

*MOTHER-INFANT SEPARATION IN
PRISON: PROBLEMATISING
ATTACHMENT THEORY IN POLICY AND
PRACTICE*

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ABSTRACT

Women in prison assert that separation from their children is one of the most traumatic aspects of their imprisonment (Corston, 2007; Douglas, Plugge & Fitzpatrick, 2009; IAP, 2017). This thesis considers mother-child separations in English prisons from the perspectives of mothers and prison staff, alongside a critical examination of the use of attachment theory in prison policy and practice. Using a critical realist approach, this mixed-methods study integrates qualitatively analysed semi-structured interviews with a practitioner survey and document analyses. A focus on attachment theory enables a multi-perspective view of an overlooked group of prisoners and proposes relevant policy and practice applications.

Study of policy and related literature reveals a consensus that separation from children for imprisoned mothers is traumatic. However, no detail is offered about how mothers should be supported. Interviews with six attachment experts and a survey of 30 family practitioners uncovered a range of critiques of current prison practice supposedly based on attachment theory, in particular the focus on a 'best age' of separation. Interviews with six previously imprisoned mothers highlighted the importance of the wider context, especially external childcare, with regards to their experience of separation. Open prisons were viewed as enabling access to services and the most positive relationships with staff. Interviews with 24 prison staff emphasised the challenges of working with separated mothers, specifically the emotional impact of this type of work, and the difficulties of working with social services.

Focusing on the understanding and practice of attachment theory revealed its limitations and problematises its use in prison policy, including critiques of Mother Baby Units. It is proposed that future practice and research should be underpinned by partnership with social work in order to inform best practice, whilst a human rights-based approach with enforceable minimum standards would mitigate some of the harm caused by mother-child separation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACCT	Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork
AOP	Anti-Oppressive Practice
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
BME	Black or Minority Ethnic
BMJ	British Medical Journal
Cafcass	Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
DoH	Department of Health
FA	Framework Analysis
HMIP	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service
IAP	Independent Advisory Panel on deaths in custody
MBU	Mother Baby Unit
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NOMS	National Offender Management Service (now HMPPS)
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
PACT	Prison Advice and Care Trust
PRI	Prison Reform International
PSI	Prison Service Instruction
PSO	Prison Service Order
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

REA	Rapid Evidence Assessment
RNR	Risk-Need-Responsivity (model of rehabilitation)
ROTL	Release on Temporary Licence
TA	Thematic Analysis
WHO	World Health Organisation

GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

ACCT: A self-harm and suicide prevention procedure in prison. It involves a care plan, which is reviewed, and close observation of the prisoner.

Age of children: Whilst MBUs are officially for children up until the age of 18 months old, there is some flexibility for children to stay until they are two years old. Thus, in general, I refer to children under two years old to capture this wider group of children who are not on MBUs, but if referring to policy or specific research I will use 18 months.

Listeners: Prisoners trained by The Samaritans (UK suicide-prevention charity) to support other prisoners through active listening and peer support.

MBU: A separate area of the prison with individual rooms and some flexibility from the prison regime. There is generally a nursery and play areas for the children and mothers may have the option of preparing their own food.

Open prison: Prisons in which prisoners have more freedom to move around the prison and to leave to work or return home for a set period of time.

ROTL: This allows prisoners to leave the prison for training or work, compassionate leave, childcare etc. Prisoners need to apply and be risk assessed before being granted leave.

'Separated mothers': This is shorthand for imprisoned mothers separated from their children.

Third sector: Includes non-governmental, non-profit and voluntary sector organisations.

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PREFACE

For men, prison means an interruption in their lives, a loss of freedom and of personal autonomy, deprivation of goods, services and heterosexual relationships. For women, prison is not just an interruption in their lives; it can separate them from their children permanently. (Corston, 2007, p.23)

For mothers in prison, separation and loss of children ‘were the most commonly cited factors leading to the high risk of suicide and self-harm within prisons’ (Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody [IAP], 2017, p.11) in England and Wales. Furthermore, US data over the past twenty years suggest that most imprisoned mothers could be rated as clinically depressed (Poehlmann, 2005), and after six months in prison mothers remain depressed, unlike non-mothers whose rates of depression reduce (Fogel, Martin, Anderson, Murphy, & Dickson, 1992). Given this bleak outlook, it is surprising that so little research exists that focuses on mother-child separations from the mothers’ perspective (rather than their views of the impact on their children). Indeed, there are not even any centralised figures in England and Wales that break down how many women in the prison system have children or the children’s ages. What we do know is that separation from children is an ‘increased trauma’ (Herzog-Evans, 2013, p.71) and a ‘gender-specific effect of the prison

environment' (Bartlett, 2007, p.445), not least because for most mothers prison is the first time they are separated from their children for any length of time (Caddle & Crisp, 1997).

In terms of the children, only 5% remain in their family home following their mothers' imprisonment (Women's Breakout, 2016), and this greater disruption in comparison to paternal imprisonment is unsurprisingly associated with a range of negative outcomes. Most research on the impact of parental imprisonment focuses on fathers; thus, 'children affected by mothers' imprisonment are neither seen nor heard' (Woodrow, 1992, p.37), despite their increased vulnerability (Poehlmann-Tynan, 2015; Murray & Murray, 2010). The risks for children specifically associated with maternal imprisonment include: increased social and emotional difficulties (Dallaire, Zeman & Thrash, 2015; Bloom & Steinhart, 1993); worse physical and mental health (Scharff Smith, 2014), including a greater incidence of externalising behaviours (Murray, Farrington & Sekol, 2012), and feelings of depression and shame (Burgess & Flynn, 2013; Scharff Smith, 2014). Children whose mothers are in prison have worse school performance (Woodward, 2003), and are more likely to drop out of school (Trice & Brewster, 2004; Bernstein, 2005). In comparison to children whose fathers are in prison, children of imprisoned mothers are more likely to be in foster care (Dallaire, 2007), and, whether cared for by family or strangers, they are more likely to be assessed with insecure attachment, i.e. unable to be soothed by their attachment figure, seek their attachment figure out when distressed or use them as a safe base to explore the world (Poehlmann, Park, Bouffiou, Joshua, Schlafer & Hahn, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005). There are some gender differences (i.e. between girls and boys) reported in terms of the impact on children (Scharff Smith, 2014). However, one of the key findings of research on the impact of maternal incarceration is the association with children's criminal convictions in adulthood (Huebner & Gustafson, 2007; Dallaire, 2007).

There are additional stressors, including the impact of witnessing a mother's arrest which has an impact similar to witnessing parental violence in the home (Dallaire et al., 2015). Indeed, visiting mothers in prison, whilst generally leading to positive outcomes, can result in increased behavioural problems for some children (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper & Shear, 2010). When mothers are released, children must go through a period of adjustment which is mediated by mothers' stress levels and can also have a negative impact (McClure et al., 2015). Whilst there is debate about the specific effect of maternal imprisonment on children, for example Murray and Murray (2010) argue that this generally occurs in contexts of adversity which are subsequently increased by the experience of imprisonment, it is clear that children are severely disadvantaged by maternal incarceration, even more so than by paternal incarceration.

Nevertheless, there are several books devoted solely to the impact of incarceration on children (for example see Shaw, 1992; Scharff Smith, 2014; Poehlmann-Tynan, 2015), and a growing body of empirical research (see the special edition of *Attachment & Human Development*, 2010). There is, however, far less focus on mothers' experience of separation. As a result, this thesis explores a range of perspectives to understand mother-child separations in prison from experiential, practice and policy standpoints but with a focus on the mothers. Because there is provision for mothers to stay in prison with their children aged under two years, I concentrated on this specific age group.

I was particularly interested in the mothers' perspective from my work as a group facilitator in the voluntary sector. For several years prior to and throughout the course of this PhD research I have been facilitating groups for women released from prison, for homeless mothers in a community hostel and for pregnant women and new mothers in prison. Imminent and historic separations from children have been a recurrent, emotive discussion topic and scoping conversations with former prison staff about the viability of this research highlighted the role of separation from children in self-harm incidents during

Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork [ACCT] reviews (see glossary). In addition, during my time facilitating prison-based groups, I encountered many puzzling references to attachment theory from both third sector (see glossary) and prison staff (e.g. that children's attachment would be 'permanently broken' if they had contact with both mother and a foster carer). I became increasingly aware of the distance between academic debates and practitioners (c.f. Bartlett, 2007). Thus, I was interested in the use and application of attachment theory, but with a specific focus on the impact of separation on mothers, given the predominant focus on children of prisoners.

Through thirty-five interviews with mothers, prison staff and attachment experts, this research explores the emotional impact of mother-child separation, the challenges staff face in providing support and the use of attachment theory in relation to imprisoned mothers. Despite focusing on separation, discussion has inevitably returned to Mother and Baby Units [MBU] (see glossary) both because mothers and staff referred to them but also because they are currently the only alternative to separation for mothers of young children, i.e. under two years old (for an overview, see 11 Million, 2008 and Howard League for Penal Reform, 1995).

This thesis begins with a discussion of the policy context and psychological theory which underpin the research. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the current situation for women in prison and specifically mothers of young children. This includes an overview of the relevant policy changes over the past decade since The Corston Report which the UK Home Office originally commissioned following the death of six women at the same prison. The report called for a new, gender-informed approach across the criminal justice system, i.e. taking into account the specific needs of women. This included fewer women sentenced to prison, smaller prisons across the country, greater use of community solutions and increased use of women's centres (Corston, 2007). This report was a key turning point in female prison provision.

There follows a review of the sparse UK research that focuses on mother-child separations in prison both at the current time and since the first research on MBUs in the 1980s, to accentuate the recurrent debates. Relevant research from abroad (primarily the US) is summarised before moving on to an overview of attachment theory. There is a discussion of the history of attachment theory and its use in policy more generally, before a specific focus on its use with and pertinence for mothers in prison. Applicable critiques of attachment theory are reviewed before finishing on the key theories which informed this thesis.

Chapter 2 outlines the aims of this research with a discussion of its approach. This includes a justification of its critical realist underpinnings and consideration of the importance of ethics and reflexivity in prison research before examining the research design and process. This part highlights the key aspects and considerations at each step: from participant recruitment across the different studies, to the design of materials and data analysis. There is a particular focus on interviews and their implementation because they were the chief research method. The chapter finishes with a discussion of thematic analysis and the inclusion of framework analysis for the staff study, with a brief overview of the importance of credibility in qualitative research.

The first, multi-component study presented in Chapter 3 discusses the findings from three Rapid Evidence Assessments (REAs), interviews with attachment academics and a survey of child and family practitioners. Given the paucity of specific work on mother-child separations in UK prisons, this study provides a detailed exploration of the use of attachment theory in relevant policy, academic and grey literature alongside expert commentaries on prison policy and practice. The key findings of the REAs are presented separately to call attention to the differences between the literatures. Next the interviews with the five attachment academics are discussed, with a particular focus on age limits for separation. Lastly, the practitioner survey highlights their views about current

prison separation policy. This chapter emphasises the main tensions between academic theorising and prison policy in relation to attachment theory, before discussing the experiences and views of previously imprisoned mothers and prison staff.

Chapter 4 reports the findings from the second study – interviews with six formerly incarcerated mothers. It begins with a brief, selective overview of relevant literature, focusing particularly on Enos (2001) due to its pertinence to this research. The study participant demographics are presented along with brief, anonymised vignettes of their histories. The majority of the chapter then discusses the four main themes constructed from the mothers' interviews and their suggestions for improving the current system.

Prison staff views are presented in Chapter 5. There is a discussion of relevant literature on prison staff research, which considers their attitudes to caring and their propensity for distress. The recruiting prisons and the staff demographics for the 24 participants are described to contextualise the findings. The key themes are examined, which focus on the main challenges that staff face when supporting separated mothers (see glossary), and their suggestions for improving both the support systems and the training currently on offer.

Chapter 6 concentrates particularly on the use of attachment theory in prisons and brings together the mothers' and staff perspectives and understanding. This enables a critical discussion of how attachment is practised through the use of MBUs and the separation age limits from a current and a historical perspective. Finally, there is consideration of the impact of the wider context both for staff and for mothers, primarily vis-à-vis family support and relationships with social services. Through its problematisation of the use of attachment theory, this chapter is contrasted with the expert commentary on attachment theory in policy and its use in relevant literature in Chapter 4.

The concluding chapter brings together the findings from the three studies as a general discussion with a focus on the broader implications. The contradictions in the use of attachment theory are discussed and broadened out to consider the debates about whether prisons can be sites of intervention for women in prison. Through considering relevant social work literature, some alternative ways of working are proposed before the limitations of the research are considered, along with suggestions for practice and further research.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

It must never be forgotten that, with the state's abandonment of the right to impose capital sentences, orders of the kind which family judges are typically invited to make in public law proceedings are amongst the most drastic that any judge in any jurisdiction is ever empowered to make. When a family judge makes a placement order or an adoption order in relation to a twenty-year-old mother's baby, the mother will have to live with the consequences of that decision for what may be upwards of 60 or even 70 years, and the baby for what may be upwards of 80 or even 90 years. We must be vigilant to guard against the risks. (James Munby, 2013, p.2)

Paradoxically it has at times felt as if there is both too much and too little literature on the subject of mother-child separations in prison. On the one hand there is a range of researchers who have spent years researching the female prison experience. On the other, from a closer vantage point, there seems to be a preponderance of US-based research and a range of UK research on disparate topics, but very little research specifically on the topic of separation. Moreover, although this research sits within the discipline of psychology, staying within this discipline alone would provide an extremely limited perspective of the current state of knowledge about mothers in prison. Thus, this is a review of the

most relevant literature from a range of disciplines to contextualise mother-child separations in prisons.

The chapter begins by describing the current context for women in prison, their specific gender-related needs and the related policy development. It then concentrates on MBUs and separation, and presents the sparse data available. It seemed important to contextualise the current situation for mothers in prison in light of developments since The Corston Report (Corston, 2007), given the attention on 'gender-specific needs'. Consequently, there is a discussion of the lack of progress and change in light of Corston's recommendations, with a particular focus on the sentencing literature to understand why women's levels of imprisonment have remained unchanged.

Following this there is an overview of recent and historical UK research relevant to mother-child separations, which highlights a potential shift in focus from solely considering children's needs to considering mothers' welfare in addition to that of their children. Relevant non-UK research is then appraised which emphasises the challenges of motherhood in prison. The remainder of the chapter focuses on attachment theory – its history and use in policy, along with its relevance to women in prison and a discussion about various critical perspectives.

1.1 Current context for women in prison

On May 4th, 2018, there were 3,897 women in prison, 4.7% of the total prison population (Ministry of Justice [MOJ], 2018a). 564 women, 14% of the female prison population, were on remand on 31st March, 2018 (MOJ, 2018b – remand figures are available quarterly), i.e. not yet sentenced. Women spend on average four to six weeks in prison on remand, and less than half of women remanded and found guilty are given a prison sentence (Women in Prison, 2017). In total there were 8,447 women in prison during the course of 2016,

10% of the total of those sent to prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2017a). In England, there are 12 women's prisons in England, of which two are privately run.

Some of the key differences between men and women in prison are the nature of offending, sentences and levels of self-harm and suicide. 84% of women in prison committed a non-violent offence (in contrast to 71% of all prisoners), and 70% of women are serving a sentence of six months or less (as opposed to 47% of all prisoners) (Prison Reform Trust, 2017a). In fact, only 10% of women serve sentences of two years or higher (Prison Reform Trust, 2017a). Although this has reduced over the past decade, women are still overrepresented in self-harm incidents (19%), and in 2016 there were 12 self-inflicted deaths of women in prison, which is the highest level since 2004 (Prison Reform Trust, 2017a). An initial review highlighted five reasons for this: reduction in staff numbers; increased mental health and substance misuse needs; increased illicit drug use and associated bullying in prison; decrease in release on temporary licence [ROTL] (see glossary) and related increase in post-release homelessness and subsequent recalls; and, the closure of Holloway in 2016 (IAP, 2017).

Women in prison have specific needs, particularly in relation to their children. There has been a growing awareness and development of support for women in the prison estate, especially over the past decade. Following the deaths of six women in HMP Styal, The Corston report was commissioned in 2006 in order to review the situation of women 'with particular vulnerabilities' in the criminal justice system (Corston, 2007). This led to over forty recommendations and subsequent changes in the prison estate. As the then inspector of prisons, Nick Hardwick (2012) comments: 'there is evidence that Baroness Corston's report has driven real and significant change in the experience of women in prison' (Hardwick, 2012, p.15). This is demonstrated by Prison Service Order [PSO] 4800 which sets out gender-specific needs for women prisoners. It is clear from the development of Mother Baby Units which have improved over the years (for

example, HMP Styal's MBU had an outstanding Ofsted report) and the recent announcement that there will be family engagement workers in all public-sector women's prison to support family contact (Women in Prison, 2015). A more detailed consideration of the situation following Corston will be addressed in the later section 'Policy context: Corston and beyond'.

In terms of the most recent policy, the National Offender Management Service [NOMS] 'Better outcomes for women offenders' (NOMS, 2015) document identifies seven key areas that need to be addressed to improve support for women. Four of these areas are family contact, pro-social identity, mental health and substance misuse, which could all be improved by supporting women who are separated from their children. As this thesis will argue, supporting separated mothers and the staff who work with them could have a broader, positive impact on prisons in general.

Imprisoned mothers of infants: MBUs and separation

Whilst figures are kept on the number of women incarcerated, there are no official figures for the number of children of female prisoners, or for the numbers of children in care, including those who are permanently separated from their mothers (Galloway, Haynes & Cuthbert, 2014; Baldwin & Epstein, 2017). In the UK, imprisoned mothers are separated from approximately 18,000 children aged under 18 each year (Prison Reform Trust, 2014). Figures are not clear about the ages of the children but approximately one-third of mothers in prison have a child under five years (Prison Reform Trust, 2014). The most recent figures on births in custody suggest that about 120 women give birth per year (MOJ, 2008), and there are around 750 women per year imprisoned with a child under 18 months (Gregoire, Dolan, Birmingham, Mullee, & Coulson, 2010). By combining figures from a 2013 Freedom of Information request on applications and acceptances to Mother Baby Units and research on women who are eligible to apply (Gregoire et al., 2010), it can be estimated that around 500 women a

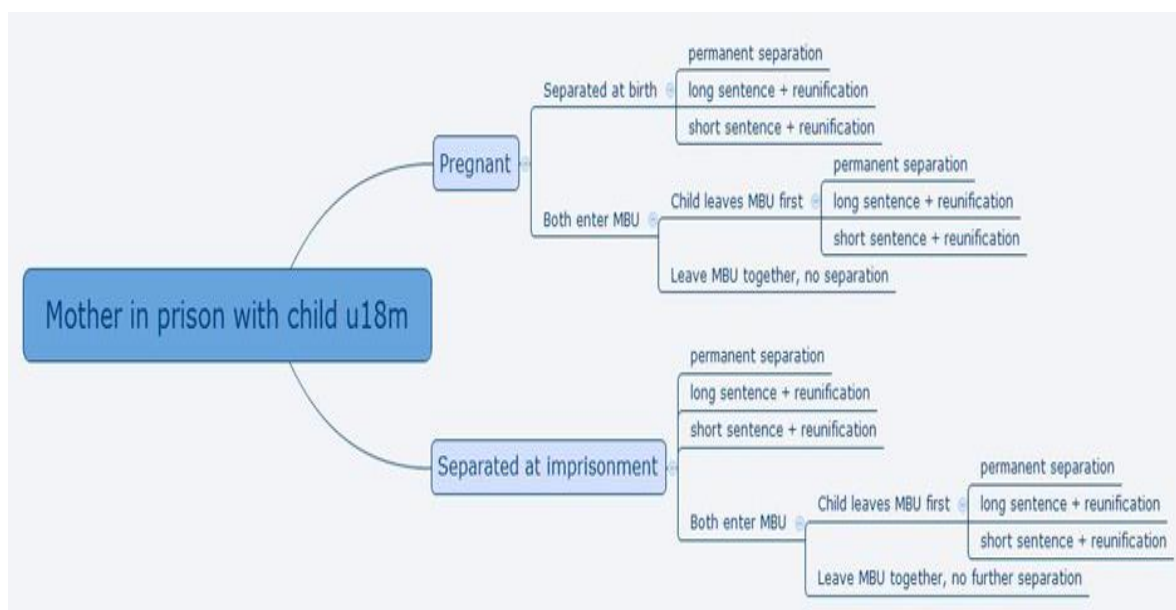
year are separated from their children under 18 months, but the true figure is likely to be higher.

In more recent work by the Prison Reform Trust and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children [NSPCC] the figures vary widely. The PRT refers to a study by Liebling and Maruna (2005) which found that two thirds of women in prison are mothers of children under 18 years and a third of these women have children under five years (e.g. Minson, Nadine & Earle, 2015). Using the most recent figures cited earlier, there are just under 900 children under five years with mothers in prison at any one time (1,877 children in 2016). By contrast Galloway et al. (2014) state that 3,000 babies a year under two years old are separated from their mothers. This has been calculated from ONS data and estimates from the total number of children separated from their parents in prison each year. Thus, there is a possible range of 500 to 3,000 babies separated from their mothers each year.

Statistics which are more generally accepted are that for 85% of mothers (of children of any age) this is the first time they have ever been separated from their children (Caddle & Crisp, 1997). Only 5% of all children with a mother in a prison remain in the family home (Prison Reform Trust, 2000) and 9% of children are cared for by their fathers (MOJ, 2007). At least a third of women in prison are single mothers (Epstein, 2012). These figures give some indication of the impact on children of having a mother in prison.

There are several different ways mothers can be separated from their child under eighteen months, depending on whether they arrive in prison pregnant or with a young child in the community. The different pathways are in Figure one below:

Figure 1 - Possible separation trajectories for mothers in prison



The multiplicity of trajectories calls attention to the diversity of possible experiences mothers may have and the challenges for staff providing support. In England and Wales, Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) exist in prison so that some women can remain with their children under 18 months. These units are separate to the main prison, with individual rooms and some flexibility from the prison regime. There is a specific Prison Service Instruction which is an operational framework for prisons running Mother and Baby Units (PSI 49/2014).

Mothers and expectant mothers apply to a specific unit and can be refused a place if it is not seen to be 'in the best interests of the child', which is generally due to child protection concerns or substance misuse (see 11 Million, 2008). As with any children separated from their mothers by imprisonment, the options are to be placed in kinship care or into state care (Prison Advice & Care Trust, 2011). Some of these children will be placed for adoption and never reunited with their families (Choices Islington, 2015). There are currently only six MBUs with a maximum capacity of 54 places (see www.gov.uk for the most up-to-date

figures), which is far lower than even the conservative estimate of 500 women separated per year (see above).

When mothers are separated from their children they are reliant on carers to bring their children to the prison for visits. Each prison has different rules about visits, including days, times and number of visits but generally convicted prisoners are allowed two one-hour visits every four weeks (Crown Copyright, 2018). In some prisons there are occasional 'family days' which are longer, child-centred visits with organised activities (Partners of Prisoners, 2018). Mothers of children were particularly brought into focus in The Corston Report (Corston, 2007), and if recommendations such as less sentencing to prison and small, dispersed units had been implemented, the situation for mothers would have improved and there would have been far fewer separations. Thus it is to the policy context following Corston that we now turn.

Policy context: Corston and beyond

Two years after the publication of The Corston report, Baroness Corston chaired an All Party Parliamentary Group [APPG] on women in the penal system and their report was published in 2011. This follow-up to the original work praised the implementation of gender-specific standards in prison and the monitoring of women as a specific group by NOMS. However, it also commented on key recommendations from the original report that had not been implemented. These included: smaller units for women; custodial sentences only for violent offenders; remand imprisonment only when women were likely to receive custodial sentences; and increased funding for women's services. The report noted there had been no decrease in the number of women in prison, nor any decrease in the disproportionate rate of female self-harm (APPG, 2011).

Hardwick (2012) documented the same lack of action and pointed out that women were still receiving short prison sentences. He stressed that, despite

much good work, there were still far too many distressed women in prison. He focused criticism specifically on the government for not carrying out Corston's recommendations. This inaction in response to the changes put forward by Corston (2007) means that more women are and have been separated from their children than would otherwise have been.

Seven years after Corston, Jung, Kaufmann & Harrow (2014) provided a case study of the work of the Corston Independent Funders' Coalition (CIFC) – a group of grant-making trusts that formed a coalition specifically to advocate for Corston's reforms at government policy level. They concluded that limited progress had been made in changing prison policy for women. The study highlighted the near impossibility of policy change, even with robust evidence, when there is no corresponding political will.

This lack of change was reflected at grass roots level in a Clinks report that followed nine organisations supporting women in the criminal justice system over the course of a year (Clarke, 2014). It might have been expected that these community women's services – some funded by NOMS or local probation trusts – would have flourished in a post-Corston environment. However, despite many examples of good practice, the organisations were financially insecure and there was scant central government or local authority recognition of the importance of gender-specific services for women offenders. The report called attention to the financial insecurity faced by the organisations, coupled with increasing female poverty as a result of welfare and benefit changes, which could indicate an increase in re-offending. And indeed, the female prison population increased by 680 in 2015, in comparison to the year before (MOJ, 2016).

However, whilst an increase in the prison population undoubtedly means an increase in mother-child separations, many of Corston's recommendations

focused on alternative sentencing practices for women i.e. a gender-informed approach from the start of a woman's trajectory through the criminal justice system. It could be argued that it is primarily sentencing practices which directly affect the number of imprisoned women separated from their children under two years old.

A brief look at the most recent sentencing literature reveals a level of complexity that goes some way in explaining why the number of women in prison has not dramatically fallen in the past ten years since Corston. Gelsthorpe and Sharpe (2015) explain the increase in the female prison population as mainly due to sentencing practices, rather than any changes in offending. Their perspective is that sentencers are confused between risks and needs and tend to 'up-tariff' women so they can access support (in prison) more easily. However, this has a negative impact on women in the long term because on release from prison they are likely to have lost housing and their children, and find it more difficult to find a job. Minson et al. (2015) draw attention to the diverse understanding of gender and separation from children among judges (despite unanimous research literature on the topic that mothers suffer most), and how this results in inconsistent sentencing with regards to motherhood as a mitigating factor (i.e. grounds for a non-custodial sentence).

Even when women are not sentenced to prison but receive community sentences, these can be a 'back door' into custody, according to Hedderman and Barnes (2015, p.113) because women can be sentenced to prison if they breach the community sentence requirements. They note that, despite various understandings of gender equality, judges have made visible efforts to reduce prison sentencing, unlike magistrates who believe they have but whose sentencing practices have in fact remained unchanged (Hedderman & Barnes, 2015). Nevertheless, what this research reveals is that the availability and use of community provision does not automatically lead to a reduction in the female prison population. When women are not ready for support, or structures are not

in place to enable them to participate in community services, failure to participate results in a custodial sentence anyway. Kendall (2013) believes that the existence of simultaneous community and custodial sentence options has led directly to the expansion of the female prison estate. Thus, the only way to reduce the number of incarcerated women is to reduce the possibility of giving custodial sentences at all.

The extensive research and third sector reports merely seem to highlight the gap between knowledge and practice. In Minson et al.'s (2015) Prison Reform Trust discussion paper on the sentencing of women, endorsed by the Magistrates' Association, the need for a gender-informed approach is stressed and the associated intergenerational costs to families are clearly pointed out. The paper puts forward nine proposals for sentencing reform in order to prevent inconsistent sentencing, with an explicit drive to improve outcomes for women offenders. Despite this clear, accessible paper, Birkett's (2016) research shows that magistrates continue to be unaware of community sentencing options for non-violent women.

The increasing female prison population and inconsistent sentencing practices are reflective of negligible changes at a policy level. Goldhill (2009) proposes that both the government and the public are unreceptive to the idea that female offenders are different from male offenders. According to Goldhill (2009), gender responsiveness depends on widespread attitudinal change and this has not taken place. Proposals have been watered down and Corston's focus on smaller units for women has been dismissed as uneconomical in favour of larger prisons. Goldhill (2009) relates this to a general media backlash against women being given what is regarded as 'special treatment'.

Evans and Walklate (2011) further develop Goldhill's (2009) ideas. They suggest that gender responsiveness is impossible with a government focused

on the notion of 'risk' and reducing crime. This narrow focus obliterates Corston's notion of 'vulnerability' in women as the result of external, structural forces which can be changed. The government focus overlooks context and, in reference to Carlen's (2002) work, Evans and Walklate (2011) point out that any discourse on women's social reality is swiftly erased in policy formation. Kendall (2013) sees this decontextualisation as one of the risks inherent in a gender-informed approach. Structural problems are psychologised and individualised, encouraging an emphasis on notions of personal responsibility. Gelsthorpe and Sharpe (2015) point out that responding to women solely with regards to gender means overlooking other differences such as ethnicity and class, which affect how they are treated in the prison system.

In line with Goldhill's (2009) observation that Corston's call for smaller units has been obscured by a focus on building very large prisons, Coyle (2008) compares the response to Corston with that of the Carter reviews (2003; 2007). He notices that Corston consulted widely and put forward a model that is agreed would reduce re-offending. However, he relates the low government enthusiasm specifically to the lack of commercial viability. The Carter review, with a less transparent process, proposed building larger prisons that satisfy commercial interests. This proposal was acted upon almost immediately.

The literature shows that despite Corston's clear call for reducing female imprisonment and her pragmatic suggestions that would have reduced mother-child separations, the wider political context and systemic beliefs about gender have resulted in very little change over the past decade. Having considered the policy background to mother-child separations, the relevant research context will now be reviewed.

1.2 UK research context

There are three key studies about the mental health of imprisoned mothers of young children in the UK (Birmingham, Coulson, Mullee, Kamal & Gregoire,

2006; Gregoire et al., 2010; Dolan, Birmingham, Mullee & Gregoire, 2013). Together these studies build a picture of mothers in prison – both those in MBUs and those who are separated from their young children.

Gregoire et al. (2010) reviewed the mental health needs of imprisoned mothers of young children and compared these findings to an earlier study of the mental health needs of mothers in MBUs (Birmingham et al., 2006). The MBU study highlighted a couple of relevant points in relation to separated mothers. Firstly, that mothers in MBUs are less vulnerable than the general prison population (and probably separated mothers) in terms of their mental health and their backgrounds before entering prison. This is confirmed in the two following studies. Secondly, they suggest that MBUs may ‘inadvertently discriminate’ (Birmingham et al., 2006, p.402) against mothers with mental health difficulties, even though these are not specific criteria for MBUs. Although there are no details as to how this happens, it appears as if the MBU selection process excludes women with mental health difficulties. Thus, mothers with mental health difficulties are being discriminated against and losing out on opportunities to develop a relationship with their young child when they are refused places on MBUs.

Gregoire et al. (2010) state that, given the increased risk of mental distress for mothers of young children and women in prison, women who have been separated are both at a high risk and are unlikely to receive any support, ‘thus placing this already disadvantaged group of women and young children at even greater disadvantage and risk’ (p.380). In contrast to the MBU group of mothers in their earlier study, Gregoire et al (2010) point out that the separated mothers are more socially vulnerable (i.e. more likely to be single, unemployed and not have their own home), and have greater mental health needs (90% were assessed as having current mental health problems, 42% had current treatment needs). There were high rates of drug use compared to MBU mothers, and interestingly slightly lower levels in women who had applied to an MBU (and

been unsuccessful) than those who had not applied. The authors point out that with better (and presumably more) mental health treatment in prison, more women would have a chance of a place in MBUs, with concomitant benefits for mothers and their children. Moreover, the authors call attention to the fact that most women will be caring for their children on release so the failure to provide support in prison will add to further difficulties on release.

The study underlined the elevated levels of depression in separated mothers compared both to the mothers in the MBUs and the general female prison population. Gregoire et al. (2010) suggest that depression could prevent mothers from applying but could be a result of separation. They highlight the relationship between child and maternal mental health: 'The separation of these mothers and children may contribute to or exacerbate the women's existing mental health problems and increase the negative effects on the child's current and future mental health' (p.390). This is pretty stark, and it is striking that this is the only empirical study on the mental health of separated mothers in the UK.

Dolan et al.'s (2013) follow-up study, emphasised the ongoing differences between MBU and separated mothers after release. Separated mothers were more likely to be unemployed (92% separated, 73% MBU) and in unsettled accommodation (24% separated, 4.5% MBU) or homeless (13% separated, 0% MBU). Separated mothers had reduced their drug intake less than the MBU group and, whilst the difference was not significant, were more likely to have committed another offence since first interview. Those mothers who had not been reunited with their children following separation in prison were significantly more likely to have been convicted of a further offence and they had far higher levels of depression. The authors suggest that caring for infants in prison and continuing to care or resuming care for children when released are therefore related to reduced offending. Thus, the negative consequences of separation, both in prison and following release are evident.

Two recent pieces of research mention the impact of separation only in passing, but they are relevant. Baradon and Fonagy's (2013) cluster randomised trial of the 'New Beginnings' programme showed an unexpected decrease over time in reflective functioning in the control group of mothers on the MBU. The authors speculate that some mothers may have been anticipating a future separation with preparation, so they were psychologically withdrawing from their children. This highlights how MBU interventions potentially need to take individual women's situations into account to be effective. Foley and Papadopoulos (2013), in their review of perinatal mental health services for imprisoned black or minority ethnic (BME) women, suggest that separation is even more difficult for foreign nationals because their children are in a different country and they receive no additional support to cope with this. This differential impact is rarely mentioned, indeed the specific needs of BME and foreign national women are generally overlooked in the literature.

Historical UK research: a focus on age limits

In terms of historical UK research, there are two Home Office studies which are cited in most UK-related literature and all policy. They appear to provide the only policy justification for the 18-month age limit and it is noticeable that the focus is very much on the impact for the child and not the mother.

The first landmark piece of research was a Home Office study, with an extension ESRC study, which was used as the original basis for the 18-month upper age limit (Catan, 1988a; 1989a; Catan & Lloyd, 1988). This developmental research, based in one MBU, focused solely on the impact on the children. The researchers found 'no evidence of generalised developmental delay in the unit babies' but there was some impact on motor skills for older children who stayed more than four months (Catan, 1989a). An extension study explored the environmental effects on the children in more detail and found that the MBU children had more limited social experiences and fewer social interactions than similarly aged children in a community crèche (Catan & Lloyd, 1988). This small-scale study is still cited now, despite being nearly 30 years

old, and having as its sole focus children's developmental trajectories. There is no discussion of the impact of separation and no follow-up study.

The more recent Home Office study was based on a large-scale 1994 survey across all 12 women's prisons and over 1,000 interviews with mothers in prison (Caddle & Crisp, 1997). This thorough study calculated that 14.5% of children of mothers in prison were under two years (this remains the most recent figure, as do many of the figures from this report). The report cites an inaccessible Department of Health [DoH] inspection (DoH, 1994) as justification for the 18-month age limit:

Some child care experts have suggested that, for the time being, the upper age limit of 18 months should not be extended, the idea being that children who have to be separated from their mothers should do so before becoming too attached (Department for Health, 1994)' (Caddle and Crisp, 1997, p.47)

It is interesting that the notion of being 'too attached' is not supported by attachment theory (Waters & McIntosh, 2011) and the 'child care experts' are not named or cited in any publicly available reports. A psychiatrist provides an overview of this same DoH inspection (although with a different date) in the British Medical Journal [BMJ] (Dillner, 1992). Dillner (1992) calls for compassion in the system – both for mothers and children – pointing out that separation is used to discipline mothers, it increases mothers' risk of suicide and there is no counselling or support for mothers following separation. The judicial system is criticised for imprisoning women at all. What is striking is that this appears to be one of the first publications to focus on the impact of separation on mothers. Another psychiatrist writing at the same time calls for doctors to act against the imprisonment of parents (Black, 1992). In addition, Black (1992) questions the ability of prisons to assess mothers' parenting ability (and thus their right to MBU places) and states that 'most criminal parents can parent well' (p.970).

Whilst it might be tenuous to draw out patterns from four pieces of literature, there appears to be a shift over time. From Home Office studies focusing on the effects of MBUs on children, to medical practitioners highlighting the impact on mothers, the culmination is The Corston report with its focus solely on women in the criminal justice system.

The final piece of UK literature which refers to separation is a review of maternity services for mothers in prison (North, 2006). This review points out some important issues about separation. Mothers often do not feel fully involved in decisions about their child's future and there can be a lack of communication between social services and the prison, which leaves mothers uninformed. Separated mothers often miss out on postnatal care, they are not supported to adjust back to the prison routine after separation on an MBU, nor are they supported when they leave prison. North (2006) highlights the challenges for prisons and social services working together, which make the process even more stressful for mothers, resulting in mothers separated from their babies due to slow administrative processes. North (2006) points out that the 18-month age limit is cited by HMPS officials without research to back it up and can be legally challenged (supported by Munro, 2007).

Relevant research from abroad

Whilst there is a paucity of UK research on separation, there are some relevant qualitative studies mainly from the US. Some of these studies look at the impact of separation on mothers at birth, whilst in prison or on release from prison nurseries.

Chambers' (2009) research highlights that temporary prison separations at birth often become permanent. This research focuses on forced separation at birth and stresses that 'the psychological impact of forced separation on mothers and babies remains largely ignored.' (p.205). Chambers' analysis draws out the

feelings of grief and shock of separation after birth and how mothers psychologically balance trying to maintain a sense of attachment during separation but trying not to think about the separation too much.

The psychological function of 25 imprisoned pregnant women was assessed by Hutchinson, Moore, Propper & Mariaskin (2008) who found depression was associated with impending separation. Women were concerned about the initial separation 24 hours after birth and then a possible lack of attachment when eventually reunited on release. In a similar vein, Houck and Loper (2002) carried out a Parenting Stress Index (PSI) with 362 imprisoned mothers and found stress, and related anxiety and depression, were associated with limited contact with children and the impact of visits.

Unsurprisingly these three studies all reported increased stress, depression and anxiety – and the finer grained analyses of the specific concerns and feelings of the mothers could potentially be used to guide interventions with mothers in prison. Similarly, the research on coping strategies and motherhood identity could be used to develop interventions, although it is not clear the extent to which these models are specific to the prison contexts in which they were developed.

Celinska and Siegel (2010) carried out 74 interviews with mothers about coping with potential and actual separation. From their analysis, they defined a typology of mothers' coping strategies for separation, based on the coping and stress literature, which categorised strategies as adaptive or maladaptive and whether they were focused on emotions or problems. Whilst it is not clear how generalisable this typology might be, there were some similar findings to Shamaï and Kochal's (2008) research on motherhood in prison. This Israeli study with nine women who had been imprisoned without their children analysed how motherhood was often first acknowledged in prison and then for

some could become an identity which was a source of hope and potential motive for change. The authors developed a psychological model for the experience of motherhood in prison, with changes in maternal identity and functioning over time. This research discovered that mothers had a special status in prison, even when separated.

This idea of a special status is not mentioned in other research, however Krüger, Priebe, Fritsch and Mundt (2017) note that mothers have a significantly lower suicide risk in prisons than women without children. Whilst the two findings (special status and lower suicide risk) cannot necessarily be directly related without further empirical research, this does suggest that strengthening the parental role of mothers in prison and facilitating contacts with their children could be part of suicide prevention.

However, the picture is more complex when release is considered. Byrne, Goshin and Blanchard-Lewis (2012) carried out a follow-up study of outcomes for children who left a prison nursery before their mothers' release from prison and compared them with those who left with their mothers. The separated mothers, despite time in a prison nursery with their children, were less likely to regain care of their children and were more affected by drug relapse and recidivism. It seems as if motherhood can be protective whilst in prison, however if the separation continues after release, it becomes an increased risk factor.

Whilst not about imprisoned mothers, Kenny, Barrington and Green's (2015) work on the impact of separation on drug users is extremely pertinent as they described a similar profile of women to those in prison. This paper moved away from individual psychological understandings of the impact of separation and, instead, puts forward the concept of 'disenfranchised grief' i.e. there is no social validation for this loss. For these authors, separation was another expression of

a lifetime of trauma and injustice. They described how professionals consider the experience of child loss as the fault of the individual women, whereas this paper considered it within the framework of social suffering – where unjust social systems connect to women’s individual trauma. This paper explicitly spoke out against parent-child separations – the only other research that does this is Chambers (2009) who calls for an end to forced separation because of the harm. I will now consider the foremost psychological theory which accounts for understanding separation and its impact.

1.3 Attachment theory: history, policy and research

This section provides a brief overview of attachment theory and some of its more recent developments, followed by a review of its use in policy and some of the challenges related to this. Following this the specific attachment literature relating to women in prison is examined. Critiques of the attachment literature are then considered and four approaches which have informed this research, and which address the critiques are presented.

History and overview of attachment

At the core of attachment theory is Bowlby’s thesis that the biological bond is formed by children seeking proximity to caregivers ensures both physical and psychological survival and adaptive functioning (Bowlby, 1969). Bowlby’s early work focused on the impact of childhood maternal separations and later delinquent behaviour (Bowlby, 1944), and it was this study about the danger of early separations that led to his 1951 World Health Organisation [WHO] report ‘Maternal Care and Mental Health. This report set in motion changes in public policy and spawned a vast amount of research. Initially there was resistance to the idea that separations could cause distress in children – as the initial reactions to Bowlby and Robertson’s film showing in 1952 revealed – however gradually changes were made. For example, hospital visiting hours were slowly changed so parents could visit daily, rather than weekly or monthly (Karen, 1994).

Bowlby further developed his ideas through study of ethology and evolutionary biology – in particular the monkey studies of Harlow (1958). Bowlby described behaviours children instinctively use to keep mothers close by in terms of innate patterns, introducing the term 'attachment' for the first time (Bowlby, 1958). Bowlby (1958) theorised that seeking proximity to a caregiver is crucial to physical and psychological survival. Babies elicit instinctual responses from caregivers which in turn leads to the development of a biological bond between child and caregiver (Bowlby, 1969). However, if caregiver responses are repeatedly rejecting or absent, the child will develop problems, often very serious ones such as those Bowlby had observed in his earlier clinical work (Bowlby, 1944).

Bowlby appointed Ainsworth to replace him in a follow-up WHO study and she refined and organised Bowlby's work (Ainsworth, 1962) before developing the idea of attachment styles through her observational studies in Uganda and Baltimore (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth, Belhar, Waters & Wall, 1978). Ainsworth conceptualised three attachment styles (secure, anxious and avoidant) that were determined using her novel assessment, the Strange Situation, which is still used in clinical and research work today (Karen, 1994). Main later added a fourth category, disorganised attachment (Main & Solomon, 1986), which has been particularly associated with maltreatment by caregivers (Pickreign Stronach et al., 2011; Cicchetti & Barnett, 1991) and later challenging behaviour (Bakermans-Kranenburg, Ijzendoorn, & Juffer, 2005). However more recent work has disputed the strength of many of the earlier claims (Granqvist et al., 2017).

This relationship between caregiver behaviour and child response has been theorised as an intergenerational model. Parent-child interactions develop into internal working models of relationships (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986) which can then affect future relationships through the capacity of mentalisation (Fonagy,

Gergely & Jurist, 2004) and be transmitted to the next generation through parental reflective functioning (Fonagy, 1999) or mind mindedness (Meins et al., 2003). Attachment researchers subsequently developed adult attachment style classifications (Shaver, Belsky & Brennan, 2000; Main & Goldwyn, 1995).

Research building on the impact of attachment on emotional development has been developed since the 1970s when Sroufe and Waters first put forward the idea that the goal of the attachment system is 'felt security' rather than managing the distance between child and caregiver (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). This has led to work around the relationship between the development of attachment and affect regulation (Sroufe, 1996) and interpersonal trust (Schore, 2010).

Rutter has provided some of the most comprehensive refinements of Bowlby's theory, particularly in relation to the notion of maternal deprivation (Rutter, 1981). Whilst Bowlby's early work – and the interpretations of it at the time – seemed to suggest that children should never be separated from their mothers until they were at least three years old, Bowlby did later acknowledge that care from a familiar adult could reduce the trauma of separation (Bowlby, 1973). Rutter pointed out that Bowlby had incorrectly generalised findings from institutionalised children to all separations from mothers, including day care (Rutter & Aziz-Clauson, 2016) – a similar criticism that Robertson made at the time (Ludolph, 2012). Further refinements included empirical evidence that maternal sensitivity is not the primary determinant of attachment security for most children (Fonagy, 2001), and the development of theoretical models that are developmental across the lifespan and incorporate context in a more complex way (e.g. Crittenden, 2008).

Use of attachment theory in policy

From its inclusion at the WHO, attachment theory is now embedded in early years' policy and practice in the UK. It is considered vital to nursery practice

(Department for Education, 2014), central to work with looked-after children (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE], 2010), and all services working with children and families at risk are required to use attachment models and assessment tools where possible (NICE, 2015). Attachment theory is used in legal disputes over child custody – an area of research that probably has the most relevance to mother-child separations in prison.

As Rutter (1971) emphasised, it is the reason and context for separation that has the most impact on children, rather than separation itself. Fonagy (2001) added to this in stating that it is not the continuity of attachment that is important, rather the ‘mediating conditions,’ and Rutter (2002) agreed pointing out that over focus on early experiences has obscured the impact of ongoing adversity. In child custody disputes attachment theory is used and misused, according to many leading researchers and theorists. Rutter and Aziz-Clauson (2016) highlighted that child custody disputes centre on the incorrect idea of the presence of a child ‘attachment’ or ‘bond’ rather than security – which is what the assessments actually measure – or an understanding that children attach to multiple adults, even if they are harmful.

Kelly and Lamb (2005) argue for an approach which takes age into consideration, based on an understanding of the child development research. Controversially they suggest that younger children can manage more transitions between caregivers. Lamb (2002) – an attachment researcher who has written extensively about the application of this research to child custody disputes – has pointed out that decisions and policy tend to be steered by values and ideology, and that efforts to be fair to both parents often overshadow children’s best interests. One of his main assertions is that the non-residential parent is deprived of everyday interactions which are vital for formation and maintenance of attachment (Lamb, 2002). This ties in with preventing detachment by both

child and parent, which has been suggested as a possible risk (Main, Hesse & Hesse, 2011).

Family Court Review has published many articles on the application of attachment theory to the court process. There has been a particular focus on how children under three years can establish organised attachment relationships with two parents (Pruett, McIntosh & Kelly, 2014; McIntosh, Pruet & Kelly, 2014). What is interesting is the range of views presented. More 'traditional' theorists and researchers advocate in the 2011 special issue that children need one caregiver for the first three years with regular, in-depth visits by others. The idea of a single, main caregiver has been reiterated in the same 2011 issue with the proposal that non-residential caregivers could have once-a-month contact which then is increased later on (Bretherton, Seligman, Solomon, Crowell & McIntosh, 2011). Lamb, however, writing for the same publication, disputes these claims. He clearly lays out that two attachment relationships develop simultaneously, i.e. with both parents. Both attachment relationships should be encouraged as such, particularly when children are under three years when the benefit of regular transitions between caregivers outweigh the problems (Lamb, 2012). Lamb (2014) calls for individualisation and broad general guidelines, rather than detailed specifics, when applying child development research to child custody. Indeed, the controversy for him lies in whether findings are generalisable across different populations (Lamb, 2012), which echoes Rutter and Robertson's earlier criticisms of Bowlby's original theory.

What mainly emerges from this body of work are the challenges in applying attachment theory to policy and practice. There are problems in even defining attachment consistently (Waters & McIntosh, 2011), and different views of attachment lead to conflicting implications for courts, custody decisions and policy (Ludolph, 2012). The adversarial nature of the court process means 'experts' in attachment can provide a range of opinions depending on who has

employed them (Bretherton, Seligman, Solomon, Crowell & McIntosh, 2011), and generally the wider support network is overlooked, with a focus solely on the parents (Riggs & Gottlieb, 2009). It is still very much in dispute the extent to which the main assumptions of attachment theory can be applied to special populations of children (Tucker & MacKenzie, 2012), and by extension, to their parents. 'Special populations' would include children of parents in prison as they are not generally investigated as specific group.

Mothers in prison and attachment theory research

There is a limited amount of research on women with babies in the prison system, and a very small proportion of this which uses attachment theory. It seems extremely pertinent given that prison policies for mother baby units and separation from children are implicitly based on ideas of attachment (see for example, 11 Million, 2008). There is one issue of *Attachment & Human Development* which explicitly covers recent research and lays out the challenges for researchers using attachment theory (see 2010 special edition). The most recent research highlights the negative impact on children being separated from their mothers and, to a lesser degree, the impact of separation on the mothers themselves.

The prevailing view about separating babies from their mothers in prison in the first two years is that the child will be more likely to develop problematically or develop a psychopathological trait (see e.g. Wooldredge & Masters, 1993). Most research continues to focus on the impact on children and the likelihood that they will develop insecure attachment as a result of their mother's incarceration (Sleed, Baradon & Fonagy, 2013), due to specific parenting traits associated with imprisonment (Hutchinson et al, 2008).

There has been some suggestion, however, that the 'entire network of attachment relationships for children whose parents are in prison' should be explored (Bretherton, 2010, p.426). Murray and Murray (2010) highlight the

'multiple possible mechanisms' (p.289) for child psychopathology, including 'unstable caregiving situations' (p.292) outside the prison, which affect child attachment security. Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010) do indeed find that children are more likely to be secure with stable caregiving outside prison which suggests separation from their mothers is not necessarily the primary factor, in accordance with Rutter (1981). Byrne, Goshin & Joestl (2010), through a study on the impact of a prison nursery, showed that mothers assessed as insecure can raise securely attached infants. Therefore, in terms of the impact on the child, it is clear that mother-child attachment is not the only or even the most important factor.

In terms of theoretical work, there are occasional mentions of the children of prisoners. Alexander (2015) makes attachment-informed suggestions for contact visits and parenting programmes in prisons. Crittenden (2008) emphasises the risks of separating children from their caregivers because of the long-term implications of foster care and repeated changes of home. In terms of the impact on children, although the theory underlying the policy emphasises that separation from mother is detrimental and harmful to the child, it is clear that the situation is more complex and related to the outside situation as well. Despite this there is a clear focus on mother-child dyad in terms of policy (such as MBUs and moves towards adoption).

There is even less research on the effect of separation on the mother and on the whole it is just referred to in passing. Byrne et al. (2010), in reference to Greene, Haney and Hurtado (2000), state that: 'Imprisoned mothers report that separation from children of any age was the most traumatic aspect of incarceration.' (p.376). Bortner (2002) develops this further by reporting that mothers in prison are more likely to be insecurely attached than mothers in the community and this is related to their ability to cope with separation and their presentation of depression. Borelli, Goshin, Joestl, Clark and Byrne, (2010) draw out the relationship between attachment and previous histories of abuse

for women in prison and the impact this can have. They found higher levels of insecure attachment in incarcerated women and an increased likelihood of depression.

Despite these findings there is a lack of empirical research on what might be most useful to support women in this situation and no in-depth research exploring the experiences of women who have been separated from their children. The focus seems rather to be on pathology via mental health diagnosis (see for example Birmingham et al., 2006). Based in the US, Arditti (2012) is unusual in focusing on the impact of separation on everyone involved and highlights the distress of imprisoned parents and its impact on their parenting. She explicitly draws on an ecological perspective to understand the effect of imprisonment on parenting and synthesises a broad range of empirical research to make policy and practice recommendations. Arditti refers to 'ambiguous loss' as contributing to distress (Arditti, 2012), which is a development of Bowlby's original theorising around the impact of loss of children on parents (Bowlby, 1980). However, apart from one brief reference to the 'parent-child bond' (p.110), Arditti's only use of attachment theory is this concept of 'ambiguous loss'.

Adshead has written about the interaction of prisoners' attachment status and the prison environment. She states that prisoners' higher than average 'abnormal' attachments will be activated in secure institutions due to the combination of their early experiences, the stress of admission, lack of containment in institutions, the impact of abuse and violence in prisons and abrupt changes of staff (Adshead, 2004). It seems clear that separation from children could be added to this list. For Adshead, it is not possible to infer risk from the prisoners' generally insecure attachment styles, but the combination with the hostile environment creates a far riskier situation (Adshead, 2004). This can be used to provide an attachment theory perspective on women's suffering in prison, including mothers separated from their children.

There is one notable exception. US-based Schen (2005) reviews the maternal separation literature from an attachment theory perspective. She begins by considering the literature, which considers separation under normal circumstances and its associations with anxiety and depression. Schen (2005) suggests 'separation may change the mother's experience of her child' (p.234) and she compares Bowlby's descriptions of infant responses to separation to mothers' behaviours in the face of separation from child. Following the theoretical overview, Schen (2005) reviews the mother-child separation literature in different populations of vulnerable mothers: those separated due to mental health diagnoses, homelessness, social services and imprisonment. The similarities between these mothers are pointed out and she reflects on the emotional factors in complex grief. This review paper, with clinical vignettes, appears to be the only work which focuses on mother-child imprisonment separations using attachment theory to explain the impact on mothers. Thus, research is patchy and incomplete and the over focus on the mother-child dyad, to the exclusion of the mother's experiences, overlooks the impact of the wider environment.

1.4 Critical approaches to attachment theory

Whilst some of the debates have been highlighted above, this section will give an overview of some of the main critiques of attachment theory by attachment researchers before going into detail about the approaches which have been drawn on in this research. Several researchers draw attention to a problem with the word 'attachment' itself and how it has been misused and overgeneralised (Ross, 2004; Waters & McIntosh, 2011). It has been argued that the idea of strength of attachment is a fallacy (Waters & McIntosh, 2011), and that the predictive power of attachment has been overstated (Meins, 2017), given that later functioning is not solely a result of early mother-parent attachments (Lamb, 2005). Meins (2014) states that the focus on attachment has been misplaced and it should be on parenting. Related to this Follan and Minnis (2009) claim that the over focus on the impact of early separation in attachment research has

obscured the impact of maltreatment of children, which is more important. Rutter (2014) highlights many of the key issues which remain unknown and had previously questioned the assumptions made across categories and called for more subtlety in research (Rutter, Kreppner & Sonuga-Barke, 2009). Rutter et al. (2009) argue that the focus on security versus insecurity is reductive; this is developed by Ein-Dor, Mikulincer, Doron and Shaver (2010) who state that, given the high frequency of insecure attachment, there may be an evolutionary advantage to having diverse attachment styles.

Keller (2008) depicts attachment as a 'closed system' which means there has been very little change or development in the theory. Indeed, LeVine and Norman (2008) describe attachment theory as part of cultural shift away from a medicalised view of childcare. There has been, they argue, a move towards mental health as the aim of parenting within an ideology of care which shrouds moral reform in science (LeVine & Norman, 2008). Their criticism centres on the use of judgements in words like 'security' and 'sensitivity' which they argue are merely normative assumptions reflecting the ideals of middle-class Anglo-American culture at a particular juncture in time rather than the broader range of healthy developmental pathways (LeVine & Norman, 2008). Even a brief look at the historical literature within Western Europe of childhood reveals the general change in attitudes towards children over time and across class (see for example Clarke, 2004) and the concomitant constructions of children's needs which are so central to practice and policy development (Woodhead, 1997).

For these anthropological psychologists, attachment theory is merely a 'culture-bound theoretical position' (LeVine & Norman, 2008, p.140). They argue that there are multiple norms of development and parents parent differently according to their cultures. It is cultures that determine the differences in responsiveness and distance, not pathology (LeVine & Norman, 2008). In support of this historical and cultural perspective of attachment theory, Richman, Miller and LeVine (1992) argue that maternal responsiveness is

affected by culture and education, rather than individualised personality traits or early history of caregiving. Finally, the anthropologist and primatologist, Hrdy, has written extensively about the critical role of cooperative breeding and allomothers in humans and primates (Hrdy, 2009). This body of work, from an evolutionary and sociobiological perspective adds further weight to the dissenting voices calling for a more complex view of attachment.

The two key aspects to these critiques are the need for a more social approach, which extends beyond the mother-child dyad, and consideration of the cultural specificity of assumptions. This seems very relevant when thinking about mothers in prison given that they are reliant on others for the care of their children and are rarely white, British or American, middle class mothers. The following four approaches go some way in addressing these limitations to mainstream attachment theory. These theories informed both the design and analysis of this research and its findings.

Social approaches

There have been some theoretical developments which have not been cited in the above research, but which go some way in explaining the impact of separation both on mothers and children and address the call for a more social approach to attachment. One explanatory model is Bifulco and Thomas (2013). Whilst research cited is not from a prison sample, the 'high risk' group shares some characteristics with women in prison. There is explanation of how insecure attachment styles relate to stress and coping, including strengths within each style. This develops Borelli et al.'s (2010) work, cited above, on the relationship between abuse and attachment style for imprisoned women to a far greater degree.

Bifulco and Thomas (2013) highlight that: 'expression of attachment style may involve a more dynamic relationship to an adverse social environment than is

generally acknowledged or documented' (p.82), which suggests a move away from a purely internal model of attachment. They note the limitations of previous attachment research which ignores parental motivation and the impact of the wider family network. This echoes concerns previously pointed out about the narrow focus of attachment theory and research.

This theory fills in the gaps highlighted in the research in regard to mothers' reactions to separations, their ability to cope and access social support. Another complementary, but somewhat different approach, is social network theory. This explicitly deals with the perceived over focus in classical attachment theory on monotropy (the exclusive mother-child relationship) (e.g. Lewis, 2005; Ijzendoorn, 2005). Lamb (2005) explains that infants grow up in social groups far beyond the mother-infant dyad, and that early experiences have been over-emphasised at the expense of the impact that experiences later in childhood can have on attachment. Lewis (2012) develops this further and points out that there has been a focus on dyads because they are easier to measure. He particularly highlights the 'extradyadic social influences' which relate to isolation and integration.

Lewis (2012) explains that emotional intensity decreases with group size and that multiple caregivers mean a child will be less dependent on any single person. This would have implications for attachment status as perhaps 'secure' status relates to a specific model of parenting which involves an intense one-to-one focus by the mother. Riggs and Gottlieb (2009) note that children with closer support from several caregivers are, in fact, better adjusted and this wider attachment network fosters increased security during difficult periods. The implications of this monotropic versus polytropic debate are vast given the possible policy responses each position would take.

Furthermore, Lewis (2012) adds: 'The effect of social class on self-concept and perceived powerfulness would seem to be relevant to parent-infant interaction' (p.109). Whilst he does not develop this further, this does suggest that parent-infant interactions (and attachment status) might reflect structural inequality, and does raise the question as to whether attachment status is in fact pathologising and individualising social differences. This echoes the concerns of the anthropologists cited above.

Social network theory is useful in that it broadens the focus from the dyad to the wider group. However, it is somewhat tentative and, whilst it makes some passing reference to 'culture' and 'social class', these are not developed. For these to be considered more fully we move to feminist critiques of attachment theory and cultural psychology research.

Feminist and cultural psychology critiques

There is no recent, extended consideration of the cultural or historical specificity of ideas in the mainstream literature surrounding attachment in the UK (for a US example see Vicedo, 2013; Vicedo, 2017), despite the fact that it is implicitly used to decide whether mothers should be able to keep their children in prison (see PSO 4800). Burman (2008) provides an overview of attachment and how it reflects a prevailing political ideology and discourse surrounding mothering. More detailed critiques of attachment from a feminist perspective include the criticism that it decontextualises women's experiences from their 'historical and cultural circumstance' (Cleary, 1999, p.32) and has emerged from a discourse that essentialises women's roles (Franzblau, 1999). The reduction of attachment to a feature of individuals ignores social stressors and the environmental impact, and the fact that it is a function of relationships (Bliwise, 1999).

It is the over focus on the mother as solely responsible for a child's wellbeing and a belief in 'intensive parenting' which penalise women who have a network

of care; this often applies to women in prison (Granja, Cunha & Machado, 2015). As Barlow (2004) points out: 'critiques from within Western cultures point to variations in mothering related to race, class, and ethnicity that necessitate revising understandings about mothering' (p.516), which suggests that diverse ways of mothering may be pathologised and labelled as 'insecure' if they do not conform to expectations. This is explored in Jensen (2010) who looked at the category of 'warmth' and found that over 50% of parents did not fit into any classification.

Seymour (2004) highlights that shared childcare may in fact be more prevalent (which is very much in line with Hrdy's work, discussed above) and underlines that the Bowlby-Ainsworth model 'has no explicit place for cultural variations other than as 'suboptimal', maladaptive, or pathogenic'. Barlow (2004) extends this further by relating the exclusive mother-child relationship and trauma of loss as a Western European 'cultural story' which is not universal.

Bliwise (1999) refers to Collins' (1991) work that elucidates four dimensions on which African Americans differ in their views of parenting from Euro-American views and suggests that 'the lower rates of attachment security frequently observed in studies that sample members of minority ethnic groups may reflect different caregiving structures and cultural values and not insensitive attachment systems' (p.48). Thus, there is a call for 'indigenous perceptions of desirable and undesirable attachment behaviors' (Weisner, 2005, p.89) in a more anthropological fashion given that 'secure' attachment holds cultural assumptions. This seems extremely pertinent when the profile of women in prisons is considered as they comprise a disproportionate number of economically deprived, BME and foreign nationals (Prison Reform Trust, 2017b).

One area of research in psychology has explored these differences in more depth and that is cross-cultural psychology. Although, as in anthropology there is a risk of colonising experience and the difficulty of representing the 'other' needs to be continually assessed, one researcher has carried out empirical research which highlights many of the questions raised above. Although she is not researching from an explicitly feminist standpoint, I hope to show how she addresses many of the concerns of feminist critics.

Keller (2013) stresses that 'it is first important to define attachment from within cultural points of view' (p.187) because this then will 'pave the way for improvement of clinical and educational programs as defined by the needs of the people.' (p.187). Keller's research accentuates the differing conceptions of the self and how this relates to parenting and attachment (Keller, 2002). Her cross-cultural research has particularly focused on communities that differ in terms of their conceptions of relatedness and agency (rural and urban, Western and Global South) and how this relates to attachment (Keller, 2003; Keller & Otto, 2009). She has detailed four different parenting systems that are emphasised differently amongst different cultural groups (Keller, 2000).

Keller has highlighted that there is individual variation, so group membership is not the only explanation for parenting and attachment behaviours (Keller et al., 2006), and that historical variation plays a large part in differences within cultures (Keller, Borke, Yovsi, Lohaus, & Jensen, 2005). She underlines the vast diversity of parenting ethnotheories (Keller et al., 2004). Two recent publications review the key and most up-to-date literature on cultural conceptions of attachment, including empirical research and theoretical papers. The call from both publications is for a move towards a more ecological and contextualised understanding of attachment which does not pathologise much of the world's parenting (Quinn & Mageo, 2013; Otto & Keller, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a contextual overview of the situation of women in prison today. It is clear that sentencing practices directly affect the number of women and children who are separated by imprisonment. Given that most of these women will not gain a place on an MBU it is concerning that we know so little about the impact of separation on mothers and children. Attachment theory provides a framework through which to consider this experience, although as demonstrated by the literature the details have been debated and disputed throughout its history.

The relationship between theory and policy is complex – not least because practitioners' interpretations and contexts vary in their implementation and understanding. Attachment theory is a particularly significant theory because it permeates so much of our everyday language and understanding of parenting. If attempts are to be made to support women both in prison and with reunification with their children, we need to understand how they experience the current context of separation. Likewise, staff perspectives of working with separated women and their practices based on attachment theory need to be explored. The following chapter will consider in further detail how this research was conceptualised and developed.

2 METHODOLOGY

There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.

(Arundhati Roy, 2004, para.4)

This chapter considers the design and challenges of carrying out research in a prison context. It begins with the overall aim and then discusses the critical realist approach used and the related ethical considerations. Following this, recruitment and access to participants are discussed before an examination of the various methods and analytic procedures used in the research.

The overall aim of this research was to consider the experience and impact of separation from infants on imprisoned mothers. Given the 'invisibility of women in prison who are separated from their babies' (Albertson, O'Keeffe, Lessing-Turner, Burke & Renfrew, 2012, p.18), and that the only research which explores this is not UK-based (e.g. Chambers, 2009), it seems important to begin with a qualitative exploration of how mothers cope with separation and how staff experience supporting women in this situation.

In view of the paucity of literature, it was most relevant to take an exploratory approach which integrated a range of perspectives, including those of formerly imprisoned mothers, prison staff, relevant academics and practitioners and related documentation. Given the use of attachment theory in Mother and Baby Unit policy (PSI 49/2014) as justification for not separating mothers in some circumstances, and the use of this psychological theory more broadly in education and social care, this was an opportunity to reflect critically on the use of attachment theory in prison policy and practice. Taking a multi-perspective view enabled consideration of current policy and practice in the women's prison estate from both a practical and theoretical stance.

The project aimed to:

- a) Explore how mothers in prison coped with separation from their infants and how they can be best supported.
- b) Explore the views and experiences of prison staff working with female prisoners separated from their infants and how they can be best supported.
- c) Explore prison and third sector documents relevant to mothers separated from their babies in prison. Identify how they support or conflict with the experiences of prisoners and staff and what their underlying assumptions of attachment theory are.
- d) Investigate the views of attachment academics and practitioners on current prison policy and practice.
- e) Make relevant and actionable recommendations.

The aims were ordered in this way to highlight the importance of the mothers' views – without understanding their perspective, it is not possible to provide meaningful support. The research, however, was not carried out in this order and aims c) and d) are presented in Chapter 3 because the findings from this study fed into the development of the interview schedules for the following two studies.

2.1 The approach

Given the intended aim to explore policy, practice, theory and lived experience, critical realism offers the most compelling approach (Bhaskar, 1989; Willig, 1999). Critical realist research tends to be exploratory, rather than theory testing, and is focused on explanation (Edwards, O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). Given that the focus of this research is understanding the support needs of women in prison and staff, and the interrelation with policy and theory, exploratory research seemed more appropriate than to take a positivist orientation and to measure or test. I will begin by discussing the epistemological and ontological context to this research and then move on to considerations of reflexivity and ethics.

This research is grounded in a belief that there are multiple accounts of any event or situation and, whilst in society some may be afforded more importance or weight, it is hoped that this will not be unthinkingly reproduced in this project. The idea of diverse types of expertise, for example 'experts by experience' and 'experts by profession,' is a direct influence from my work for the Hearing Voices Network and the related user/survivor research challenges to psychological research (e.g. Sweeney, Beresford, Faulkner, Nettle & Rose, 2009). Whilst I do not share the lived experience of imprisonment and separation from a child, I hope to keep the ethical and epistemological critiques of these perspectives in mind throughout the research.

Critical realism

In line with social constructivism, critical realist research takes 'a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and understands knowledge as socio-historically specific and produced through social processes' (Sims-Schouten & Riley, 2014, p.47). It casts a critical eye on claims of 'truth' and 'objectivity' (Edwards et al., 2014). This has enabled me to be influenced by Foucault (1975/1991) and Rose (1985; 1998; 1999), even if I did not explicitly draw on them in the analyses. However, whilst epistemologically similar to social

constructivism, critical realism is nevertheless a weak form with an emphasis on ontology (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2014).

The ontological emphasis – that reality exists independently of people’s language and perceptions – was the key reason for moving away from social constructivism. As Sims-Schouten and Riley (2014) explain, a critical realist perspective acknowledges that ‘people’s actions will be influenced by personal and societal mechanisms that are independent of their thoughts or impressions’ (p.47). This is an acceptance of the materiality of lives, i.e. the extra discursive. Nightingale and Cromby (1999) in their critique of social constructionism highlight that not everything should be reduced to discourse. More recently Pilgrim (2017) in his work on child sexual abuse (CSA) makes the dangers of a purely discursive approach very clear. As he points out, an extreme relativist position disregards survivor accounts, ‘can be an impediment to social justice’ (p.11) and finally ‘can be a coded way of trivialising the serious public policy challenge of CSA’ (p.10).

This seems extremely pertinent when considering the needs of women who have often suffered extensive trauma and abuse and have been imprisoned. Reducing their accounts, and the accounts of those who work with them, to discourse would not enable any critical reflection on the structures that affect the women’s lives nor enable any possibility of practical recommendations.

There are critiques of the vagueness of ‘materiality’ (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995), however these have since been thoroughly theorised (Sims-Schouten, Riley & Willig, 2007) and it is important to note that ‘material practices are given an ontological status that is independent of, but relates to, discursive practices’ (p.102). This emphasis on a relationship with discursive practices enables a more complex and nuanced view of possible constraints on people’s accounts. Factors from their own research analysing women’s talk on

motherhood refer to 'access to amenities' (p.103) and 'current government policy' (p.103) both of which seem relevant to imprisoned mothers (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007). Indeed, they go on to say the following about policy and theory:

Whilst policies and psychological theory can be theorised as social constructions, the institutions that shape and form them, and the economic interests and necessities which uphold these institutions, hold extra discursive power (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007, p.106).

Any consideration of prison policy and the role of attachment theory in prisons needs to bear this in mind. Reducing policy and theory to constructions potentially ignores and hides the harm they can cause. Thus, there is a place in critical realism for the 'extra-discursive' impact of prison, poverty and social characters of women in prison (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007) and for the non-reduction of lived experience as 'purely rhetorical' (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007, p.104).

Arguably, it is this emphasis on multiple determinations and complexity (Bhaskar, 1978) and the practical implications of critical realism (Edwards et al., 2014) that make it the most useful approach. This applies both to translating research to practice and to stakeholder acceptability (for example, NOMS, prison and third sector staff). Critical realism offers scope to make clear, practical practice suggestions (Willig, 1999), and to remain comprehensible to those coming from a potentially more positivist standpoint (i.e. the Prison Service).

There is a wide array of literature that promotes a critical realist approach for practice-based research: nursing (McEvoy & Richards, 2003); social work (Houston, 2001); criminology (Renzetti, 2016); mental health (Rogers & Pilgrim, 2014); homelessness (Fitzpatrick, 2005); and education (Scott, 2005). The scope of this research demonstrates the diversity of methods, rather than a

single allegiance, which is a key part of a critical realist approach (Ackroyd & Karlsson, 2014). It enables analysis at multiple levels (Sims-Schouten et al, 2007) and theoretical pluralism (Edwards et al., 2014). This means that the methods can fit the questions and the context, rather than forcing research questions into a preferred method.

Furthermore, there is the possibility of an explicitly gendered and feminist approach to research from a critical realist perspective (c.f. Ussher, 2010; New, 2003). Social constructionism – outside the realm of critical realism – has been critiqued for overlooking gender (Clegg, 2006). This is crucial given the gendered experience of separation from children (Nazroo, Edwards & Brown, 1998), which is being explored in this research and the centrality of gender that the prison policy acknowledges (PSO 4800). This is reflected in a growing body of relevant gendered critical criminology work (for example, Renzetti, 2016; DeKeseredy, 2010) which draws attention to the use of critical realism for linking theory, policy and practice.

Ethics and reflexivity

A key element in critical realist research is reflexivity. This applies both to models and concepts, no matter how mainstream and accepted, but also to personal biases and assumptions (Edwards et al., 2014). This is in line with feminist thinking about research (e.g. Wilkinson, 1988) and qualitative psychology (Parker, 2005). 'Attending to the institutional location of historical and personal aspects of the research relationship' (Parker, 2005, p.25) means not ignoring the role of the researcher in eliciting accounts from participants, which seems particularly important given the sensitive subject matter and the range of participants.

Reflexivity forms part of critical realist research and relates to taking an ethical position (Parker, 2011). For Parker (2011) ethics is about using 'I' to take

responsibility for how the researcher represents others. This occurs from the design through to carrying out interviews where each decision to empathise, validate or disagree is an ethical stance (Parker, 2011). Berger (2015) develops this further in discussing the advantages and disadvantages of sharing experience with participants in research and most importantly 'embracing humbly the standpoint of the uninformed' (p.13), particularly when interviewing marginalised groups. In addition, Russell and Kelly (2002) point out how researcher beliefs and values affect the process – another facet to recognising the institutional aspects (Parker, 2004).

So, with these considerations in mind, I do not agree that I can 'give voice' to participants, particularly as I do not share the experiences of imprisonment, motherhood or separation from a child. But I do believe in the value of putting different perspectives on equal platforms, without privileging one form of knowledge or experience over another. I began this research with my own academic interests in attachment theory in addition to front-line experience in the third sector with women released from prison. Facilitating prison antenatal groups throughout the course of this research enabled me to understand more about the prison context and raised many questions for me about staff perceptions of policy and practice. I used this in-prison role to recruit staff and 'ally' myself with them to encourage them to participate. Whilst facilitating the groups I had opportunities for informal conversations with staff to explain my research and I became a recognised face over time. In addition, I was part of an organisation that staff respected and understood, which further motivated them to take part. Thus, even if they did not know me personally, they knew who I was working for and had positive relationships with others from the organisation.

Similarly, when recruiting formerly incarcerated women from community groups, I used my association with these groups as a way of positioning myself as familiar, rather than as an anonymous researcher. In informal conversations,

when participants were deciding whether or not to take part they would often ask about which staff members I knew and what my role was in these groups. So throughout the interviews I often emphasised my identity as a staff member, rather than as a researcher, and I will reflect further on this as appropriate.

In terms of institutional ethics, the research was approved by Middlesex University's Psychology Ethics Committee (see appendices one, two and three), and the NOMS National Research Committee (see appendices four and five). The British Psychological Society (2009) Code of Ethics and Conduct was followed, in addition to The Data Protection Act (1998). NOMS were interested in the application of the research to their policy and business priorities and, as Carlen (1994) warns, this affected my research design as I tried to frame it within NOMS priorities. Whilst I already had an interest in practice-oriented research, negotiating with NOMS certainly kept me on this route and probably away from discursive approaches that I might otherwise have used. Further changes to the research design are detailed in section 2 of this chapter, which discusses access to prisons and participant recruitment.

Research design

This is a mixed methods study incorporating Rapid Evidence Assessments [REA], a survey and semi-structured interviews. However, given the exploratory nature of the questions and the lack of research specifically on the topic of mother-child separations, the design is primarily qualitative. Denscombe (2007) discusses how methods choices tend to be practical rather than philosophical, and that methodological triangulation ensures a more complete picture of the research area. Thus, I have three studies, A, B and C, each exploring a different perspective of mother-child separations in prison, and of these Study A comprises three parts. What follows are the broad details of the research design, including recruitment and analysis, whilst specific study-related details are in the relevant chapters.

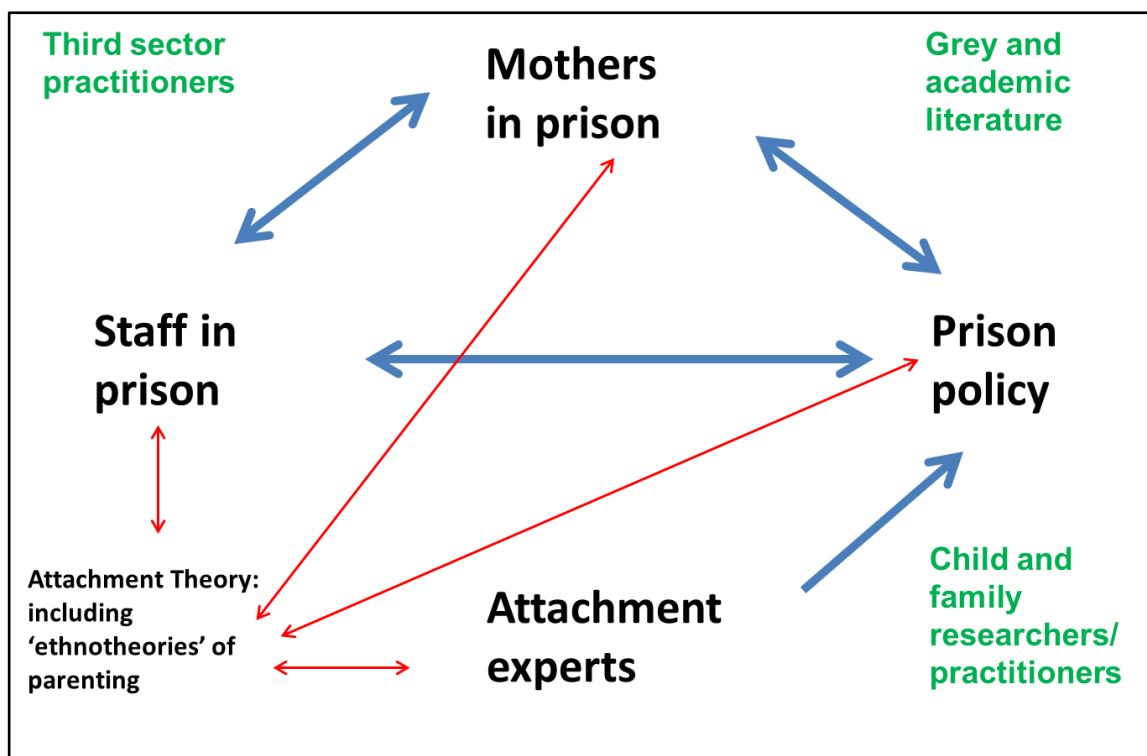
Study A is explicitly an exploration of ‘expertise’ of attachment theory in different forms. It is a multi-methods study, formed by three separate but overlapping parts which have all fed into each other. The first part was a document analysis, exploring a specific corpus of relevant policy and practice literature for its use of attachment theory. A second part was devised, following the first, which involved interviewing a select group of attachment ‘experts’ (i.e. researchers or practitioners who had extensive experience of attachment theory) who commented on current policy and practice from an attachment-informed perspective. The final part comprised a survey which was developed from the interviews and the literature, with a focus on policy and practice, in order to explore the views of a much broader range of researchers and practitioners. This study is the focus of Chapter 3.

Study B explores the experience of mother-child separation from the perspectives of mothers who were separated from their primary-aged child(ren) whilst serving a prison sentence. This study aimed to interview a small group of women who were happy to share their experiences and discuss their ideas for improving support structures for mothers in prison. This study is the focus of Chapter 4.

Study C investigates the views of prison staff who support mothers separated from their children in prison. These interviews explored staff experiences and their suggestions for improving support structures for themselves and mothers in prison. This study is the focus of Chapter 5.

The aim was both to explore these different perspectives and to link them by scrutinising the different uses and understandings of attachment theory and parenting. Figure 2 shows how this relationship between the studies was conceptualised and this analysis is the focus of Chapter 6.

Figure 2 - Relationship of three studies



2.2 Participant access and recruitment

Recruiting participants to qualitative research and considering who takes part in your sample is an 'iterative series of decisions throughout the process of research' (Gutterman, 2015, p.2). This indeed was a key feature of this research and this section will reflect the winding, iterative process – including the ethical, theoretical, pragmatic and bureaucratic forces which shaped it. The notion of 'sampling' is perhaps more closely associated with quantitative research; however, it is still relevant in qualitative research, just approached differently (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Thus, I have described in detail both the recruitment process and the demographics of my samples so they can be compared (non-statistically) to the wider, relevant populations. First, I address recruitment for the expert study (the start of this research project) and then I consider prison and community recruitment separately as the contexts and approaches were so different. For each study I discuss both the sample I intended to recruit (and its justification) and the participants I actually recruited.

Experts and practitioners

Given the paucity of literature, the aim of this study was to gather reflections on current prison policy by attachment 'experts' and practitioners. Expertise was defined as a contribution to the academic or practice literature on attachment theory and a significant amount of time working in this area. There was no requirement for participants to have worked in forensic settings – the focus was on how they would respond to current policy in the light of their expertise in attachment theory. Interviewing and surveying experts is acknowledged as a way of obtaining the most up-to-date view of thinking (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016) inspired by the Delphi Method (Turoff & Linstone, 2002) – an expert consultation process often used in policy formation. A full Delphi Method was not carried out due to the exploratory nature of this research, along with time and resource constraints. The related literature, however, was relevant and has been drawn upon where relevant. The overall design was similar to McGuire and Bond's (2010) expert survey of a model of jail diversion in which three experts reviewed findings and then 55 professionals were surveyed. It drew on the key informant approach, a strength of which is the relatively fast collection of high quality data (Marshall, 1996).

As expert consultation was one of the initial stages of the wider research the target was five participants – enough to represent a spectrum of views, but small enough to enable fast analysis in order to move on to the survey. This was a convenience sample based on the criteria described above and recruited through academic contacts. Most of those contacted by email never replied and the most successful contacts were personal recommendations who then recommended others – also known as 'snowball sampling'.

I approached 13 experts in total, five took part, three seemed initially interested but eventually either decided not to take part or stopped replying to emails. Although not mediated by gatekeepers in the same way as participants in the later studies, this study had by far the highest rate of refusal. Despite this, the

small group of experts who did take part were extremely varied in terms of the experience and attachment theory perspectives. (See Chapter 3, section 2 for further details.) Diversity of experts is highlighted as important when consulting experts for the Delphi approach (Powell, 2003). The expert interviews provided the opportunity to gather in-depth, current views on the policy, whilst the survey enabled a snapshot of current practitioner opinion, targeting a far larger group.

Survey recruitment was aimed at child and family practitioners, so they could comment on prison child separation policy from their professional perspectives. As the survey data was to be used descriptively the sample was non-probability, researcher-influenced and exploratory (Denscombe, 2007). As with the expert study I used snowball recruitment via initial departmental and personal contacts in the field and specifically targeted a broad range of professional groups, including social work, clinical psychology, education, CAMHS, fostering and adoption, and psychotherapy. As the survey was completed, I monitored the professional backgrounds of participants and then targeted missing groups (see Chapter 3, section 3 for details). Overall there were 40 participants, which is on the low end of small-scale surveys (Denscombe, 2007). As with the expert interviews, this was inspired by the Delphi method, however the aim was to seek a snapshot of current practice thinking rather than to achieve a consensus.

As it happened, there was strong agreement across the participants. Whilst there may have been some element of a response bias, in that perhaps only those who felt strongly about mother child separations in prisons took part, some participants stated this was an area they were unfamiliar with in the comments sections. Obviously, the aim is not to generalise from the survey, however it does provide a sense of the views of a range of practitioners who do not work in prisons but work with mothers and children in other settings. The rationale for this relates to the overall study aim of understanding how attachment theory is used and understood in practice, and I was interested in

seeing how other attachment-influenced practitioners might understand the current situation in prisons.

The prison estate

My aim was to recruit staff and prisoners from three different prisons (out of the 12 women's prisons in England) across England, one each from the North, the Midlands and the South. This was to ensure that the findings reflected more than the particularities of a single setting (along the lines of a case study) and would enable access to different staff groups as each prison is run differently, with a varying prisoner population given its geographical location. Prior to applying to NOMS I gained consent from four women's prisons in support of the research. This, however, was a lengthy and challenging process for which I was reliant on contacts working with or within these prisons.

NOMS approved the staff study (with minor changes) and rejected the prisoner study because they felt it would be too upsetting for prisoners and there was already sufficient evidence on the impact on women. (Although I asked for the evidence, no one was able to provide this.) In the light of this I decided to recruit women from the community (for details see below) and to focus solely on staff recruitment from the prisons. Following NOMS approval, I had to re-approach the prisons for them to formally agree to take part and make arrangements for me to carry out the interviews. This process took a further eight months because there had been so many staff changes in the interim and the announcement of the closure of one of the prisons. Thus, I ended up with two prison sites after nearly two years of negotiation. These are described in Chapter 5, section 2.

The primary challenge of recruiting staff in prisons is the difficulty in finding names and contact details of relevant staff. As a result of this I was completely reliant on a key contact in each prison to make the initial arrangements for the interviews. My inclusion category was any staff member who had in any

capacity supported women separated from their children under two years of age. I aimed to recruit staff from across the following staff groups that I had identified as relevant from informal, preliminary discussions with prison staff: prison officers, healthcare, chaplaincy, psychology/mental health, offender management and relevant third sector organisations. This was to be a maximum variation purposive sample (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), mediated by relevant in-prison gatekeepers given the security restrictions of research in prison. I aimed to recruit five to eight staff from each prison, which would enable enough data to explore a range of viewpoints but would not be too disruptive to the prison regime.

In reality, the recruitment process was entirely opportunistic. I was able to organise a few interviews in advance of the days I was allocated for interviewing, but most were arranged on the day depending on which staff were available and willing. For staff who were not available I offered them the opportunity to take part by email. The details of staff participants are in Chapter 5, section 2. Despite only recruiting staff from two prisons, the workers based in prisons and in the community had in fact worked across nine of the twelve women's prisons during their careers. Third sector staff in particular were often based in more than one prison simultaneously, whilst staff who had worked for many years in the prison sector had often worked in more than one prison in both the male and female estates. Whilst not making any claims to generalisability, it is clear that the findings will to some extent reflect people's views of the women's estate overall, rather than only the two prisons which took part.

Community recruitment

My initial intention was to recruit staff and prisoners solely through prisons. However, as I familiarised myself with both the literature and the prison funding context I realised that support for separated mothers in prison was offered by a range of organisations. As the delays in gaining prison approval became more apparent I decided to carry out a separate study of staff working in third sector

organisations based in the community which support mothers separated from their children in prison. My recruitment criteria were the same as for the prison staff and I was aiming to capture the views of a range of staff from different organisations.

I began recruitment, initially through the two organisations in which I was based. I contacted the major charities involved in supporting mothers in prison. These were organisations which featured regularly in the grey literature or which I had come across through my work or informal conversations. Many charities responded with initial enthusiasm, but staff then did not respond to the invitation to take part. However, given that so many third sector organisations are funded to work directly in prisons I interviewed a range of third sector staff through the in-prison interviews. As it became increasingly clear that the boundaries between organisations working inside and outside prisons were very blurred, I decided to analyse all the staff interviews together in one study. In total, I interviewed staff from a total of eight different organisations working in various parts of the country. In order to preserve the anonymity of these organisations, they will not be described, however general descriptions and staff roles are depicted in Chapter 5, section 2.

When NOMS refused permission to recruit women with lived experience through prisons I decided to recruit women in the community who had previously been incarcerated and separated from their young children. I recruited through the two organisations in which I was based. Attempts to recruit through other agencies were unsuccessful. I did ensure, however, that I only recruited women who were not attending any groups that I was facilitating. Whilst more difficult to recruit women in the community than in prison, I did feel that ethically this was more appropriate as women were consenting to take part whilst in the community, rather than in prison. When women are imprisoned and potentially very distressed by separation, it is not clear the extent to which they can fully consent to take part in research. Women may take part in research

whilst incarcerated that they would not otherwise choose to because of the coercive nature of the prison environment. Thus, participating in research might be inappropriately and unethically incentivised, for example by the opportunity to leave their cell and be listened to when there are limited services available. (For a history of unethical research practices with prisoners and current debates on ethical practices see Cowburn, Gelsthorpe and Wahidin, 2017). Furthermore, women released from prison are more likely to have been reunited with their children by this point and living under less stressful circumstances, reducing any pressure to take part.

Given the challenges of recruiting women from this group and that these women tend to face more difficulties on release than those who had places on MBUs (Dolan et al., 2013), the only sampling criterion was women who had been separated from their children under two. As it became clear that even this was too restrictive, I asked gatekeepers to consider any women who had been separated from her child or children who were primary-school aged. This increased the number of interviewees. Originally, building on Foley and Papadopoulos' (2013) work, I had hoped to explore in detail whether foreign national mothers or Black, Asian or ethnic minority mothers had additional support needs. However, as I could only recruit a small number of women from the community I did not feel I could focus on this as a main topic. I have, however, mentioned participants' comments in Chapter 4 and incorporated brief suggestions for supporting foreign national women in Chapter 7, section 3.

I acknowledge that recruiting through two support organisations means I will have excluded women who have not engaged with any services on release and are possibly more vulnerable. Nevertheless, to recruit any women at all I needed to build on the rapport already established with these trusted support organisations (Abrams, 2010). However, despite being a small group recruited from only two organisations, the women I interviewed had served sentences in four different prisons and their sentences ranged from nine months to seven years. I would argue that, whilst small, this sample is adequately sized (O'Reilly

& Parker, 2013) to reflect a range of experiences in the prison system. See Chapter 4, section 3 for details.

2.3 Methods and materials

I used three data collection methods which are described below. As interview studies formed a greater part of the research they are discussed in greater detail.

Document analysis

Document analysis is a feature of mixed-methods research (Bowen, 2009). It is often used for policy research (e.g. Wach & Ward, 2013) and is considered useful because the objects of research are stable and unchanging (Bowen, 2009), and researchers can access a large amount of written material. The findings can be used to triangulate other methods – a key consideration for credibility in qualitative research (Eisner, 1991; Patton, 1990).

I carried out three documentary analysis studies, which are presented in Chapter 3. The aim was to consider the recent UK context since The Corston Report and to understand the varied perspectives in the different disciplinary and sector literatures. I began with policy and government publications to set the current context for prisons and then analysed academic literature and the grey literature as separate corpuses. It was important to include the grey literature as I had a focus on practice and the role of the third sector. Following the principles of REAs (for government guidelines see National Archives, 2014), I used a transparent search procedure and then carried out a first stage content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Since I was considering concepts of 'attachment' and 'separation', rather than evidence per se, I searched with key words determined by the research questions. Thus, I carried out a deductive a priori analysis (Crabtree and Miller, 1999) because I was aiming to understand definitions and differences in definitions about attachment and separation. In

addition, I reported frequencies because the search was systematic, so my sample could be seen as representative (within limitations, particularly in terms of the grey literature).

For the second stage I carried out a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using both content and thematic analysis is a recognised approach in document analysis as a way of exploring texts at different levels (O'Leary, 2004). In many ways the thematic analysis was similar to that of interview transcripts (Bowen, 2009) but in this case I was in fact analysing fragments of text because attachment and separation were such minor topics within all of the documents. This analysis provided the context for and development of questions for both the survey and the interviews. Whilst an accepted limitation of document analysis is the extent to which policy documents can reveal practice (Wach & Ward, 2013), it was extremely useful for understanding differences between policy as written and how it is interpreted in prison contexts.

Web-based questionnaire

A survey is simply a 'method of gathering information from a sample of individuals' (Scheuren, 2004, p. 9). However, it is a vast field of debate (see for example de Leeuw et al, 2008). Despite these debates it seemed an appropriate approach to understand the extent to which practitioners working with families agreed or disagreed with current policy. The strengths of surveys lie in their potential for descriptiveness and that a large amount of data can be collected in a short amount of time; although this is counterbalanced by a lack of depth and generally a poor response rate (Kelley, Clark, Brown & Sitzia, 2003). My aim was to gather a broad range of views in a short space of time, in far less depth than an interview, so I chose a web-based questionnaire as a straightforward way of accessing a group of professionals. (The participants, procedure and findings are discussed in Chapter 3, section 3).

As Denscombe (2007) points out, response rates increase with personalised messages, so I started with my own networks and encouraged snowball recruitment in an attempt to reach as many people as possible. The content included a brief demographics section to understand the extent of participants' experience and their professional sector. The questions then focused on key aspects of current separation practice in prisons. I used a combination of Likert items and free text, so participants could explain their responses where necessary, but it was easy to compare responses across the group in percentages and bar charts. I was sensitive to the problem of bias so ensured I used neutral wording in descriptive statements with which participants could agree or disagree. The questionnaire was piloted by two participants who fed back on clarity and ease of use. The lack of strategic sampling means the findings cannot be generalised statistically. They do however provide a snapshot of a range of experience practitioners on a rarely discussed aspect of prison policy.

Interviews

Interviews enable researchers to find out what people 'feel and think about their worlds' (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.1). They can be described as 'an interchange of views between two persons' (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p.2) and form the core of much qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews allow for the flexibility for participants to influence the process more (Edwards & Holland, 2013) so that interviewees have some control over the topics (Patton, 2002). This seemed particularly important for a sensitive subject such as separation. Further strengths of interviews include the possibility of exploring subjects in depth and the possibility for researchers to discover that which cannot be observed, i.e. perceptions, understandings and meanings that participants make of the topic (Patton, 2002). I used semi-structured interviews in diverse ways across the three studies. The interviews in Study A (Chapter 3, section 2) with attachment experts were very focused and participants had little opportunity to move away from the topic. The interviews with mothers in Study B (Chapter 4) were the most flexible as I wanted to understand the impact and experience of separation from each individual perspective. Finally, Study C

(Chapter 5) with prison staff was somewhere in between but the limitations were more external in that participants were often restricted by time as interviews took place during their work shifts.

This possibility of using interviews differently with different groups of participants is a strength of semi-structured interviews (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The interviews were not so varied that I could not analyse across all of them in terms of commonalities and differences (Gillham, 2005). In addition, using semi-structured interviews meant I could be flexible; whilst most were face to face, several were carried out by phone and a few by email, according to participant preferences. There was one joint interview by two members of staff who did not want to be interviewed separately.

2.4 Further considerations about interviewing

Whilst there are many strengths, semi-structured interviews are not without their weaknesses. These will be considered in greater detail, followed by the design and procedure used in this research.

Power and emotion

Edwards & Holland (2013) focus on power and emotion as potentially problematic. In terms of power, my relationships with participants varied depending on the study and it is important to consider how these might have affected the interviews. In Study A, I was clearly a 'student' deferring to 'experts', and this possibly could have affected the extent to which they were happy to be open about their views or even engage more theoretically in the interviews. In Study C, I relied on shared knowledge and experience to build rapport with prison staff and I deferred to their experience. A couple of participants, however, expressed anxiety about taking part, which perhaps reflected their feelings of 'being researched' and being the interviewee rather than the interviewer.

Finally, for Study B, I was most concerned about the possible power imbalances with the mothers who had experienced child separation in prison. Aware of critiques around knowledge production, particularly from a service user perspective (Sweeney et al., 2009), I wanted to ensure that participants felt able to discuss what was most important to them as openly as possible. I presented myself as somebody who wanted to learn from them and invited feedback at the end of the interviews. However, it seemed more was revealed about the interviewer-interviewee relationship throughout the course of the interviews and in our informal chats before and after the interviews. Some participants commented on my 'whiteness' and asked whether I had children (which I answered). Discussing skin colour was often a precursor to talking about racism in the criminal justice system and pointing out differences between us was perhaps an attempt to show that I could not fully understand their experiences of discrimination in prison. Further references to our differences included participants who highlighted that they preferred groups or interventions which were led by facilitators who 'had lived it' because they understood far better than those who had 'learned it from books'. I take it as hopeful that participants were able to point out our differences and the extent to which I might not understand their experiences. Burman et al. (1996) discuss the importance of acknowledging institutional power in interviews and difference from interviewees. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this study may have produced different findings had it been conducted by a woman with lived experience of incarceration and separation from her child.

In terms of the 'emotion work' of interviewing (Edwards & Holland, 2013), studies B and C were both at times emotional. Women's stories in Study B were often harrowing and in Study C some staff were emotional about their work (because of the upsetting nature of what they had heard). A couple of staff were extremely anxious about the interview process, whilst some were particularly concerned about anonymity and what could and could not be referred to. This aspect of interviewing often makes them draining, but also relies on a degree of improvisation during the process (Wengraf, 2004). This was particularly

challenging during the prison staff interviews as I had to carry out up to eight in one day given staff timetables. I hope that clarity and transparency around the analytic process and reflection throughout the analysis has enabled any blind spots or omissions to be more obvious.

In many ways the impact of emotions on the researcher is supported through operationalisation of a sensitivity protocol (see appendix 16). However, using semi-structured interviews enabled me to remain sensitive to staff and women's context and current situation. If participants wanted to steer the interview away from a difficult topic, this was possible. The design of the interview schedules took into account the potentially distressing nature of some of the questions. It is to the design of the individual studies to which I will now turn.

Design

Study A: The methods for the literature reviews are discussed in Chapter 3, section 1 and the findings from these formed the basis for both the expert interviews and the practitioner survey. I designed an interview schedule (see appendix 9) based on the findings of the three REAs, general literature and my work with pregnant mothers in prison. The aim was for the participants to comment on aspects of current practice in prisons from their specific attachment perspective. In addition, I incorporated questions about the impact of separation, the potential use of attachment theory in informing support and policy issues such as 'best age of separation'. The focus on 'best age' came from conversations with staff at NOMS who highlighted this as a policy priority, and the grey and policy literature that centred on this notion. I included a handout (see appendix 9) to show the possible trajectories mothers might go through in the prison system so that those participants not based in the prison system would easily be able to understand the current situation for women. As I wanted to directly compare perspectives between participants, I tried to ensure I covered all the questions in a similar a manner as possible.

Study B: Separation is undeniably a painful experience and I aimed in these interviews to focus on how mothers had come through the experience and whether they had encountered any support in prison. This focus meant they did not necessarily have to talk in depth about the experience of separation itself if they did not want to. I began with some contextual details about the age of their child and then moved to how they coped, how (and whether) they were supported, general thoughts about parenting and finally how they would improve support structures in prison for mothers (see appendix 11). Focusing on what worked and what did not kept the conversation practical and meant participants could draw on their experiences to make suggestions for improving services without necessarily discussing their experiences. At the end women had a chance to give feedback on the process and some said it was a relief to have the opportunity to talk. This interview was piloted with a colleague with personal experience of incarceration who suggested ways to clarify wording and to ensure questions were asked as sensitively as possible.

Study C: This followed a similar structure to the previous study (see appendix 12 for interview schedule). I began by asking staff about their experiences of supporting separated mothers and then moved to how much support they had particularly around separation. I subsequently asked about what additional support or training they would find useful. Next, I then asked them about their thoughts around parenting and MBUs, and then ended by asking about support in general and how they would improve support structures in prison for mothers. As with Study B, I piloted this interview with the same colleague. The intention behind focusing on staff support needs was both to explore an under-researched area and to ensure that staff did not experience the interview as critical of their practice, but more along the lines of appreciative inquiry (Liebling, Price & Elliot, 1999).

Procedure

Interview procedures were similar for all groups of participants. Each interviewee was interviewed in a private room either at their place of work or in a community setting such as a public library. Some participants chose to take part over the phone or by email. Interviews were recorded and lasted between 15 minutes and 73 minutes (average time = 45 minutes). At the beginning of each interview I explained the study aims, limits to confidentiality and data protection. Between us we agreed the length of the interview. I emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary, and they could end the interview at any point before they were given a consent form to sign (see appendices 6, 7 and 8). For staff members and women recruited through community organisations I highlighted that I was entirely separate from the organisation or prison and would only feedback general overall findings, and nothing that would identify individuals.

At the end of each interview, participants were given an opportunity to reflect on the process and feedback to me before I ended the recording. I then provided them with a debrief which included details for support for participants in studies B and C where the content was more sensitive [see appendices 14, 17 and 19]. Participants had an opportunity to ask further questions about the research and I checked how participants were feeling, and if they had been upset during the interview. I followed up with all participants the following day to thank them and check if anyone needed any additional support. For Study B I reminded participants about their named staff contact in their recruiting organisation.

2.5 Thematic analysis

In analysing the data, I wanted to represent the diverse range of staff views and positions whilst being fully aware that in the process I would be ascribing meaning to each participant's account. I hope that transparency in the process makes it evident how I reached each interpretation. I was neither focusing on

individual experience and meaning nor developing a theory so neither IPA (Smith & Osborn, 2008) nor grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were appropriate. Whilst interested in discourses and their various analyses (e.g. Potter, 1997; Parker, 2013), I decided it was not appropriate for this to be the focus because of the need to keep the research practice-focused and accessible for NOMS and practitioners.

With these considerations in mind, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) seemed the most appropriate approach. Its strengths lie in its flexibility and applicability across different paradigms, including critical realism. Using thematic analysis, I was able to analyse all or parts of the data set, so I presented findings from participant groups in separate chapters (Chapters 3-5) and then analysed all three interview studies together in Chapter 6. Thematic analysis involves finding thematic patterns and interpreting these patterns (Boyatzis, 1988) but it is important to emphasise that themes do not 'emerge' from texts; they reflect how the researcher thinks about data (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Azul, 1997). In addition, I have not reported the number of participants represented within themes because my sample was not representative. Numbers suggest that some views are more significant than others, which cannot be inferred from qualitative research with a non-probability sample (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

My analysis was primarily theory-driven (i.e. led by the questions), but I also constructed some data-driven themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). My main themes were led by the key topics surrounding separation, for example, support structures in prison and challenges in the workplace. I used the questions about parenting to analyse participant use of attachment theory. For the questions around support and prison structures my approach was semantic, focusing more explicitly on participant meanings; however, for the analysis related to attachment theory this was a more latent approach which drew on the related literature throughout the process (see Braun & Clarke,

2006, for their discussion of semantic and latent approaches). See Figure 3 for a summary of the process of thematic analysis.

Figure 3 - Thematic analysis process

TA Process – adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006)

Step 1: This is the familiarisation stage and included transcribing all the interview recordings and re-reading the transcripts. [See appendix 21 for summary of transcription notation]. I included pauses, non-verbal noises such as laughter and crying, incomplete words and sounds. [Transcripts are included for examiners only in a separate section.]

Step 2: Initial coding stage where I marked interesting aspects of the data e.g. specific quotations or explicit references to key topics. For Studies A and B I did this by hand, for Study C I used NVivo. I made notes of associated meanings or ideas and after I had coded each interview individually, I cross-checked to see any initial similarities.

Step 3: This was the initial search for themes – i.e. interpreting patterns in the interviews and bringing related codes together. This included going through the data sets multiple times refining and adapting themes. In addition, I mind-mapped ideas and used the memo function in NVivo to themes together within the question topics.

Step 4: At this stage I had a group of themes that seemed to represent the data. I searched for the themes systematically across the data set and ensured I had not missed out any unexpected or less obvious perspectives. I then mapped out the themes and subthemes hierarchically and ensured they were answering the research questions.

Step 5: The final stage – selecting relevant extracts, analysing the themes further and writing up the findings.

Adding framework analysis

For study C I carried out TA in the context of framework analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994; Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor, 2003). The founders of this approach take a subtle realist approach (Hammersley, 1992), which they define as close to critical realism and that they contend is appropriate for policy and practice research (Ritchie et al., 2003). Whilst this is called 'analysis', in many ways this approach is more of a process of data management which is particularly useful for large numbers of interviews and adds some additional stages before the more fine-grained TA is carried out. The systematic nature of framework analysis helps prevent 'unconscious editing' (Berger, 2015, p.221), and indeed I was surprised that some of the findings did not reflect my overall memories from the interview and transcription process. Terms such as 'themes' and 'codes' are used differently to Braun and Clarke's (2006) process, however, the approaches are very similar. I used NVivo 11 (QSR International) throughout this process as its most recent version has been designed to incorporate framework analyses. See Figure 4 for a description of the process of framework analysis.

Figure 4 - Framework analysis process

FA process – adapted from Ritchie et al. (2003)

Step 1: Familiarisation stage as above.

Step 2: This step involved managing the data set. First, I had to decide the themes under which to sort the data and then I indexed these themes with a hierarchy of main and subthemes. I drew these themes from the question topics but also developed some from my initial reading of the transcripts. I had to ensure that there was no overlap between the themes, so they were conceptually distinct even if they were related. My themes were structured by question topics which seemed most prominent in interviews (e.g. support, training, views of MBUs, parenting, challenges etc).

Step 3: This process is known as 'indexing'; it is a less detailed form of coding where all relevant data extracts are brought under the appropriate theme. These can then be visualised in NVivo through its framework matrices function. The next step was then to summarise, not interpret, each theme for each participant within the matrix (for an example see p.234-6 in Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This comprehensive summarising ensured that I checked every participant's transcript for every theme in a systematic manner. It also enables easier analysis of themes across all cases.

Step 4: I applied TA steps 2 to 5 as above (see Figure 3) but within each broader thematic category so the data was already reduced. FA has a range of analytic options at this point but Braun and Clarke's (2006) process was more detailed.

Credibility

Qualitative research cannot be judged by the quantitative concepts of validity and reliability. It is important that quality is assessed; however, there are debates about how to judge quality and a plethora of neologisms have been developed (for an overview see Seale, 1999). There are some key quality criteria which multiple researchers agree on and three aspects on which I have focused in this research: transparency, 'audit trail' and triangulation. Ritchie et al. (2003) emphasise the importance of transparency about the research process and ensuring any potential bias is made clear through researcher reflexivity. Likewise, Holloway and Wheeler (1996) highlight the importance of an 'audit trail' which documents the design of the study, participant recruitment, interview schedules and permissions and data such as socio-demographics of participants. Seale (1999) discusses the use of triangulation and its multiple definitions. Key ones are the use of multiple methods and the 'elicitation of multiple perspectives' (Seale, 1999, p.475).

More generally, Spencer, Ritchie, Lewis and Dillon (2003) have created a quality framework for qualitative research aimed at government departments reviewing research and its applicability to policy. They highlight aspects such as: selecting an appropriate research strategy; systematic and transparent data collection, analysis and interpretation; and making credible claims based on the analysis. These are very similar to the discussion by Mays and Pope (2000) who discuss different operationalisations of validity and relevance for qualitative research. I have been guided by these in the design and reporting of this research.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges of carrying out research in the prison sector, the methodological approach enabled enough flexibility to manage the various setbacks and challenges. Critical realism is a viable standpoint from which to

consider the impact of policy and theory from different perspectives because it does not ignore the real impact of social structures, such as prison, on people's lives. This approach coupled with thematic analysis ensured I could analyse participant responses in different ways and consider the issue of mother-child separations in prison from several different vantage points. It is to the first of these vantage points that I now turn – a consideration of the experience of separation from a policy perspective and 'attachment' expertise.

3 PRISON POLICY AND EXPERT COMMENTARY

It is not hard to see why Martin Narey, who was head of the Prison Service until 2005, says he is "as proud of Mother and Baby Units as anything I achieved in my time in the prison service." But what of the thousands of other mothers in British jails?

(Paul Vallely, 2012, para. 60)

This chapter is an exploration of ‘expertise’ in attachment theory in different forms. It discusses a multi-component study, formed by three separate but overlapping studies which have all fed into each other. All three parts are reported together in one chapter because they are to be considered as one whole study which provides a perspective on attachment theory. The first part was an exploration of a specific corpus of relevant policy and practice literature for its use of attachment theory. A second part was devised, following the first, which involved interviewing a select group of attachment ‘experts’ (i.e. researchers or practitioners who had extensive experience of attachment theory) who would comment on current policy and practice from an attachment-informed perspective. The final part comprised a survey which was developed from the interviews and the literature, with a focus on policy and practice, in

order to explore the views of a much broader range of researchers and practitioners.

This approach was taken because there is a lack of literature on the impact of separation on imprisoned mothers and a specific lack of literature which focuses on attachment theory in a UK prison context. The sparse literature that exists is international and is not necessarily always applicable to a UK prison study. This tripartite study is focused on current UK prison policy and practice, as defined by prison service documents and the use and application of attachment theory in this context. As there is no systematic research in this area, data were gathered from a range of sources in order to build a picture of how theory, policy and practice might connect, and in turn be used for intervening with mothers in prison separated from their infants aged under 18 months. Thus, this study aims to find links and divergences between policy, theory and practice as applied to a female prison context, and in addition draws on practice and research from outside this context.

3.1 Policy and literature review

Current prison policy (PSI 49/2014) refers to attachment theory, and the most recent research on mothers and babies in prison is being led by attachment researchers. These suggest that there is a strong justification for considering the use of attachment theory in current prison policy and practice concerning mothers separated from their young children, and the need to explore this further in the literature. Policies specifically addressing mothers in prison and their babies have been developed since the 1999 review of MBUs and the later Corston Report in 2007, which brought women's prison issues to the fore. These documents along with follow-up reports, policies and HM Inspectorate of Prison (HMIP) work form a corpus which refers to mother and baby separations and are the most relevant publicly available documents. [These reviews have been published and can be found in appendices 22 and 23. I acknowledge the input of my supervisors for editing the papers.]

In addition to considering the use of attachment theory in the policy, these reviews explored how mother–infant separations are referred to across relevant academic and grey literature. Academic literature considered was any commercially published work in either books or journals, and generally peer-reviewed. Grey literature was defined as ‘that which is produced on all levels of government, academia, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers’ (The New York Academy of Medicine, n.d.). For the purposes of this review it includes third-sector (e.g. non-governmental organisations, international bodies, charities, quangos, independent research bodies) reports, briefings and unpublished academic work. Arguably, these are particularly pertinent when exploring mother-infant separations in prison given the range of third-sector organisations that are involved both working directly with women in prison and researching and campaigning. Given the role of third sector organisations in providing support for separated mothers, and the sparse academic literature, it seemed important to include grey literature in the reviews on their behalf. Furthermore, certain key publications (e.g. North, 2006) have been repeatedly cited in policy, government and academic literature, highlighting the importance of some of this work.

A further reason for focusing on the grey literature is that practitioners may be more likely to use relevant grey literature in their work than academic publications, for reasons of physical access, direct relevance and its practical application. Whilst some grey literature can be criticised for its lack of rigour (Killoran, 2010), it is this more informal approach, including the use of first-person testimony, which can make it more accessible to those in the field and overcomes potential publication bias such as the exclusion of qualitative data (Hopewell, Clarke, & Mallett, 2006). Finally, as this is an under-researched area (for notable exceptions see Birmingham et al., 2006; Dolan et al., 2013; Gregoire et al., 2010), examining grey literature broadens the search to be as

systematic as possible in relation to what literatures are drawn on in policy and practice.

Aims:

- a) To explore policy, academic and grey literature relevant to mothers separated from their babies in prison.
- b) To identify and analyse any use of attachment theory in the literature.

Method

Design: Three separate REAs were carried out, one on policy literature, a second on grey literature and a third on academic literature. These reviews applied the principles of REAs (a research tool used by UK government departments). This is a more limited form of systematic review using a more focused research question in a shorter time period. The overall structure of Kitson, Marshall, Bassett, and Zeitz's (2013) review was followed because it drew out the diverse perspectives between different types of documents, which seemed appropriate for these reviews. See Figures 5 and 6 for procedure for each REA.

Search Method: All policies since the 1999 MBU review, including HMIP reports, were systematically searched. Government websites were primarily used for prison policy; however, a few could only be found referenced in other documents or third sector websites. Inspection reports and non-policy government documents were searched from 2007, i.e. from the date of The Corston Report. All relevant third sector sites were searched and any missing references from citations were tracked down.

All documents were compiled, searched for duplicates and sorted into categories based on type of policy document, organisational authorship for grey literature and academic practice/discipline for the academic literature. First a

summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of the documents was carried out to answer the question 'Is separation referred to?'. The documents were then thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with a particular focus on the issue of separation to understand 'How is separation referred to?'

Inclusion: Relevant UK publications from 2007 to August 2015 were included. There were major changes to the female prison estate in 2007 following The Corston Report (Corston, 2007). The documents had to be publicly available, (i.e. accessible through academic and grey databases and public websites, rather than internal policies and reports), and relevant to imprisoned women separated from their children under 18 months in the UK.

Search terms: The main search terms were mother and/or baby/infant, attachment and separation (and related, so attach* and separate*). Relevant documents were scanned for 'child' and 'women' with none of the above words to ensure there were no alternative terms.

Analysis: Thematic analysis was carried out following Braun and Clarke's (2006) five-stage framework. (See Figure 3, Chapter 2 for step-by-step process.) This was a 'theoretical thematic analysis' because specific references to mother and child separation were highlighted, and by extension any explicit or implicit references to 'attachment' were noted. Themes did not 'emerge' from the data but were driven by the research questions. Prevalence of themes was noted as an additional way of comparing between document categories. The key themes were developed from the focus on attachment and separation.

Figure 5 - Flowchart showing search and analysis stages for policy review

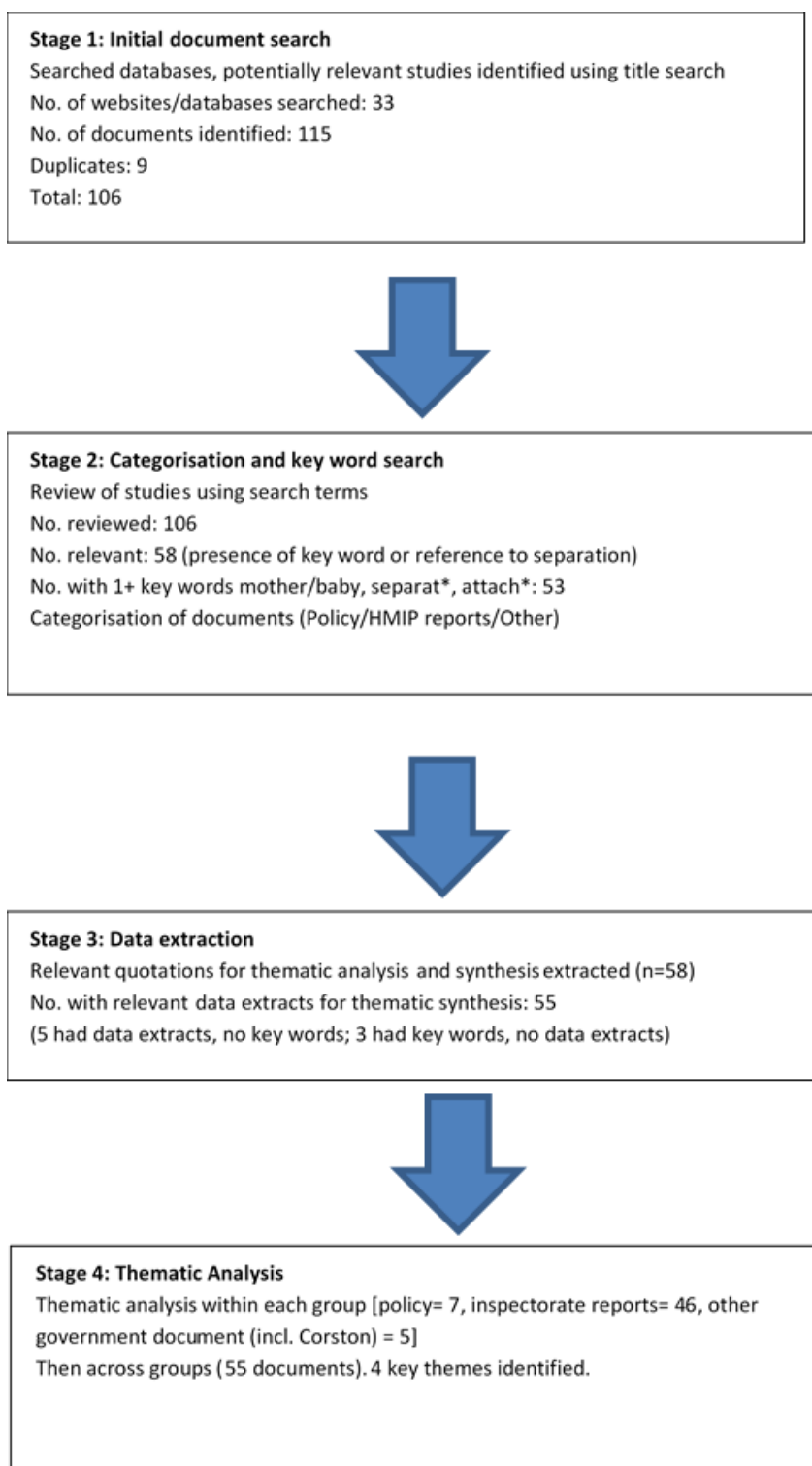
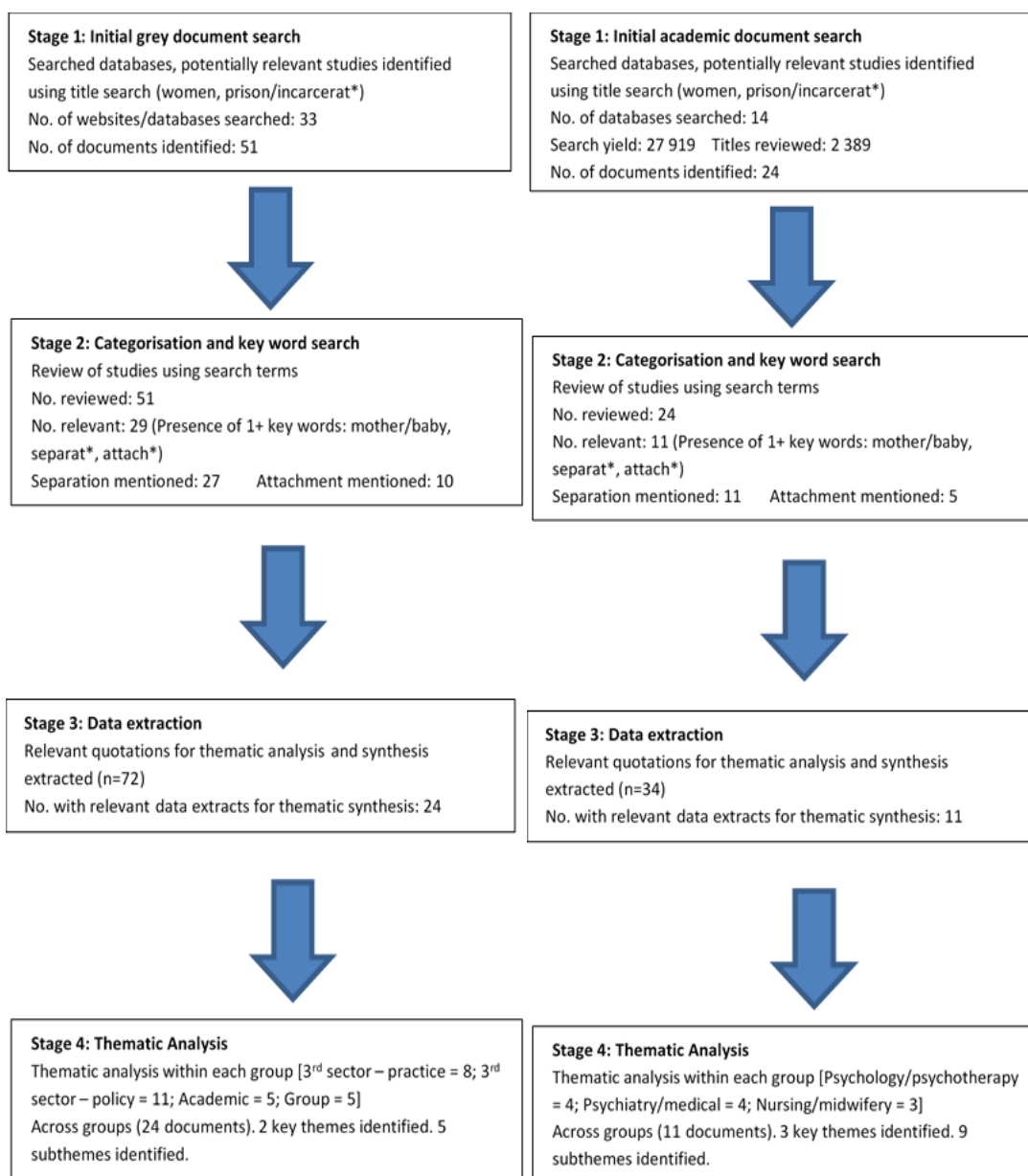


Figure 6 - Flowchart showing search and analysis stages for grey and academic reviews



Policy literature findings

Policy documents

Since 2008 there have been four specific MBU policies which also deal with separation. Although each new policy overwrites the previous one, all relevant ones were included to examine any changes over time.

The data extracts were grouped into four themes: 'child focus', 'maintaining mother-child relationship', 'role of staff/support' and 'separation as trauma'. See Table 1 for totals.

Table 1 - Policy document themes

Table 1			
<i>Policy document themes – number of codes, instances and documents</i>			
Child focus	Maintaining mother-child relationship	Role of staff/support	Separation as trauma
12 codes	6 codes	3 codes	1 code
10 separate instances	8 separate instances	4 separate instances	1 separate instance
5 docs	4 docs	3 docs	1 doc

What is most striking is the number of codes that focus on the child in comparison to either the mother-child relationship, or the role of staff. Furthermore, the 'child focus' theme draws on specific research in terms of ideas around age limits, 'damage' and 'bonding' which follows the emphasis of the policy on 'best interest of the child' (PSO 4801, 2008, p.1). However most of the academic research is not directly cited, rather it is mentioned as 'expert advice'. There are only three specific references in the policy documents: a mis-cited Quaker Council report (Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2007), one piece of mis-spelled Spanish research from 2003 (Jiménez & Palacios, 2003) and a partially referenced work from 1984 that relates to six year olds (Lewis,

Feiring, McGuffog & Jaskir, 1984). The Quaker report is a comparative review of conditions in women's prisons across Europe, the Spanish research assesses the educational context of infants in prison with their mothers, and the final work assesses the relationship between attachment status of children at one year with behaviour problems at age six. It is striking that more mainstream and directly relevant works are not cited.

The acknowledgement of the impact of separations on mothers, (including 'psychological distress' and 'self-harm') and on staff ('stressful' and 'distressing'), does not lead to specific recommendations, nor does it draw on any research. Furthermore, there is a distinct difference between the type of language used in reference to the children and to the mothers. For example, in relation to children a typical extract is: 'It is recognised that what a child needs in its early years is a constant caring and stimulating relationship with an adult' (PSO 4801, p.25). This is clear and considerate language (although not particularly well defined), whereas a typical quote in reference to mother and staff needs does not demonstrate the same sensitivity, for example: 'Separations need to be planned well in advance' (PSO 4800, p.52).

There are no details as to what needs to be planned or how these separations might be carried out in the document. The focus is very much on the welfare of the children and not the mothers. And whilst there are some references to the needs of mothers and staff, these are not clearly described or considered. These are interesting omissions given that PSO 4800 is specifically aimed at the treatment of women in prison, and the MBU policies are supposed to consider both mother and child.

HMIP reports

All relevant HMIP documents since 2007 were reviewed and these included thematic reports, HMIP Corston submissions, annual reports and inspections. Attachment was not referred to directly in any of these publications; however, the impact of separation on women was referred to repeatedly. It was mentioned in 13 different sections of inspectorate reports, including ‘Safety’, ‘Respect’, ‘Self harm and suicide’, ‘Staff-prisoner relationships’ as well as more obvious ones referring to families and children. The wide scope of categories could signify how much separation has an impact on women across all domains of their time in prison. The codes were categorised in a similar way to the policy group, however, with some distinct differences. See Table 2 for details.

Table 2 - HMIP themes

Table 2				
<i>HMIP document themes – number of codes, instances and documents</i>				
Child perspective	Mother perspective	Positive prison practice	Negative prison practice	Separation as trauma
1 code	14 codes	5 codes	8 codes	1 code
1 separate instance	16 separate instances	40 separate instances	31 separate instances	5 separate instances
1 doc	5 docs	28 docs	22 docs	5 docs

In the inspectorate reports the mothers’ perspective is by far the largest category in terms of codes. These all centred on the ‘distress’, ‘suffering’ and ‘vulnerability’ of the women due to separation. By contrast there was one mention of the impact on the child, which was described as ‘catastrophic’. Given the nature of the prison reports there were two further themes on prison practice: positive and negative, which included the role of staff. Whilst the inspectorate documents do not mention attachment directly, they do repeatedly mention the impact of separation on the women with regards to distress and mental health in detailed ways. Here are two typical extracts: ‘Disrupted relationships with children are a particular source of distress for women’ (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2006, p.58) and:

Even where prisons are aware that women are suffering the trauma of separation there is often little understanding about the emotional effect this will have on them and its repercussions which often just attract a disciplinary response. (Hardwick, 2010, p.14)

In contrast to the policy extracts, the focus is very much on distress and the impact on women as a result of separation from their children. There are lots of examples of positive prison practice (e.g. family support workers, third sector counselling, Samaritans Listeners (see glossary), and chaplaincies) with regard to separation but, understandably as these are inspectorate reports, there is no sense of the theory or research underpinning these.

Other government documents

This small category of documents includes both non-policy government MBU and relevant Corston documents. They were included because they had direct references to separation and attachment. See Table 3 for details.

Table 3 - Other government document themes

Table 3		
<i>Other government document themes – number of codes, instances and documents</i>		
Child perspective	Mother perspective	Separation as trauma
6 codes	6 codes	1 code
6 separate instances	6 separate instances	1 separate instance
3 docs	2 docs	1 doc

It is noticeable that there are an equal number of codes mentioning the child's perspective and the impact on the mother, however all the 'impact on mother' references were in the Corston documents rather than the government documents. This group of documents does directly mention 'attachment theory' in a summary of the evidence and cites the following works: Bowlby, (1969);

Ainsworth, (1982); Black, (1988); Fonagy, Target, Steele, & Steele, (1997); Rutter, (1981).

The extracts referring to the impact on mothers are similar to those in the inspectorate group, using emotive language and emphasising the impact: 'Separation from their children was mental torture.' (Corston, 2007, p.33) and:

Motherhood is a factor that appears to protect women in the community against suicide but this protection does not apply in prison where mothers are separated from their children and those serving long sentences may lose their opportunity to have children. (Corston, 2007, p.22)

Whilst this was a small and heterogeneous group of documents, it was interesting that both mothers and children were referred to in equal terms and that attachment theory was referred to in an explicit way.

Themes across all documents

As the category findings demonstrate there are some shared themes with some interesting differences. Firstly, all the categories have at least one direct mention of the 'trauma of separation' so it is acknowledged that being separated from a baby can have a very painful impact on a mother. However, there are variations in the emphasis placed on the impact on the mother or the child. Attachment theory is only referred to directly in relation to the child, and even in these cases it is relatively insubstantial, particularly in the prison policy. Specific references to prison practice are mainly in inspection reports, and across all categories there is extremely limited mention of staff needs. Documents seem to lack a joint perspective of both mother and child. Table 5 shows a summary of the global themes. What it reveals despite the different emphasis in each literature category is how there is a general overall cohesion between the different groups.

Table 4 - Global themes

Table 4			
<i>Global themes across all policy documents</i>			
Global theme	Sub-themes	Document category	Specific examples
Child perspective	Child perspective	Policy, Other gov	Attachment – e.g. age limits as separation
	Child support	Inspection	
Mother perspective	Maintaining mother-child relationship	Policy	Separation as distress
	Mother perspective	Inspection, Other gov (Corston only)	Impact on mental health
Staff, policy and practice	Role of staff/support	Policy	Staff need support
	Negative prison practice	Inspection	Problematic separation visits
	Positive prison practice	Inspection	Good support e.g. counselling
Separation as trauma	n/a	All	

Attachment theory is rarely directly mentioned throughout the documents examined, and generally only in relation to the impact on children. Separation, however, and its impact on mothers are repeatedly mentioned. The policy documents highlight the ‘best interests of the child’ whilst pointing out that separation can be a ‘trigger for extreme distress and self-harm’ and that mothers need planning and support. However, the details for this support are lacking. The inspectorate reports repeatedly describe how separation causes distress, increasing anxiety and depression. They give specific examples of positive and negative practice around separations in prisons. The remaining government documents point out that motherhood in prisons increases the risk of suicide and emotively cite separation as ‘mental torture’ which causes distress and directly affects mental health.

Thus, there seems to be a general agreement that separation is traumatic – this was highlighted across the different literature categories. What differed were the nuances in the ways in which attachment theory and separation were referred to in the different categories. Furthermore, there are limited suggestions from a theoretical and practical aspect as to how to support women, particularly in relation to the impact it has on their mental health.

Grey literature findings

Third sector practice documents

The ‘Third sector practice’ category covers a range of organisational publications, including Women in Prison, Barnardo’s, PACT, Together UK and NSPCC. Understandably the focus varies depending on whether the organisation itself is mother or child focused, although even child-centred organisations acknowledge the impact on mothers.

Table 5 - Third sector practice document themes

Table 5				
<i>Third sector practice documents: themes and subthemes</i>				
Impact			Practice	
a)Impact on mother	b)Impact on child	c)Impact on mother-child relationship	a)Support for mother	b)Staff
9 codes	3 codes	3 codes	7 codes	2 codes
4 docs	2 docs	3 docs	4 docs	1 doc

What is initially striking from the totals above is that the themes focus far more on the mother, both impact and support, than the child or the staff. The ‘staff’ codes are two specific suggestions for training, rather than any mention of the emotional impact, and the focus in general is very much on the mothers’ needs – both what works and what could be done.

The emotional impact on the mother is explored in detail with vivid language and ranged from 'worries and fears' to 'feelings of isolation and powerlessness' and 'severe mental and emotional distress'. It is interesting that it was only in this practice category that there were complex descriptions of the impact, including detailed awareness of the impact on mental health, which ranged from general references to 'maternal mental health' to more specific ones to suicide, self-harm, post-natal depression and post-natal psychosis. This awareness is reflected in the suggestions for support for mothers which are mainly emotional and psychological:

Perinatal health care services and prisons should ensure that parents, and in particular, mothers who are separated from their babies are provided with multi-agency follow up support packages, with a specific focus on postnatal psychological wellbeing. (Galloway et al., 2014, p.39)

This quotation highlights the complexity of the support required ('multi-agency') and that it specifically needs to be 'postnatal psychological wellbeing'. This focus on the psychological impact was reflected in discussion on attachment and separation. There was an emphasis on the impact of separation with descriptions such as 'desperate loss' and the 'emotional trauma of separation,' and with reference to attachment theory in some instances e.g.: 'the CJS [Criminal Justice System] can disrupt relationships, including the attachment relationship' (Galloway et al., 2014, p.9).

In some documents there was a sophisticated use of attachment theory, although primarily from a child's perspective. These discussions covered how insecure attachment relates to disrupted relationships and future outcomes, in relation to children. There was one explicit reference to how the mothers themselves are likely to have insecure attachments.

Third sector policy documents

The 'Third sector – policy' category covered documents from: Prison Reform Trust, Fawcett Society, Howard League, World Health Organisation (WHO), and Penal Reform International (PRI). Most of the codes related to the theme 'impact on mother' when separation was referred to.

Table 6 - Third sector - policy themes

Table 6		
<i>Third sector policy documents: themes and subthemes</i>		
Impact		Practice
a)Impact on mother 10 codes 7 docs	b)Impact on child 3 codes 3 docs	a)Staff 1 code 1 doc

The documents in this policy category tended to be general, referring to women in prison, rather than specifically referring to imprisoned mothers of infants. They included direct quotes from imprisoned mothers and nearly all the extracts concerned the emotional impact of separation. These were described in vivid terms such as: 'traumatic and lasting effect', 'great distress', 'emotional trauma' 'state of shock' and the impact was compared to the 'trauma of bereavement'.

The impact of separation included references to mental health, life on release and family networks, and was mostly referred to in terms of trauma and directly related to the impact of imprisoning women:

Until more women are diverted from prison the levels of self-harm, mental illness, and the long-term effects of the separation of children from their mothers will continue. (Fawcett Commission, 2009, p.9)

There was a first-person description of self-harm as a result of separation and in another extract self-harm was described as a means of coping. There was only one direct reference to attachment, which referred to recent research – but only in relation to the impact on children.

Academic documents

Whilst it may seem incongruous to have an ‘academic’ category for grey literature, there is a body of work that is not published commercially by academic institutions. There is relevant research concerning mother-child separations in prison, including a key paper cited by many others (Albertson et al., 2012). The institutions whose work was found through the review were: Huddersfield University, Sheffield Hallam University, Halsbury’s Law Exchange and the Separation and Reunion Forum. Most of the codes in this category focused on the impact on mothers.

Table 7 - Academic themes

Table 7		
<i>Academic documents: themes and subthemes</i>		
Impact	Practice	
a)Impact on mother	a)Support for mother	b)Staff
13 codes	7 codes	2 codes
4 docs	3 docs	1 doc

The documents in this category only discussed the impact on mothers, there were no references to the impact on children, and the language used was far less emotive, for example: ‘anxiety’, ‘disruptive’ and ‘negative impact’, except when drawn directly from interviews, e.g. ‘devastating pain’. However, direct separation experiences were theorised, which was not the case in any of the third sector documents:

It is therefore anticipated that, when this dyad are separated, the mother will be preoccupied with anxieties and concerns about her children and engulfed in emotional turmoil. It is this narrative structure that underpins the narrative of the wounded mother. (Lockwood, 2013, p.179-180)

Aspects mentioned that were not highlighted in other categories included a detailed reference to 'problematic behaviour' in prison that suggested this was due to stress caused by separation (Raikes, 2009). There was a description of the guilt mothers experience following separation from their child, and the resultant lack of opportunities to deal with this (Raikes, 2009). There was one extract which could not be categorised, which pointed out that prison uses separation from children as punishment (Arnold, 2012).

There were many examples of good practice, and in general reference was made to research findings more than in the third sector work. In one example, up-to-date attachment research was cited (Byrne et al., 2012); however, attachment tended to be referred to more generally, particularly in terms of opportunities for mothers to bond and attach.

'Group' documents

This category was for documents produced by groups which included charities, NGOs, government departments and academic institutions. There was a wide range of perspectives and they included academic, legal, policy and practice. None of the documents were specifically about female prisoners' separation from children. They were either about vulnerable women more generally, women in the criminal justice system, or reviewing parenting programmes across the prison estate. The codes extracted were focused on the mother, except one, and equally divided between support and impact. See Table 8 for details.

Table 8 - Group themes

Table 8		
<i>Group documents: themes and subthemes</i>		
Impact		Practice
a)Impact on mother 6 codes	b)Impact on child 1 code	a)Mother support 6 codes
4 docs	1 doc	3 docs

The ‘impact’ theme covered separation as traumatic and described a range of emotions, particularly grief. Self-harm was highlighted as particularly likely after separation. Kitzinger poignantly called separation ‘another form of violence against women and an abuse of children’ (McNeish & Scott, 2014, p.26). This was the only example in any document which linked separation to systemic violence.

Extracts in the ‘practice’ theme were practical, with positive practices highlighted, particularly around preparation and family support. The sole reference to attachment was in relation to children who undergo several changes of fostering placements as a result of separation. No research was cited in this instance.

Academic literature findings

Psychology/psychotherapy literature

This category covered three publications concerning the ‘New Beginnings’ programme and one theoretical review in a special edition on incarcerated parents. Given the backgrounds and the journals in which this work was published, it is not surprising that these four documents used attachment theory extensively. They considered the impact on the child and the mother in the case of separations from a theory-informed perspective, and considered the impact of the prison setting and the relevant policies. The research presented was

solely from the randomised controlled trial of the intervention, ‘New Beginnings’, an attachment informed intervention. [This intervention was a 12 session parenting programme focusing on the mother and baby attachment relationship in prison MBUs. Drawing on a psychoanalytic approach, the programme aimed to improve parent-child interactions and counted as an accredited course for prisoners. Whilst no longer funded to be delivered in prisons, the programme has been adapted for community settings.]

Table 9 - Psychology/psychotherapy themes

Table 9		
<i>Psychology/psychotherapy literature: themes and subthemes</i>		
Separation (3 docs)	a)Impact	1 doc
	b)Prison setting	2 docs
	c)Policy esp. forced separation	2docs
	d)Reunification	0 docs
Attachment theory (4 docs)	a)Mothers’ history	3 docs
	b)Impact on child	3 docs
	c)Early months as sensitive period	2 docs
Research findings (2 docs)	Type	RCT, Theory
	Lived experience	No
	Intervention	New Beginnings, suggest pregnancy as opportunity
<i>Note: Total number of documents = 4</i>		

The references to attachment theory are extensive despite the limited focus of the documents. The theory paper only used attachment theory in relation to children, and the ‘New Beginnings’ trial was specific to the intervention which only involved women in MBUs.

There was reference to the mothers’ own attachment histories as ‘highly traumatic’ and the role of the prison environment:

Many troubling aspects of the mothers’ histories are activated by the prison environment, thereby creating major problems for the establishment of care-giving bonds. (Baradon & Target, 2010, p.73)

This focus on the mother was highlighted in the importance of the first few months as a sensitive period for both mother and child, something rarely mentioned in the rest of the academic literature, the grey literature or policy.

Separation is described as a 'painful issue' evoking 'enormous anxiety' and the result of the process in MBUs is highlighted:

For example, some mothers on the MBUs will be separated from their infants later on and, without adequate preparation, may become gradually less engaged with their baby as the time of separation draws nearer. (Sleed et al., 2013, p.13)

This reference to the role of prison in preparing women for separation is emphasised in an awareness of the impact on staff:

Forced separations of mothers and their babies is a controversial and painful issue within the prison system and often evokes strong responses not only in the inmates but also in MBU staff. (Baradon, Fonagy, Bland, Lenard, & Sleed, 2008, p.244)

In addition, the first year after birth was seen as a 'window of opportunity' as mothers 'are particularly open to change'.

Psychiatry/medical literature

This category included two reports of the limited mental health research on imprisoned mothers in the UK, one public health research report on imprisoned women and a discussion paper.

Table 10 - Psychiatry/medical themes

Table 10		
<i>Psychiatry/medical literature: themes and subthemes</i>		
Separation (4 docs)	a)Impact	4 docs
	b)Prison setting	0 docs
	c)Policy esp. forced separation	1 doc
	d)Reunification	1 doc
Attachment theory (1 doc)	a)Mothers' history	0 docs
	b)Impact on child	1 doc
	c)Early months as sensitive period	0 docs
Research findings (3 docs)	Type	Quantitative, Theory
	Lived experience	Yes
	Intervention	No
<i>Note: Total number of documents = 4</i>		

As the table shows, there was only one reference to attachment theory (Fonagy, Target, Steele, & Steele, 1997), and this only referred to child outcomes and was not recent. However, there were repeated references to separation and its impact, plus the only mention of reunification in any of the documents.

The clinical research into mental health outcomes highlighted the difference between separated and non-separated mothers. These supported all the observations in the practice literature and inspectorate reports in the policy review:

The separation of these mothers and children may contribute to or exacerbate the women's existing mental health problems and increase the negative effects on the child's current and future mental health. (Gregoire et al., 2010, p.390)

Furthermore, it was found that on post-release follow-up, separated mothers were more likely to be unemployed and homeless, and less likely to have care

of their children (Dolan et al., 2013). There was a gendered analysis of the impact of separation on female prisoners:

Separation from family, especially children, adversely affects the mental health of female prisoners and is implicated in why women are more likely to break the rules in prison than men. (Douglas, Plugge, & Fitzpatrick, 2009, p.10)

This consideration of the context was extended to consider sentencing:

Greater use could also be made of community sentences in order to prevent separation occurring. (Dolan et al., 2013, p.435)

And also post-release support:

The small number of separated mothers who subsequently had care of their children suggests that more needs to be done to help these women reunite successfully with their children on release. (Dolan et al., 2013, p.435)

The public health research included a vivid quote on separation by a mother:

'That's a pain that no pain relief – no painkiller can kill'. (Douglas et al., 2009, p.6)

Nursing/midwifery literature

This category included three publications, two research reviews and one report of a prison-based support service for pregnant women. These publications were focused very much on services for pregnant women in prison. See Table 11 for themes.

Table 11 - Nursing/midwifery themes

Table 11		
<i>Psychiatry/medical literature: themes and subthemes</i>		
Separation (3 docs)	a)Impact	2 docs
	b)Prison setting	1 docs
	c)Policy esp. forced separation	0 docs
	d)Reunification	0 docs
Attachment theory (0 docs)	a)Mothers' history	0 docs
	b)Impact on child	0 docs
	c)Early months as sensitive period	0 docs
Research findings (2 docs)	Type	Research synthesis, Systematic review
	Lived experience	Yes
	Intervention	Pregnancy as opportunity
<i>Note: Total number of documents = 4</i>		

Whilst there were no references to attachment there were many references to separation, highlighting the impact on mental health. Separation is described as causing depression and anxiety and fills mothers with 'dread'. There are first person quotes on the experience which include: 'Words just can't describe how bad it hurts' (Wismount, 2000 in Shaw, Downe, & Kingdon, 2015, p.1,459) and also: 'it is a separation anxiety that you go through.' (Chambers, 2009 in Shaw et al., 2015, p.1,459).

There is reflection on the 'more serious consequences for foreign nationals who face the added stress of not being in the same country as their children' (Foley & Papadopoulos, 2013, p.558). This is a rare acknowledgement of the diversity of experience within imprisoned mothers. The role of staff in mitigating the trauma of separation for women is highlighted: 'The attitudes and actions of prison and maternity care staff can reduce or increase this sense of trauma' (Shaw et al., 2015, p.1459).

Discussion

The concept of attachment is widespread in the general discourse of parenting and bonding, with the idea of disrupted attachment having negative

consequences for children being generally currently accepted. This idea underlies the use of attachment theory in prison policy (PSO 4801, 2008). The practice category of grey literature had the most references to attachment, which suggests practitioners in the field find it a useful concept. It was highlighted in the academic literature in the psychology/psychotherapy category with reference to a prison-based intervention. Although the women in this intervention had not been separated, attachment theory was used to discuss the impact of separation on women.

Whilst most references to attachment were in relation to children, as in the policy review, there was acknowledgement in the academic literature and particularly in the grey literature, that the mothers have attachment histories too. Entire grey report sections were titled 'Attachment and separation' and there was repeated description of the extensive trauma it causes women, as well as more specific details of the impact on their mental health, especially with regards to self-harm and suicide.

When attachment was referred to as a general concept, this was in the grey literature (and the policy) and was often not referenced. However, relevant and recent research was cited far more often in the grey literature than in the policy review. In fact, in the grey literature there was a relatively sophisticated understanding of the impact but it could have been developed further in most cases, particularly in relation to citing research and theory.

In terms of the academic review, the psychiatric, medical, nursing and midwifery literatures mentioned the emotional impact of separation on mothers, although this was not theorised psychologically or otherwise, and no specific interventions or practices were suggested. Attachment was not mentioned, only diagnoses, and whilst this doubtless reflects discipline differences, the one attachment reference in the psychiatric literature was nearly ten years old.

The grey literature highlighted that the policy focus on 'best age of separation', which does imply use of attachment theory, did not appear to be based on attachment research and furthermore is legally arbitrary, and therefore could be challenged. Thus, attachment theory appears to be the basis for MBU policy (and by extension mother-child separations in prison); however, this is not systematically reflected in the literature. Both attachment and separation were referred to across all literatures in terms of the emotional impact on women, but there were generally sparse references to attachment theory or research and limited suggestions for practice.

It is acknowledged across multiple literatures over a ten-year time frame that separation from infants has a serious impact on imprisoned mothers. Whilst this review cannot claim to be completely systematic, given the nature of grey literature, it does provide an overview of the area. The diverse body of work encompassed reports and publications with a variety of aims, audiences and authors, and it incorporated a wide selection of policy and academic work, as well as first-person testimony and practice literature. It is clear from this review, and the wider literature, that women separated from their children have worse mental health than women who are not separated from their children. Separation was described as having a clear negative emotional impact both in the words of women interviewed and in descriptions by professionals. The language used varied, according to the type of literature, from the 'trauma of separation' to mental health diagnoses and very emotive descriptions; nevertheless the negative impact described was the same.

However, what lacked across the literatures (apart from those mentioned) were specific interventions and practices to mitigate the negative impact on women in prison. There were references to 'preparation' and 'support', and the example given most often was counselling. However, there was no discussion of what

form this might take or how different women serving different sentences might benefit (or not).

Staff needs were occasionally acknowledged but generally overlooked, and again there was little specificity in terms of what might be supportive. There were some hints at the complexity of staff responses, and one grey report analysed so-called 'problematic behaviours' of prisoners as a response to separation. These were highlighted in inspectorate reports as the kind of behaviours that attract harsh punishment without staff understanding the causes. But again, this does not seem to have been translated into anything practical for staff or prisoners.

If policy is going to draw on psychological theory (such as attachment theory), and theory that practitioners appear to find useful (as reflected in the grey literature), then this needs to be reflected in the policy literature, and used in interventions to mitigate the harms caused by separation.

3.2 Attachment expert perspectives

This second study was devised following the first, which involved interviewing a select group of attachment 'experts' (i.e. researchers or practitioners who had extensive experience of attachment theory) who would comment on current policy and practice from an attachment-informed perspective. This approach was taken because there is a lack of literature on the impact of infant separation on imprisoned mothers and a specific lack of literature which focuses on attachment theory in a UK prison context.

Given the diversity of 'attachment theories', using expert interviews enabled immediate responses to current policy that could be easily compared. This approach was an adaptation of the 'key informant' interview approach, originally

used in anthropology research and now a feature of health services and policy research (Sofaer, 1999; Marshall, 1996). It provides a way of collecting high quality data in a short amount of time and, in this study, was used to triangulate the findings of the rapid evidence assessments. Thus, this study aims to find links and divergences between policy, theory and practice as applied to a female prison context, whilst drawing on practice and research from outside this context.

Aim:

- a) To investigate the views of attachment academics and practitioners on current prison policy and practice.

Method

Interview Design: A semi-structured interview schedule was designed with a focus on prison policy and attachment theory. Questions covered interviewees' own attachment models drawn on, possible trajectories for mothers in prison, separation from mothers' perspectives and questions on policy and theory. There was a focus on 'best age' as this is key in the policy and often attachment theory is referred to in discussions of the 'best age' for separation. Content was drawn from the REAs and my work with Birth Companions.

[Please see appendix 9 for the schedule.]

Ethics: For these interviews participants were asked to agree to waive anonymity for some or part of the interview. Any participants who did not agree had the option to take part anonymously. All five participants agreed to waive anonymity. [The option to waive anonymity was included so there was the possibility of associating experts with their views and thus creating a preliminary literature on attachment perspectives of prison policy.] The subject matter was not personally sensitive, so no distress was anticipated, and participants had the option not to answer any questions.

Recruitment: Participants were selected to take part and included authors of the key literature, departmental contacts and each other (i.e. snowball sampling). A range of attachment experts from a variety of perspectives were invited to take part over a six-month period and of the 14 approached five were interviewed. Another three expressed an interest but it proved impossible to carry out the interviews. Whilst this can clearly not be considered a representative sample, the five participants represented different attachment approaches and experience in terms of research and practice.

Data Analysis: Transcribed interview data were described using narrative summaries and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). (See Figure 3, Chapter 2 for step-by-step process.) Themes were analysed deductively and semantically in order to report similarities and differences between the interviewees and were explicitly related to themes from the REAs, for example, in relation to staff support and practice and the idea of separation as a trauma.

Participants

The five interviewees were all extremely experienced researchers or practitioners in the field of attachment, with a minimum of ten years' experience in the field, and in four cases with careers spanning decades. In addition to their expertise in attachment, the participants' experience of forensic research or practice included prison-based psychotherapy, psychiatric MBU clinical work, research in a maximum secure forensic psychiatric institution, running a randomised controlled trial (RCT) of a prison MBU intervention and convening a conference on child separation in prison.

Findings

Whilst four of the participants referred specifically to Bowlby as a main theoretical influence, there were different emphases between individuals. These emphases included: evolutionary theory, Mary Ainsworth, Mary Main, Elizabeth Meins (and her concept of mind-mindedness, see Meins et al., 2003), and mentalisation (in particular parental representations of attachment, see Fonagy, Gergely & Jurist, 2004). One participant drew on many different aspects of attachment theory but felt the key focus was the mother's relationship with the baby, which begins in pregnancy.

Whilst there were many overlaps in terms of practice recommendations and concerns around the impact of separation on mothers in prison, each interviewee had a different primary focus. These were: a single focus on the child; the centrality of pregnancy; the impact of context on the mother-child relationship; the role of the extended family; and the idea of empowering mothers through their active participation in the separation process.

These varied emphases led to a particularly detailed range of concerns and issues deriving from a background of attachment theory. These were often highlighted by more than one interviewee. Participants thought about the mothers in terms of their demographics and risks (both past and present) of mental health difficulties. These risks were related to mothers' own attachment histories and the impact of sexual abuse and domestic violence in terms of how separations would affect mothers and what needs to be considered in any form of support. This emphasis on history and its role in interpersonal relationships was related to the impact of the prison environment and how staff could also act as attachment figures, and the implications for practice. There were broader themes of holding people in mind: the very psychological focus on the baby being in the mother's mind before and after birth and how this idea feeds into practice; and the more practical attention to visits and contact with family and how these are a crucial part of supporting women.

'Best age of separation'

The questions which related directly to current policy and drew the most specific responses from participants were those relating to the idea of the 'best age' of separation (the rationale for focusing on this is discussed in the study design in Chapter 3). Participants pointed out that it was not possible to have a 'best age' because separation is never positive, and it is impossible to have a set rule. There was concern about the possibility of a set rule:

I don't think we can be hard and fast about this and what my fear is that there will be some research that reeks of certainty coming along which will say that it's the best thing for the baby to be taken but babies know what's happening, they can smell the mother, they turn to hear her voice, they prefer her breastmilk over others, so they're not just a blank sheet. (Interviewee 1, 203-207)

Furthermore, all participants agreed that unless there was a definite risk of abuse or neglect with the current child then mothers should not be separated:

I do think that, yeah, taking the mother, taking the baby from the mother in the labour ward without enabling her to hold baby or have anything with the baby is...downright cruel and inhumane as well. (Interviewee 3, 206-208)

There were interviewees who stated very strongly that they were anti-separation and it should be avoided at all costs given the risks associated both for child outcomes and maternal mental health. In general, there was agreement that contextual factors were important, including where the child would be placed and the nature of the separation itself. Whether the mother would be reunited with the child after her sentence was an additional key factor in determining an 'appropriate' age for separation.

If a mother is not going to be reunited with a child after birth, then there was general agreement that the separation should happen as early as possible – from the first days and within the first month. However, it was agreed that all mothers (including those who had committed serious offences) should have contact with their newborn babies, even if it had to be supervised. Any permanent separation should involve a thought-through ending, and there was one suggestion that lessons could be learned from open adoption literature that suggests these are more successful than closed adoptions.

In situations where mothers would be reunited, it was felt that mothers should not be given custodial sentences if possible, as the first 18 months are thought to be so crucial in developing attachment. And several stated that ideally that would not happen until well beyond two years. However, if separations were deemed necessary, separations at six to nine months were seen as a particularly problematic age because babies are thought to be still developing attachments and it would be especially harmful to end these.

The current MBU limit of 18 months resulted in some disagreement. Those participants who were prepared to make some specific comment about ages gave clear reasons to support their views. One interviewee was clear that 18 months was not a good age as object permanence (Bell, 1970) is still not developed so separation would be too distressing. Another interviewee felt 18 months was appropriate but only if the child was securely attached. It was stressed that separating an insecurely attached 18-month child would cause emotional problems for the child later on.

There was overall strong agreement that MBUs were important and a useful place to provide support for mothers in prison. It was felt that families should be involved with the process as much as possible, both for the child and the mother's interests.

Impact on mother

Across all interviewees the extensive impact of separation on mothers, both in terms of physical and mental health, was acknowledged:

I mean it's an absolute trauma and especially for so many of these mothers who...you know, for whom, this is a cycle and they've had a lot of loss and trauma in attachment relationships themselves which has led them on a particular path which has led them into...whatever unlawful activity which has led them to where they are now. (Interviewee 3, 148-152)

Physical aspects highlighted were sleep and appetite (and the concomitant effects on mental health) as well as somatisation. The emotional effects were described in detail (anger, irritability, withdrawal, catatonia, dysregulation, feeling devastated, demotivated and hopeless). Specific effects on mental health included: anxiety, depression, PTSD, suicide and self-harm. There were discussions around the impact on substance misuse, including street drugs, alcohol and painkillers and their role in alleviating anxiety for the women:

I know that using substances is their response to anxiety, you know unendurable and intolerable. And the smoking is very heavy and access to drugs, if that's available or drinking. (Interviewee 2, 418-419)

The psychological effect of uncertainty was discussed and how this affects mental health and the mothers' ability to bond with their child. Finally, trust was discussed and how the experience of separation could destroy the women's trust in professionals, services and other people in general.

Implications for practice

The implications for practice were detailed and covered preparation for separation, support following preparation, support during pregnancy, general support and suggestions and the roles of MBUs. The key points to emerge were

clarity and the women's involvement in preparing for separation. In terms of support following separation, there was agreement that this should be a therapeutic space to explore feelings, whether individually or in groups:

I think that they need to have a follow-up of some 6 to 8 sessions. I mean Care Confidential or C for Change do a very good journey programme with women who've lost their children. It's physiologically very shocking to have a baby taken away from you and I think that the women need a place to be able to talk about that, to have their feelings acknowledged. (Interviewee 2, 103-106)

General support focused on the importance of contact visits and how these should be carried out, the role of family support and awareness of sexual violence in all support situations. As mentioned above, MBUs were repeatedly highlighted as they were seen to provide a place where much of the required support could be offered.

Staff support needs

Specific recommendations for staff support included knowledge and training and space to explore feelings and reactions (either individually or in staff groups). Specific training suggestions were: child development knowledge (particularly through films), mental health and listening skills, sensitive conversations, and trauma informed approaches, especially around the impact of sexual abuse and domestic violence.

3.3 Child and family practitioner perspectives

The aim of this study was to incorporate the views of practitioners, given that prison staff experiences are being examined. It was an opportunity to understand the perspectives of child and family practitioners who are not in the

prison setting and without the same institutional constraints. However, they may be working with similar families and involved in mother-child separations.

Given the role of third sector organisations working in prisons and supporting women on release it is clear that the boundaries between 'prison' and 'non-prison' staff are blurred. A survey enabled me to reach a wider range of practitioners and relate their practice-related reflections to the theoretical perspectives of the expert interviewees.

Aim:

- a) Investigate the views of child/family practitioners and researchers on current prison policy and practice.

Method

Survey Design: This online survey questionnaire was developed from the REAs, the expert interviews and my work at Birth Companions. It focused on key aspects of policy and practice concerning separation of mothers in prison from their children under two years. The responses were all on Likert scales with some free text boxes for participants to explain their answers. A brief demographics section was included to gather data on participants, including their occupation. Categories such as ethnicity were based on ONS categories. Kelley et al.'s (2003) recommendations on good practice in survey research were followed. [Please see appendix 10 for the schedule.]

Ethics: Participants were informed about their anonymity and confidentiality before proceeding and had the right to withdraw. The questions were not about personal experience; they asked for commentary on current policy and practice, so no distress was anticipated, and participants had the option not to answer any questions.

Recruitment: 50 child/family researchers and practitioners were recruited via personal and departmental contacts, professional networks and snowball sampling. Specific professional groups were targeted such as social workers, psychotherapists and psychologists; however, survey dissemination relied on the goodwill of participants. Whilst not a statistically representative sample, the wide range of professionals who took part, and the high numbers suggest that the results are arguably some indicator of professional opinion.

Data Analysis: Demographics were used descriptively for the sample. The Likert scale data were analysed categorically in SPSS and Excel to ascertain the level of agreement and disagreement with current prison policy. Free text answers were analysed with thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). (See Figure 3, Chapter 2 for step-by-step process.)

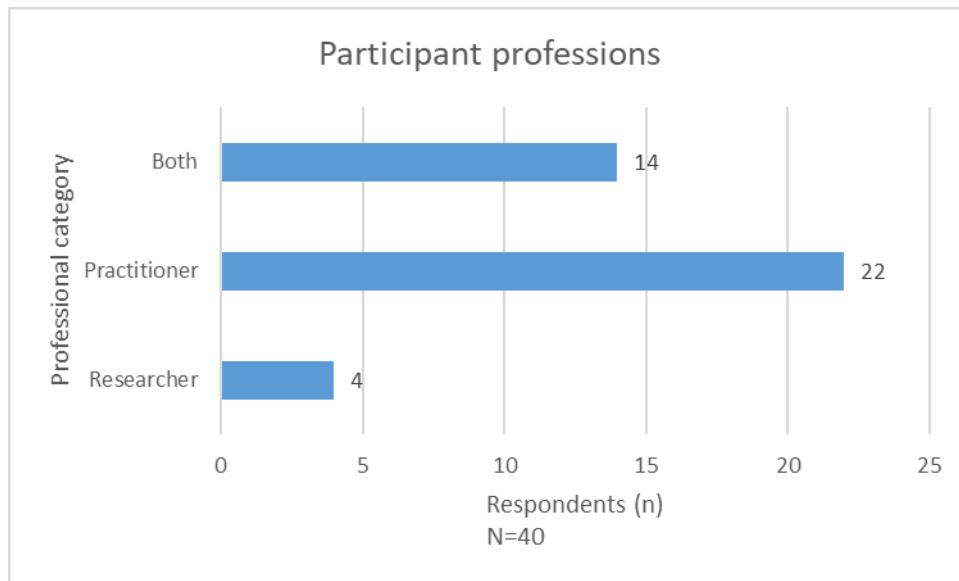
Participants

The survey was open for two months from September 2016 and there were 50 responses. There were 13 partial responses. Of these, 10 were excluded for the following reasons: no consent and partial data completion (n=6); only Likert scales were completed (n=2); only demographics were completed (n=2). Three partial responses were included because they filled out the demographics and the Likert scales. This was considered to be enough data for the numerical responses. Following the data cleaning process, there were N = 40.

Profession and sector

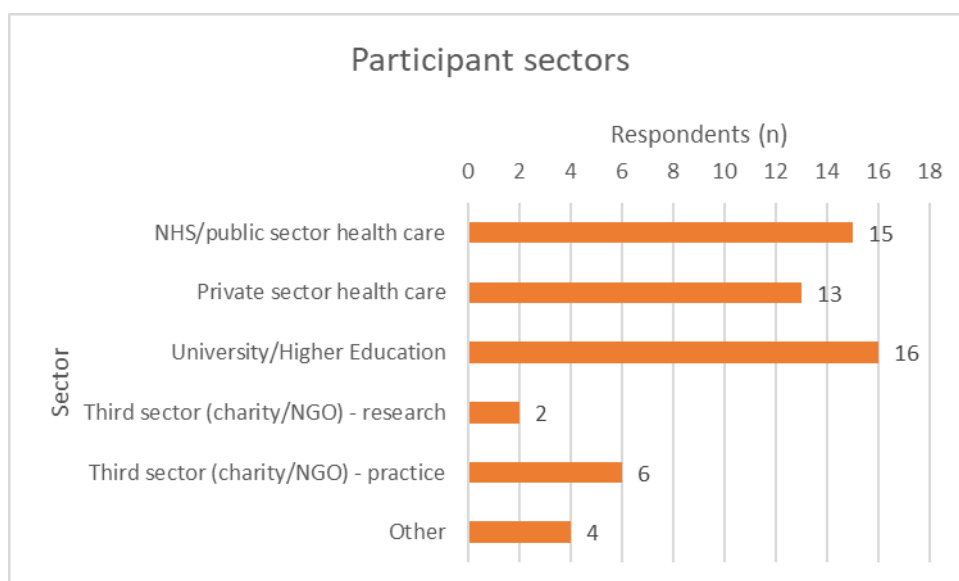
Participants were asked to assign themselves to a professional category, as well as being given the opportunity to define their job title.

Figure 7 - Participant professions



90% of participants in the survey were practitioners (n=36) either solely or as part of a dual role. The range of professions from the job title questions included: psychotherapist, social worker, clinical psychologist, counsellor and birth parent worker. Psychotherapists and clinical psychologists formed over half of the participants (n=23).

Figure 8 - Participant sectors



Participants could select as many sectors as relevant, and what this shows is that most are based in health and education settings (n=44) and very few in the third sector (n=8). Participants worked in one to four different sectors, however the average was for participants to work in only one sector.

Professional experience

Combined, the 40 participants had 646 years of professional experience, with a range of 5 to 35 years and an average of 16 years. This was higher than expected and would certainly mean that the survey could be considered as 'expert' literature. 31% (n=13) had experience in a forensic setting and 95% (n=38) were UK-based. Whilst the survey did not have any location criteria, the high number of UK participants means it is directly applicable to this policy and practice context.

Gender

93% of the participants were female (39/40). This is probably a reflection of both the sampling technique (all of the primary contacts were female), and of the gender bias in health and social care professions in general. It perhaps reflects the content which focuses solely on maternal experiences, rather than parenting in general.

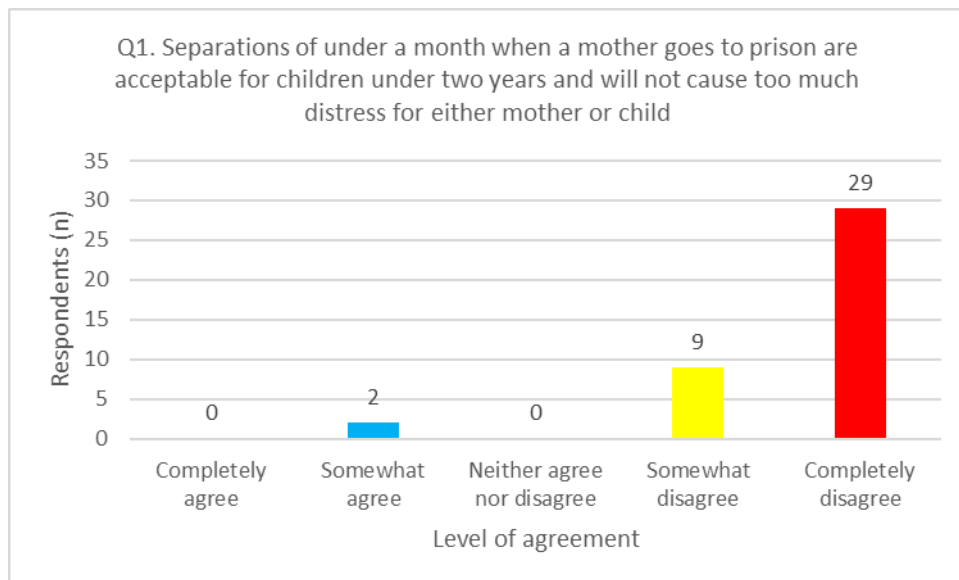
Use of attachment theory

All participants (n=40) reported that their work was informed by attachment theory and the range of theorists used in their work was broad – 38 different theorists were mentioned. The most frequently occurring were Bowlby, Ainsworth, Main and Winnicott. 30% (n=12) of participants used attachment measures in their work, and 15 different measures were specifically reported. It is possible that more are used as there were some vague descriptions which were not counted.

Key findings

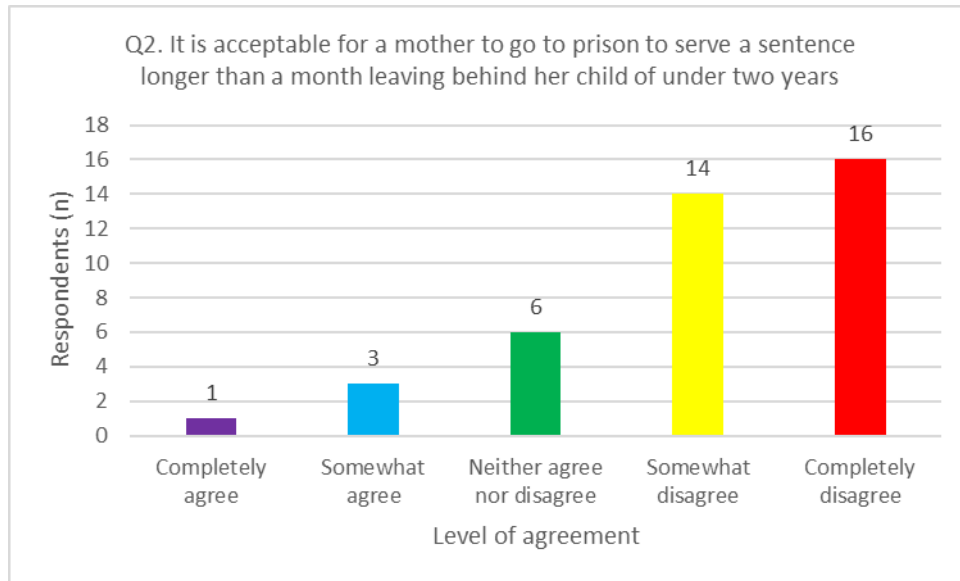
This section presents the main findings from the practitioner survey. The body of the survey comprises eight Likert scales which assess the level of agreement with current prison policy and its potential impact. Some commentary is provided question by question for the Likert scales, however, all the results are discussed in more detail in relation to the other studies in the discussion section. Overall the results show a critique of current prison policy and practice. Participants unpick the complexity of the situation and call for more individualised responses to separation, rather than blanket rules.

Figure 9 - Separations of under one month



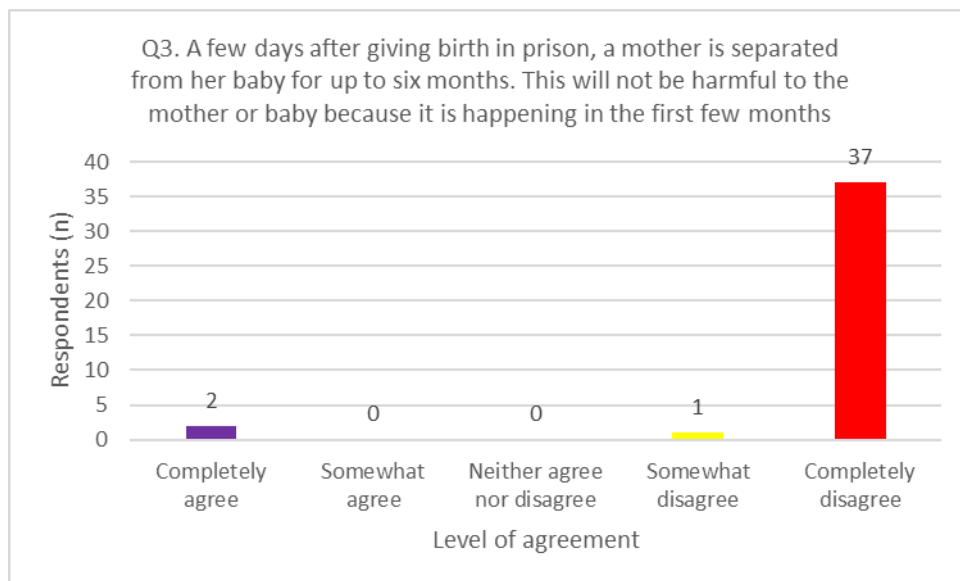
The first question asks about the possible distress for separations of under one month, and 95% (n=38) disagreed with the idea that short separations would not be distressing. This was reflected in the follow-up questions where 93% (n=37) were concerned for the child and 85% (n=34) were concerned for the mother (n=34). 5% (n=2) did not have any concerns for the mother (as opposed to 7% who were unsure with regards to the child, and the remaining 10% who were unsure with regards to the mother).

Figure 10 - Separations of over a month



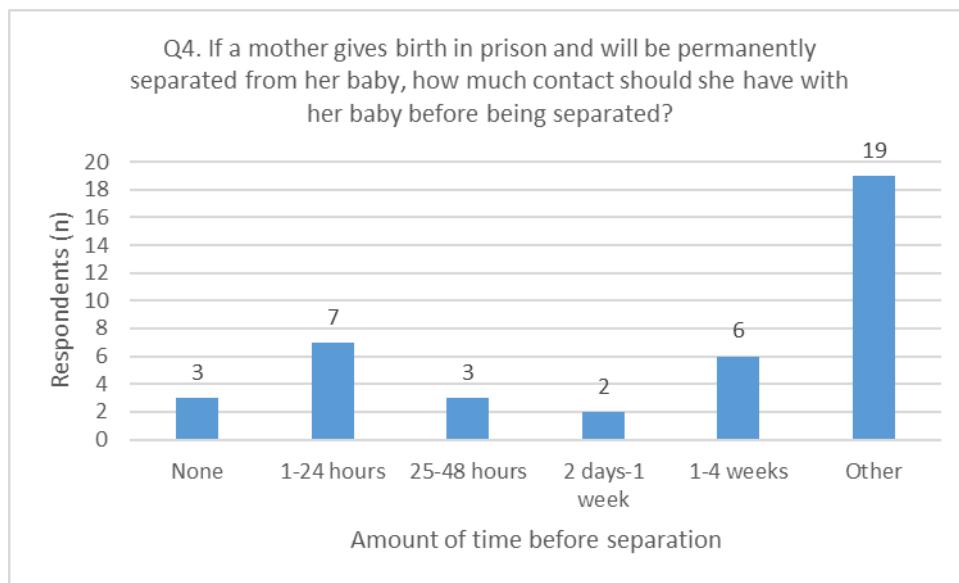
This question asks about the acceptability of separations of over a month. There is a similar distribution of answers as for the previous question but 25% (n=10) either agree it is acceptable or are unsure, and 40% (n=16) completely disagree with this situation. The text answers for this question particularly suggested that respondents were considering the women’s convictions and sentences and their ability to care for their children. In general, there was a call for a case-by-case approach to these longer separations.

Figure 11 - Six-month separation following birth



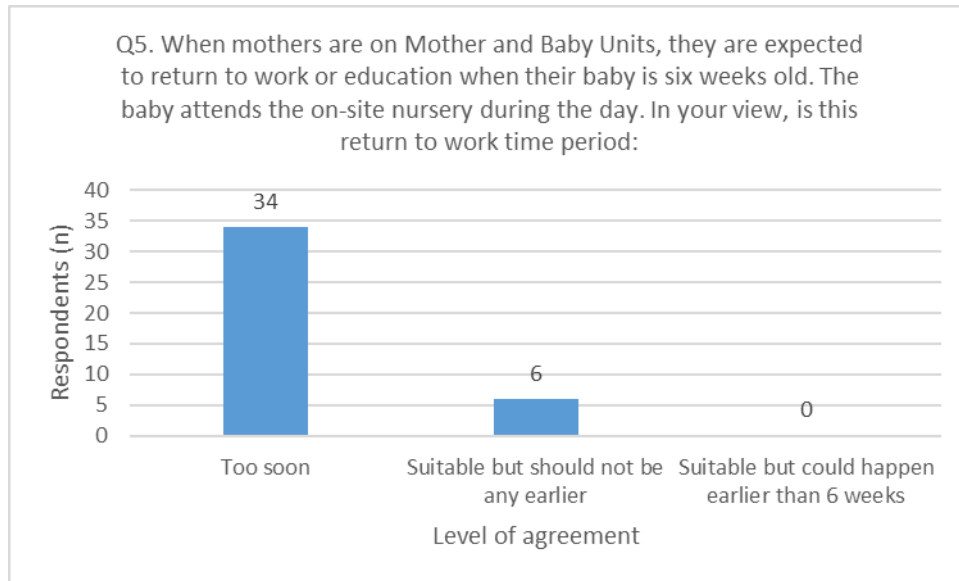
93% (n=37) of participants agree that an extended separation in the first six months would be harmful. The text answers stressed the potential for long term, irreparable damage as a result of this early separation. It appears from the text responses that the two participants who replied 'completely agree', in fact disagree with the policy, so these responses should perhaps be excluded.

Figure 12 - Contact before permanent separation



This question about the amount of contact mothers should have before permanent separation from their babies produced a broad range of answers, unlike most of the other questions. As Figure 12 shows, 48% (n=19) chose 'other' and their free text responses focused on the mother's choice for amount of contact with consideration for the mother's risk of harming her child. As for many questions, free-text answers included repeated suggestions of a case-by-case approach, e.g. 'I think it is up to the individual and depends on the individual situation. All options could be distressing and would be experienced differently by different people.'

Figure 13 - Return to work/education at six weeks



85% (n=34) felt that mothers returning to work at six weeks was too soon. 15% (n=6) felt this was a suitable time but should not be any earlier. The text responses revealed a strong belief amongst participants that there should be parity with mothers in the community (so a minimum of 6 months to a year before returning to work), and there were concerns that this return to work could disrupt breastfeeding. However, others stated that it would depend on the number of hours of separation each day and a small number suggested there could be benefits for mothers to have a break from their baby, e.g. 'some mothers may need the social aspect for their mental health.'

Figure 14 - Separation at 18 months following MBU admission

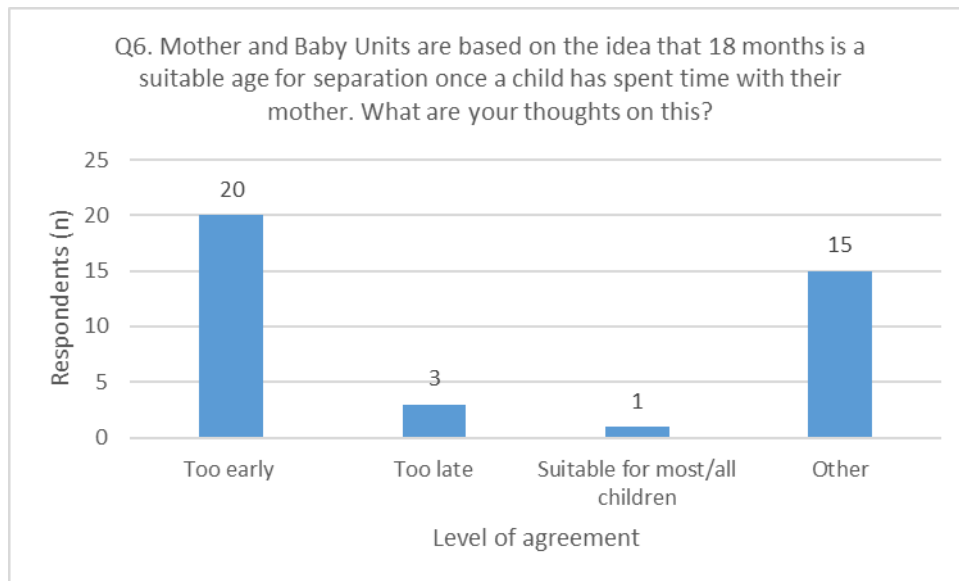
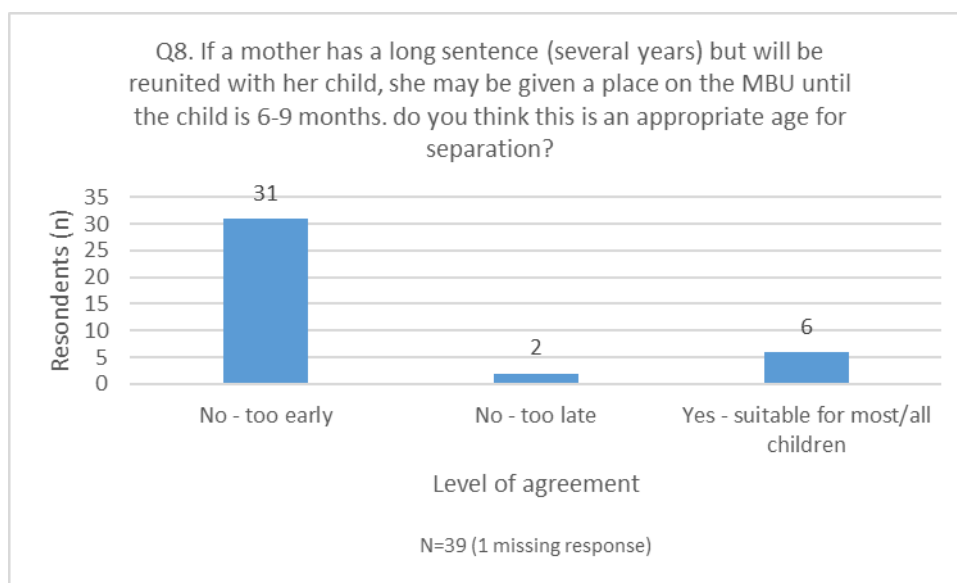


Figure 14 addresses a question that NOMS is particularly interested in and what was found in this study was that 50% (n=20) of participants believe 18 months is too early an age for separation, and 38% (n=15) selected 'other'. These free text responses drew out the complexity of having a single age limit for separation to apply to all children. The overall view from the text responses was that this was too early but should be decided on a case-by-case basis. Additional factors such as level of contact following separation and the nature of the separation itself (e.g. whether it is sudden) were considered: 'Normally, separation occurs gradually. A sudden and complete separation at any point is very harmful to the child and would be extremely painful for the mother.'

Figure 15 - Separation when mother has a long sentence



78% (n=31) believe that separation at age six to nine months is too early when mothers have a long sentence, and will be reunited with their children. The text responses drew out that 18 months would be better, although it is worth bearing in mind that at least 50% of respondents felt that 18 months was too early. There was concern that it would possibly be traumatising to separate at this early age.

Main concerns for separated mothers and children

The free-text responses for what the primary concerns for mothers were centred on distress and the risk of deteriorating mental health. There were worries about the mothers' future attachments with the separated child, future children and other relationships: 'The mother is likely to begin a grieving process that will lead to depression and a poor attachment with the child'. These concerns were raised for children with a focus on current attachments, and distress for the children and their future mental health: 'Loss of primary attachment figure gives rise to emotional difficulties and later relationship difficulties. It is a traumatic loss.'

Summary

This group of attachment-informed practitioners and researchers conveyed serious concerns about current separation policy in UK prisons. Whilst a range of views were represented, there was general agreement about the harms of this policy and reflection on the complexity of the whole situation of separation. These questions were answered with reference to wider issues relevant to imprisoned women's mental health, sentencing practices and women's offences in general. The survey raised questions about how a psychological theory, such as attachment theory, is applied in policy and practice and whether this is actually possible. For such a high number of attachment-informed professionals to disagree with a supposedly attachment-informed policy raises the question as to whether a survey of a broader, more representative range of professionals would yield the same findings. Or perhaps the survey has revealed some of the problems caused when a complex psychological theory is used to inform policy.

3.4 Overview of findings

This mixed-methods study is an investigation of the views of expert attachment academics and practitioners on current prison policy and practice concerning women in prison who have been separated from their infants aged under 18 months. Whilst having such a small-scale study limits the generalisability of the findings, it is hoped that the findings from the interviews and the survey as part of a wider study serve to broaden the examination of the role of attachment theory in prison policy and practice.

Whilst there were variations in the literature in terms of the use of attachment theory there was a consensus that separation is traumatic for women and causes them significant distress. This consensus continued in the interviews and the survey results, with details of the type of distress suffered and attachment-informed suggestions for psychological support. Whereas the policy literature had few specific practice recommendations, the grey literature

(practice-based) and the interviews, in particular, included many detailed practice recommendations. The needs of the staff, however, were in general overlooked.

It is clear from the interviews that there is overall agreement that mothers should be supported to provide 'good enough' parenting and that separation should not happen apart from in exceptional circumstances. Even when separation does occur, the vital importance of contact was repeatedly highlighted. Likewise, the survey respondents broadly felt that mothers should be able to remain with their child, except in cases where their offence relates to their ability to care for their children. This clear focus from a small, but diverse (in terms of their attachment theory orientation) group of participants fits very much with the literature, recommendations and policy. However, this wide agreement seems only to accentuate the extent to which this is not being implemented.

Concrete practice suggestions from the interviewees regarding preparation and support for mothers matched and developed those from the literature reviews, and were grounded in participants' work with attachment theory. The interviews highlighted the findings of HMIP reports and provided specificity to the grey and academic literature in terms of details of practice. With regards to the key aspects of practice pointed out in the literature reviews, the mother's involvement and role of the staff are both seen as key. Mothers' involvement in decisions around separation were emphasised in the survey, as was the need for an individualised, case-by-case approach to separation.

Psychological support following separation was acknowledged as crucial, whether this takes place in groups or individually. This provides justification for the third sector practice confirmed in the grey literature and the focus on psychological distress in the survey. However, the role of psychological support

in prison has been critiqued (e.g. Kilty, 2012). This was not considered in the interviews or the literature, neither how interventions or those delivering them might be perceived and related to punishment, nor the thought that reducing distress could just be a means of camouflaging the prison experience (Kilty, 2012).

The theme of 'separation as trauma' was present across the literature reviews in the policy, grey and academic literature. However, there was far more detail on the negative impact of separation for mothers in the interviews and the survey, far extending the theme of 'separation as trauma'. What was particularly emphasised in the interviews was that any support for this traumatic situation should consider that this group of women is particularly vulnerable, in terms of mental health, their own attachment, and histories of trauma and abuse. The significance of imprisoned women's histories of trauma and abuse is repeatedly highlighted in the literature (Carlson & Shafer, 2010; Clements-Nolle, Wolden, & Bargmann-Losche, 2009; Green et al., 2016), as well as the potentially traumatising impact of prison on women (Moloney & Moller, 2009).

The role of trauma-informed practice

The central significance of women's trauma histories is emphasised in the very small and interesting practitioner literature on working with mothers in prisons in the UK and Ireland (Baldwin, 2015; O'Malley & Devaney, 2016). Furthermore there has been a recent attempt to embed trauma-informed practice via training across the female prison estate (Covington, 2018). Trauma-informed practice refers to services which apply an understanding of trauma in all aspects of their delivery, this includes striving for survivor safety, control and choice (Bowen & Murshid, 2016) and an understanding of how services might retraumatise survivors (Sweeney, Clement, Filson & Kennedy, 2016). The aim is for staff to understand the impact of trauma on people's lives, including their coping

mechanisms, and how this relates to mental and physical health and substance use (Bowen & Murshid, 2016).

The empirical literature, primarily in mental health settings, is sparse but promising (e.g. Azeem, Aujla, Rammerth, Binsfeld & Jones, 2011; Gatz et al., 2007; Greenwald et al., 2012; Morrissey et al., 2005). Emerson and Ramaswamy (2015) highlight the importance of understanding the theories underpinning trauma-informed programmes for better delivered programmes and research. Attachment theory might offer an additional theory to support trauma-informed practice, particularly as it offers a framework in which to consider staff-prisoner interactions which are perhaps overlooked when trauma theory (e.g. Herman, 1992a) alone underpins a programme or intervention.

The importance of trauma in the care of women in prison is highlighted in the practice literature. A model of care for women in prison was put forward by UK prison researchers which stated that because of their histories, women need gender-sensitive provision that builds on their existing strengths (Bartlett, Walker, Harty & Abel, 2014). They pointed out that NOMS are aware of the interdependence of past experiences and current lives in prison. Indeed, the focus from the interviewees on comprehensive, trauma and attachment-informed mental health support, with an understanding in relation to substance misuse to feed into staff training fits very much with the current programme being rolled out across the women's estate.

The attachment experts and family practitioners in this study highlighted the importance of providing support for mother-child separations within the context of understanding the wider traumas women in prison have suffered. However, despite the relative wealth of literature on the critical importance of considering the incarcerated women's histories of trauma and abuse in prison practice, it does not appear as if much has changed since Corston pointed out that prison

was not the right place for women who have experienced abuse and violence (Corston, 2007). It is unclear how many staff have attended the trauma-informed training in the female prison estate and whether this is changing the work culture (HMP prison officer, personal communication, 2016). Understanding of the impact of trauma is not lacking. The problem seems to be in implementing trauma-informed practice in prisons and evaluating its impact.

Implications of a lack of critique

The challenge in implementing trauma-informed practice in prisons may be related to the lack of critical discussion about whether the (important) principles of safety and choice are in fact achievable. Kilty (2012) emphasises that ideas of autonomy and empowerment are potentially impossible in prison contexts. However these were key ideas in the interviews and often in trauma-informed practice. Indeed, whilst the concrete suggestions offered in survey and interviews seem straightforward, for example providing clear preparation for separation and parenting support, or extending MBU and visiting provision, perhaps the effect of the prison environment itself is being overlooked.

Neither the interviews or the survey data nor the literature reviews critique the ideas of attachment and trauma or the implications of applying these into the prison setting. MacVarish, Lee and Lowe (2015) explore the idea of attachment as a 'regime of truth' which adds to a raft of psychological 'norms' created by health and welfare professionals. This article highlights how the emphasis on early years and the state's growing involvement in parenting via policies which stress the importance of the early years 'also risk the child's well-being by hastening their permanent removal from birth families' (MacVarish et al., 2015, p.265). Whilst attachment theory has the potential to add to the support for women in prison, it has the potential to further pathologise them as 'bad parents' even when this bears no relation to their conviction (as in most cases).

This risk of pathologisation is evident in the literature, which highlights the risks of trauma-informed practice in two ways. One is that the idea of 'trauma', responses to trauma, and the related diagnosis of 'PTSD', (which one interviewee pointed out), are based on an assumption that responses to trauma are in fact pathological and need changing (Burstow, 2005; Summerfield, 2001). The second problem is that being trauma-informed (i.e. having the knowledge or awareness) does not always translate into a socially informed approach (i.e. the skills) (Tseris, 2013; Berliner & Kolko, 2016), thus staff may still respond in punitive or medicalised ways.

Finally, one interesting review of trauma-informed practices draws out the importance of a paradigm shift across the entire organisation (rather than mere changes in work practices), along with ongoing evaluation and cultural sensitivity (Sweeney et al., 2016). Whilst survey respondents did raise broader questions around women's mental health, criminal sentencing and the women's prison estate more generally, systemic ideas around intervention are missing from the literature reviews and the interviews, suggesting a need perhaps for a more integrated approach which considers the role of both attachment theory and systems theory (e.g. Alexander, 2015).

This group of attachment-informed practitioners and researchers conveyed concern about current separation policy in UK prisons. Whilst a range of views were represented, there was general agreement about the harms of this policy and reflection on the complexity of the whole situation of separation. These questions were answered with reference to wider issues relevant to imprisoned women's mental health, sentencing practices and women's offences in general. The survey raised questions about how a psychological theory, such as attachment theory, is applied in policy and practice. Given that such a high proportion of attachment-informed professionals in the survey disagreed with a supposedly attachment-informed policy, there are two possible explanations. Either the survey is completely non-representative of family practitioners and

needs to include a broader range of professionals who hold more similar positions to the policy, or the survey has revealed some of the problems when a complex psychological theory is used to inform policy.

Conclusion

Across the literature reviews, interviews, and survey there was strong agreement that separation from their children aged under 18 months for imprisoned mothers is traumatic and deeply distressing. The overriding message about current policy is that it causes harm to women. However, the message is more complex when it comes to attachment theory since it can be used and understood in different ways. Despite apparently using attachment theory, current prison policy does not specify what kind of support women should receive when undergoing the experience of separation, acknowledged as traumatic by the prison service. Whilst practitioners are using attachment theory in their work with separated, imprisoned women, as shown by the grey literature review, researchers and practitioners in the interviews and survey offer criticisms of current policy using attachment theory.

The current prison policy emphasis on 'the best interests of the child' has potentially obscured the impact on mothers and left a vulnerable group of women at even greater risk of mental health needs. Whilst there is awareness of this situation there appear to be blocks to implementing an appropriate response, since many of these concerns have been repeatedly raised since The Corston Report in 2007. Given the prevalence of attachment theory across the literature and its use by practitioners, there might be scope to use attachment theory to inform policy and practice to develop appropriate support for staff and mothers in prison. Many practitioners use attachment theory to reflect on the role of historic trauma in the lives of women in prison so there appears to be some precedent for its use, particularly given the current interest in trauma-informed approaches in prisons. However, using attachment theory in prisons

should not be done without understanding the potential harm caused. This will be revisited in more detail in Chapter 6, and the limitations and implications of this study will be addressed in Chapter 7. The next chapter will take the first steps to understanding this through considering the perspectives of previously incarcerated mothers.

4 MOTHERS' PERSPECTIVES

Mothers marginalized by society—whether through poverty, imprisonment, mental illness, or immigration status—nevertheless retain strong maternal ties and suffer greatly when separated from their children, with common responses. Conditions that maintain the attachment bond mitigate the impact of the separation for the mother: contact between mother and child; the mother's control over some of the circumstances of the separation; the presence of support in her role as mother; the mother's knowledge that her child is safe and in good hands; and the ability to find a larger purpose or meaning in the separation. With better attention to the mother's experience, we can benefit both mother and child. (Schen, 2005, p.242)

This chapter presents the findings of the interview study with formerly incarcerated women. It begins with a non-systematic overview of relevant literature to contextualise the interviews. I have drawn extensively on Enos' (2001) magisterial study of imprisoned mothers and used her work to frame the literature around three topics: substance misuse, idealised understandings of motherhood and mothering identity. These three topics resonate with the analysis of the women's interviews and they provide an outline of some of the key research in this area. The chapter then provides a summary of the methods

used with some additional details to the general overview in Chapter 2. The participants are then described before I present the four main themes and the participants' suggestions for improving the system.

4.1 Context

The key work which provides the context and inspiration for much recent research on mothers in prison is Enos' (2001) sociological study of mothering in prison. Whilst the study is based in the US seventeen years ago, the English and Welsh prison system bears some similarities in terms of its female population, harsher sentencing and the impact on women. Enos' (2001) work draws on the mothers' own words and explores the range of ways her participants understand and practise mothering and how they protect their identity as a mother. She highlights that incarcerated women are just as committed to parenting values as all mothers, however she problematises the notion that children and family support can be a protective factor for all women following imprisonment. For Enos (2001), one of the key factors which affects a mother's relationship with and likelihood of custody of her child both during and following incarceration is substance abuse.

Role of substance abuse

Epidemiological research shows gender differences in substance use (Tuchman, 2010) and this is echoed in prison research. In a systematic review and meta-analysis of substance use disorders in prisoners across 10 countries, Fazel, Yoon and Hayes (2017) identified that women had significantly more drug problems than men. The ten studies reviewed found a pooled prevalence of 51% (95% CI = 43-58; range 30-69%) for drug use disorders in female prisoners (as opposed to 24% in male prisoners). Alcohol use disorders were more consistent at about a quarter for both sexes (Fazel et al., 2017). This confirms earlier research which has found higher rates of drug use in women (Fazel et al., 2006; Langan & Pelissier, 2001) and that women are more likely to use hard drugs such as heroin (Borrill et al., 2003).

An MOJ (2013) report on longitudinal survey data found further gender-specific associations with drug use. Women were more likely than men to use Class A drugs in the four weeks before prison and women's offending was more likely to support their own or another's drug use. Drug use was associated with reoffending. The elevated levels of drug use amongst women in prison are important to consider in relation to mother-child separations. If about half of women in prison are using drugs (and these were roughly the levels in the prisons in which I was based) then it is safe to assume many mothers of young children are affected by drug use. In terms of separation, these mothers will most likely be excluded from prison MBUs and less likely to reunite with their children on release. Whilst there are community-based drug and alcohol rehabilitation MBUs, this is not the case in prisons. In addition, Forrester and Harwin's (2006) research shows that children with substance misusing parents comprised 62% of all children undergoing care proceedings. They found that women in this situation were generally living in poverty, with a substance misusing partner and often experiencing violence. Unsurprisingly, this parallels the experience of many women in prison. Furthermore Forrester and Harwin (2006), in the same vein as Enos (2001), discovered that many mothers would not approach services for support for fear that their children would be removed.

Their fears are probably justified when Broadhurst et al.'s (2017) research on recurrent care is taken into account. In their latent case analysis of Cafcass (Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) records (which incorporated 65 000 birth mothers), the largest group of women undergoing recurrent care proceedings i.e. repeated child removals, were women suffering the 'toxic trio' of substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse. Indeed, of the five groups they identified, three of them included substance misuse as a key feature and, in addition, women in these groups were more likely to have criminal records. Moreover, they found that one in four women undergoing proceedings return (i.e. they have further children removed).

Whilst undeniably there are mothers whose drug use means they are unable to care for their children, Kennedy (2013) suggests that there may be assumptions and stereotyping by social services professionals and the judiciary about women's ability to parent. In relation to this combination of drug use and prison time, she goes on to say:

The contradictions inherent in idealized notions of motherhood involve an element of blaming women who fail to live up to those ideals and may fuel legal decisions that incarcerated women are incapable of caring for their children and unworthy of aid. (Kennedy, 2013, p.88)

Kennedy (2013) highlights this clash in beliefs about motherhood as perhaps the underlying explanation for why some mothers are separated from their children, rather than any specific indicators of harm to children. Indeed, as Stone, Liddell and Martinovic (2017) point out, imprisoned mothers may be regarded as addicts by professionals regardless of whether they have ever used substances. The idea of 'unworthy of aid' is worth underlining given that, as Kennedy (2013) points out, substance misuse is related to experiences of childhood abuse and domestic violence, which relates to Cunha and Granja's (2013) suggestion that prison is the 'only social agency available for poor populations' (p.107).

Thus, the relationship between substance misuse and child removal is a strong one. For separated mothers this means that, not only will they need additional support in prison, but they remain at risk of child removal even after release. Furthermore, as Kennedy (2013) discusses, child removal can result in mothers returning to misusing substances where previously they had been drug-free for a period of time. This is described as a dissociative practice to manage the pain of separation in one study of mothers separated from their children through drug use (Kenny et al., 2015).

Once in prison, motherhood is used as a goal or elusive prize for women in drug rehabilitation programmes, but this comes with its own challenges as Kilty and Dej (2012) explore. They point out that drug use is defined ‘as the antithesis of “good” or intensive mothering’ (Kilty & Dej, 2012, p.9), but if women are unable to regain custody of their children this will more than likely lead to relapse. As they go on to explain:

The danger in “anchoring” identity to an essentialized conceptualization of motherhood is that it may create a feedback loop of abstaining from drugs “to be a good mom,” while at the same time using drugs to cope with feelings of inadequacy in that role.
(p.11)

Kilty and Dej (2012) underline the impossible position of imprisoned drug-using mothers. If they fail in their programme they are likely to blame themselves, rather than perhaps an unrealistic ideal of mothering. Indeed, motherhood is used to suggest that overcoming an addiction is a mere question of choice – choosing parenting over using drugs (Kilty & Dej, 2012). This oversimplification in prison programming is rebutted most effectively by a participant in Segrave and Carlton’s (2010) research. Within their interviews with 25 previously imprisoned mothers, a participant explains how drug addiction is similar to being in prison, and in fact imprisonment is simply an extension of this experience. An experience which they argue is caused by traumatic histories and present challenges – which relates to the earlier discussion of the profiles of women in prison (see Chapter 1). Thus, there is a strong connection between imprisonment, substance misuse and child removal, which can be lost if only one aspect is the focus of research. As Kilty and Dej (2010), highlight, substance misusing mothers in prison are often contrasted with an idealised concept of motherhood and it is to this which I now turn.

Idealised understandings of motherhood

While focusing on the particular impact of substance misuse, which is a key factor for child separation in prison and the community, it seems evident that part of what affects judgements about imprisoned women's 'parenting ability' is a normative idea of a 'good mother'. As Eljdupovic and Bromwich (2013) explain:

Incarcerated mothers are 'doubly stigmatized' or 'double odd'. They are where most of the women are not or should not be. They are in jail, like men. At the same time, incarcerated mothers are not doing what social expectations dictate that 'good' mothers should do; they are not providing daily care to their children. Rather, they are separated from their children, leaving them in the care of someone else, often a stranger. (p.1)

It is this tension between incarcerated mothers and 'good' mothers which runs throughout the literature. Enos (2001), throughout her work highlights the different understandings of parenting and the mother-child bond, with a focus on race and ethnicity. From her sociological perspective Enos (2001) discusses the ideology of motherhood and the assumptions behind it, such as complete absorption in 'mothering', which are presented as natural but are social productions. She questions why anyone would expect mothers in prison to understand mothering in the same way given their worlds are so different from what others have described as very 'middle class' ideals of mothering (e.g. Eljdupovic & Bromwich, 2013), 'highly idealized and essentialised' (Cunha & Granja, 2013, p.115), and particularly focused on a notion of 'intensive mothering' (Scobie & Gazso, 2013, p.150). This has been echoed in attachment theory critiques by Keller and Bard (2017) as discussed in Chapter 1, section one.

Enos (2001) discusses the implications of differing ideas around mothering, particularly in terms of attitudes to shared care and fostering for incarcerated mothers. In the US context, she points out that foster care is seen as 'white',

and black and Hispanic extended families are more likely to take care of children and less likely to be estranged from their imprisoned daughter. In her research, Enos (2001) discusses Collins' (1990) work around other-mothering and points out how 'shared child keeping has long been a feature of black communities and communities of color but has only recently characterized middle-class families' (p.101). Enos (2001) considers that some women believe that others are capable of raising their children, whilst others see any other caretaker as ineffectual.

The impact of mothers' relationships with caretakers during mothers' incarceration is highlighted throughout research with imprisoned mothers (Enos, 2001; Granja et al., 2015) and thus forms part of the critique of the inadequacy of the construct of 'intensive mothering'. Furthermore, the impact on imprisoned women because of this normative assumption is suggested to be intensive guilt 'compounded by an "ideology of blame" stemming from the current social construct of parenting' (Granja et al., 2015, p.11). What Granja et al. (2015) make clear from their research with imprisoned Portuguese mothers is how the ideology of 'intensive parenting' is used both to judge imprisoned mothers as incapable, but is then used as an impossible goal for them to aim for, which leaves them blaming themselves further. What this obscures, of course, is the wider social factors, such as poverty and violence, which lead to mothers' imprisonment in the first place.

In addition to the problematic role of idealised notions of mothers inside prisons, ideals of mothering relate to prison policy more broadly. However, theorists emphasise different perspectives. Herzog-Evans (2013) suggests that countries which value motherhood more allow children to stay longer with their mothers in prison. She focuses on a divide in Europe between Latin countries, Germany and The Netherlands which value motherhood. Meanwhile in the UK and Scandinavia, she proposes, where mothers and fathers are seen as interchangeable and where the state intervenes more, mothers and children are

separated more often. Kilty and Dej (2010) and Hannah-Moffat (2001) in their focus on the US and Canada, argue rather that it is a focus on 'gender-responsive' programmes and 'woman-centred' prisons which have promoted idealised notions of motherhood which are used to govern women who do not fit these normative beliefs. In her historical overview of the management of imprisoned women, Hannah-Moffatt (2001) argues that these normative ideas are a key part of female regimes, including both directly as in for example the case of in-prison parenting programmes and as part of the 'feminisation of penal regimes' (p.197) in general.

Thus, research with imprisoned mothers seems to draw attention to tensions between normative assumptions surrounding motherhood and how these are understood and responded to by imprisoned mothers but also used by the prison system more generally. The last type of research I will now examine concerns more individualised mothering identities.

Mothering identity in prison

Recent research has focused on mothers' identity and individual strategies within a construct of an 'imprisoned mother'. This focuses on the emotional impact and the continued impact on maternal identity following release (Baldwin, 2017), and how mothers distance themselves from stigmatised associations with imprisonment (Aiello & McQueeney, 2016).

The individualised focus is perhaps epitomised by Celinska and Siegel's (2010) typology of coping strategies used by separated mothers in prison [see Chapter 1, section 2 for further details]. Whilst they did acknowledge the impact of wider systems on mothers:

The extent to which incarcerated mothers can maintain their authority is tied to the cooperation of the children's caregivers. Women who most effectively mothered from prison were those whose children's guardians included them to the largest extent possible in the

children's lives and facilitated communication between the mother and child.' (Celinska & Siegel, 2010, p.462)

The strategies Celinska and Siegel (2010) discussed are very much centred on individual mothers, rather than support systems which might alleviate mothers' suffering. The strength of Enos' (2001) work lies in her consideration of identity within a sociological approach. Enos (2001) constantly contextualises the strategies she explores, such as how incarcerated mothers maintain their mothering identity and defend this identity from threat (i.e. that they are unfit to be mothers), and how mothers negotiate ownership of their children with caregivers. Mothers are not a homogenous group. Their experiences of mothering are affected by their experience of race, poverty and their histories of trauma. Whilst the psychological literature does not deny the mothers' backgrounds, it appears to avoid theorising the relationship between the experience of separation for mothers and their identity with the impact of wider social systems. Thus there is scope to develop the coping research beyond individual strategies to understand mothers' experiences and then consider appropriate forms of support in the light of their experiences.

Aim:

- a) Explore how mothers in prison coped with separation from their infants and how they can be best supported.
- b) Make relevant and actionable recommendations.

4.2 Method

Interview design: A semi-structured interview schedule was designed with a focus on how mothers had coped during their time in prison separated from their child or children. There were questions about their experience of support in prison, their ideas around parenting more generally and their opinions of how they would improve support structure. The schedule was flexible so participants could just answer what they felt comfortable discussing and at the end there was an opportunity to give feedback. [See appendix 11 for schedule.]

Ethics: Participants were given information about the study in advance of the interview and time to ask any questions before signing the consent form [see appendix 7]. I reminded them about the limits to confidentiality and that the interview would not affect their support from their recruiting organisation. I had a sensitivity protocol in place [see appendix 16] and an agreed name contact, if they became distressed.

Recruitment: Once NOMS rejected my application to interview women in prison, I approached two voluntary sector organisations with which I have connections. One of these supports women in prison antenatally and through birth, the other supports women with convictions to find employment. They agreed to recruit women who had been released from prison but had experienced separation from their children under two whilst imprisoned. Given that many women who are separated from their children are more vulnerable on release in terms of mental health and social stressors such as poor housing (Dolan et al., 2010), it seemed important that these organisations should act as mediators and only suggest the research to women whom they felt were able to take part. I relied on staff to consider women's current situations such as involvement in child protection proceedings, mental health and housing before discussing the research with them.

It became apparent that many women who had been separated from a young child were not in a position to be interviewed; for example, they were often still engaged in child custody proceedings. Therefore, I extended the criteria to women who were separated from a child or children of primary school age. I felt that their experience of separation from a young child would enable them to comment on the situation for mothers of children under two years.

Recruiting through staff members was not without its challenges. Some women had not understood the aim of the research, and thought it related to feedback

about the organisation. Other women took part out of a sense of duty to the individual staff member who recruited them. However, I was clear women did not have to take part (and a few opted to drop out when I contacted them) and I ensured the interview was very flexible, so participants could discuss any topics they felt were important, rather than just sticking to the schedule.

I contacted nine women by phone, one did not respond, one chose not to take part after initial contact, one agreed to an interview and then decided not to take part. In the end, six women took part, three were interviewed by phone and three face-to-face in private rooms in public libraries near their homes or places of work. Interviews lasted between 40 and 75 minutes, with an average of 56 minutes.

Data analysis: Using thematic analysis (see Figure 3, Chapter 2 for process), I wanted to understand women's interviews as individual narratives and to find similarities and differences across all the participants. As a result of this, and because they were a small group of interviewees, I used thematic analysis only and analysed by hand, rather than with NVivo. This meant that I read each interview in turn, annotating and drawing out themes from each one. I then compared themes across interviews, bringing together common and divergent perspectives for each of the themes. My aim was to stick to the focus on mother-child separation so, as a result, I have not used all the data collected as women often spoke in detail about their lives leading up to their prison sentences and things that had happened since.

4.3 Participants

In Table 12 below is a summary of key information from the demographic questionnaire. Whilst not a representative sample of women released from prison who have been separated from their children, it gives some indication of the range of experiences even within such a small sample.

Table 12 – Study B participant demographics

Table 12	
<i>Study B participant demographics</i>	
<u>Category</u>	<u>Participant responses</u>
Age	35-44 years (n=5) No response (n=1)
Country of birth	UK (n=3) Jamaica (n=2) Kenya (n=1)
Nationality	British (n=4) Jamaican (n=2)
Ethnicity (self-described)	Black British (n=2) Black Caribbean (n=2) White British (n=1) African (n=1)
Living situation prior to conviction	With family (n=5) Homeless (n=1)
Employment prior to conviction	Full or part time (n=4) Unemployed (n=1) No response (n=1)
Conviction	Drug-related (n=3) Fraud (n=2) Theft/burglary and drug-related (n=1)
First time in prison	Yes (n=4) No (n=2)
<i>Note: Total number of participants, N = 6</i>	

All women who took part were sentenced between 2007 and 2015, so they were all in prison following The Corston Report. Their sentence lengths varied between nine months and seven years. From the most recent figures calculated in 2015, the average custodial sentence length for women was 9.5 months (MOJ, 2016), and 79% of women served sentences of over 12 months (MOJ, 2016). So, whilst I did not interview any women with sentences of under nine

months, the six women I spoke to were representative of women in prison in terms of the lengths of their sentences.

The two organisations from which participants were recruited were both inner city services supporting women whilst in prison and on release. One of the organisations has a strong track record of encouraging BME service users (and recruiting BME staff), which is reflected in my sample. In addition, if this study had been carried out in a different region of England, there might have been more white British participants.

The women who spoke to me described the context of how they ended up in prison and were separated from their child(ren). In the interests of anonymity and confidentiality I have not discussed all this detail; however, I have included vignettes of each of the participants. These give an extremely brief overview of each person and their personal situation related to their separation experience before and after their prison sentence. All of the detail is drawn from their interview transcripts, but I have paraphrased in the interests of brevity and to ensure nobody can be identified. [VIGNETTES REMOVED]

4.4 Findings

The themes were developed from what the mothers said and initially what was striking was the extent of the impact of the wider system – both mothers’ families and the wider justice system – on their experience of separation. I will begin by considering how women described the emotional impact of separation, next the role of external childcare as this often seemed more significant to the women than the prison environment, then the impact of prison staff and finally the systemic issues. See Table 13 below for a summary of the main themes and subthemes discussed in this chapter. Women’s thoughts around MBUs and parenting will be discussed in Chapter 6 alongside the staff responses.

Table 13 – Study B themes

Table 13				
<i>Study B: themes and subthemes</i>				
<u>1)Emotional impact of separation</u>	<u>2)Role of external childcare</u>	<u>3)Impact of prison staff</u>	<u>4)Systemic issues</u>	<u>Suggestions for improvement</u>
Guilty, depressed and suicidal	Supportive vs non supportive family	General unsupportiveness	Lack of support on release	Open prison Contact
Blocking feelings	Family not coping	Helpful individuals	Impact of the wider justice system	Mother-specific interventions
Continuing on release	Social services	Prison officers – the good and the bad		General support

In many ways the role of external childcare was at least as, if not more, important than what happened in the prison for women – they described how knowing what was happening to their children had a direct impact on how they felt. The women’s relationships with their children and their carers could be hindered or facilitated by the structure of the prison itself. This is highlighted in the participants’ discussion of the strengths of open prisons (see glossary). It is

clear that many women had contextualised their personal experience within broader systemic issues of justice, racism and sexual violence.

Impact of separation

This theme developed from the emotions discussed by the mothers in relation to their experiences of separation from their children in prison. Some women described mental health difficulties they had struggled with before going to prison that intensified whilst in prison as a result of separation. Other women directly related their psychological distress in prison to their separation and the stress of not being able to care for children. Women also included observations of how other prisoners managed being separated from their children.

The three main ways in which women discussed the impact of separation centred on guilt, depression and feeling suicidal. Feelings of guilt were very much related to a sense of having failed as a mother and for one participant it was ongoing: 'even now ... the guilt eats away at me,' 'their lives are ruined because of me' (Participant 1, 390; 624). For another participant the guilt was overwhelming but very much in the past:

The guilt, the guilt around my children was, just, was just incredible. I thought, I thought I was going to die, you know when you think you're going to die from guilt...that's how I, I thought I was just going to die because I had so much to deal and I didn't know whether I was ready to deal with it or not. I thought if I go back to drugs it would be a lot easier...because that way I don't have to face it.' (Participant 4, 50-55)

In addition, to guilt, participants discussed feeling low or depressed. One woman described how she had a diagnosis of depression prior to going to prison. She chose not to continue her medication – so suffered from withdrawal – and then began to feel low and suicidal (Participant 5). Another participant was clear that her feelings of depression were directly related to separation and not mental health difficulties:

I was really, really depressed. Really, I was going through very hard time. because I just lost it in prison She [the governor] said I should be assessed for my mental issues at the time But obviously I knew I wasn't having mental issues it was because of being separated with a child....I got messed up, er, in fact emotionally, you know even physically, because...I was not eating. (Participant 3, 20-129)

For this participant there was a clear difference between 'mental issues' and distress caused by an external event, such as separation from a child. However, this seemed only to be in relation to herself for she went on to say:

I saw a lot of women come, who have just come maybe with their babies only one week old, you know, [l:mm] and they come without their baby and they cry all the night, they end up in mental unit and you know they get depressed. (Participant 3, 117-119)

Another participant described coping through blocking out all feelings:

When I was in prison I didn't think, I just went to all the educational classes. (Participant 2, 194-195)

This strategy of blocking out feelings was discussed by another participant who explained how she had seen women in prison taking drugs to cope with separation (Participant 5). Both interviewees who had used drugs before their prison sentences described how they used drugs to block out pain. One had been gang raped; another had a brother who had been convicted of murder. These mothers, however, withdrew from drugs whilst in prison which left them having to deal with feeling incredibly guilty about their children's situations.

The impact of separation continued on release as mothers reflected on the ongoing effect on their children. Participant 5 described her daughter's ongoing fear following her unexpected imprisonment:

I think the whole experience is the fact that I dropped her at school that morning and went to court and never came back...So it's just a terrifying thing...but the whole point is like, she kind of, it's still there...because if you think about it, it's like a trauma to a kid. Your mum drops you off and you never see your mum. You see your mum again but the next time your mum it's like you have to be visiting her, she doesn't come home. (Participant 5, 674-681)

And similarly, Participant 3 describes the impact on both her sons:

The bigger one of course, although he was already going to be 20 and he was a mature adult, it really affected him because he's never also been separated from me...it affected him so badly negatively he, he's now fully recovering slowly by slowly...The little one now who I'll never, even if I'm going somewhere because now I'm doing a small job, I will make sure I'm here for him when comes from his, he's dropped by a school bus. Because if he comes home and I'm not home, for example, if my son is here waiting for him if I'm running late or something, he will not eat, he will be opening every room looking for me.... So, he really remembers that one time I went for a long time. (Participant 3, 433-442)

Unsurprisingly these experiences related to participants' ongoing sense of guilt due to separation from their children while they were in prison.

Impact of childcare outside prison

Family relationships and the related networks of childcare were key to how several participants managed in prison. Any prior relational difficulties were intensified or ruined by poor childcare by extended family. Whilst it was primarily family members who took on the care of the participants' children, foster carers and social services played a role for some women.

Some family members were described as supportive, enabling the relationship with their children to continue (Participant 5). On the opposite end of the scale,

one participant's family removed her child to another country and the prison provided no support for contact when she could not afford long distance phone calls (Participant 2). There was one woman who described how her family initially provided extremely poor care for her children:

They came, I'll never forget. My children looked like shit. They were skinny. Their eyes were drawn in. I could say that they were undernourished. They weren't being nurtured. And then walking towards me and I saw it. And I'll never forget it. Tears just came out of my eyes. And I stopped the visit.... And that, that broke me. That was the thing that broke me. (Participant 6, 83-90)

However, once the childcare was sorted out and her children were all being properly cared for, this participant described how she was able to focus on herself and her own development:

It's like, my whole body, it's like something left me. I'm not, it's just like, the stress of everything had left me. And I just done my A-Levels. Signed up and done my A-Levels and done, I, I just got on, I got so proactive with my own brain.... It was one of the best experiences, I can only express to no one. I left school ten days, I had my daughter ten days after my sixteenth birthday. I did go back to school, I didn't concentrate that much, though. I done well on my art because I can draw, that was obvious, and my English. But this was the first time since having children that I was able to release my mind. As soon as [friend's name] taken them boys and I got accepted into open [prison] and I went to open, I was like a seventeen-year-old again. The people that I, I hung around with had so much ambition, they're doing, you know, we studied together, we sat in the class and laughed like school girls. If I answered first the next one would get pissed off, 'Oh I wanted to answer that!' It was hilarious. Eye-wateringly hilarious sometimes. And too, it was making me forget my kids, which I was so amazed at. That's what I needed. I needed me. [I: You needed some space?] Yeah, I didn't realise that, it's always

been about my kids. As I got that break and I realised, oh my gosh, this is the first time since you've been 15 that you've been by yourself. I embraced it. It was the best thing that's ever happened to me going prison. (Participant 6. 211-580).

What is key in this example is that this mother felt that she had missed out on her education because of her children, so in this case the separation enabled this mother to take educational opportunities she had missed. But this was only possible once she knew the children were being properly cared for.

For many mothers, however, there were just not any suitable family members or friends available. Another participant described how, in an effort to avoid her disabled 18-month year old going in to care, her 20-year-old son had to care for her baby. She had to stop breastfeeding abruptly and was unable to offer support for her baby's health problems:

I would call my son at home ... and the bigger son looking after, er, this little one and I could hear how he was struggling and there's nothing I can do (Participant 3, 130-132).

This participant directly attributed her separation from her child and the impact on her older child to her distress. This sense of helplessness in the face of not being able to care for one's own baby was echoed by the participant who gave birth in prison. She realised when she was finally able to visit her child in hospital that her baby was not being cared for and there was nothing she could do:

Because that day when I went, after I came out on the Saturday and I went to see her on the Monday, um, she was in the same Babygro and the officer said, 'You can't kick off!' And I said, 'Why can't I kick off? Why haven't they changed her clothes? I need to bath her.' 'You can't, we've got to go soon.' And the handcuffs come out and I'm, it was awful leaving her. And then I used to phone up to check on her

on the days I couldn't go. And I could hear the babies crying. I know which baby were mine were crying. (Participant 1, 436-441)

Like other mothers, it was knowing her child was not cared for properly which was even more stressful than the separation. For Participant 1, when her child was in temporary foster care, and she had a good relationship with the foster carer, the separation became far less stressful:

No money can buy that sense of peace knowing that your baby is looked after when you're not there (Participant 1, 515-516).

For children in care, often the relationship is entirely reliant on social services to bring them to visit their mothers in prison. Participant 4 described the 'sporadic' nature of the visits and how 'social services didn't go out of their way to continue the relationship' (47-48) which has affected her relationship with her child in the long term. The wider impacts of social services are discussed further in Chapter 6, section 3.

What seems particularly important is how women's difficult family situations continue to affect them once they are in prison. Those with less or no support on the outside continue to be disadvantaged by this, and their time in prison is directly affected by this in relation to their childcare.

Impact of prison staff

Whilst prison staff had a major impact on women's time in prison, in terms of separation they seemed to be less significant than those on the outside caring for the children. Furthermore, nobody was able to describe any support they received in prison specifically in relation to being separated, apart from peer support, for example: 'Most of us in my particular, um, cell was more like a Christian, so we kind of read the bible. We kind of support each other. We cry if we have to cry.' (Participant 5, 317-319). When directly asked whether they were supported in prison, the main responses were either 'No' (Participant 4,

Participant 2) or that they relied on their religious beliefs: 'It was down to me and believing in my creator,' (Participant 6, 286) and 'I am a Christian, I prayed a lot of course.' (Participant 3, 213) There was a general sense that staff were unsupportive:

You didn't really get much support...you don't get much support from, we call them screws, or you know wardens, we didn't get much support whatsoever. (Participant 5, 180-181)

And when prisoners asked for help: 'All they do is send you into the room to go and read through all the leaflets.' (Participant 5, 283-284).

Nevertheless, individual staff members were supportive in more general ways. Several participants described staff members they would never forget but pointed out that these individuals were rarities. Specific examples of supportive staff were a governor offering extra phone calls to organise childcare (Participant 6), health care staff and third sector birth supporters who were thoughtful (Participant 1), and some participants found the chaplaincy helpful (Participant 3). Although others were more critical of the chaplaincy, saying 'They're just more interested in your coming to the chapel and that's it.' (Participant 5, 336).

However, the main staff group discussed in the interviews were prison officers. There was general agreement that were 'some amazing' (Participant 6, 470), 'really considerate' (Participant 1, 554) and 'fantastic' (Participant 4, 382) officers but not enough of them, and most of the notable officers were in open prisons:

We're all allocated a personal officer. My personal officer, Miss X, to die for, I love her I'll never forget her. This was in open prison. In closed prison there's not enough staff to facilitate what they say they can. There's not enough staff. And the ones that are there that really

want to do it, they're not getting enough support. (Participant 6, 243-246)

On the whole participants discussed the problems with officers – personal officers were described as unavailable (Participant 2) and non-existent:

What I would say is you're supposed to have, erm, a personal officer, yup. But those personal officers, to be honest...my personal officer, I didn't even realise he was my personal officer until when I was leaving... So, I didn't get that support at all. (Participant 3, 226-231)

In addition, it was perceived that staff tended to ignore quieter women:

If you don't have big issues like fighting in the prison or taking drugs in prison they don't really bother (Participant 3, 229-230).

There was a sense that the officers were perhaps jaded by their work:

There were a couple of nice officers. But they'd seen and heard it all before ... I overheard one of them saying..... 'They come in here and they want to keep their kids, blah blah blah' (Participant 1, 365-367).

One participant described how many officers had military backgrounds and the negative impact this had on women's behaviour:

You've got prison officers in there that are army, um, military type people. And you're in there ... shouting, screaming, dd, banging doors. You're men, dealing with women like this, are you serious? And then you've got these women, now, retaliating to you like men. So then their attitude is changing (Participant 6, 273-276).

Related perhaps to their aggression, officers were described as untrustworthy (Participant 1) and one participant said she felt too scared to talk to them (Participant 3).

In addition, officers were seen to be unable to support women with their mental health, this was only available from other prisoners (Participant 5) or 'Listeners'

'but they had...their own problems, to be honest' (Participant 3, 297-298). The shortage of officers was repeatedly mentioned and the impact in terms of mothers not being able to visit their babies in hospital (Participant 1), or being able to attend education (Participant 6). The tendency for quieter women to be overlooked meant mothers struggling with their mental health could go unnoticed:

I got so lost I was not talking to anybody. I was just staying alone in a corner somewhere when we are told to go out...Er, I would just go there and sit alone, erm, like that. But nobody ever talked to me except the other girls telling me, 'Are you ok?', you know. But the officer would have, you know, I thought maybe the officer would come and ask, 'What's happening?' You know, talk to us, you know, 'Life is not over,' things like that. But they are not bothered. (Participant 3, 262-267)

This participant was in fact offered counselling outside the prison, but this would have involved being accompanied by two officers and being shackled so she turned it down.

Finally, there were far more serious issues in terms of officer behaviour. Participants described: bullying, 'There was a few in there that tried it [bullying] with me' (Participant 6, 400); xenophobia: 'Once you're labelled as a foreign national they treat you completely different from how they treat others...you don't get the same' (Participant 2, 483-487); racism: 'They'll basically tell you, 'Fuck off, black cunt' (Participant 4, 304-305); and sexual harassment and abuse: 'I was sexually harassed...by this officer' (Participant 4, 320-321). Focusing on a specific topic such as mother-child separation appeared to shine a light on the more problematic aspects of prisons in general.

Systemic issues

Many wider issues were discussed by participants in relation to their experience of being separated from their children. These can be divided into two themes:

the lack of support on release and its implications for re-gaining custody of children, and the impact of the wider justice system.

In terms of the lack of support on release, every participant directly referred or alluded to the challenges of housing and jobs for themselves and other women they knew. Participant 1 described the impact of moving to poor housing with a baby on release and running the risk of losing custody. Participant 6 felt that work needed to start in prison to help women organise housing for both council tenants and women with mortgages. She highlighted that there was far less provision for women on release compared to men:

I think even different boroughs should allocate a little, should have a little team for women, especially. I'm not disregarding men. But men get help. And this is what I've noticed, they have their mum, they have their aunt, they have their sister, they have their gran. Men always have women in their life. Women don't have no one. We have no one. If the dad might help from time to time, he might help. And he's still looking at you to find your husband to help you. Your mum she's got her own stuff to do. Women don't get help. And everyone thinks women and children get help.... There is no help for them. (Participant 6, 492-499)

The lack of services was echoed by Participant 4 who found there was no drug rehabilitation for her on release and she described how difficult it was for her to stay clean:

Because I was in a hostel when I came out of prison. And there's nothing put in place when you go into hostels, yeah, but it's just shit, yeah. They should have all the services for vulnerable women and men placed into those services, like drugs and alcohol where's they should have everything, but they don't. They deliberately put you into these places to set you up to fail. (Participant 4, 65-69)

Even when, with the help of a friend, Participant 4 managed to get clean she was still not able to gain custody of her children:

What it meant was that I got the detox and engaged with the services. So, I engaged with the services and yet again the issues were around my children. Around the stuff that went on for me, my mum, my dad. (Participant 4, 140-142)

Participant 2 felt that the poor work of probation meant that 'most people come out and don't have nowhere to go or nothing to do,' whilst Participant 5 highlighted the judgement she felt when applying for jobs and how this meant she felt 'doomed'. A few participants described how when they were supported it was by friends rather than professionals. These descriptions are extremely familiar to anyone working with women released from prison, but what these participants emphasised was how having children to care for or trying to regain custody of their children made negotiating release even more challenging.

Several women, however, pointed out that they were only able to access any support for drugs and alcohol difficulties, mental health problems or legal challenges once they were released. In fact, when discussing support for separation this often only occurred after incarceration and the key supports described included counselling, friends, third sector organisations, solicitors and GPs.

Finally, with regards to the wider criminal justice system, mothers felt that the arrest and court system meant mothers could not prepare for separating from their children (Participant 5), whilst others felt that judges 'don't give a toss' (Participant 4, 618) about mothers. One participant had lost all trust in the judicial and police system (Participant 3). Another felt that this lack of trust in the system was affecting many prisoners on release, with grave consequences:

They're releasing prisoners who are angry, really angry men and women who are going to commit more atrocities when they get out because they're full of resentment and they're full of hate towards the system. (Participant 4, 369-371)

What was striking about this focus on systemic issues was that none of the questions directly addressed these, the focus was on support in prison; however, the significance of the wider context surrounding prison is clear given that every participant discussed it.

Suggestions for improvement

Suggestions for improvement were mainly modest and centred around contact, mother-specific interventions, and additional support from staff more generally. As mentioned earlier, women who had been in open prison (as well as closed prison) felt that the structure there was optimal, so this will be described first.

As one participant explained:

Unless you've got the determination and support network on the outside, you're not going to get any good out of closed prison.... Closed prison to me it's a bit barbaric. (Participant 6, 280-317)

What she went on to describe was how open prison could support anyone, no matter what their situation was. Open prison was described as enabling more family contact:

What worked for me, number one, was not being banged up. I was able to make a phone call up until eleven thirty at night...The flexibility. the flexibility, the peace of mind that at school in the morning, the afternoon, evening, I could phone you and say 'good morning' I could phone you and say 'good evening'. When it was in closed they're getting banged up. My kids are still awake so I can't phone and say good night. I'm saying good night when it's still

daylight out in the summer nights. Do you know what I'm saying? So, the open is to be able to contact my family as and when needed. And to know that they can phone that prison and someone's coming to my room to get me. (Participant 6, 510-520)

In addition to more straightforward family contact, there were supportive services in place (rather than 'just leaflets' described in closed). The staff in open prisons were all described in positive terms and this and the structure were seen to facilitate an atmosphere of trust within which women thrived (P4). What was interesting was to hear a prison described in such glowing terms which seemed to benefit both mothers and children.

The ideas for contact were modest but participants felt these would have made a significant difference to their relationships with their children. The key issues were the expense of phone calls and the inflexible call times. One participant suggested a free half hour call a day for mothers, perhaps at children's bedtimes (Participant 5), whilst another proposed that foreign nationals be entitled to more calls to make up for not having any visits (Participant 2). Several participants felt that Skype or Facetime would be extremely beneficial for staying in touch (Participant 5), particularly with younger children (Participant 4).

The extended family visits were really valued by participants, but they wanted them more frequently at weekends in a more child-friendly room (Participant 5), with private rooms for breastfeeding mothers (Participant 3). For mothers giving birth in prison, Participant 1 felt that more visits to see her baby in hospital would have been useful, and she would have liked officers to check on her when she was back in the prison.

Participants made a range of suggestions with regards to prison staff explicitly facilitating mothers to engage with their children in prison. There was a view

that this lack of provision was a missed opportunity to help prisoners with children:

People in prison are so riddled with guilt when it comes to their children. They, if something like that was to be put in place, they'd grab that with both hands, they wouldn't feel so resentful. They won't feel so disheartened or want to self-harm or kill themselves. So many women and men die in prisons, you know. And it's just a cry for help.
(Participant 4, 604-609)

Participants' ideas included using the structure of open prison to enable mothers to care for their children during the day (Participant 4), professional-led mothers' groups (Participant 5) and building on mothers' motivation to be with their children to develop an individual response for rehabilitation (Participant 6). In terms of parenting courses, it was suggested that these should be run by trained officers for separated mothers:

There's no officers that have got expert parenting skills. There's nothing put in place. They've got courses. Courses ain't nothing. You've got, you've got to be able to have lived it to be able to, do you know what I mean? So it would be good, it would be a really good thing if you had officers who were trained to train inmates how to do good parenting skills.... Because some women don't know how to be parents. Because they only learn, they only learn what they were taught or how they were brought up. They don't know. I didn't know.
(Participant 4, 554-568)

On MBUs, however, it was felt that it would be important to have people with lived experience working with the mothers:

Have a separate unit and don't bring in people that, that are textbook. Bring people that have experienced it...Because those that have experienced it know. Those that have read it in books don't know...They don't. They might have had all the degrees in the world and that but they've never lived it. Only those that have lived it know.
(Participant 4, 576-579)

In addition to this need for 'lived experience', several participants highlighted the importance of having individualised responses:

Find out about that person and tailor to the individual's needs. Everyone's in prison but not everyone's everyone. Everyone has an individual name, you give us our NOMS numbers, but we're all individuals. So tailor to our needs. (Participant 6, 372-375)

And this same participant felt that intervening at arrest could be a potential turning point:

And it could all stop in the initial, on that initial point of arrest. When you find out what's going on and you delve a bit in. Yeah, get a counsellor, everyone needs that. Everyone needs to talk, find someone, make them have a conversation whether it's for half an hour just to tell them to give you bullet points of their life and what they'd want to change. Try and tailor it. (Participant 6, 714-718)

Whilst many of these suggestions seemed realistic and suggested that participants felt the system could be altered, there was one participant who felt extremely despondent about the possibility for any change:

You know it's funny because this is all to do with funding, you know. And the government ain't gonna, you've got all the best intentions where you sit down and you interview people like myself and that and you come up with all these great ideas. But the government ain't gonna fund all this. You know, even if they wanted to. 'Cos they're going to be thinking about the risk. They're going to be thinking about the interventions. They're going to be thinking about safeguarding. They're going to be thinking about, there's all these things that they've got to be thinking about. (Participant 4, 597-603)

Perhaps the small-scale nature of the participants' suggestions revealed a realistic understanding of the likelihood of any change in the prison system for

mothers and reflected their feelings of resignation about the way the prison service does not adequately support mothers separated from their children.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from interviews with mothers. The impact of context on mothers' experiences was highlighted, both in terms of the role of external childcare and the broader systemic issues. These issues affected their relationships with staff (in the case of racism and sexual assault), their reintegration and their subsequent opinion of the justice system. In many ways this emphasis on the impact of context was reflected in the suggestions for improvement which emphasised the positive environment of open prisons. The environment described by participants fostered consistently positive and trusting relationships with staff and appeared to promote support and access to services. These were all aspects which were criticised as problematic in closed prisons. The next chapter will consider staff perspectives on mother-child separations and their suggestions for improvement.

5 PRISON STAFF PERSPECTIVES

*Being a screw is not a socially important profession. It should be.
What prison staff do has huge effects. (Ben Gunn, 2016, para. 1)*

This chapter presents the prison staff interview study. It begins with a brief overview of relevant staff literature focusing on prison officer approaches to caring and factors in officer stress and burnout. I have focused on the prison officer literature as it is the most applicable, however my study incorporated prison staff from a range of professional backgrounds. The participants and settings (prison and third sector organisations) are described and the main findings discussed. These include staff challenges when working with separated mothers, support systems available for different staff groups and their suggestions for support and training. Themes concerning MBUs and attachment theory are examined in Chapter 6.

5.1 Context

As Bennett, Crewe and Wahidin (2008) point out, it is important to study prison staff both as a group in their own right under a particular type of work stress, and because of their impact on prisoner wellbeing. There is little doubt that

prisons are a challenging place to work. The current president of the Prison Governors' Association describes an ever-changing system as a consequence of political manoeuvres with resultant overcrowded prisons, low staffing levels, high rates of staff attrition and constant changes from civil servants who do not understand the prison system (Albutt, 2017). In this context the crucial staff-prisoner relationships (Liebling, 2011) are put under strain. Indeed, as Scott (2008) points out:

Relationships between prison officers and prisoners cannot remove these structural pains of imprisonment, but they can either mitigate or exacerbate the extent of suffering imparted. (p.168)

Similarly, it is important to remember that prison officers are affected by the systems encompassing prisons. In addition to which, staff supporting mothers separated from their young children face particular challenges. Women's mental health and participation in the prison regime may be affected and staff have to draw on a range of skills and experience to work with this group of women. The role of staff in supporting mothers of young children has not been explored in the literature. However, prison staff and their attitudes towards caring and the impact of work stress have been examined. Literature on burnout in prison staff emphasises the effect of burnout on staff behaviour, which in turn affects how they support prisoners (Garland, 2004). Clearly it is important to support staff so they can offer the best care.

Tait's (2011) research identified confidence and engagement with caring in prison officers as key aspects in her typology of caring. She interviewed 45 staff working across two prisons and incorporated observational data and prisoner reports to form her typology. This nuanced dissection of prison officer approaches to caring highlights the impact of repeated traumatic events (particularly witnessing severe self-harm) and lack of managerial support on officer empathy and their impact on prisoner agency. Prison officers who were not supported following experiences of trauma demonstrated 'uninterested, hostile, unsympathetic and threatening behaviour towards prisoners' (p.449).

But, as she points out, 'those who expressed a lack of interest in working with prisoners were often struggling with the emotional consequences of caring in difficult environments.' (p.453). What is interesting about this research, is that officer caring is not reduced to personality or attitudinal beliefs. Indeed, Tait (2011) argues that officers' approach to care is an interaction between their experience of the prison environment and their personal qualities. Some officers saw similarities between themselves and prisoners, leading to more of a counsellor role, whilst others labelled prisoners as 'good' or 'bad' and were more likely to use force and lack empathy. This is interesting to consider in the context of imprisoned mothers in terms of when staff relate to their own experiences of motherhood. Whilst most studies of officer-prisoner relationships are based in men's prisons, Tait (2011) highlights that:

Women prisoners (on average) elicited more care from officers: they were seen as less of a physical threat, they expressed greater vulnerability and they were more open to forming relationships with officers. (p.452)

Indeed, research focusing on women's prisons draws attention to the different relationships that male and female officers form with prisoners (Tait, 2008). In a comparison of male and female officers at HMP Eastwood Park, Tait (2008) noted that the prisoners might share less openly with male staff, and they had a different kind of rapport which was less intense and more relaxed than with female staff, but equally valued. Male staff struggled initially working with women prisoners, particularly if they self-harmed or tried to take their own lives. A compelling finding, however, was that female staff were more likely to express punitive views, perhaps related to their increased compassion fatigue and greater likelihood of feeling personally attacked by women prisoners (Tait, 2008).

Interestingly, in terms of research into the punitive attitudes of staff, Kelly's (2014) survey of 159 prison found that while their attitudes were on the whole more punitive than the general public, staff who had worked the longest and

had more direct experience of caring for prisoners or working explicitly within rehabilitation had the least punitive attitudes of prison staff. Those staff who had minimal direct contact with prisoners were the most punitive (Kelly, 2014). This suggests that staff might become more caring over the course of their careers if they are in front-line roles. Crewe, Liebling and Hulley (2011) determined that there were problems with staff who were either too punitive or too soft. Indeed, prisoners expressed preferences for staff who used their authority appropriately. This use of authority was related to experience and staffing ratios, and created an environment for the prisoners 'that was safe, predictable and psychologically reliable' (p.109). The use of authority and power for many prisoners, however, is why staff cannot be trusted (Warr, 2008). As Crewe et al. (2011) discuss, they discovered a paradox which was that prisoners rated most highly the prisons in which staff felt the least positive about both their jobs and the prisoners. This highlights the complexities of the prison environment, and perhaps suggests the incompatibility of staff and prisoner needs and views.

Crawley (2004) suggests that a key challenge for prison staff is their judgement about who deserves care. This work emphasises the similarity between prison work and emergency medics, but for prison staff those they care for are generally seen as unworthy of care. The research discusses how staff are constantly managing their own emotions, as well as those of prisoners. In order to cope, staff cultivate a 'rhetoric of coping and detachment' (Crawley, 2004, p.14), and this has been described as a 'technique of denial' (Scott, 2008, p.168) when analysed using Cohen's (2001) theoretical framework. Staff seem generally to feel more confident when dealing with anger (Crawley, 2004). Much of staff anxiety centres on dealing with psychological distress, particularly when associated with self-harm (Walsh & Freshwater, 2009; Short et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2017). This is despite prison officers being able to recognise signs of mental ill health (Birmingham, 1999), so perhaps having more knowledge than they realise.

However, staff themselves are at a higher risk of psychological distress than the general population. Over half of officers reached 'caseness', i.e. a clinical level of distress, in Harvey (2014) and 74% in Kinman, Clements and Hart's (2017) study. In terms of protective factors, Harvey (2014) determined that accessing support in the prison was helpful, similarly Kinman et al. (2017) found working relationships and role clarity were protective but managerial support was not. Indeed, they found managers were seen as particularly unhelpful with regards to emotional support (Kinman, Clements & Hart, 2016). Lambert, Minor, Wells and Hogan (2016) found that when supervisory support was available it lowered job stress, which suggests that management support can be useful.

Unsurprisingly, lack of support was associated with prison officer stress and burnout (Finney, Stergiopoulos, Hensel, Bonato & Dewa, 2013), and was highlighted in staff focus groups as a key factor, along with staff shortages and lack of training (Holmes & MacInnes, 2003). In addition, research suggests that racism towards staff in prisons comes mainly from other staff, rather than the prisoners (Bhui & Fossi, 2008). This forms an additional job stressor for BAME prison staff. For those staff who work in health- or education-related areas, Crewe (2008) suggests that they will face additional role strain because their core professional code is likely to be experienced as conflicting with the prison environment and custodial staff roles.

It is evident that prison staff are working in extremely difficult conditions, however the extent and usefulness of support in place for them appears questionable. Whilst it is clear that caring does form an important part of the work of prison staff, unsurprisingly, specific contextual conditions, such as management support, affect the nature of care they can offer to prisoners.

5.2 Method

Interview design: A semi-structured interview schedule was designed with a focus on staff experiences of supporting separated mothers and their views on

both the support they received and would like to receive. There were questions about parenting, MBUs and how they would improve support for separated mothers. [See appendix 12 for schedule.]

Ethics: Staff had the opportunity to ask any questions about the study before signing the consent form [see appendix 8]. I reminded them about the limits to confidentiality and how I would anonymise the prison data. Whilst I did not anticipate that the interview would be distressing, I had details of a relevant staff member for them to contact after the interview, if necessary.

Recruitment: This has been described in detail in Chapter 2, section 2. See appendices 4 and 5 for NOMS application and approval.

Data analysis: I used framework analysis (see Figure 4, Chapter 2 for process) to organise the data in NVivo and thematic analysis (see Figure 3, Chapter 2 for process) to analyse the interviews. Themes were analysed deductively and semantically in order to report the range of perspectives among staff.

5.3 Participants and settings

Twenty-four staff members were interviewed and were remarkable for their lack of diversity. All interviewees were female, except for one, and all British except for one, who defined as British-European (country not given for anonymity). All participants spoke English as a first language and all were born in the UK except for two. In terms of self-defined ethnicity, there were 20 White British, three White Other (including Irish) and one Black British participant. The one characteristic which did vary was age: participants under 25 years, n=1; participants aged between 25 and 34 years, n=4; participants aged between 34 and 44 years, n=6; participants aged between 45 and 54 years, n=10; participants aged 55 years and over, n=3. As these results show, most participants were aged 35 years or over.

Whilst data are collected on demographics of prison officers, this is not necessarily the case for organisations working within or with prisons and, given the sample size, no conclusions can be drawn as to the representativeness of the interviewees. However, the 24 staff did represent a wide variety of organisations and prisons which will now be briefly described to give some contextual details but without breaking confidentiality.

Prisons

Prison-based staff were recruited from two prisons; one in the north of England (Prison A), one in the south (Prison B). As there are only twelve women's prisons, with four mother-baby units and two privately run, I will not give specific details about the prisons. From their most recent Independent Monitoring Board, Ofsted and HMIP reports (un-cited to keep the prisons anonymous), both prisons are closed, local prisons with approximately 500 prisoners, including both those with short sentences and life sentences. Both prisons have what is seen as a 'complex mix' of women, including 30-40% who have drug and alcohol difficulties. The impact of short sentences and lack of housing on release were highlighted as serious challenges for women from both prisons on release. Prison A seemed to have a cycle of women coming in for breaching the conditions of their parole whilst Prison B had a high number of women on two-week sentences.

There were examples of good practice in both prisons; they were praised for family contact and supporting women coming out of domestic violence, prostitution and trafficking. Prison A was praised particularly for meeting the needs of women with substance misuse difficulties. Overall prisoner-staff relationships were described as 'good' in both prisons, and they have a similar proportion of female staff. They were praised for the range of third sector organisations working with them and the services provided.

In terms of criticisms, mental health services for women with serious difficulties were assessed as deficient in both prisons; related to this their responses to ACCTs were seen as needing improvement. Prison A has a lower proportion of foreign nationals and as a result had less support in place for women from overseas. Staff shortages were judged to have an impact on support provided for women in Prison A. Prison B was criticised for healthcare in general, and its provision for women with complex needs. For mothers whose children are in care, there seemed to be difficulties liaising with social workers to arrange visits, and for those women in on remand, there appeared to be no support available at all. It was pointed out that much of the good work in Prison B relied on voluntary organisations.

Third sector organisations

I recruited staff based in four external third sector organisations. Through the in-prison recruitment I interviewed staff in an additional four organisations so eight were represented in total. Three of the external organisations work in two or more prisons. The fourth external organisation was community-based and worked with women released from one prison. The four internal organisations were all based in one prison. The third sector organisations included: counselling, family support (including specialist perinatal and early years support), healthcare, and resettlement (i.e. housing and employment). Local, regional and national organisations were represented.

Staff roles and experience

The 24 staff held a wide range of job roles. These will be described in general terms for confidentiality. Table 14 summarises the main details. The staff fall into three broad categories: those working in typical prison roles, such as prison officers; those working specifically with children and families; and those under the broad umbrella of health. There was roughly the same number of participants in each group and front-line, senior and managerial levels were represented in each category.

Table 14 - Staff profiles

Table 14				
<i>Study C: staff job profiles</i>				
<u>Staff category</u>	<u>Specific area of work</u>	<u>Seniority</u>	<u>Employer</u>	<u>Total (N=24)</u>
Prison	Prison officer, offender supervisor, probation officer	Administrator, Senior, Manager	Prison Agency	n=7
Children & Families	Pregnancy, young children, families	Senior practitioner, Manager	Prison 3 rd Sector	n=10
Health	Counselling, drugs and alcohol, holistic support	Senior practitioner, Manager	3 rd Sector	n=7

Eight of the staff interviewed were employed directly by a prison and there was one agency worker. Of the fourteen third sector workers, thirteen were employed by voluntary sector organisations and one by a not-for-profit. The third sector workers were equally split between those based in prisons and those based outside.

In terms of years of experience in their current role, the 24 staff were categorised into one of four groups to aid anonymisation: under three years of experience, n=6; between three and five years of experience, n=4; between five and ten years of experience, n=7; over ten years of experience, n=7. Thus, over half of staff (n=14) had more than five years' experience. However, four of the six staff, who had been in their current role for under three years, had previously worked in another prison for between three and twelve years. These participants were generally experienced, if not highly experienced in prison work.

Across all 24 staff, 11 had worked in other prisons for an average of eight years. Nine of these staff were based in the third sector, one was a member of prison staff and one was agency. Between them these staff had previously worked at seven other women's prisons. This means their combined experience covered nine of the thirteen women's prisons in England (Holloway was still open when I started interviewing third sector staff).

Whilst I did reach a range of staff covering a range of areas, there were some significant gaps as many staff I approached were unable or unwilling to take part. [When staff gave reasons for not taking part, these included: not being available on interview days; feeling like they had nothing to say; disliking interviews; and anxiety about confidentiality.] In both prisons the chaplaincy was highlighted as a significant source of support, but I was unable to speak to them. I did, however, speak to the clinical supervisor of the chaplaincy in one prison. In terms of healthcare I only spoke to one staff member on the drugs and alcohol team. I did not speak to any physical or mental health practitioners employed by the prison or the NHS, only staff from third sector counselling services. The prison officers I interviewed were all based in one prison, and it would have been preferable to have interviewed a broader range of prison staff from both prisons.

Roles in separation

Staff interviewed had a wide range of roles in supporting women separated from their young children. Drawn from participants' own words, these have been divided into support provided before, during and after separation to give an idea of the range of support provided by the interviewees. I asked about every type of separation in prisons (arriving separated by social services, separated due to imprisonment, separation at birth, separation on MBU), and there was some support provided for women in all these situations. Table 15 summarises the support offered for women before their separation and during separations that take place in prison. Table 18 summarises the support offered for women

following separation. This includes women who arrive in prison separated and those who are separated in prison.

Table 15 - Staff roles before and during separation

Table 15	
<i>Staff roles before and during separation</i>	
<u>Before separation: birth, MBU</u>	<u>During separation: birth, MBU</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise birth plans, separation plans and support plans • Provide ongoing support to mothers • Advocate for women • Liaise with all pregnant women in the prison • Work with pregnant women individually • Discuss separation in pregnancy groups • Provide birth support • Visit mother in hospital and liaise with social services re:baby handover • Facilitate contact visits, extra visits, family stay and plays • Organise ROTLs • Liaise with family • Work on joint photo album with mother and child • Refer to support services in prison e.g. chaplaincy, family engagement • Liaise with social services and other outside agencies • Attend multi-agency meetings with information about risk and offence • Collate information for separation board, take part in board and offer support afterwards • Involved in initial risk assessments for court and prison boards • Provide reports re:drug and alcohol use for boards only at solicitor request • Recommend against social services separation where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate final visits • Support on day – wait in visits’ hall while it takes place • Offer time for chat after final visits • Emotional support • Advocate for women

Table 16 - Staff roles following separation

Table 16	
<i>Staff roles following separation</i>	
<u>After separation in prison</u>	<u>After separation on release</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional support • Postnatal visits • See mum for first month, then taper off • Visit once after separation and then ensure supported • Check welfare – monitor for changes in behaviour and mood • Navigate through sentence, manage prisoner • Handover when mother returns to main prison • Support mother on return from hospital and refer on/handover to other services, especially family support • Ensure midwives and mental health services are aware • Check with social services that women have children so can provide support • Offer housing support so women can regain custody of children • Provide counselling for any kind of child loss • Facilitate intervention groups for women who have lost children through social services • Provide counselling for women on remand • Offer structured way to work through feelings associated with loss • Offer chance for women to tell story and connect separation to own experience of being parented • Aware of impact of separation on drug and alcohol recovery • Provide certificates and evidence of drug and alcohol recovery for reuniting on release • Follow up re: counselling if transferred to another prison • Facilitate contact with children in care • Organise family stay and plays • Organise ROTLs • Provide support for officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing support so women can regain custody of children • Provide holistic support for domestic violence, sexual violence, drug and alcohol, trauma • Facilitate communication with social services • Follow up re: counselling on release • Try and keep in touch after release • General resettlement.

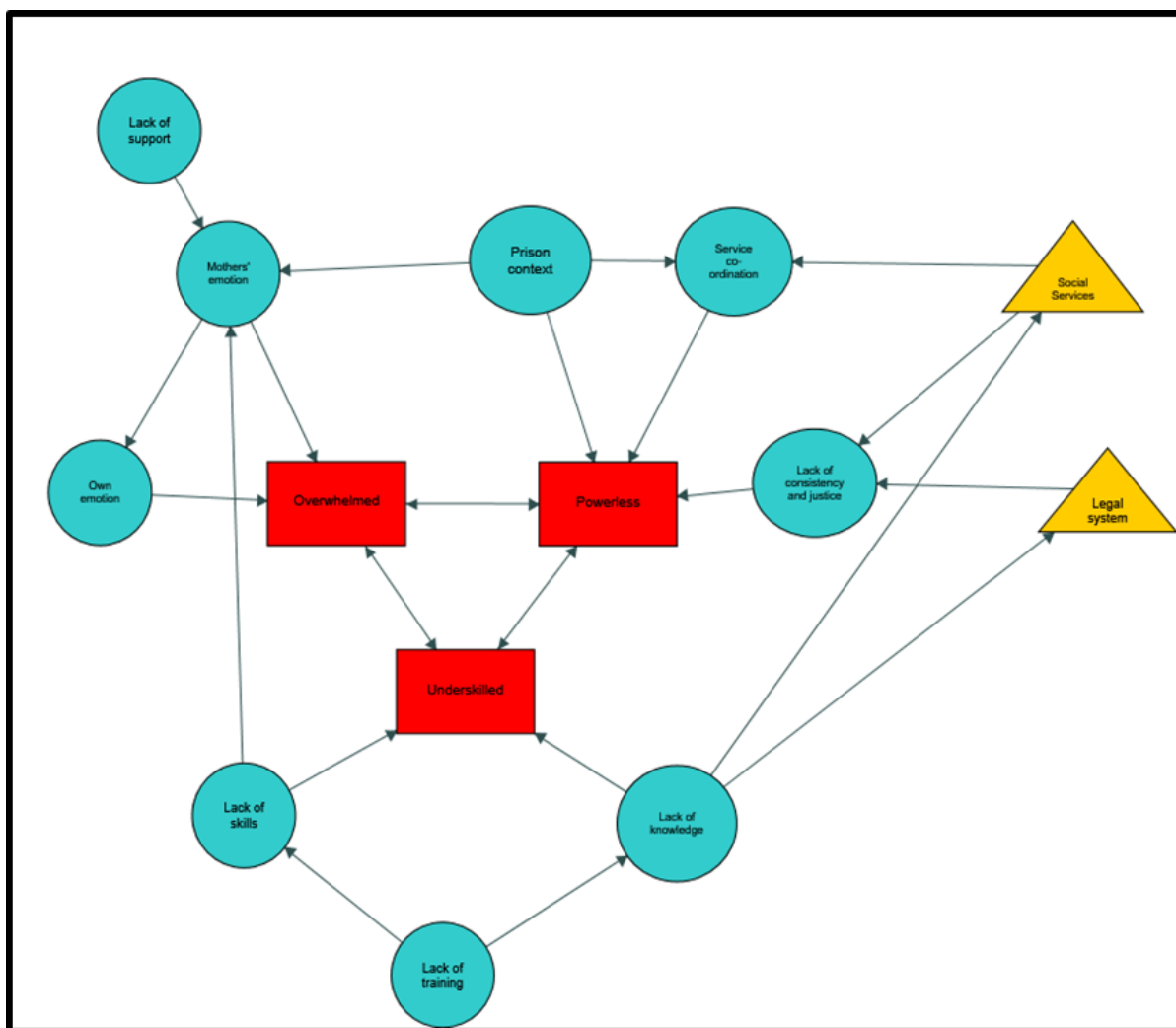
5.4 Findings

This section presents the main thematic findings from the staff interviews. This includes considering in detail the challenges staff discussed, the support structures they described, and their suggestions for improving staff support and training.

Challenges

Staff discussed the main challenges in their work, and I identified a triad of key over-arching themes across their interviews. The first was 'Overwhelmed' which describes an individual response in the face of their own and the mothers' emotions. The second theme was 'Powerless' and this feeling was due to the broader context, both the prison itself and co-ordination between services, and particularly social services and the wider legal system and their perceived inconsistency and injustice. The third theme was 'Under skilled', and in many ways the practical response to feeling unable to support mothers and lacking knowledge of legal and social services systems. For those participants who talked about the challenges in less emotional terms, their focus tended to be on lack of training, and I suggest this is perhaps a different way of talking about the same challenges. The interrelationships between the key themes and their subthemes are depicted in Figure 16. I examine each key theme in detail.

Figure 16 - Map of staff themes



Key theme 1: ‘Overwhelmed’

Throughout the interviews staff discussed the emotional impact of working with separated mothers. This was seen as something that cannot be prepared for, even with experience, because each separation is different, and staff can never be fully prepared for the impact:

Yeah, nothing, nothing, I might cry actually, nothing can prepare you for the difficulty of working with women who've had their children removed.... There's actually nothing like it. And I know that now I've done lots of other roles. And talk about going in at the deep end is

what I think now.... The level of pain, I mean, I don't, I don't, I mean it's apples and oranges because I haven't worked closely, I've done bits of work with torture victims and quite a lot of work with people who've been sexually abused. Just the level of pain is so incredibly profound. It's, yeah, it's really like nothing else. (Participant 43, 103-116)

This challenge and dealing with intense emotions, both their own and others, seemed to be epitomised in the final contact visits which are facilitated by some of the staff I interviewed. The hardest part is 'just watching somebody else break down' (Participant 36) whilst managing their own emotions. This need to 'manage emotions' was repeated through the interviews, particularly when some staff acknowledged the guilt they felt at being part of the separation process:

You're actually involved in the process that is, yeah, that is detrimental to them in one way or another. It doesn't matter which, how you look at it. And, what you're trying to do is manage that on a daily basis until we get to the end of the process.' (Participant 41, 63-66)

There were two types of guilt described, a general guilt at being part of a harmful process, and guilt in the context of relationships with individual mothers. One staff member described the challenge of their role when they had to build trusting relationships with mothers, and then sit on the separation board and sometimes decide that separation was the best course of action. Even when mothers had understood the process and felt fairly treated, there was still a sense of personal guilt from being part of the process.

The process of separating mothers in prison from their children was seen to relate to personal experiences. Staff felt they could relate as mothers, which made them more empathetic but meant the emotional impact was greater. Staff who worked with the children described 'getting attached' and struggling with their own feelings of loss, particularly when the children went into care. Loss

was seen as tapping into many different experiences for staff, which if unsupported could have a negative impact:

It's a hard one separation, you know, because you've got your bereavement and loss, and, and you know the implications of that. I think what comes up for you as an individual is it taps into your own stuff. And when you haven't got anything in place, um, you know, it can make you quite ill, really.' (Participant 47, 86-89)

Staff who provided counselling found a loss and bereavement framework useful for making sense of their feelings and were aware that for separated mothers loss was present all the time. Whilst guilt and loss were two specific feelings that were discussed in the interviews, even when participants didn't name how they felt they did say that they had to 'manage emotions'. This seemed to involve remaining empathetic but having enough distance to not become overwhelmed:

So, it is hard to take that step back and because you can't be emotionally involved but actually to do this job you have to be a little bit because you are, you know, I just think you need to show the women that you have got some empathy' (Participant 33, 329-331)

This description of balancing empathy and distance mirrors some staff concerns about the balance between wanting to do support women but understanding their limits, both for themselves and the women. One manager pointed out the potential for abuse of power when staff believe they can rescue women. Other balancing acts included how to not be overwhelmed by colleagues' emotions and leaving their work-related emotions at work so home life is not affected.

However, a significant fear which appeared to underlie or connect to many of these feelings, was the anxiety around providing emotional support for women. This was due to the intensity of mothers' emotions and the fear that unqualified staff may 'open a can of worms' (Participant 41, 106) and because of the

challenge of being vulnerable in prison, 'because they [women in prison] can't show too much, you know' (Participant 51, 42).

The extent and intensity of mothers' emotions were vividly described by staff as a major challenge in their work with separated women. The emotional impact of separation was seen as particularly profound shortly after the separation and at the beginning of the counselling process – this is when prisons felt most concerned about risk. Mothers were described as having 'ups and downs' of guilt, anger and shame which became an 'incredibly toxic burden' (Participant 49, 33). Staff identified that these feelings increased mothers' aggression, self-harm, suicide attempts and drug-taking following separation. Separation was seen as having an impact on drug and alcohol recovery in the long term:

I think it [separation] hinders their recovery. Um, if the children have been removed permanently then some women feel like there's no reason for them to become drug free. Their motivation has gone so I think we see increased drug use or steady drug use in custody. So, there's no real end point for them. (Participant 45, 16-19)

This lack of motivation for change could result in women becoming stuck in addiction and grief. Several participants highlighted how there is a particular trauma around children going into care. The children are 'gone but they're not dead' (Participant 49, 161-162). And the impact of loss was seen to be part of an ongoing cycle of trauma and hopelessness for women, including domestic violence and abuse, from which it becomes increasingly difficult for them to escape. The consequences of women's past and present situations and their concomitant emotions are a key part of staff feeling overwhelmed by their work.

Key theme 2: Powerless

Part of the challenge that staff identified when supporting mothers separated from their young children was feeling powerless as a result of the prison context. Key practical issues that had a direct impact on how well staff felt able

to support women were around staffing levels and information collection. Staff called attention to the constant staff changes and understaffing resulting in women not having continuity of care or feeling able to talk to officers:

When I first came here the prison service, you used to have an officer on every single house, I'm going back eight years. Every single house had an officer. The officer knew all the women on that house. So, if they had a problem, somebody would come down. They had to book in in the morning and off they went. So, they got to know the women, they got to know whether they was acting a bit different - they were able to pick that up. All that's gone now. So, they don't have the officers on the house. The feedback from the women is they haven't got anyone there to listen to them. Nobody's got any time. It's so busy, it's so understaffed. (Participant 47, 91-97)

This opportunity to form trusting relationships was seen as particularly important for women separated from their children. Closely allied to this is the lack of centralised and systematic information collection about which women have children. The two prisons described different approaches; however, staff in both prisons discussed women who were not supported as a result of a lack of information sharing.

Staff described 'patchy' good practice (Participant 43, 485), where women would often lack support immediately following separation, particularly if they arrived in prison separated or following giving birth in prison. For mothers separated on MBUs, the follow-up care was described as thorough but staff voiced repeated concerns about the lack of continuity of care when mothers return to the main prison following separation:

With the shifts...you're not always there for the difficult times. As much as you can, you want to be there for them but sometimes it's out of your control about having that continuity of care. (Participant 39, 34-37)

Separations at birth were seen as often more challenging than separations on MBUs because there could be less planning involved, and these relied on the involvement of social services as well as co-ordinating prison staff. One third sector organisation highlighted their concerns about the lack of support for officers following separations and reported that they were often left to offer this support:

I guess we've also really noticed how officers can be left feeling after being in a situation where a woman's separated from her baby.... And sometimes officers have to us, you know, how...terrible they've been left feelings. And we have actually been in a situation where we've actually stayed and debriefed with them a bit...Talked them through what's happened...because I think it's not fair in the same way for them not to have emotional support or perhaps recognition of how emotionally challenging some of those situations are. (Participant 50, 119–127)

In general, it was frequently repeated that the wider prison had little or no understanding of the impact of separation on women.

This lack of understanding was related to a general lack of awareness of mental health and acknowledgement of separations as traumatic. This was seen both as a lack of knowledge and skills and as a lack of suitable spaces and privacy for counselling, as described by one head of a counselling service:

I mean it's always a problem because, I mean I barely get through a session without somebody bursting into the room.... And they're glass partitioned so, you know, to try and get the client to sit with her back to the door because you think if she's going to bawl her head off she doesn't want to see everyone, to see her doing that. [I: Of course not.] But it is tricky and it's deeply less than ideal. (Participant 49, 266-270)

The problems of lack of space for and awareness of what is needed for counselling were seen in the context of prisons being a 'completely disempowering environment' (Participant 46, 346) and the challenge this brings when trying to support women through separation:

But the main thing, I guess, is just there is such an uneven power dynamic in our prisons. And that has obviously been exacerbated for women who've had their child temporarily or permanently removed. And I think it's really difficult as professionals and working with women, how do you empower, how do you disrupt power dynamics, how, you know (Participant 43, 477-480)

There seemed to be an underlying question about the extent to which staff really can provide emotional support in contexts of incarceration.

The sense of powerlessness in the prison context was further intensified by the challenges of services co-ordinating their work the prison. Social services was a target of frustration amongst many of those working with separation. The relationship of prison staff and social services will be examined in more detail later on. Staff explained that services within the prison were often not joined up, mental health and substance misuse services were a common example, and work could often be duplicated, for example, in gathering information about a woman's family network.

There were challenges emphasised in terms of co-ordination between prison and third sector organisations – both those based inside and outside the prison. The main difficulties included: unclear lines of responsibility, in terms of management and supervision particularly of new staff; third sector staff felt their work was limited by the prison, for example by making access to women difficult; and a general difference of priorities between officers and third sector staff when it came to providing support.

MBUs were discussed by staff and there were views that these units are often not tolerated or understood by the rest of the prison: 'we're just seen as a big pain in the bum' (Participant 46, 333); 'the biggest challenge is that other people don't understand why we're here. So, support can be lacking' (Participant 46, 346-347). Related to this, continuity of care, as mentioned above, is often lacking when mothers return to the main prison from an MBU or when they are released. There was immense frustration from staff that mothers could be separated following release because of a lack of community support:

You know, women being separated can happen a few months after leaving here, even though they've done fantastically, because there is no support outside.... And, and that can be because there's no mother and baby places outside or no supported living or not that kind of thing. So, they, they can go out and they are, but, but it can be like shared parental responsibility with the local authority because, um, of the risk. They might be going back to the same man they were with before. Or the same family, or the same area where the, all the associates are the same. And actually, we do feel that, that, the support ends and then there's nothing else. (Participant 46, 106-112)

Within the prison it was noticed that there were difficulties co-ordinating services, such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation, for women on MBUs.

Finally, some third sector staff considered the obstacle to different services and prisons working more effectively together was in fact due to different underlying ways of working. One organisation with an explicit trauma-informed approach felt that their ethos was not understood by either the prison or social services and this resulted in mothers not being treated with respect:

I: So, what are the particular challenges of being trauma-informed and then working with other agencies and organisations that aren't trauma-informed?

P: Yeah, it's just not understanding that somebody can be so overwhelmed by an experience and that they can be, um, I suppose in these situations it would normally be social services that we were talking to and they are completely coming from a child perspective with a lot of sort of other judgements there about the mother. (Participant 32, 430-437)

The last set of challenges identified how staff feel powerless about the wider system, which incorporates both the prison context and co-ordination with services. This focused on both social services and the wider legal system. Staff gave examples of inconsistent practice around which mothers retained custody of their children and those who did not:

I find some of the laws just ridiculous that, that a father can come and take a child and, and not let them have contact with the mother they've lived with. I find that it's bizarre. And how a woman can lose her children when she's only been put on remand. Erm, and that her crime was nothing to do with children obviously, it was, you know, something completely different. So, I find that very hard to understand sometimes. (Participant 35, 183-187)

Even staff who had worked with separated mothers for a long time felt they were observing repeated inconsistent practice by social services and sentencers. This inconsistency continues in prison as some mothers are entitled to ROTLs, and others are not, despite staff seeing the benefit for all mothers:

Specific groups can have specific things. So, if you're a sole carer, you'll get all these ROTLs, you'll get everything, if you're behaving and engaging. People who've lost their children don't get an extra ROTL or extra visits from family to support them through the loss of their child. And if you've got a partner you don't get them either. So, this is where unless you fit into one pot, you're not entitled. (Participant 44, 295-298)

Several staff expressed their anger at the impact of short prison sentences resulting in permanent child loss. Community-based staff pointed out how mothers were often left in an impossible situation on release – housed far away from their children and then penalised for not maintaining contact. Finally, stigma was highlighted both in the general population and in other agencies. The staff I interviewed felt that women are being judged and badly treated as a result of general perceptions about the rights of women with a conviction. The perceptions of inconsistency and injustice were further aspects of the situation for separated mothers that front-line staff were unable to address:

One woman that I was with, where there was more of a plan and it seemed really positive, she was told that she would actually meet the foster parents and they'd come and meet her and she'd say goodbye to the baby in hospital. But, um, you know it was difficult to know whose fault it was and why that arrangement broke down. But there were a couple of times when, um, she was told that the foster parents were coming, and she prepared herself, and then they didn't come. And in the end, she had to be taken back to prison and say goodbye to her baby and just leave the baby in the neonatal unit at the hospital. Not being able to hand the baby over to someone, which she'd been told would be what happened. And that was really devastating to her. (Participant 50, 393-400).

Key theme 3: Under skilled

This sense of being overwhelmed by their own and mothers' emotions was paralleled by a feeling of being under skilled for such emotional work with female prisoners. Several participants pointed out that there was no training specifically for dealing with issues arising from separation, its effects on women and how to manage, and that they wanted this to feel more confident. What was particularly highlighted as a skill lacking in everyone who was not a counsellor was being able to adequately provide psychological support. All staff acknowledged that this was part of their role but lacked the confidence and

skills to be able to do it 'properly'. There was a general sense of anxiety that they might make things worse for separated women and that they needed to refer on to professionals when women were very distressed:

We know that there is the possibility that we're, we're going to open a can of worms that we're not going to be able to shut. (Participant 41, 105-107)

Yet, these were all front-line staff working regularly with separated women.

The sense of powerlessness in the face of the challenges of the wider environment was echoed in the feeling of having a lack of knowledge. The key areas in which staff felt under skilled concerned the structure of social services, knowledge about mental health and the availability of wider services and referral pathways. Whilst clearly staff cannot change the wider system, some of them seemed to feel that their lack of knowledge was contributing to their sense of powerlessness and that training in these areas might help to overcome this.

Support available

In addition to asking staff about challenges they faced in supporting mothers separated from their young children, I asked about the specific support they received for this part of their job roles. The support structures described varied depending on their organisation and the following four categories appear to best capture those. The summary of findings in Table 19 reveals the spectrum of support available for staff supporting mothers in prison. This spectrum ranges from informal colleague support to regular clinical supervision:

- i. Prison employed: Staff directly employed by a prison described having no formal support in place specifically around separation. They highlighted other colleagues as their main source of support. In terms of management support this varied from informal support to staff who clearly expressed that their managers were good sources of support during the separation process. Some staff described team meetings, briefings and a mentor system – however, what was noticeable was that

these were not mentioned by all members of the same team. In terms of wider support, the most frequently reported response was that there was something available (e.g. a care team), but nobody seemed to know about how to access or knew anyone who had accessed this form of support. Interestingly, however the head of counselling in one prison reported that they saw many staff who were seeking additional emotional support for their work.

- ii. Third sector – low support: The smaller third sector organisations were often lacking supervision and meetings but like the prison staff most of their support came from colleagues in their own or other organisations. Managers were sometimes available, and the relevant governor was seen as a helpful resource. There were some psychological forms of support in place, but these were not systematically used, and one staff member described paying for their own therapy to compensate for a lack of in-work support.
- iii. Third sector – high support: The larger third sector organisations, more likely to be national in scope, appeared to have more systematic support structures in place where separations can be discussed. These included individual, group and line manager supervision, in addition to regular team meetings. Managers and team members were seen as consistent sources of support, in addition to the relevant governor. The gaps in support appeared to be for managers, even when they did front line work, and there was a general sense that the prison did not offer enough for staff based inside the prisons.
- iv. Counselling/trauma-informed: Staff based in counselling organisations or third sector organisations with an explicit trauma-informed ethos had the most structured and systemic support systems. These were regular individual and group supervision for both front-line and management staff. Colleagues were sources of support but there were structured forms of support between colleagues such as peer supervision. There was a divide between organisations that received additional support from

the prison (e.g. supervision and line management by the psychology team) and those who received nothing. However, those that were not provided with support by the prison felt sufficiently supported by their organisation.

Table 17 - Staff support structures by organisation type

Table 17			
<i>Staff support structures by organisation type</i>			
<u>Prison-employed</u>	<u>3rd sector (low)</u>	<u>3rd sector (high)</u>	<u>Counselling/trauma-informed</u>
Nothing formal	Nothing specific to separation	One to one supervision	Individual supervision
Nothing specific to separation	No regular supervisions or meeting	Group supervision	Clinical supervision, including offsite
None	No support for managers	Monthly line manager supervision	Group supervision
Unsure where to refer to	Other support	6-weekly team meeting	Monthly/fortnightly supervision depending on clinical load
Staff support each other	Peer support	Constant support from team and line manager	Management supervision and support
Close colleagues	Pool experiences	Experienced line manager	Colleagues
Staff in other parts of prison	Partner agencies	Relevant governor	Peer supervision and support
Informal support from line manager	Contacts outside the prison	No supervision for managers even though engaged in front-line work	Peer debrief
Can ask manager/senior support	Can ask managers	Not much from prison – care line	Pool resources from different specialists in team
Good manager and deputy manager	Manager out at head office, not present but available by email/phone	Family	Other health or social care professionals in prison
Team meetings	Relevant governor		None from prison even when based there
Briefings before and after	Offered counselling if required		Supported by prison psychology team – well line managed
Mentor system with experienced staff members	Debriefing for volunteers		Prison provided one hour of monthly external group supervision
Clinical support person available but no details	Clinical supervision but poorly attended		Supportive governor
Support team but unsure	Self-funded therapy		Organisation paid for additional training
Chaplaincy if needed/asked for	Family or partner		Personal reflection
Psychotherapist is available informally			
Family or partner			

Staff support and training suggestions

Following questions about the challenges and support in place, staff were asked what support structures they would put in place and what training they would like to access if they had an unlimited budget.

Surprisingly, in terms of support, very few staff could think of anything and it was mainly managers who made suggestions for the staff they line managed. Interestingly some wanted to make support compulsory because they felt that was the only way staff would use it. The counselling and trauma-informed organisations felt their support structures would be beneficial for everyone involved in supporting mothers separated from their young children. It was made clear that clinical supervision was only useful when provided by someone both psychologically qualified and knowledgeable about the prison context. The preference was for external supervision but understanding the prison context was more important.

Table 18 - Staff support structure suggestions

Table 18
<i>Staff support structure suggestions</i>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Staff suggestions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debriefs following separation to analyse what could be done better next time• Individual/group supervision with a psychologist• Counselling for staff after separation – not being given an option• Trained staff member on unit to support team through discussions/group counselling• Availability of clinical supervision made more visible• Enough clinical supervision – external to prison but with prison experiences professional• Compulsory group support and optional one to one• Advice on where to go when separation brings up personal issues

As the small number of suggestions make clear, there is a focus on clinical supervision and emotional support following separations. The descriptions of

this support made it clear that staff feel it is important to have an appropriately qualified member of staff rather than just a peer, and provision that is separate from the team. There was one suggestion around debriefs to improve practice, and one staff member felt they had been supporting separated mothers for long enough and no longer needed support.

Ideas for training, however, came much more easily to staff and there were many suggestions. These varied from training specifically related to separation to knowledge and skills applicable to the broader context. Many third sector staff felt that officers in particular needed specific training to enable better working between prisons and third sector organisations. However, a couple of members of staff felt no training could help them in their work as every separation scenario is different. All the training suggestions are organised in Table 19.

Table 19 - Staff training suggestions

Table 19				
<i>Staff training suggestions</i>				
<u>Separation specific training</u>	<u>Relevant knowledge/skills</u>	<u>Training with/about wider services</u>	<u>Awareness raising for officers</u>	<u>Further suggestions</u>
Implications of separating mothers from babies – what to look out for, how to support, where to refer	Counselling skills Basic mental health awareness Trauma-informed training	Joint training with social services Safeguarding training – how to link with social services	General education around impact of separation for uniformed staff and non-psychotherapy staff – to understand how mothers struggle and need support beyond two weeks	Upskilling care team and managers in child loss and separation More experienced staff aware of impact of separation on staff
Mothers' emotional needs	Domestic violence training	In-prison services e.g. family support sharing knowledge		
Supporting mothers with loss and grief	Social work training Law training	Support services available	Awareness amongst officers about making relationships with (and referring) pregnant women with young children	Training delivered by staff who've gone through separations and have child-minded perspectives
General training on separation: guidelines, policies, structure, age limits	How attachment works Fourth trimester	Multi-agency approach to separation Training for everybody liaising with mums, including re: clear pathway		Training targeted to specific staff groups
Process of separation in prison	Developmental trajectories		Awareness of depression (including postnatal) and how to support and refer	Information packs
Process of child removal by social services and why it happens	Breastfeeding, holding babies so mothers not given conflicting information re: first hours/days before separation			Follow-up and recaps on all trainings
General impact of child loss			Trained to be more supportive and less judgemental	
Relate separation to trauma				
Specialist training on how to re-engage separated mothers and support back into prison life				

The table shows a clear desire from staff for training specifically related to separation from children and all the practice-related implications from understanding emotional needs to the legal processes. In terms of the broader skills and knowledge staff feel would be useful, the most frequent suggestion was for counselling skills. In addition to this, ideas included knowledge around mental health, trauma, domestic violence, social work and law. There were some requests for specific child-development training, including those that would cover attachment and developmental trajectories.

In order to address the co-ordination difficulties between services, a range of training suggestions were made including joint training with, for example social services, or training by expert teams such as family support, in order to share knowledge. Training was viewed as a way to encourage cross-team working.

Many training suggestions were aimed specifically at officers:

There are some really brilliant prison officers who get all of this stuff. But I feel like the education piece around the impact of this [separation] in staff training, for kind of uniformed staff and others, like non-psychotherapy staff is really, really important. And that would support the women in turn. Because who's there at two in the morning? Certainly not the non-uniformed civilians. It's the, it's the prison officers. (Participant 43, 406-410)

Staff I interviewed felt that many of their challenges were because of differences between their approach and that of the wider prison. In general, the suggestions for officers were around understanding the impact of separation and its broader potential effects on a woman's mental health. The final suggestions were aimed at managers and experienced staff to enable them to support front-line staff and share information.

Conclusion

Staff openly discussed the challenges they face in supporting separated mothers and these included both the emotional impact and the frustrations of working with other agencies. The degree of support in place for staff varies considerably according to their role and employer and, for those with minimal support it was only managers who suggested improving the structures in place. However, training was very much regarded as a key way to tackle the challenges identified. Generally, staff seemed reluctant to suggest ideas for increased support. This could be due to the intense pain of supporting separated mothers, combined with a lack of experience for the non-counselling staff of supportive organisational cultures. The following chapter will consider staff knowledge and understanding of attachment theory and how this relates to prison policy and practice.

6 ATTACHMENT THEORY: USE IN PRISON POLICY AND PRACTICE

Every time a social phenomenon is directly explained by a psychological phenomenon, we may be sure that the explanation is false. (Durkheim 1895/1938, p.104)

This chapter focuses on the use of attachment theory in prisons as experienced by mothers and as practised by staff. It brings together the thematic analyses of staff and mothers' interviews to consider their different perspectives side by side. Where relevant, I will make reference to the expert and practitioner studies. Separation in prisons is complex – there are multiple different trajectories (see Figure 1, p.11) and this thesis has not been able to cover all of them in detail. The use of attachment theory in policy and practice, however, is relevant to all possible separation scenarios for mothers. First this chapter will examine mothers' implicit mentions of attachment theory through their discussions of parenting and then it will move on to staff understandings of attachment and separation. The use of attachment theory in practice will be considered through exploration of views of MBUs and the eighteen-month age

limit. A brief history of MBUs will be discussed to contextualise the staff perspectives. Finally, the chapter considers relevant themes that relate to separation but are broader than mother-child attachment. These include social support and relations with social services, along with a brief discussion of the wider context of MBUs, and the current move to gender- and trauma-informed approaches.

6.1 Understandings of attachment theory

Parenting

Whilst I did not explicitly ask mothers for their ideas about attachment theory, I did ask about their ideas around parenting. This was a flexible incorporation of Keller et al.'s (2004) concept of 'ethnotheories of parenting', and their responses did include some references that relate to ideas about attachment. Mothers with lived experience discussed their ideas of parenting which mostly centred on love and consistency. Two aspects which relate more directly to ideas around attachment theory were about intergenerational influences and the idea of 'bonding'. In response to the question about the origin of their own ideas of parenting, several participants described how they were affected by their experiences of growing up. Several participants wanted to avoid at all costs how their mothers had parented them: some felt they had not managed to do this, others felt they had. Other participants pointed out positive aspects of their childhood experiences which they had deliberately tried to replicate. A child's need to bond was repeatedly mentioned and of particular note there was one mother who described how she was concerned that her separation from her newborn baby would ruin 'the bond' (Participant 1, 447), but that long term she felt like it had not: 'the bond's so special' (Participant 1, 454)

However, the mothers' primary association with parenting was guilt and shame. There was a sense that 'I felt like I've let her [my daughter] down' (Participant 5, 411), and that parenting was 'a lot of emotional baggage and guilt' (Participant

4, 50). One participant saw herself as a 'bad mother' (Participant 3, 207-208), and the participant who had had the most children removed described herself as 'scum of the earth' (Participant 1, 266) because she felt responsible for ruining the lives of her children. It is probable that the findings would have been different had I interviewed mothers whilst in prison and who were parenting at a distance. Nevertheless, it is notable that when discussing being a parent, mothers were more likely to focus on their principally negative emotions, particularly in relation to their pathway to prison and its impact on their parenting. Whilst incarcerated mothers' emotions have been studied in a recent criminology study (Baldwin, 2018), the attachment literature has little to offer to consider the impact of the broader context on how an imprisoned mother may feel about her parenting. Crittenden (2008) suggests that separation due to imprisonment might make parents feel less secure in their parenting; however, what the mothers I interviewed were describing was far more multifaceted.

Staff use of attachment theory

In terms of prison staff there were many implicit and explicit references to attachment theory, although I did not ask explicitly about attachment. What was particularly striking was the diversity of views. The importance of a 'bonding stage' (Participant 38, 139) was highlighted, and this bond was seen as 'essential' (Participant 46, 366), because if it did not happen at an early age there would be negative consequences later on (Participants 34, 44, and 46). In fact, early attachment was responsible for 'resilience' (Participant 46, 371) and 'means that everybody is going to be healthier and happier and it's going to save the state money.' (Participant 51, 279-280).

Disrupting early bonding was viewed as leading to 'dissociated attachments' (Participant 46, 368-369), and affecting the attachment of the next generation (Participant 32). Separation was seen as particularly problematic for under twos because separation at this age would then affect adult relationships (Participant 43). One staff member felt that all adopted children have attachment difficulties (Participant 32). Another believed that a 'mediocre attachment' with birth

parents was better than no attachment (Participant 43, 325), although one staff member had observed officers advising mothers not to hold their newborn child because this would disrupt their future attachment (Participant 50).

During this 'bonding stage' there was a sense that children gradually become attached. The 'best' age for separation was when 'baby had ..the attachment but wasn't too attached' (Participant 42, 129), and it is this point that is 'better' for separation because children get more attached with age so more 'devastated' by separation (Participant 42, 130). Staff discussed how in one prison mothers in the MBU used to be separated at age six to nine months because this was deemed best for children's emotional development by the prison. This had recently changed, however, following a court challenge led by an imprisoned mother who had a psychologist's report that disagreed with this practice (Participant 42, Participant 40). Separation was now at 18 months instead; however, some staff members still felt that earlier separation was better for children. What is particularly striking about the focus on age six to nine months as 'best' for the child is that this was explicitly contradicted by the attachment experts and the practitioner survey (see Chapter 4). There the explanation was that separation at this age was harmful precisely because children's attachment was not fully developed.

Whilst many of the staff who discussed attachment had backgrounds in childcare, some did not. But what is interesting is how this notion of 'attachment' was interpreted and related to prison practice. There was very much a focus on the impact on children. Indeed, there was only a single mention of attachment in relation to mothers that separation from children leads to 'broken' attachments for mothers which can result in anxiety dreams (Participant 49, 102).

This discussion calls attention to how theory is used and understood in practice by non-specialist staff. What is noticeable is how the experts and practitioners

repeatedly discussed the impact of prison context, the nature of the separation, the level of contact in relation to attachment, and in general there was a call for case-by-case responses to separation. By contrast, prison staff referred to attachment in far more generalised ways, as if applicable uniformly across populations.

However, when prison staff discussed separation, as opposed to when they referred to attachment theory, their discussions were more nuanced and specific. When unconstrained by a psychological theory, staff discussions included the impact of context and incorporated more thoughtful responses and practical ideas for how to respond. Their compassion for the women they work with was more apparent. This was very striking and suggests that when using everyday language, rather than an often misunderstood psychological construct such as attachment, staff were able to express greater empathy and understanding. It appears as if a limited knowledge of attachment theory somehow reduced staff capacity to respond to mothers as individuals with traumatic histories. However, this was only when discussing attachment, not when they discussed separation.

Separation was described as shameful (Participant 43), and a result of social failure, often related to protecting women from violent partners (Participant 46), a partner who might then take custody of the child whilst the mother was in prison (Participant 43). Addiction was described as a primary reason for social services' separation before prison (Participant 44), and part of a cycle related to domestic violence (Participant 33). Trauma in women's pre-prison history was discussed as resulting in low self-esteem and their inability to ask for help (Participant 32). Understanding factors such as trauma, addiction and domestic violence were seen as crucial in understanding how to support women.

There was acknowledgement that mothers rarely want to separate from their children; it is usually a local authority decision (Participant 34). When this results in permanent separation, this has a particularly severe impact (Participant 43). Staff discussed the effect on mothers of not knowing what is going to happen throughout the separation process, and how it is this that leads to separation becoming a 'breaking point' for some mothers (Participant 36). It was recognised that separation from a child is challenging because it is not a social norm, and thus all mothers need contact (Participant 35). This is particularly problematic for mothers whose children are taken abroad (e.g. Participant 2).

The emotional impact on mothers was described in detail by staff. They had observed women self-harming (Participant 45), taking their own lives (Participant 48), and suffering from the 'toxic burden' of the shame of separation (Participant 49). Some staff felt that separation was especially painful at birth (Participant 48), others had noticed the pain for mothers around anniversaries such as birthdays (Participant 45). Staff had noticed mothers' increasing self-blame (Participant 33), their changes in behaviour and emotions while not receiving any support (Participant 44). One participant explained that separation needed to be responded to as a form of 'complex grief' (Participant 49, 174).

What is noticeable is that discussing 'separation' as opposed to 'attachment' results in far more consideration from the mothers' perspective. In terms of supporting mother, these insights are the groundwork for understanding how to respond, and interestingly these views are closer to the experts' discussion of attachment and their more systemic approach.

6.2 Attachment in practice: MBUs

Another way in which participant understandings about attachment were revealed was through their perspectives of MBUs. MBUs could be understood

as an enactment of attachment theory, given that their entire premise is that incarcerated mothers are not separated from their babies. Participants' discussions highlighted their priorities in addition to (and sometimes instead of) the mother-child bond.

Mothers' perspectives

As this study was researching separation experiences, none of the mothers who took part had spent time on a prison MBU, and only two of the participants would have been eligible given the age of their children. However, the mothers shared a diverse range of perspectives on MBUs.

Whilst there was a prevalent view that children needed to be there for the entire sentence, thus avoiding any separation – what this would look like in terms of age limits varied. One standpoint was that children should stay until two or three years (when starting nursery), another standpoint was that five years (primary-aged) was more appropriate. In opposition to this, because the prison environment was not deemed suitable for children, only the first year was seen as appropriate if there was no other option. Related to this, there was concern that children would become resentful if they were in prison for too long, so they should visit regularly rather than be on an MBU.

In a different vein, Participant 1 felt that everybody deserved an initial chance of one month, and then the option of staying depended on how they managed for that month. She felt that 'even people like me', i.e. those with a history of multiple child removals and drug use should have the chance to turn their life around. In terms of the admissions criteria, Participant 1 pointed out the problem of numbers of places and how, even without additional challenges such as drug use, most women cannot be offered a place:

It didn't feel fair at the time, I don't think it feels fair for any woman. If there's like 60 people pregnant and only 12 can get a chance, there's

not no, it's not fair is it? The odds are stacked against them already. Whatever the issue is.' (Participant 1, 130-132)

What this range of perspectives from a small sample of participants shows is that these mothers considered the impact of the environment on the child as much as the preservation of the mother-child 'bond', and additionally that the MBU can play a role for mothers as a turning point.

Prison staff views

Prison staff had a range of views in relation to MBUs and, in contrast to the mothers I interviewed, many of them had had direct involvement with MBUs over the course of their careers. Whilst some staff held entirely positive views of MBUs, others were more nuanced and, at times ambivalent, particularly for those staff who had experience of working on prison MBUs. Whereas some reasons given about the benefits of MBUs were vague, the most prevalent positive reason for MBUs was cited as the mother-child bond. This was described in a range of ways in terms of the mother's exclusive focus on her child:

'It's the best start in life for that baby because they're getting the one to one support from their mum' (Participant 34, 416-417)

And this exclusive focus was most important in the first two years:

'I definitely, yeah, so [pause] a hundred percent think like a mother and baby unit does work, and I do think that like a lot of mums should be given, if obviously if they've got the babies with them, because it's the most important stages of the life is when they're first born up to like they're two because of their development, erm, the age and stage of development. And I think mums should be there for, for them crucial time in their life growing up.' (Participant 34, 496-500)

This need for 'togetherness' was related to research that had been interpreted to mean that not separating was more important than the impact of the prison environment:

'Yes, absolutely, the best thing is to keep the child, in my view, is to keep the child in with the mum. Um, because I mean, you, research I learned this last weekend, apparently, research shows that a newborn baby can recognise its mother, smell and the sound and so on. Um, and so even to never have that sound or smell from birth will be experienced as a, as an anxiety and a loss by the baby. All pre-verbal and can't express anything. Um, so yes keep mother and baby together where at all possible and I know prison's not an ideal environment.' (Participant 49, 388-394)

These ideas are not controversial and adhere very much to textbook versions of attachment theory. Interestingly the positive aspects for mothers of MBUs discussed by staff were nothing to do with attachment. These included mothers' access to knowledge and skills, particularly parenting, and the chance to have regular contact with professionals, such as health visitors and the nursery staff. Where it was encouraged, it was felt that mothers could be positively supported by peers.

In addition, there was a perspective that MBUs were a space for mothers to reclaim some power in the face of incarceration:

'And that's, that's the biggest challenge is that other people don't understand why we're here. So, support can be lacking for those things.' (Participant 42, 346-347)

This was interesting because it drew on a rights-based discourse, as opposed to the preservation of a 'bond' and because several participants, including this one, felt that women were constrained in how they parented because of the prison context. Consequently, whilst mothers had a right to parent, they did not have a right to parent in the way they wished. In some ways this contradiction goes to the heart of the challenges raised by MBUs in prisons and relates to the concerns that staff raised about them.

In terms of criticisms, there are some that might be understood as related to attachment, others less so. There were a range of concerns about the impact on mothers, particularly how they could not parent as they would at home and this left mothers feeling powerless. There was acknowledgement that this structure was only, in fact, beneficial for a few mothers. Staff recognised they had strict rules about, for example, weaning which mothers might not want to follow; however, they justified this because 'we're trying to show them, you know, the best way' (Participant 48, 279-280). Others felt the threat of separation as a punishment for bad behaviour was stressful (Participant 43), whereas another view was that knowledge of separation at 18 months for those with long sentences, 'That's got to be like some form of torture. That's got to be like sitting on death row, knowing that the end is coming at some point.' (Participant 45, 176-177). Another staff member was not sure of the benefit of MBUs given that mothers had to return to work or education when their children were six weeks so they all had early separations anyway (Participant 50).

Further criticisms of MBUs included the risk of institutionalisation of children and the impact on other children outside. Children left behind could become jealous but also MBUs created a 'false environment' (Participant 34, 406) because mothers would have to go home to parenting all children at the same time, so there was a question about whether it was helpful to have a focus on just one child for a period of time. There was a view that when mothers had long sentences, MBUs were not in the children's interests because of this separation at 18 months (Participant 34). Many of these concerns focus on the mother and the impact on her parenting both during and after her imprisonment. The others consider the impact on children both in and outside the prison.

Finally, there were two general comments: one that MBUs did not provide enough learning opportunities for mothers in terms of parenting and this was a missed opportunity; and the converse that MBUs should not in fact exist because the state should not be providing childcare for women in prison. These

are interesting because they provide opposing views as to what the role of MBUs should be. One staff member clearly sees the MBUs as part of mothers' rehabilitation, whilst the other sees parenting as completely irrelevant. However, neither felt that preserving the mother-child relationship was key.

18-month age limit

As previously discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, one of the key policy and related practice uses of attachment theory is the idea of a 'best' age of separation. In general, there was agreement amongst staff that it was important for babies to bond with their mothers in the first months. However, as children get older, other concerns become more important, in particular their awareness of their environment. What was notable was that there was general agreement by staff that 18 months is the age at which children become aware of their environment and that by this age it is 'stifling' (Participant 41, 163 and 165). According to staff, this is when children realise they are in prison and start noticing being locked up, bars on windows and staff keys. Currently, this is the age at which children generally leave the MBU.

There were concerns that 'loads of research' showed that the prison environment negatively affected development if children stayed too long on MBUs (Participant 36, 250). In contrast there was a perspective that MBUs advanced children's development, particularly social, because of the access to excellent nursery facilities and greater opportunity to interact with adults than they might otherwise have (Participant 46). It is important to note there is no conclusive research currently for either perspective. There is one piece of UK research from the 1980s (Catan, 1989a; 1989b) which found children had a slight (but reversible on release) decline in physical and cognitive development when they stayed in the MBU. Furthermore, given the changes across the women's estate and MBUs in the past 29 years since the research was carried out, it is questionable just how applicable it can be. Byrne's research in US prison nurseries has shown that children can develop secure attachments during their time in prison (Byrne et al., 2010; Goshin & Byrne, 2009; Byrne et

al., 2012; Goshin, Byrne & Henninger, 2014; Goshin, Byrne & Blanchard-Lewis, 2014). Whilst this is more positive, it is unclear the extent to which it can be applied to the UK context.

When I asked staff whether the MBU environment should be changed to be more appropriate for older children, this revealed a point of tension. Whilst some felt the provision should be expanded up to pre-school or primary school age (similar to the mothers' views), there were concerns about the implications of expanding MBU provision. In fact, some staff felt that 'most women just shouldn't be in prison' (Participant 32, 567) and several discussed alternative provision. This general uncertainty around age limits and extending provisions is interesting in light of the expert perspectives. The experts and the practitioners all expressed concerns at having a 'best age' of separation for all children, and they generally advocated case-by-case decisions. Indeed, over a decade ago Black, Payne, Lansdown and Gregoire (2004) writing in the BMJ stated:

It can be anticipated that 18 months might be the most difficult age for a child to separate from its primary carer, but what, if any, would be an appropriate change to the current upper limit? (p.897)

This doubt around the validity of a single age limit for all child separations in prison is in fact incorporated in the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders (2010):

Decisions as to when a child is to be separated from its mother shall be based on individual assessments and the best interests of the child within the scope of relevant national laws. (Rule 52(1))

This reflects perhaps the challenge of applying a psychological theory, which has few definite answers, to prison policy which requires certainty.

History of MBUs

It seems useful at this point to historically contextualise these points of conflict between prison staff and attachment experts. Since 1948 babies stayed with their mothers in Holloway Prison until they were nine months and in open prisons until two years old (Moore & Scraton, 2014). When Holloway's MBU closed in 2013, this age limit was still in place. The other closed prison MBUs (Bronzefield, Eastwood Park, Peterborough and Styal) have age limits of 18 months but would often separate children at six to nine months as discussed earlier. Whilst clearly MBU provision has developed since 1948, the age limits have not varied, and it appears that it is the justification for them that has changed instead.

Looking at the available historical literature, which dates from the 1980s, the debates have remained the same. Elton (1987) points out that the age limit policies are based on opinion rather than evidence on the impact of separation or MBUs, in particular Home Office beliefs about the harm of the prison environment on children's development. He criticises the exclusion of women with postnatal depression from MBUs (an echo of Birmingham et al., 2006); furthermore, he questions the assumption of a lack of alternatives to imprisoning women with children, and in general calls for a more child-friendly environment.

Elton's editorial resulted in debates about what women need whilst pregnant and incarcerated, and then on release to care for their children. Britten (1988) draws exclusively from attachment theory to argue that the 'primary' separation of a baby from its incarcerated mother is potentially less harmful than the 'secondary' separation of a baby from its foster carer on its mother's release. Whilst he points out that there is a lack of data on this supposed damage, he argues that Bowlby's theory provides more than enough evidence.

Catan (1988a; 1988b; 1989a; 1989b) draws attention to the media concern over children separated from their imprisoned mothers and negative outcomes alongside reports on the damaging impact on children being raised in prison. Interestingly she points out that the focus on the criticism of separation avoided any attention to practical support for children in MBUs. This was a result of the use of attachment and child development research for 'ideological purposes', i.e. to keep mothers and children together at any cost. Catan (1988a) calls for child-centred policies to be implemented – and there is no doubt that these have been, through the involvement of Action for Children and PACT, in some of the MBUs. However, there has been no other empirical research on MBUs and child outcomes.

What this brief excursion into the historical literature has demonstrated is that the age limits have not changed in 70 years and that the justification for them with attachment theory, in fact, came later. Catan's (1988a) critique of attachment theory is interesting and fits in with the historical critiques of attachment theory. Vicedo (2013) has carried out a detailed historical analysis of the rise of attachment theory in the US and relates it to an already present cultural assumption that mothers are solely responsible for child outcomes. These assumptions are explored in greater detail by Ehrenreich and English (2005) in their exposition of childrearing advice. Vicedo (2013) argues that the scientific evidence for attachment theory 'has been insufficient and is deeply flawed' (p.238) and reveals how core beliefs about attachment, such as monotropy, persist both in popular discourse and academic literature, despite evidence to the contrary.

This historical analysis relates to feminist work which discusses attachment theory as a discourse based on moralising social norms that overlooked wider social factors (e.g. Burman, 2008), affected both policy and practice (Hollway, 2006) and created a culture of mother blaming (Starkey, 2000). Hollway (2006) highlights that 'separations are not qualified in context, length or meaning'

(p.455). This is particularly significant when more recent critiques of attachment theory stress the overlooked cross- and intra-cultural differences in attachment and their implications (Quinn & Mageo, 2013; Otto & Keller, 2014; Keller & Bard, 2017).

Thus, the concerns expressed by the prison staff in their interviews reflect debates about MBUs and attachment that have been going on for nearly 30 years. Whilst staff who worked as counsellors discussed how they found using attachment theory in their individual practice helpful, it is not clear how useful it is as a basis for policy. The lack of context-specific evidence for and agreement about attachment does not seem to have led to clear guidelines in the policy about how to support mothers and staff. As suggested by Catan (1988a), perhaps it is the focus on preserving the mother-child 'bond' that has prevented further action. In particular, I would like to suggest that an over focus on an individualising psychology theory is likely to obscure the wider, contextual factors that affect how mothers and staff cope with child separations.

Waters and McIntosh (2011) in their discussion of the application of attachment theory to child custody disputes in divorce argue that the early years are not, in fact, critical and that a lifespan approach is more useful. They explain that harm is not caused by the losses per se 'but the history of family disorganization' (p.479) and indeed, it is not the amount of contact, but the quality of contact that matters, and it is primarily the lack of co-ordination between parents which causes problems (Waters & McIntosh, 2011). This resonates with the wider factors identified by both women and staff which affected their experiences of separation.

6.3 Beyond attachment

The focus on mother-child separations brought into view the wider, contextual factors which mothers and staff highlighted. It was clear that changes in the

prison environment (for example by moving to an open prison), and relationships with family members or other agencies, had a sizeable impact on mothers and the staff supporting them. This section will consider the role of social support, social services and admissions to MBUs as key aspects with regards to the experience of separation.

Role of social support for women

In all the women's accounts of their experiences of separation, a significant factor which mediated how they coped was family support. Who was looking after their children and how well they did this, and the support for contact between mothers and children being maintained was fundamental to mothers and how they managed. The participant who particularly exemplifies this is Participant 6 whose four children were initially extremely poorly cared for – which understandably was extremely distressing for her. However, once her children had been moved to suitable carers and were brought to visit her, Participant 6's entire experience of prison seemed to change, and she described being able to focus on herself and her own education. This experience was echoed in others' accounts of either supportive or problematic family support.

For many of the staff, their hesitations about whether the environment should be changed to accommodate older children rested on their perceptions of the impact of family support on women. Their repeated observations were that the children of mothers without family support did not flourish as much as other children in the MBU because the children were deprived of wider experiences of being 'handed out' for home visits. Nursery staff were limited in how often they could take children out, and staff expressed concerns that even if the MBU provision was extended, mothers without this support would still be affected because there already were difficulties for children on the unit without family support:

But I think if, if you haven't got that supportive family network and it's just you and the baby. I do think it affects the children staying here until eighteen months without having the outside. I mean there was one little girl, she wasn't separated but she was there until eighteen months. And every time they took her out, um, she'd cry at new experiences, didn't like her shoes being measured, if a plane went over she'd cry....I mean they were getting her out once a week, which is all they can do on a rota. But it's, it's not enough is it, so.
(Participant 40, 158-164)

This disadvantage continued after release, as staff gave examples of mothers who had left MBUs with their babies, but had still been separated because they had had no family or social support to help them manage the transition (Participant 46). Interestingly, whilst all were positive about MBUs, the attachment experts similarly highlighted the importance of family involvement. Staff, however, discussed particularly challenging examples of family involvement; for example, when children were taken custody of by violent fathers, who then prevented children's contact with mothers (Participant 33).

What is important is that for mothers to cope with either separation or time on an MBU, there cannot be a sole focus on the mother-child dyad, but the wider family network needs to be included. For prison staff this is obviously how they work. However, it is not necessarily acknowledged if there is a focus on attachment theory. Furthermore, the discussion of social support relates to the wider, relevant mental health literature which identifies social support as key in reducing the impact of, or supporting the recovery of, postnatal depression (Robertson, Grace, Wallington & Steward, 2004), depression (Brown, Andrews, Harris, Adler & Bridge, 1986), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [PTSD] (NICE, 2005) and Complex PTSD (Herman, 1992b) .

Relationships with social services

In parallel to mothers' experiences with family support, prison staff discussed in detail the impact of their working relationships with social services. Access to MBUs is entirely mediated by social services, and it is only rarely that prison staff might argue against their decision. Staff repeatedly explained how working with social services was, in fact, one of the main challenges of their roles (Participant 35, Participant 48). As one participant said, 'children's services are a bit of a nightmare' (Participant 36, 58), and went on to explain that communication was limited and engagement poor – social workers tended not to attend meetings and sometimes they refused to carry out assessments (Participant 48). The main complaint was inconsistent practice between social workers (Participants 33, 35, 46, and 48) – some neither know about MBUs nor understand the prison system (Participant 46, Participant 48), others do not believe children should visit their mothers in prison (Participant 33) and will prevent contact, even when children request it (Participant 35).

There were criticisms that because social workers take a child perspective, they are more likely to judge mothers without taking a trauma-informed perspective (Participant 32). Their focus on the child to the detriment of the mother would include removing children because of domestic violence and punishing women when the prison cancels visits (Participant 54). Whilst critical of social services, staff wanted to understand the system further and several specifically requested training in social work (Participants 35, 41, and 44).

Staff were sensitive about the impact of social services on mothers. They understood that mothers were angry with social services and trapped as asking for help from the service would mean the removal of their children (Participant 49). Staff were angry that social workers did not intervene when fathers removed children and prevented contact (Participant 35), or made last-minute decisions about separations at birth (Participant 48). In general, there was a sense that separations were more traumatic with social services involvement

(Participant 38), and prison staff were left 'to pick up the pieces' when social workers made decisions (Participant 35, 441-442). The only positive observation of social services was that they could be a motivating factor for mothers when they threatened to have children adopted if mothers did not remain drug-free (Participant 45). Whilst the challenges of accessing MBUs and the role of social workers is highlighted in the literature (Sikand, 2017; Minson et al., 2015), it had not been explored from a staff perspective.

Wider context of MBUs

In addition to the topics of family support and working with social services, discussing mother-child separations brought up wider concerns of a more systemic nature. These included: who is excluded from MBUs, the impact of closed prison environments as opposed to open, and the impact of sentencing decisions.

Prison staff discussed their concerns about MBU admissions, in particular for those who do not get admitted. It was made clear that most women in drug and alcohol services do not get a place, even though in some prisons over 50% of prisoners access drug and alcohol services. On the rare occasions that women do get a place, they then struggle to access substance misuses services because of a lack of co-ordination between timetables (Participant 45). This was echoed by Participant 1 who was refused a place on a prison MBU but was able to access a community-based substance misuse MBU, which she credits for giving her the opportunity to turn her life around. Other staff felt that women's histories had too much of an impact on decisions, without any acknowledgement of changes which had taken place:

I think I understand why you have to have strict criteria, but I don't think you should have criteria like, oh so and so once set fire to something a time ago. Everything should be risk assessed in that moment, taking into account the journey travelled, right. (Participant 43, 190-193)

The exclusion of many (if not most) women from MBUs is reflected in the wider literature. Sikand's (2017) recent research highlighted that women who were repeat offenders, particularly with a previous custodial history, were unlikely to be successful in gaining a place on an MBU, regardless of the severity of their crime or the length of their conviction. Furthermore, Birmingham et al. (2006) identified that 'the selection process for mother and baby units may inadvertently discriminate against women with potentially treatable mental disorders' (p.402). They argue that, in addition to not being treated whilst in prison, they faced the 'additional disadvantage of not being able to access an MBU' (Gregoire et al., 2010, p.388). Other women who were less likely to have a place included women on remand and women serving short sentences – and the risks of unnecessary separation were pointed out (Gregoire et al., 2010). The research points out that because many women with mental health difficulties will be caring for their children on release, and the separation may exacerbate their problems and the impact on their children (Gregoire et al., 2010). The acceptance and non-acceptance of women into MBUs has wider implications than individual mothers. As O'Keeffe and Dixon (2015) and Dolan et al. (2013) report, women who have places on MBUs are less likely to reoffend on release, whilst there is the potential positive impact on child and mother wellbeing (O'Keeffe & Dixon, 2015).

In addition to MBU admission, there was debate around the locations of MBUs, and many prison staff questioned the suitability of closed prison environments. They suggested expanded provision for older children should only be available in open prisons, so that children have greater exposure to a 'normal' environment. Staff put forward alternative sentencing proposals, such as increased and more flexible childcare ROTLs, home detention curfews and community MBUs. Moreover, staff felt it was important that judges were aware of the impact of sentencing women to prison i.e. probable separation from children, which could become permanent. This perspective was in addition to many who felt fewer women in general should be sentenced to prison given the nature of their crimes. Reflecting on the impact of separations for mothers and

children led some staff, and one particular prison officer, to consider the nature and aim of prison. For this participant, a prison sentence should only limit freedom; it should not constrain parenting:

When you imprison someone, what you're doing is actually taking away their liberty, so, you know, in the old sort of phrase, 'walls do not a prison make' and all that sort of stuff. So, it's one of those where putting a curfew on them and bringing them back in at a particular time, you are actually impinging on their freedom. So, you're serving the same purpose but without this closed and locked environment. (Participant 41, 256-260)

This participant went on to describe how small units outside the prison walls were most suitable for women and children. This sounds very similar to Corston's (2007) recommendations [see Preface and Chapter 1 for further discussion of Corston] and is closer to practice in the rest of Europe (Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2007) and new developments in Scotland (Prison Reform Trust, 2017a). What it does reveal is a potential tension for staff between a desire to improve conditions for women in the present and an awareness of the systemic problems.

6.4 The role of attachment theory in prisons

Let us return to the study aim of considering the use and understanding of attachment theory across the different participant groups, with the objective of analysing whether it could be useful in practice. This chapter synthesises participants' reflections on attachment theory, either through their discussions of parenting, separations or attachment itself, or through critiques of MBUs (i.e. 'attachment in practice'). What seems apparent is that attachment theory is not currently understood by staff in a way that supports their practice. In fact, some of their (mis)understandings seem to serve harmful practice, such as separation at six to nine months of age. In addition to this, staff discussions of attachment obscure the contextual and ecological factors surrounding separation, which

they acknowledge when addressing separation directly or considering the role of MBUs. It is perhaps the effect of working in the prison environment which has affected their understanding of attachment theory and resulted in confusing and conflicting interpretations. However, given that staff do have sensitive perspectives on both the impact on mothers and the effect of the broader context, which are similar to both the mothers' personal perspectives and the attachment experts and practitioners, it appears as though it is the psychological theory in part, which is the hindrance in this setting.

Gender- and trauma-informed approaches

A small group of staff did appear more confident about working with mothers when they were extremely distressed by separation, and these were those from third sector organisations with an explicit gender- and trauma-informed approach. This seemed significant given the recent roll-out of trauma-informed training in the women's estate (Covington, 2018). Only third sector staff discussed women's trauma histories, and how they related to women's experiences of separation. Furthermore, these staff felt their working relationships with social services were more challenging because social workers were not trauma-informed or trained in specifics such as domestic violence. The same staff highlighted that the most vulnerable women (i.e. those with the most extensive histories of trauma) would already have social services' involvement, but no support in accessing mental health or domestic violence services. Indeed, social services were seen as exacerbating women's experiences of trauma precisely because of their focus on child removal, and their insistence on labelling women as 'high risk' because they had experienced trauma in the past. Trauma-informed staff felt that a trauma-informed approach was part of reducing the impact of prison institutionalisation (Participant 54) and creating prisons as places of possible healing (Participant 43).

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on staff understandings and the practice of attachment theory in the female prison context. By examining the use of this psychological theory, it has been possible to assess its applicability. Staff appeared to express more empathy and to have more practical ideas about how to support mothers when they discussed separation, rather than attachment. This finding, along with the staff critiques of MBUs, and some of their ideas about separation age limits have problematised the use of attachment theory as a basis for prison policy. The concluding chapter will review these findings in relation to the literature and offer a possible alternative theoretical approach upon which to base policy and practice.

7 GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The putative centre welcomes selected inhabitants of the margin in order to better exclude the margin. (Spivak, 1987, p.107)

This research has focused on mother-child separations from multiple perspectives in order to understand both the experience of this and the role of policy. The thesis has presented findings from an analysis of relevant policy documents along with commentary on current policy by attachment experts and practitioners, followed by interviews with mothers and prison staff. Instead of assessing the attachment status of mothers or their children, the research sought to understand the impact of using attachment theory in prisons. The aim was neither to refute the significance of attachment theory, nor solely to find fault with current prison practice. Rather the purpose was to make relevant suggestions to ensure women are not even more adversely affected by this very specific 'pain of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958, p.64), and to consider the appropriateness of applying attachment theory in prisons.

From their perspective, formerly imprisoned mothers highlighted the impact of the wider context as key for how they coped with separation from their young children. Thus, their relationships with caregivers outside prison and the flexibility of open prison regimes mitigated some of the pain of separation for them. In many ways, this resonated with sociological accounts of maternal imprisonment, such as Enos (2001) who draws out the effect of mothers' lives and family relationships prior to imprisonment. My interviewees' focus on context, rather than individualised, psychological accounts of coping strategies (e.g. Celinska & Siegel, 2010), underlined that the role of the prison environment in 'coping' should not be overlooked. Staff participants, meanwhile, identified both emotions and the wider context, in particular working with social services, as specific challenges in their work with separated mothers. In line with the literature on caring (Tait, 2011), staff alluded to the impact of the prison environment on their care of prisoners. Indeed, the staff focus on training, as opposed to improving support structures, perhaps reflects the literature in which staff are critical of prison management support (Kinman et al., 2016). What the interviews with both mothers and staff exposed was the interrelationship between mothers' lives before prison, in particular the impact of poverty, and their encounters with social services as the key factors in determining the experience of separation in prison.

A focus on attachment theory and separation revealed that mothers did not necessarily want to preserve the mother-child bond at the expense of their children's development, whilst prison staff were more thoughtful and practical when considering mothers' separations without the framework of attachment theory. Thus, although attachment theory is the basis for MBU policy, it does not appear to be successfully guiding staff practice, nor is it adequately discussed or analysed in the relevant policy, grey or academic literature (Powell et al., 2017a; Powell et al., 2017b). In contrast to the prison staff discussion of attachment theory, experts and practitioners stressed the impact of the prison context, the nature of the separation itself and the importance of case-by-case responses to separation from an attachment theory perspective.

Whilst attachment theory seems to be useful in a research context, for example when assessing the impact of prison nurseries (Borelli et al., 2010; Byrne et al., 2010; Byrne et al., 2012), it is potentially harmful in a prison context when it is used as the main justification for separation at specific ages (see Chapter 6, section 2). The use of attachment theory can enforce normative assumptions about parenting which exclude fathers and wider family members (Granja et al., 2015), and do not take class or cultural differences into account (e.g. Keller, 2013). This chapter brings together these main themes from the three studies and discusses them in the light of the wider literature. The focus is on alternative approaches to how prisons could intervene with mothers in prison in the light of the problems identified with attachment theory. Given the crucial role of social services in mother-child separations in prisons, I have drawn particularly from the social work literature. Following these considerations, there are recommendations proposed based on the interviewees' responses and suggestions for future research.

7.1 Attachment, MBUs and the wider implications

Taking a multi-perspectival approach to mother-child separations has enabled a view on the use of attachment theory in prisons. Through discussing separations and their impact, some contradictions in the use of attachment theory have been revealed, particularly as demonstrated through MBU practice. These contradictions in turn bring into question the function of MBUs. As discussed in Chapter 5, staff have a range of understandings of attachment theory, often unrelated to the relevant research and theory. This is particularly exemplified by its justification of separations at six to nine months, even though this is contraindicated by theory and could potentially be a source of harm. However, there are further incongruities if we focus specifically on MBUs and attachment theory, given that they are based on an assumption that they promote healthy attachments.

MBU admission appears to discriminate against most mothers in prison, so only a non-representative group of women (in relation to the general female prison population) are given the opportunity to keep their babies in prison, i.e. women with the fewest mental health and addiction problems and who are more likely to have been employed prior to incarceration (Birmingham et al., 2006), so it seems likely that they are economically more privileged. This raises a question as to whether it is the use of attachment theory which might encourage or contribute to this type of discrimination. As discussed in Chapter 1 part 4, some critics of attachment theory have highlighted the inherent middle-class assumptions underlying parenting practices associated with attachment theory, so it is possible that these implicitly form part of judgements about who is accepted on to MBUs. Indeed, research with probation officers and magistrates suggests that women who do not fit normative expectations of mothers, such as mothers whose children are in care, 'will be held more blameworthy for similar offences' (Hudson, 2002, p.40). Hudson (2002) goes on to explain that, similarly, foreign national women prisoners are more likely to be judged as abandoning their children, rather than committing offences to support their children in situations of poverty.

In addition to the problem about who is admitted to MBUs, staff acknowledge that the MBU environment constrains parenting, so the extent to which MBUs can promote secure attachment in children of all ages could be questioned if mothers cannot parent in the way they wish. Given that a key tenet in traditional attachment theory is the construct of 'sensitive responding' (Main & Cassidy, 1988), it is not clear how much this is possible under strict controls, and with the ongoing threat of separation as punishment. This is perhaps reflected in the 'New Beginnings' research, which found that for mothers in the control group who did not receive the intervention, levels of reflective functioning and interaction with their babies reduced over time (Sleed et al., 2013). In other words, mothers who were not receiving a supportive intervention in the prison

MBU, appeared to find it increasingly difficult to engage with their babies over time.

Furthermore, staff suggested that the environmental constraints on parenting could only be mitigated by mothers with ample family support so, again, MBUs might promote attachment only for a small and select group of women with family support. These incongruities raise questions about the suitability of the use of attachment theory in prison and the wider implications of mother-child separations. Some of the critiques of attachment theory raised in Chapter 1 relate both to whom it is applied and the wider network of relationships which seem crucial in the impact of separation on mothers in prison. These critiques suggest that perhaps traditional attachment theory is too limited and narrow to be the theoretical basis for the use of MBUs.

Another aspect for consideration is whether MBUs should be used as a site of intervention with mothers in order to address their additional needs, or whether the presence of MBUs in fact deflects attention from the majority of women in prison who do not access them and who suffer an additional 'pain of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958, p.64). This relates closely to the wider debates about whether prisons can or should indeed be sites of intervention or rehabilitation, or whether the focus should be on sentencing practices and community services.

Prisons as sites of intervention

In favour of prisons as sites of intervention, gender- and trauma-informed perspectives take into account that 'women's common pathways to crime are based on survival of abuse, poverty, and substance abuse' (Bloom, Owen & Covington, 2004, p.34) and that prison contexts need to take these into account in any response. Bloom et al. (2004), who theorise and promote the gender- and trauma-informed response in the US, and Covington (2018), who has

recently implemented a trauma-informed approach in the English women's estate, believe that considering women's relationships with their children is a central part of gender-responsive policy, and targeting parenting is part of addressing women offenders' needs (e.g. Bloom et al., 2004). This relates closely to the aims and ethos of The Corston report (Corston, 2007) which sees prisons as potential places of rehabilitation, as well as punishment, particularly if there is an understanding of the gender-specific needs of women.

I would argue that if prisons are going to be truly gender- and trauma-informed then MBUs need to be accessible to all or most women, otherwise their exclusion on the basis of previous social services' involvement (which often relates to experience of domestic violence, poverty and addiction) seems disingenuous and unhelpful. Indeed, research from social work around child protection practice has critiqued the focus on attachment and parenting, in lieu of a focus on poverty and context, as part of a discourse which blames parents and separates them from their children (Gupta, 2017). It is perhaps not surprising that MBUs are functioning in a similar way given that access is almost entirely controlled by social services (for example, Participant 34 described it as 'very rare' (347) that the prison would make a recommendation against social services for a mother to access an MBU). If MBUs had broader admission criteria, this would obviously need a re-conceptualisation of MBUs as places of intervention and support for women who have more needs than are currently admitted. However, the impact of women's histories of poverty and abuse, is precisely why some argue against prisons as places for rehabilitation. There is a range of critical voices which argue against the possibility of prison as rehabilitative or a site for intervention (e.g. Carlen, 2003), so I will only focus on those aspects which are particularly pertinent to mother-child separations.

The debate seems to focus on whether prison can and should be able to mitigate social harms that are such a feature of the lives of women in prison (Carlen, 1994). This is key to thinking about mother-child separation for, as the

interviews have shown, women's experiences of separation (and thus how they can be supported) are directly affected by wider issues such as poverty and family support. Carlen (2003) argues that prison is a 'tool for managing poverty' and 'there is no way that primarily penal methods can address primarily social injustices' (Carlen & Tombs, 2006, p.357). For Carlen, poverty cannot be solved by rehabilitation because prisoners 'have never had anything to be rehabilitated to' (Carlen, 2013, p.33). Similarly, Carrabine (2000) and Hannah-Moffat (1995) draw attention to how gender-based notions of rehabilitation obscure race and class oppression i.e. the impact of racism and poverty on women's trajectories into prison. This could be linked to the current function of MBUs – they appear to provide a positive service, however, this obscures the fact that most women cannot access them for the very reasons that they are in prison.

Carlen (2013) argues that rehabilitation is in fact discriminatory and that we need 'reparative criminal justice' (p.32) that includes 'socio-economic reparations' (p.32) because the state 'has failed materially and culturally in terms of ensuring satisfaction of their minimum needs' (p.33). This fits in with the social work critique that much of child removal is related to poverty (Gupta, 2017). Indeed, critical literature from both criminology and social work highlights the problems with the current move towards the psychologising and individualising of social needs as risks. One of the dominant risk-focused models for offender rehabilitation, risk-need-responsivity (RNR) (for overviews see: Ward, Melsner & Yates, 2007; Polaschek, 2012), has spawned academic research and debate on its applicability to women. There are those who argue that it is appropriate for risk factors to be gender neutral but that intervention (the responsivity part) should be gender specific (Rettinger & Andrews, 2010). However, there is a significant critique of this approach with others arguing that gender-neutral approaches misclassify many women (Reisig, Holtfreter & Morash, 2006), that women do in fact have gender-specific needs (Hollin & Palmer, 2010), and that poverty reduction, in fact, is more effective in reducing recidivism (Holtfreter, Reisig & Morash, 2006). McNeill (2012) argues that the focus on risk is over individualising and the wider context needs to be

considered, whilst the interventions (responsivity) are over general and not individualised enough.

Pollack's (2004) anti-oppressive practice (AOP) framework aims specifically to de-individualise women's problems and throughout her work (and social work practice) she analyses and critiques the role of risk and how it is used to control women in prison (Pollack 2005; 2008). These debates are relevant to mother-child separations because, although family ties are emphasised as crucial for women, nevertheless separation from children may not be considered 'criminogenic risks' for women and thus not worthy of intervention (Hannah-Moffatt, 2005). Additionally, 'risk' is part of the assessment process for entry to prison MBUs, so ironically what may not serve as 'criminogenic' enough for additional rehabilitative intervention would still be enough to justify not giving a mother a place on an MBU.

From a feminist perspective, Hannah-Moffatt (2005) argues that risks and needs are related to cognitive interventions, which assume that crime is a choice rather than as a consequence of structural inequality (see also Hannah-Moffatt, 2009). Indeed, she argues that risk for women in prisons with gender-responsive approaches is focused on maternal relationships by expecting prisoners to follow 'middle-class white normative ideals of motherhood' and by governing mothers through parenting programmes (Hannah-Moffatt, 2010). As she describes:

One area that is commonly targeted for 'risk' and intervention is the parenting relationship; programs are increasingly using parental status to regulate women, promote prosocial values and motivate participation in programs. GR stresses the importance of the status of motherhood to many women and the pains of separation, which can be a powerful lever in promoting access to children, protecting custodial rights and providing programs, but can also be also translated into programs for mothers that target their relationships...

This exemplifies the central position of motherhood in the regulation of women and is based on the assumptions that women require these programs and desire motherhood. Although it is important to recognise the significance of maternal (and intimate relationships), on a practical level it is also critical to consider how an emphasis on such relationships is conflated with broader concerns about risk and discipline. (Hannah-Moffatt, 2010, p.202)

This is important to bear in mind – how motherhood might be used within prisons to control women – and it relates directly to concerns raised by staff that women were not able to parent their own way in MBUs.

There is a chilling example from the U.S. which might perhaps serve as a cautionary tale against unthinking expansion of MBUs. Haney's (2013) US-based ethnography of a 'Female Rehabilitative Community Correction Center' describes and critiques the practices of a third-sector run, state-funded prison centre for mothers and children. She points out that:

Punishment operates not only through familial separation but also by remaking familial relationships. We already know a great deal about the punishing effects of the former. Yet parenting in the penal state, on its terms and under its conditions, can also be quite punishing. The institutional processes of control and domination that operate in traditional prisons do not vanish when inmates are taken to mini-prisons in the community and reunited with their kids. (Haney, 2013, p.125)

In this case there is an arguably tyrannical use of attachment theory, where staff promote mother-child bonding at all costs, and primarily at the cost of any of the mothers' own needs. 'Despite all the talk about the need to bond, there was almost an avoidance of motherhood in the prison. Or, more precisely, there was a deafening silence about women's needs as mothers' (Haney, 2013, p.118). In practice this meant a complete absence of support around legal assistance, welfare payments and debt accruals. In other words, there was neither

acknowledgement of, nor support for the social issues facing women living in poverty, which most of them were having to endure. The focus on bonding disseminated a message that caring was women's work only and any negative feelings associated with mothering could not be expressed. Every aspect of life in the prison was permeated with the 'ideology of intensive mothering...fraught with class and race assumptions' (p.121) which in addition stripped away any of the mothers' authority because they were so highly controlled by the prison staff. Haney (2013) proposes that the Centre's therapeutic model emphasised women making themselves responsible as individuals for social failings, another permutation or neglect of women's social welfare needs.

Player (2014) similarly points out how women's welfare needs are conflated with their supposed risk of reoffending, resulting in interventions that aim to control rather than support. She goes on to say:

Attending to the non-criminogenic needs of offenders tends to fall outside of this schema and, although programmes may present as opportunities for empowerment and social inclusion, their operational principles are part of a model of governance that depends upon the segregation and exclusion of those who represent an unacceptable level of risk. (p.285)

This seems pertinent in the context of MBU admissions. The re-framing of welfare needs as all about risk is echoed in the social work literature around child protection in which Featherstone, White and Morris (2014) argue for a different response towards parents, and point out that mental health needs and experience of domestic violence are understood as risk factors (and thus are more likely to result in child removal) rather than support needs. The point of drawing these links is to demonstrate that mother-child separation in prison is related to the wider context of child protection in the UK and that, as some sociologists suggest, prisons are left to deal with the failings of other social institutions (Owen, 1998). Perhaps 'we expect too much from prisons and are puzzled when they fail to work' (Owen, 1998, p.17).

7.2 The role of prisons in the context of mother-child separations

There are those who believe that prisons by their nature cannot provide psychological intervention or rehabilitation. Carlen (2003) argues that prisons cannot rehabilitate prisoners because of their aim of punishment, and because psychological approaches are not appropriate for what she terms 'women's social needs'. She points out that:

Studies of desistance from crime support this view by suggesting that what happens outside prison in terms of housing, jobs and personal relationships is much more important than any brainwashing attempts made via prison programming. Other studies suggest that imprisonment causes more psychological damage than any in-prison therapy can ever cure. (Carlen, 2003, p.23)

Mother-child separation could certainly fit within the 'psychological damage' model that Carlen refers to and affects most women, given that so few access MBUs. However, others see a role for intervention in prisons. Whilst Haney (1997) and Maruna (2011) acknowledge the limitations of psychology in prisons, they both see a role for psychological intervention. Indeed, in opposition to Carlen and Tombs (2006), Haney (1997) sees psychology as a way of mediating the harms caused by prison.

In the UK female forensic context, a systematic review of interventions with women offenders found a 'modest... body of evidence' for interventions addressing the impact of substance misuse and early trauma (Bartlett et al., 2015, p.133). This review highlighted the relationships between substance misuse and trauma for women and pointed out that social interventions, which improve health, are not always reported in the literature. Along similar lines, Bartlett et al.'s (2014) work, proposing a future model of care for female offenders, calls for a move away from a focus on risks towards a recognition of women's strengths. Both papers call attention to the challenges for women on release with a lack of available services, even when they have engaged well in

health services in custody. Thus, it is argued that women's prisons are potential places of 'health gain' (Bartlett & Hollins, 2018, p.135) if they take 'a holistic health and social care approach...led by the woman's articulation of her own concerns' (Bartlett, 2007, p.446) which could enable consideration of the complex interrelationships of women's difficulties.

This is very much in line with Corston's (2007) approach and the recent Public Health England (2018) standards to improve wellbeing for female prisoners. These standards focus on the wider determinants of incarceration and propose trauma-informed support within overall health promoting prison environments. What the health-focused research and policy suggest, therefore, is that there might be scope for supportive interventions in prisons for separated mothers. Obviously, there are already services like Choice for Change (Choices Islington, 2015) in place, nevertheless, there is currently nothing systematically offered to all separated mothers at the current time in the female estate.

Moreover, in my interviews, it was the staff who saw the importance of psychological support for the mothers. The mothers interviewed had not experienced any psychological support in prison, and those who had undergone counselling only had this opportunity on release. In addition, staff based externally to prisons discussed their ambivalence about the benefit of counselling in prisons. Like Carlen (2003), the mothers focused more on family relationships, housing and employment than access to psychological intervention. Furthermore, the comparison between open and closed prisons by mothers brought into focus what mitigated the suffering caused by separation from children. Once mothers were in open conditions and had more flexibility and freedom over contacting and being visited or visiting their children, the pain of separation was reduced. As Pollack (2004) points out, there needs to be an acknowledgement of power and control in prison environments and their impact in relation to any intervention or service, psychological support notwithstanding. This is particularly relevant given the histories of women in prison as Walker

and Towl (2016) highlight: 'Prison regimes may serve to intensify women's trauma while equally the trauma may worsen the prison experience for women' (p.69). What the women's interviews suggested was that a different type of prison regime (i.e. open) could be more supportive than individual intervention.

MBUs deflecting resources

The final critique against any in-prison intervention or service is that they deflect resources from where they are particularly needed, i.e. in the community either for re-integration or as sentencing alternatives (Carlen, 2002). Shaylor (2009) critiques gender-informed approaches – and Bloom and Corston in particular – because of this dependence on the idea of rehabilitation. She argues that a focus on rehabilitation has not led to a reduction in women's imprisonment, but in fact is part of the reason for the increase in incarceration. This is echoed by Player (2003) who points out that women can be up-tariffed to prison to receive support (see also Chapter 1, section 1). Here it is evident there would be a terrible irony that a mother could be up-tariffed to prison to receive 'support' but that this would result in separation from her child or children, which could potentially become permanent.

Alternative ways of working

Problematising the role of MBUs on the basis of a reference to attachment theory in their policy perhaps does not seem very helpful. However, acknowledging the staff ambivalence about MBUs and the links with debates in the wider literature might lead to the possibility of exploring some different ways of working with social services. This could both help prison staff negotiate these often fraught working relationships and potentially render access to MBUs more equitable. Despite the many problems discussed with in-prison intervention and rehabilitation, there are perhaps better ways to rethink mother-child separations in prison. As Moore and Scraton (2014) point out, we need both short-term proposals for change as well as an overall aim of working towards reducing the female prison population. From a theoretical point of view there needs to be far greater integration of micro- and macro-level theories, i.e. consideration of both

individual and contextual factors for mothers in prison (see Fedock, 2017 for a social work perspective on integrating theories for imprisoned women).

Player (2014) ends her searing critique of the failure of government strategy for women offenders with the following:

There are undoubtedly many dangers in linking access to welfare with the punitive controls of criminal justice, yet empirically, many women report significant gains from interventions provided both in custody and the community. Precisely how these benefits can be advanced while inhibiting the oppressive consequences of punitive state control is the key question. The conclusion of this article is that any such approach must be built upon a culture of rights in the criminal justice system that would undermine the concept of 'less eligibility' and encourage a discourse of social inclusion. It would require the replacement of risk management with a rehabilitative response that attended to social harm and operated according to a principle of entitlement. (p.291)

Whilst MBUs remain part of the prison system, perhaps drawing on Player's (2014) call for a focus on 'social inclusion' and a 'culture of rights' would help address some of their shortcomings. Given that prison staff and social services must work together to assess suitability for MBUs, perhaps it is here that a new way of working could be approached. This might enable some closer working between the two sectors. However, working conditions for staff cannot be considered separately from this approach as Crewe (2008) points out:

It seems plausible that the particular antipathy that many officers feel towards the human rights agenda relates to the widespread perception among staff that their own power and rights have been progressively diminished. It is also worth noting that staff are members of the wider public and are as susceptible as anyone else to the messages that circulate within public discourse about the moral status of prisoners and the aims of imprisonment. (p.424)

Thus, any attempts to improve conditions for women prisoners and their children must be implemented hand in hand with improved conditions for staff. It seems unimaginable to expect staff to uphold the rights of prisoners if they themselves are feeling unsupported.

In terms of mothers in prison and mothers whose children are removed, the main feature upon which both the critical criminology and social work literatures focus is the impact of poverty or 'economic marginalization' (Owen, 1998; Gupta, 2017). Practitioners emphasise this focus on poverty alongside the need for a human rights approach rather than solely a psychological one (Shaylor, 2009; Gupta, Featherstone & White, 2016). The prison staff I interviewed identified the role of social workers as a primary challenge, in particular their sole focus on the children (to the detriment of the mothers) and their lack of awareness of both the prison context and the mothers' backgrounds. These criticisms echo critique from within social work that challenges the dominant model of child protection.

Featherstone, Gupta, Morris and Warner (2018) argue that the focus of child protection has historically been the 'possibility of social reform through the agency of the mother' (p.4) rather than poverty or living conditions. Indeed, the entire concept of 'neglect' is problematic for Featherstone et al. (2018) because it translates the social issues of poverty 'into private troubles and, in so doing, converts them into evidence of intentionally troublesome/risky behaviour by parents' (p.7). The critiques of risk-based approaches in social work (Featherstone et al., 2018; Featherstone et al., 2014) appear identical to those in the criminology literature cited earlier in section one of this chapter.

The authors argue for a social model of child protection that understands and acts upon the structural inequalities which affect parents caught up in social services (Featherstone et al., 2018). Moreover, Gupta (2017) suggests that it is

in fact the over emphasis on attachment theory in the early years which has focused the attention of social care professionals on parenting rather than reducing poverty and inequality. Or, as Featherstone et al. (2014) succinctly ask, 'parenting matters but not parents?' (p.9). Neale and Lopez (2007) in their research summary argue persuasively that in their experience child protection revolves around children witnessing domestic violence rather than direct abuse. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the backgrounds of women in prison. It is reported that approximately 40% of women in prison have experienced domestic violence (APPG, 2011). Thus, social work and criminologists are putting forward similar arguments in relation to women in prison or at risk of having their children removed. This similarity of perspective suggests that prisons and social services could work together and keep mothers' needs in mind whilst still protecting children from harm. The calls for rights-based approaches are important because they both incorporate and are more extensive than trauma- and gender-informed approaches since they 'require more affirmative and pro-active state support' (Gupta et al., 2016, p.343).

Human rights-based approaches in prisons have been promoted for at least 20 years (Coyle, 2002; 2009), and include specific proposals for imprisoned mothers. Coyle (2002) stresses that visit restrictions should never be used as punishment, indeed, 'the presumption should be to maximise visiting and to allow the most favourable conditions possible.' (p.96). These guidelines emphasise that:

Special provisions need to be made to ensure that women prisoners can maintain meaningful contact with their children. The matter of very small children requires particularly sensitive consideration.
(p.131)

The guidelines go on to outline the considerations that must be made in MBUs:

During the period that an infant is in prison the environment in which he or she is kept should be made as normal as possible for both child and the mother. The child's development must not be restricted

simply because the mother is in prison. In addition, special arrangement should be made to support mother and infant when the time comes for release. (p.135).

Both extracts reflect concerns voiced by mothers and staff in the course of research. The emphasis on 'meaningful contact' echoes the suggestions made by mothers to improve visits. The comment about the prison environment, meanwhile, is a direct response to staff anxieties about the impact of the prison on children in MBUs (see staff perspectives in Chapter 6, section 2). It appears that from a human rights perspective there should be no question of the environment limiting children, and thus even with separation limits at 18 months the MBUs need to be made more age-appropriate. This would involve ensuring the MBUs are equipped for toddlers and their increasing awareness of the environment.

Furthermore, perhaps more importantly, all children would need access to 'normal' experiences in the outside world, not just those with family support. We could look to our European neighbours for ideas to appropriately extend MBU provision. There are 16 countries that allow children to stay in prison with their mothers until they are three years or older (Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2007). Some countries have alternative sentencing practices in addition to extended MBU provision, for example Italy, where mothers of children under 10 years old can be placed under house arrest instead of imprisoned (Biondi, 1995).

Moreover, there is support for human rights-based responses from across different sectors. Bartlett and Hollins (2018), discussing the mental health needs of women in prisons around the globe, suggest:

Although obviously culturally coded, a rights-based approach may avoid the imposition of culturally insensitive healthcare on poorly

described populations and allow for local solutions to develop.
(p.135)

Indeed, there are several such local solutions that could be adapted specifically to support mothers in prison. Munby (2017) in his lecture about children across the justice system calls for 'problem-solving courts' (p.7) for family matters and highlights two national initiatives that would be relevant for mothers in prison: the Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC) and Pause. FDAC is for parents with substance misuse issues and the intervention has higher rates of reunification with children than traditional court proceedings (Harwin, 2009; Harwin et al., 2011; Harwin, Alrouh, Ryan, & Tunnard, 2014; Harwin et al., 2016). Meanwhile, Pause is a programme which intervenes with mothers who have had multiple children removed from their care and aims to help them break the cycle of repeated child loss. The preliminary evaluation suggests that women increased their engagement with services and reduced their pregnancies as a result of taking part in the programme (McCracken et al., 2017). The success of these programmes offers hope that there are alternative ways of conceptualising 'risk' whilst working within a framework that assumes the rights of mothers living in social difficulty. The strength of human rights-based approaches is the possibility of enforcing minimum standards through legislation, rather than merely making best practice suggestions through guidelines such as NICE. It is perhaps only through the enforcement of minimum standards that conditions might improve for imprisoned mothers of young children in England and Wales.

7.3 Implications and recommendations

Whilst this is a small-scale qualitative and exploratory piece of research, there are some suggestions which might inform future policy and practice changes, or at the very least provide first steps towards changes. In terms of the separation process, as referred to earlier, there is a social work approach to child protection which perhaps could be used by social workers assessing mothers' suitability for MBUs. This is an adapted form of the 'capability approach'

(developing extensive work by Robeyns, 2017) and is described as a social model for child protection which ensures the promotion of children and families' human rights (Gupta et al., 2014; Featherstone et al., 2018). Similar to trauma- and gender-informed approaches, there is acknowledgement of the structural causes of distress. However, the human rights aspect requires state input and support (Gupta et al., 2016) and this incorporates providing family support and community services. As it is a social model, it would enable social workers to focus on families as a whole, rather than only considering the child's needs as separate from the parents. This approach could be adapted for the MBU admission process and trialled in prisons as a joint venture between social services and prison staff.

In terms of supporting mothers and staff, there are clear ideas suggested from the interviews. These provide the detail to PHE (2018)'s suggestion of 'adequate support to women...who are separated from their children' (p.6) and the similarly vague details for women and staff in the relevant prison policy (PSO 4801, PSI 49/2014). In Chapter 4, mothers were especially positive about open prison regimes, however their other ideas would also improve closed prisons:

- 1) Calls: funding for phone credit; flexible calls times; Skype or Facetime for video calling; additional allowances for foreign nationals.
- 2) Visits: more frequent extended family visits; separate, child-friendly visit room; private breastfeeding spaces; increased visits to newborns in hospital.
- 3) Courses and groups: professional-led mothers' support group (divided by age of children); parenting courses specifically for separated mothers.

The suggestions for contact and visits are implementable and indeed some prisons are already working towards these. Free phone calls at various times of the day and Skype calls would probably make an immediate difference to many women, and particularly foreign nationals whose children are abroad.

Similarly, the staff suggestions in Chapter 5 were realistic and practical. Support structures would need further consideration and trialling, not least because it was managers who suggested them, not front-line staff, and this ties into wider discussion of support for prison staff more generally (e.g. Kinman et al., 2017; Kinman et al., 2016; Finney et al., 2013). However, the suggestions focused on ongoing clinical supervision and emotional support following separations from qualified staff, rather than peers. Staff suggestions for training were more specific and focused on two areas: awareness raising for all staff on impacts of separation; and, deeper knowledge, skills and multi-agency working for front-line staff. (See also appendix 20 for summary of suggestions for NOMS). These suggestions could easily be added to current training and for much of these there is current expertise in prisons to provide this. The suggestions are very much in line with IAP (2017)'s call for 'staff training on the impact of separation and loss' (p.7).

Through synthesising the interviews there are three key factors or 'situational contingencies' (Enos, 2001, p.128) which affect a mother's experience of separation and these could be used by staff in planning separation support for individual mothers. Whilst many of the specialist staff are seemingly aware of these, they would enable more holistic thinking amongst all staff. See Figure 17.

Figure 17 - Three factors to determine mothers' support needs

Three factors to determine support needs

A – Is the mother a foreign national?
[If so she might need alternative contact provision in lieu of visits.]

B – Has the mother had prior social services involvement?
[If so she might need staff involvement with social services to liaise organise child contact.]

C – How much family support does the mother have?
[For mothers with less support, they will need help with paying for phone calls, organising visits and contact etc.]

Given the concerns highlighted in the literature that an over focus on in-prison services can divert resources from improving sentencing practices and community innovations (e.g. Carlen, 2002; Hannah-Moffat, 2001), it seems important that mother-child separations are considered throughout mothers' involvement in the criminal justice system. This means joined-up thinking with social services from sentencing (and for women in prison on remand) to their time in prison and their support on release. The staff suggestion for joint training and liaison workshops with social services staff would go some way in enabling this process. However, given the challenges with social services that prison staff described, it is likely that joint working practices would not be sufficient to improve matters, thus further research is suggested to fully understand the problem (see section 7.5).

The final suggestion revolves around the use of attachment theory in prison policy. If MBUs are to be based on the theory mother-child attachment, then unit staff need to be aware of multiple forms of parenting and attachment (Keller & Bard, 2017) and it is preferable that a sensitive, case-by-case approach to age of separation needs to be taken, as agreed upon by the attachment experts (Chapter 3, section 2) and the Bangkok rules (United Nations, 2010). However, given the challenges raised in this research, perhaps there is no need for attachment theory in mother-child separation policy. The capability approach (Robeyns, 2017) with a human rights-based set of minimum standards for mothers might be sufficient.

7.4 Limitations of this research

There are limitations in every piece of research, and this is no exception. There are two main areas of limitations: the first is to do with the researcher and the second is to do with the prison context.

There are always restrictions to being a single researcher, from the practical limit on the number of interviews that can be carried out to having a monotropic view and the likelihood of being blinkered by personal assumptions and biases which remain unchallenged. I have aimed to be transparent about these, so they are evident. In terms of carrying out the research, however, there is the effect of whom I did and did not share an identity with when interviewing participants. This might have affected both the sample of interviewees and the interpretation of the findings. I was identified with the recruiting organisations (see Chapter 3), and participants mostly took part because they wanted to 'give back' or had something to say. Whilst I am not questioning the validity of their views, it means I reached a limited group of women, albeit a group of women who are particularly hard to access. A researcher with lived experience of

mother-child separation in prison might have been able to access more women with differing perspectives, in addition to interpreting the findings differently.

Furthermore, I was only able to recruit six mothers, only two of whom had children under the age of two years when they were in prison. Whilst the remaining four mothers had many insights to share, in order to further understand the situation for imprisoned mothers of children under two years, there needs to be a focus on this particular group of women. In addition, I was not able to reach any mothers who were separated from their children whilst in prison on remand. The community organisations I recruited from primarily supported women with convictions so a specific approach would be needed to gather the perspectives of mothers separated whilst on remand.

In terms of the staff interviews, my role with two voluntary sector organisations and regular presence in one of the prisons meant some staff were perhaps more open and willing to talk to me. However, I did not reach many prison officers or healthcare staff. A researcher based in the prison, or a former officer or healthcare staff might have been able to access these groups more effectively. A team of researchers with more time and resources would obviously be able to reach a more representative group of staff. Similarly, a team of researchers could reach a broader range of attachment experts and practitioners which might have revealed further suggestions and proposals for improving practice.

The other limitation of this research relates to the difficulties of carrying out research in prisons. Whilst part of the reason for the under-representation of some staff groups may have been related to my role, I was limited by my reliance on gatekeepers who contacted staff on my behalf and governors who agreed access to their prisons. Qualitative research by its nature is not representative; however, if there were a more centralised and standardised

approach to prison research I could have included a wider range of staff participants and prisons. Similarly, involving prison staff and imprisoned mothers in the design of the research could have increased its relevance and impact, but the difficult process of gaining access and approval from NOMS limited the possibility of this. There has been participatory research in an Irish women's prison (O'Malley, 2015), but their access systems are completely different (O'Malley, personal communication).

Finally, a key challenge to carrying out research about mothers and young children in English prisons is the lack of centralised data on women and their children. This limits the generalisability of any research, qualitative or quantitative because there are no recent or accurate figures on how many women or children are affected by prison separation, or information about them. This lack of data limits the secondary literature available and means that even current research is still based on out-of-date figures. As it stands, we still do not know how many mothers are separated from their young children every year and therefore how much support is needed.

7.5 Suggestions for further research

Developing this research further would go some way to addressing its limitations, but the first step would need to be systematic, centralised data collection in prisons about the numbers of women and their children. This needs to be part of the current prison data monitoring system. All women need to be asked on entry to prison about their children, their ages and the care arrangements so that these data could be collated across the female prison estate. This information is collected by individual prisons but each prison has its own system and the figures are not shared centrally, and often not even within the prison itself (Anonymous prison officer, personal communication). If this is not possible, it would be feasible for external researchers to carry out surveys of the female prison estate to gather this information. This information would give researchers, policy-makers and practitioners an understanding of the scale of the problem and its distribution in each prison. It would then be possible to

understand MBU admissions (although Dolan's current PhD research will go some way in addressing this), and to develop more extensive longitudinal research about women separated from their children and their outcomes, in comparison to those in MBUs.

In terms of support for women and staff, further research could take the form of surveys, building on the ideas developed in this research and accessing a wider and more representative sample of staff and female prisoners in the women's estate, including a focus on foreign national, Black, Asian and ethnic minority women. These surveys and any additional research would need to be both broad based (to find commonalities across the prison estate), and institution specific (to understand the individual prison requirements in terms of implementation and feasibility). With regards to support for women, it would be useful to understand the views of women both currently separated in prisons, and those who have been released. However, several of the women I interviewed explained that they were only able to reflect on separation and what they needed after a period of time following their release.

The most complicated, but perhaps potentially fruitful, area of work would be in collaboration with social work to understand and develop best practice around separations, with more consideration for the mothers. The recent work around birth mothers and recurrent care proceedings (Broadhurst et al., 2017) is highly relevant, as is work around child protection referred to previously (Featherstone et al., 2018; Gupta et al., 2016) and the capability approach (Robeyns, 2017). These approaches could be developed and trialled in prisons, or used as a basis from which to evaluate current practices and assess new ways of working with separated mothers in prison. Collaborative research with social services might enable more co-operative ways of working for prisons and social services and ensure that both mothers' and children's needs are held in mind.

Concluding remarks

The focus on the impact of mother-child separations in prison has revealed the problems with using attachment theory as the basis for policy and the possible harm caused by justifying separations at specific ages. Mothers and staff have highlighted the impact of the wider context on their experiences of separation. A human-rights based approach, with minimum standards for improving contact and visits, and perhaps further suggestions from successful open prison practice, would go some way in mitigating the damage.

Separations in prisons are part of the wider child protection agenda and thus improving current practice will come from partnership research and wider social work reform to enable consideration of mothers' perspectives, given that many mothers will be caring for their children on release. If prisons are to be places of intervention for mothers, MBUs need wider admission criteria than they currently do, so more women have the opportunity of remaining with their babies, and MBU core assumptions around 'good parenting' need to be examined. Furthermore, the MBU environment and provision for children needs to be improved so that mothers without family support are not disadvantaged.

Ultimately, the best interests of both mothers and children would be met if Corston's (2007) ever-relevant recommendations were implemented. In particular, her call for custodial sentences only for serious and violent offences would automatically reduce the number of mother-child separations, improving outcomes for both mothers and children. As she clearly states: 'Women have been marginalised within institutions not designed with them in mind' (Corston, 2007, p.24). What this research has shown is that some women are marginalised even more than others – primarily those living in poverty and suffering from drug addictions – and that attachment theory is used as part of this marginalising process.

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1. ETHICS – STUDY A



Middlesex University Department of Psychology Ethics Committee Application for Ethical Approval and Risk Assessment

No study may proceed until approval has been granted by an authorised person. For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved. If you are involved in a project that has already received ethical approval from another committee or that will be seeking approval from another ethics committee please complete form 'Application for Approval of Proposals Previously Approved by another Ethics Committee or to be Approved by another Ethics Committee'

UG and MSc STUDENTS: Please email the completed form to your supervisor from your University email account (...@live.mdx.ac.uk). Your supervisor will then send your application to the Ethics Committee (Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk). You should NOT email the ethics committee directly.

PHD Students and STAFF: Please email the completed form to Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk from your University email account (...@mdx.ac.uk)

This form consists of 8 sections:

- 1) Summary of Application and Declaration
- 2) Ethical questions
- 3) Research proposal
- 4) Information sheet
- 5) Informed consent
- 6) Debriefing
- 7) Risk assessment (required if research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University property, otherwise leave this blank. Institutions/locations listed for data collection must match original letters of acceptance)
- 8) Reviewer's decision and feedback

Once your file including proposal, information sheet, consent form, debriefing and (if necessary) materials and Risk Assessment form is ready, please check the size. For files exceeding 3MB, please email your application to your supervisor using WeTransfer: <https://www.wetransfer.com/> this will place your application in cloud storage rather than sending it directly to a specific email account. If you/ your supervisor have confidentiality concerns, please submit a paper copy of your application to the Psychology Office instead of proceeding with the electronic submission.

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Application No.:	PG03	Decision:	Approved	Date:	20/10/15
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RISK ASSESSMENT (complete relevant boxes):

Required:	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Signed by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Student	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/> Programme Leader
Date:	Click here to enter a date.				

LETTER/S OF ACCEPTANCE/ PERMISSION MATCHING FRA1 (RISK ASSESSMENT) RECEIVED (SPECIFY):

	Date	From	Checked by
All	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin

DBS Certificate(s) Required? (complete relevant boxes):

DBS certificate required?	Click here to choose an item.	Seen By:	Choose an item.
DBS Certificate Number:		Date DBS Issued:	Click here to enter a date.

1 Summary of a application (researcher to complete)

Title of Proposal:	Mothers separated from their infants in prison: using attachment theory to understand how prisons can provide support		
Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor	Lisa Marzano		
Name of Student Researcher(s) and student number(s)	Claire Powell M00505768		
<i>Please click one of the following:</i>			
<input type="radio"/> UG Student	<input checked="" type="radio"/> PHD/MPHIL Student	<input type="radio"/> MSc Student	<input type="radio"/> Staff
Proposed start date	01/09/15	Proposed end date	01/09/16
Details of any co-investigators (if applicable)			
1. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	
2. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	
3. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	

Topic/Research Area (tick as many as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Psychosocial	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forensic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Developmental	<input type="checkbox"/> Sport & Exercise
<input type="checkbox"/> Cognition & Emotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychoanalysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Clinical	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychophysiological	<input type="checkbox"/> Health

Methodology (tick as many as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Qualitative	<input type="checkbox"/> Experimental	<input type="checkbox"/> Field Experiments	<input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaire
<input type="checkbox"/> Observation (humans and non-humans)	<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of Existing Data Source/Secondary Data Analysis		

1.1	Are there any sensitive elements to this study (delete as appropriate)? <i>If you are unclear about what this means in relation to your research please discuss with your Supervisor first</i>	NO
1.2	If the study involves any of the first three groups above, the researcher may need a DBS certificate (Criminal Records Check). PG students are expected to have DBS clearance. Does the current project require DBS clearance? <i>Discuss this matter with your supervisor if you unsure</i>	NO
1.3	Does the study involve ANY of the following? <i>Clinical populations; Children (under 16 years); Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders; Political, ethnic or religious groups/minorities; Sexually explicit material / issues relating to sexuality; Mood induction; Deception</i>	NO
1.4	Is this a resubmission / amended application? <i>If so, you must attach the original application with the review decision and comments (you do not need to re-attach materials etc if the resubmission does not concern alterations to these). Please note that in the case of complex and voluminous applications, it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify the amended parts of the resubmission.</i>	NO

By submitting this form you confirm that:

- you are aware that any modifications to the design or method of the proposal will require resubmission;

- students will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until completion of your studies at Middlesex, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and your supervisor will be able to access the data);
- staff will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until the appropriate time after completion of the project, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and other members of your team will be able to access the data);
- students will provide all original paper and electronic data to the supervisor named on this form on completion of the research / dissertation submission;
- you have read and understood the British Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and *Code of Human Research Ethics*.

2 Ethical questions – all questions must be answered

2.1	Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty?	YES
2.2	Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?	YES
2.3	Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?	YES
2.4	Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will participant anonymity be guaranteed?	YES
2.5	Is this research or part of it going to be conducted in a language other than English? <i>Note, full translations of all non-English materials must be provided and attached to this document</i>	NO
2.6	Is this research to be conducted only at Middlesex University? <i>If not, a completed Risk Assessment form - see Section 8 - must be completed, and permission from any hosting or collaborative institution must be obtained by letter or email, and appended to this document, before data collection can commence. If you are conducting an online survey or interviews via skype or telephone whilst you are at Middlesex University you do not need to fill in the risk assessment form.</i>	YES

If you have answered 'No' to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 above, please justify/discuss this below, outlining the measures you have taken to ensure participants are being dealt with in an ethical way.

Interview participants will be asked to agree to waive anonymity for some or part of the interview. Those who do not agree will be able to take part anonymously, however it is hoped some will be happy to be quoted directly.

Are there any ethical issues that concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form? If so please outline them below

None

All further documents in this ethics application are included in these appendices.

2. ETHICS – STUDY B



Middlesex University Department of Psychology Ethics Committee Application for Ethical Approval and Risk Assessment

No study may proceed until approval has been granted by an authorised person. For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved. If you are involved in a project that has already received ethical approval from another committee or that will be seeking approval from another ethics committee please complete form 'Application for Approval of Proposals Previously Approved by another Ethics Committee or to be Approved by another Ethics Committee'

UG and MSc STUDENTS: Please email the completed form to your supervisor from your University email account (...@live.mdx.ac.uk). Your supervisor will then send your application to the Ethics Committee (Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk). You should NOT email the ethics committee directly.

PhD Students and STAFF: Please email the completed form to Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk from your University email account (...@mdx.ac.uk)

This form consists of 8 sections:

- 1) Summary of Application and Declaration
- 2) Ethical questions
- 3) Research proposal
- 4) Information sheet
- 5) Informed consent
- 6) Debriefing
- 7) Risk assessment (required if research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University property, otherwise leave this blank. Institutions/locations listed for data collection must match original letters of acceptance)
- 8) Reviewer's decision and feedback

Once your file including proposal, information sheet, consent form, debriefing and (if necessary) materials and Risk Assessment form is ready, please check the size. For files exceeding 3MB, please email your application to your supervisor using WeTransfer: <https://www.wetransfer.com/> this will place your application in cloud storage rather than sending it directly to a specific email account. If you/ your supervisor have confidentiality concerns, please submit a paper copy of your application to the Psychology Office instead of proceeding with the electronic submission.

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Application No.:	PG076a	Decision:	ASL	Date:	19/10/2016
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RISK ASSESSMENT (complete relevant boxes):

Required:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Signed by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Programme Leader
Date:	26/09/2016		

LETTER/S OF ACCEPTANCE/PERMISSION MATCHING FRA1 (RISK ASSESSMENT) RECEIVED (SPECIFY):

	Date	From	Checked by
All	17/10/2016	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin

1.3	Does the study involve ANY of the following? <i>Clinical populations; Children (under 16 years); Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders; Political, ethnic or religious groups/minorities; Sexually explicit material / issues relating to sexuality; Mood induction; Deception</i>	YES
1.4	Is this a resubmission / amended application? <i>If so, you must attach the original application with the review decision and comments (you do not need to re-attach materials etc if the resubmission does not concern alterations to these). Please note that in the case of complex and voluminous applications, it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify the amended parts of the resubmission.</i>	YES

By submitting this form you confirm that:

- you are aware that any modifications to the design or method of the proposal will require resubmission;
- students will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until completion of your studies at Middlesex, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and your supervisor will be able to access the data);
- staff will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until the appropriate time after completion of the project, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and other members of your team will be able to access the data);
- students will provide all original paper and electronic data to the supervisor named on this form on completion of the research / dissertation submission;
- you have read and understood the British Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and *Code of Human Research Ethics*.

2 Ethical questions – all questions must be answered

2.1	Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty?	YES
2.2	Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?	YES
2.3	Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?	YES
2.4	Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will participant anonymity be guaranteed?	YES
2.5	Is this research or part of it going to be conducted in a language other than English? <i>Note, full translations of all non-English materials must be provided and attached to this document</i>	YES
2.6	Is this research to be conducted only at Middlesex University? <i>If not, a completed Risk Assessment form - see Section 8 – must be completed, and permission from any hosting or collaborative institution must be obtained by letter or email, and appended to this document, before data collection can commence. If you are conducting an online survey or interviews via skype or telephone whilst you are at Middlesex University you do not need to fill in the risk assessment form.</i>	NO

If you have answered 'No' to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 above, please justify/discuss this below, outlining the measures you have taken to ensure participants are being dealt with in an ethical way.

2.6 – Initial recruitment will be via the partner organisations so there is no breach of data protection and participants will have the study explained to them before they are invited to make contact with me, the researcher. Nobody will be interviewed who is not deemed suitable by staff (i.e. especially vulnerable at that time). I am a volunteer with one organisation and a staff member with another so I will not interview anyone who is a member of any current groups I am facilitating. For previous group members I will discuss this with the relevant staff team and my supervisors to decide whether it is appropriate for them to take part. In advance of each interview a support member of staff will be agreed for the interviewee to contact if they are distressed by the interview. This will be agreed in advance with the recruiting organisations, Letters of support from [REDACTED] will follow in the next fortnight.

Are there any ethical issues that concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form? If so please outline them below

The postnatal period and separation from infants are very sensitive times for women so this is potentially an extremely distressing subject to talk about.

All further documents in this ethics application are included in these appendices.

3. ETHICS – STUDY C



Middlesex University Department of Psychology Ethics Committee Application for Ethical Approval and Risk Assessment

No study may proceed until approval has been granted by an authorised person. For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved. If you are involved in a project that has already received ethical approval from another committee or that will be seeking approval from another ethics committee please complete form 'Application for Approval of Proposals Previously Approved by another Ethics Committee or to be Approved by another Ethics Committee'

UG and MSc STUDENTS: Please email the completed form to your supervisor from your University email account (...@live.mdx.ac.uk). Your supervisor will then send your application to the Ethics Committee (Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk). You should NOT email the ethics committee directly.

PhD Students and STAFF: Please email the completed form to Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk from your University email account (...@mdx.ac.uk)

This form consists of 8 sections:

- 1) Summary of Application and Declaration
- 2) Ethical questions
- 3) Research proposal
- 4) Information sheet
- 5) Informed consent
- 6) Debriefing
- 7) Risk assessment (required if research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University property, otherwise leave this blank. Institutions/locations listed for data collection must match original letters of acceptance)
- 8) Reviewer's decision and feedback

Once your file including proposal, information sheet, consent form, debriefing and (if necessary) materials and Risk Assessment form is ready, please check the size. For files exceeding 3MB, please email your application to your supervisor using WeTransfer: <https://www.wetransfer.com/> this will place your application in cloud storage rather than sending it directly to a specific email account. If you/ your supervisor have confidentiality concerns, please submit a paper copy of your application to the Psychology Office instead of proceeding with the electronic submission.

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Application No.:	PG07-2016.	Decision:	Approve	Date:	Click here to enter a date.
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RISK ASSESSMENT (complete relevant boxes):

Required:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Signed by:	<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Programme Leader
Date:	Click here to enter a date.		

LETTER/S OF ACCEPTANCE/PERMISSION MATCHING FRA1 (RISK ASSESSMENT) RECEIVED (SPECIFY):

	Date	From	Checked by
All	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin

DBS Certificate(s) Required? (complete relevant boxes):

DBS certificate required?	Click here to choose an item.	Seen By:	Choose an item.
DBS Certificate Number:		Date DBS Issued:	Click here to enter a date.

1 Summary of application (researcher to complete)

Title of Proposal:	Mothers separated from their infants in prison: using attachment theory to understand how prisons can provide support		
Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor	Dr Lisa Marzano		
Name of Student Researcher(s) and student number(s)	Claire Powell M00505768		
<i>Please click one of the following:</i>			
<input type="radio"/> UG Student	<input checked="" type="radio"/> PHD/MPHIL Student	<input type="radio"/> MSc Student	<input type="radio"/> Staff
Proposed start date	Click here to enter a date.	Proposed end date	Click here to enter a date.
Details of any co-investigators (if applicable)			
1. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	
2. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	
3. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	

Topic/Research Area (tick as many as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Psychosocial	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forensic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Developmental
<input type="checkbox"/> Sport & Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognition & Emotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychoanalysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Clinical
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychophysiological		

Methodology (tick as many as apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Qualitative	<input type="checkbox"/> Experimental	<input type="checkbox"/> Field Experiments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Questionnaire
<input type="checkbox"/> Observation (humans and non-humans)	<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of Existing Data Source/Secondary Data Analysis		

1.1	Are there any sensitive elements to this study (delete as appropriate)? <i>If you are unclear about what this means in relation to your research please discuss with your Supervisor first</i>	NO
1.2	If the study involves any of the first three groups above, the researcher may need a DBS certificate (Criminal Records Check). PG students are expected to have DBS clearance. Does the current project require DBS clearance? <i>Discuss this matter with your supervisor if you unsure</i>	NO

1.3	Does the study involve ANY of the following? <i>Clinical populations; Children (under 16 years); Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders; Political, ethnic or religious groups/minorities; Sexually explicit material / issues relating to sexuality; Mood induction; Deception</i>	NIO
1.4	Is this a resubmission / amended application? <i>If so, you must attach the original application with the review decision and comments (you do not need to re-attach materials etc if the resubmission does not concern alterations to these). Please note that in the case of complex and voluminous applications, it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify the amended parts of the resubmission.</i>	NO

By submitting this form you confirm that:

- you are aware that any modifications to the design or method of the proposal will require resubmission;
- students will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until completion of your studies at Middlesex, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and your supervisor will be able to access the data);
- staff will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until the appropriate time after completion of the project, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and other members of your team will be able to access the data);
- students will provide all original paper and electronic data to the supervisor named on this form on completion of the research / dissertation submission;
- you have read and understood the British Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and *Code of Human Research Ethics*.

2 Ethical questions – all questions must be answered

2.1	Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty?	YES
2.2	Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?	YES
2.3	Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?	YES
2.4	Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will participant anonymity be guaranteed?	YES
2.5	Is this research or part of it going to be conducted in a language other than English? <i>Note, full translations of all non-English materials must be provided and attached to this document</i>	NO
2.6	Is this research to be conducted only at Middlesex University? <i>If not, a completed Risk Assessment <u>form</u> - see Section 8 – must be completed, and permission from any hosting or collaborative institution must be obtained by letter or email, and appended to this document, before data collection can commence. If you are conducting an online survey or interviews via skype or telephone whilst you are at Middlesex University you do not need to fill in the risk assessment form.</i>	NO

If you have answered 'No' to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 above, please justify/discuss this below, outlining the measures you have taken to ensure participants are being dealt with in an ethical way.

+


2.6 – Research will take place at participants' place of work or at rooms booked locally (e.g. Islington Voluntary Action) at a time and place convenient to participants. This is to make it easier for people to participate.

Are there any ethical issues that concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form? [If so](#) please outline them below

None.

All further documents in this ethics application are included in these appendices.

4. NOMS RESEARCH APPLICATION



Ministry of JUSTICE
National Offender Management Service

NOMS Research Application Form

Section 1 - Key Details

Full title of research project	Imprisoned Mothers Separated from their Infants: Understanding Staff Needs and Experiences.	Complete
Date of application (dd/mm/yyyy)		* Answer Required
Research timetable (all dates dd/mm/yyyy)		
Start date	01/11/2015	Complete
Data collection period	From: 01/11/2016 To: 30/04/2017	Complete
Report completion date	31/10/2017	Complete
Lead Researcher		
Title	Ms	Complete
Name	Claire Powell	Complete
Post	Doctoral student	Complete
Employer	Middlesex University	Complete
Address	School of Science and Technology, Middles	Complete
Tel No	7847464467	Complete
Email	c.powell@mdu.ac.uk	Complete
Additional Researchers	Please click to add additional researchers	
Are you applying as an academic student?	Yes	Complete
Please complete details of main academic supervisor:		
Title	Dr	Complete
Name	Lisa Marzano	Complete
Post	Senior Lecturer	Complete
Employer	Middlesex University	Complete
Address	School of Science and Technology, Middles	Complete
Tel No	2084116998	Complete
Email	l.marzano@mdu.ac.uk	Complete
Are you a NOMS psychologist in training undertaking this research for a Chartership exemplar?	No	Complete
Is the project supported by (tick all that apply):		
NOMS HQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Please specify key contact: Roman Bowden
Community Rehabilitation Company	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify key contact: [Redacted]
Private Sector Prison	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Please specify key contact: [Redacted]
Ministry of Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify key contact: [Redacted]
Other govt. department	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please specify key contact: [Redacted]
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Please specify key contact: [Redacted]
Complete		
Has funding been secured from (tick all that apply):		
NOMS HQ	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amount? [Redacted]
Community Rehabilitation Company	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Private Sector Prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ministry of Justice	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other govt. department	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Please specify [Redacted]
Complete		

Section 2 - Aims & Objectives

Brief description of research
(Max 300 words using language
easily understood by a lay person)

This research aims to explore the experiences and needs of staff supporting women in prison who have been separated from their children under 2 years. The women may be on a Mother-Baby Unit (MBU) with another child outside prison or they may not have stayed with a child on a Mother-Baby Unit at all. Staff behaviour and their relationships with prisoners are crucial to the wellbeing of prisoners (Liebling, 2011), and staff supporting mothers separated from their young children face particular challenges. Women's mental health and participation in the prison regime may be affected and staff have to draw on a range of skills and experience to work with this group of women. The role of staff in supporting mothers of young children has not been explored in the literature. This would be an opportunity to understand the different ways staff support women and how supported they feel by organisational structures and training. It would be a chance to draw on staff knowledge and expertise which is currently undocumented and crucial to understanding how to support this group of women. This research would focus on understanding further staff training needs. This project would involve carrying out semi-structured interviews with a range of staff (prison officers, healthcare, family liaison, MBU etc.) across at least two prisons about their views on current examples of positive practice and elicit views about possible additional training or support needs. Whilst this is a small-scale investigation, it would enable a detailed understanding of the issues that a range of staff find most important. These findings would then be considered in light of the current psychological research around maternal separation and means of support.

Complete

Aim of the research

The aim of the research is to carry out a qualitative exploration of the experiences of staff supporting women in prison separated from their children under the age of two years. This research will use Liebling's 'appreciative inquiry' (see Liebling et al, 2012) as a framework to explore how staff provide support and what their needs are.

Complete

What are the primary research
questions (and/or hypotheses)?

The primary research questions are: 1) What are staff experiences of supporting women in prison separated from their children under two years? 2) How supported do staff feel in this work? 3) What do staff identify as most important for them to work with these women?

What are the potential benefits of the research to NOMS policy/business? How does the research link to NOMS business priorities? How could the findings be operationalised?

This research fits in with the NOMS commitment to 'establishing positive, safe, secure and decent environments for managing offenders' and 'reducing reoffending'. Researching officer expertise in working with female prisoner distress and coping around separation from their infants will enable prison officers to offer a higher level of support. This ties in with priorities around improving working and living conditions and improving staff-prisoner relations. With more knowledge about distress and coping with separation there may be possibilities of reducing violence, self-harm and substance misuse and meeting equality objective 6 of improving outcomes for women offenders. Scoping conversations with former prison staff about the viability of this research highlighted the role of separation from children in self-harm incidents during ACCT case reviews. (The relation between separation and self-harm is also highlighted in prison inspectorate reports.) Understanding this in more detail would very much aid staff in maintaining safe prison environments. This area of research also fits in with the MOJ call for gender-specific policies addressing

Complete

What are the potential benefits of the research to academic knowledge in the field of study?

This research would be an opportunity to draw on the 'experience-laden knowledge' (Arnold, 2016) of staff and add to the sparse literature on the impact of separation on prisoners from children in prison. By understanding staff experiences and drawing on their expertise it would be possible to link academic research to current practice in an under-researched area.

Complete

What previous research has been conducted in this area?

Despite some important research on prison officers: how key they are for the wellbeing of prisoners (e.g. Liebling et al, 2012; Liebling, 2011) and the emotionally demanding nature of the role (Arnold, 2016) there has been very little detail concerning staff in women's prisons and none specifically considering how staff work with separated mothers. Nor has the research included much, if any detail of other prison staff, for example healthcare staff. There has been one special issue of Attachment and Human Development (2010) which focused on parental incarceration and attachment. In the UK there have been only three studies into the mental health of women in MBUs and separated from their babies (Birmingham et al., 2006; Gregoire et al., 2010 Dolan et al., 2013). There is some historic literature on MBUs (e.g. Catan, 1989) and some grey literature from voluntary sector associations and midwives. Whilst potentially useful for prison staff in terms of the impact of separation on women, none of the research

Complete

What are the main limitations of the research proposed?

This a qualitative investigation which is appropriate for the topic, however, as with any qualitative research any findings will be specific to the context in which they were found. In order to mitigate this, it will be a stronger study if staff can be interviewed over two or more prisons in order to capture a broader selection of views. The emphasis would be on detail and nuance rather than statistical or generalisable results. This focus on detail and context would nevertheless translate more easily into training as it would be directly based on the experiences and knowledge of current prison staff. It will depend on the interest of staff to take part, rather than enforced systematic sampling. However initial informal discussions have suggested that a range of relevant staff would be interested in taking part and key contacts have expressed support for identifying relevant staff groups for initial recruitment. A further limitation would be staff resources in terms of setting up and carrying out interviews. However with careful

Complete

Outstanding questions in this section:

0



Section 3 - Proposed Methodology

Broadly speaking, what type of methodology do you intend to use in order to deliver this research (tick all that apply):

- Literature review
- Rapid evidence assessment/systematic review
- Action research
- Case studies
- Process evaluation
- Impact evaluation
- Economic evaluation
- Other

Please specify:

Qualitative interviews

Complete

Please summarise your proposed design and methodology (including details on sampling and sample sizes, identifying/recruiting respondents, likely response rates, testing/validation of tools/instruments)

Method
 Design: This study will examine the experiences of prison staff working with female prisoners separated from their infants. This is to ensure the interviews capture the perspectives of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency staff. The methodology will follow an 'appreciative inquiry' approach (see Liebling et al, 2012 for detailed description) as this draws out current strengths and achievements.
 Participants:
 15-20 prison staff (across different departments and prisons) who have experience of working with women who have been separated from their babies. Interviewees will be recruited through key contacts with prison staff and through advertising in staff offices. It is hoped that the prisons will be able to advise on who the most appropriate members of staff to interview would be and that they are willing to participate. A systematic sampling design would be possible with the agreement of the prison and could take several forms, i.e. ensuring representation of relevant staff groups. However

this will have to be considered pragmatically in terms of staff resources.
Materials:
Semi-structured interview schedules, the focus of which will be on experiences of working with those who have been separated. There will be a brief demographic questionnaire.

Complete

Please describe the proposed methods of analysis (quantitative and/or qualitative)

Demographic questionnaire data will be used descriptively to contextualise the interview samples. Transcribed interviews will be analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to draw out themes across the group of participants as well as any points of difference. Anonymised case studies will be written to highlight examples of best practice.

Complete

What are the resource implications (e.g. anticipated demands on staff time, office requirements, demands on data providers etc)?

In terms of resources, it will be necessary to have access to a quiet, private room in which to conduct the interviews and record them. Support will also be needed for organising the interviews so staff to have the opportunity to participate without adversely affecting their workload. If 4-7 staff members took part in each prison this would limit the pressure on each institution.

Section 4 not included for sake of keeping prison names confidential.



NOMS Research Application Form

Section 5 - Data Protection

Does the proposed study involve the collection/use of personal data?

Yes

Complete

What is your organisation's Data Protection Notification Number?

Z5439728

Complete

Does your Data Protection Notification allow for offence-related information of individuals to be stored within your organisation for research purposes?

Yes

Complete

Explain how you will hold the personal data in order to ensure its security during the study

All data will be anonymised, encrypted and held in password protected and encrypted databases that only the researcher and director of studies will have access to. Any identifying data will be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed at the end of the research. The British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct will be followed, as will The Data Protection Act 1998.

Complete

How will you ensure that any findings do not reveal information about single individuals?

All identifying features of individuals and establishments will be removed. Any data that could potentially identify participants (for example their age, gender, specific job) will be presented at an aggregate level. Participating institutions will not be named and only described in general terms so that they can not be

Will not be named and only described in general terms so that they can not be identified.

Complete

How long will the data be retained for?

5 years

Complete

How will you dispose of the data?

Paper records will be shredded and disposed of via confidential waste. No identifying information will be held electronically. Recordings and electronic files will be permanently deleted.

Complete

Please provide details on any access required to existing data sources (and whether access to this data has already been sought and from whom)

None required.



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Section 6 - Research Ethics

What are the ethical considerations relevant to this study and how have you addressed them (including obtaining of informed consent, safety of participants/researchers, ensuring anonymity/confidentiality)

Informed consent: staff who express an interest will be approached. The study will be fully explained and participants will be offered an opportunity to take part. It will be made clear that participants have the option of withdrawing at any point up until a month following the interview. The limits of confidentiality will also be made clear with regards to safeguarding. The aims of the study and how it will be disseminated will be clearly explained, including anonymity of participants with regards to data reporting. Consent for recording will also be sought. Interviews will be arranged at a time convenient to staff.

Safeguarding: this will be carried out in line with prison procedure. In practice this means that interview confidentiality will only be broken if a participant expresses the intention of harming themselves or others. The researcher has attended safeguarding training and will report regularly to her supervisor and other nominated staff members.

Anonymity and confidentiality: all identifying data around participants and details of the prisons themselves will be kept in a password protected database and destroyed at the end of the research. All transcripts will be anonymised and data aggregated so that individuals and institutions cannot be identified in any results.

Complete

Has a relevant Ethics Committee approved the research?

Yes ▾

Complete

Section 7 - Dissemination

When will the research summary and project review form be made available for NOMS?

A progress/interim report will be made available for June 2017 and the research summary and project review will be completed for NOMs by October 2017.

Complete

How else will the results of the research be disseminated (e.g. article, book, thesis etc)?

The results will be disseminated through a PhD thesis and any relevant publications.

5. NOMS APPROVAL LETTER



Ms Claire Powell,
School of Science and Technology,
Middlesex University,
Town Hall,
The Burroughs,
Hendon,
London,
NW4 4BT
c.powell@mdx.ac.uk

National Offender Management Service
National Research Committee
Email: National.Research@noms.qsi.gov.uk

21st October 2016

APPROVED SUBJECT TO MODIFICATIONS – NOMS RESEARCH

Ref: 2016-320

Title: **Imprisoned Mothers Separated from their Infants: Understanding Staff Needs and Experiences.**

Dear Ms Powell,

Further to your application to undertake research across NOMS, the National Research Committee (NRC) is pleased to grant approval in principle for your research. The Committee has requested the following modifications:

- Consideration should be given to the need for stratification when sampling to ensure that a sufficient range of views is obtained. Sample sizes should be linked to the point at which saturation of key themes is achieved.
- The following should be included in all participation information sheets/consent forms:
 - Participants should be asked for their consent to the use of audio-recording equipment.
 - Participants should be informed that there will be neither advantage nor disadvantage as a result of their decision to participate or not participate in the research.
 - It must be made clear to research participants that they can refuse to answer individual questions or withdraw from the research until a designated point, and that this will not compromise them in any way.
 - Participants should consent to any follow-up contact and the method of this contact.
 - Participants should be informed how their data will be used and for how long it will be held.
- Please can the interview/questionnaire schedules be sent to the National Research mailbox once available.
- The interview/questionnaire schedules should be tested/piloted in the first instance to check ease of use, coverage of key issues and overall length (monitoring any respondent fatigue).
- Under the Prison Act (as amended by the Offender Management Act 2007), mobile phones, cameras and sound recording devices are classified as list B items, requiring authorisation from Governing



National Offender Management Service

Governors / Directors of Contracted Prisons (or nominated persons) to take them into and use them in prison (PSI 10/2012 Conveyance and Possession of Prohibited Items and Other Related Offences).

- When using recording devices, the recordings should be treated as potentially disclosive and it is recommended that devices with encryption technology are used. Recordings should be wiped once they have been transcribed and anonymised unless there are clear grounds for keeping them any longer.
- In the final research reports, the limitations should be clearly set out (e.g. the samples may not be fully representative).

Before the research can commence you must agree formally by email to the NRC (National.Research@noms.qsi.gov.uk), confirming that you accept the modifications set out above and will comply with the terms and conditions outlined below and the expectations set out in the NOMS Research Instruction

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-offender-management-service/about/research>).

Please note that unless the project is commissioned by MoJ/NOMS and signed off by Ministers, the decision to grant access to prison establishments, National Probation Service (NPS) divisions or Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) areas (and the offenders and practitioners within these establishments/divisions/areas) ultimately lies with the Governing Governor/Director of the establishment or the Deputy Director/Chief Executive of the NPS division/CRC area concerned. If establishments/NPS divisions/CRC areas are to be approached as part of the research, a copy of this letter must be attached to the request to prove that the NRC has approved the study in principle. The decision to grant access to existing data lies with the Information Asset Owners (IAOs) for each data source and the researchers should abide by the data sharing conditions stipulated by each IAO.

Please quote your NRC reference number in all future correspondence.

Yours sincerely,
National Research Committee

6. STUDY A – CONSENT FORM ATTACHMENT EXPERTS

Middlesex University School of Health and Education

Psychology Department

Written Informed Consent

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: using attachment theory to understand how prisons can provide support

Date:

Researcher's name: Claire Powell

Supervisor's name and email: Dr Lisa Marzano I.marzano@mdx.ac.uk

- I have understood the details of the research and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.
- I have been given contact details for the researcher on the previous page and I will also be able to contact the researcher at the end of the survey.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.
- I am happy that this interview will be recorded.
- I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and I provide my consent that this may occur.

Tick here (or electronically sign) to agree:

Additional optional anonymity clause:

- I agree to waive anonymity to my responses and participation and will have one month to approve any direct quotations.

Tick here (or electronically sign) to agree:

To the participant: Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Health and Education Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits: _____

7. STUDY B – CONSENT FORM MOTHERS

Middlesex University School of Health and Education

Psychology Department

Written Informed Consent

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: what support can prisons provide?

Researcher's name: Claire Powell

Supervisor's name and email: Dr Lisa Marzano l.marzano@mdx.ac.uk

- I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.
- I have been given contact details for the researcher in the information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time during the interview and up to one month after the interview without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.
- I agree to the interview being tape recorded.
- I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and I provide my consent that this may occur.

Print name

Sign Name

Date: _____

To the participant: Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Health and Education Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits: _____

8. STUDY C – CONSENT FORM PRISON STAFF

Middlesex University School of Health and Education

Psychology Department

Written Informed Consent

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: what support can prisons provide?

Researcher's name: Claire Powell

Supervisor's name and email: Dr Lisa Marzano I.marzano@mdx.ac.uk

- I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.
- I have been given contact details for the researcher in the information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time during the interview and up to one month after the interview without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.
- I agree to the interview being tape recorded.

- I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and I provide my consent that this may occur.

Print name

Sign Name

Date: _____

To the participant: Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Health and Education Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits: _____

9. STUDY A – INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ATTACHMENT EXPERTS

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: using attachment theory to understand how prisons can provide support

Attachment Expert interview

A - Introduction

- 1) First of all, please could you describe the attachment model or theory that you draw on in your work?

- 2) Could you briefly describe any experience you have working or carrying out research in prison or secure settings.

B – Response to handout

- 3) Please take a look at the handout. Do you have any immediate comments, observations or questions?

- 4) I am particularly interested in the impact of the separation on the mother as less research has been carried out in this area. If you draw on your own research/practice, what would be your key concerns for women who are pregnant in prison and facing separation?

- 5) For a woman giving birth whilst in prison, what would a sensitive separation look like?

[If research background only, what aspects of attachment theory need to be considered]

- 6) Following separation at birth, what would be the most important considerations for women and for staff supporting them?
- 7) If a mother arrives in prison separated from her young child what would be the most important considerations for her in terms of support?
- 8) Do you have a specific example you are happy to share from your research or practice of a similar scenario which you think 'worked well'?

C – General questions

- 9) Prison policy is particularly concerned with 'best age of separation' for the child. What are your thoughts on this?
- 10) From an attachment perspective, how might separation affect a woman's mental/physical health?
- 11) Many women refer to the 'trauma of separation', how can attachment theory inform support in a prison following separation?

D – Theory comment

12) One theory from the literature suggests that supporting women in transforming the loss from a total to a partial loss can be protective for mothers and mitigate some of the effects of the separation. From your standpoint, what are your thoughts on this?

13) If you think this makes sense, what might this mean in practice in the prison context? If not do you have an alternative theoretical suggestion?

14) In practice suggestions have included having some form of contact, and allowing some bonding at birth even if the child is going to be removed permanently. What are your thoughts on that?

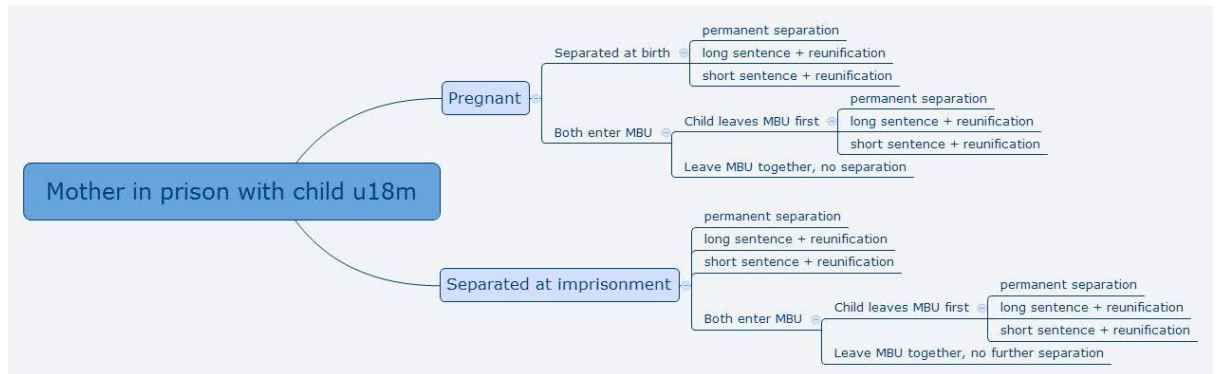
15) Do you think there is a way to balance both child and mother needs in separation?

16) Do you have any further comments or questions?

Thank you for your time.

Handout

Possible trajectories for mothers with young children in the prison system



Care arrangements can be kinship care, fostering or adoption. Women may not initially know what has happened to their children when they are remanded into custody. The prisons keep no records of dependents and their care arrangements.

Numbers are not routinely collected about women in prison and their children. As a rough guide:

- PSO 4800 states that approximately 120 women in custody give birth every year.
- A FOI request shows that between 2010 and 2013 there were on average 243 applications to Mother and Baby Units (from women who have given birth in prison or who already have a young child before entering prison) and an annual average acceptance of 126.

- Gregoire et al (2010) pointed out that just under a third of eligible women applied for a place in their research, which suggests approximately 750 women per year may be imprisoned with a child under 18 months.
- Dolan et al (2013) state that 77% of children in MBUS are cared for by their mothers on release, in comparison to 20% of those separated from their mothers in prison.

In the meantime since these figures, Holloway MBU has closed down. There are now 6 MBUs serving the whole country (England and Wales) and approximately 4 000 women in prison at any one time.

Note: MBU = Mother Baby Unit (special area of prison where mothers can stay with children up to age of 18 months)

10. STUDY A – PRACTITIONER SURVEY

Survey on mother and child separations

Introduction

This survey is for researchers, clinicians and practitioners who work with children, young people and families. I am interested in your views about the impact on mothers in prison who are separated from their infants under two years. You do not need any knowledge of the prison system or this area of work, as I am interested in your views given your professional background.

There has not been much research which has specifically considered the impact on mothers in prison who have been separated from their children. I am particularly interested in focussing on separation involving children under two years as there is some provision for children of this age in the UK to remain in prison with their mothers. You do not have to answer all the questions although it would be helpful if you could explain why you do not wish to answer any of the questions.

The survey will take approximately 15 minutes.

Informed consent

Demographics

- How do you define your gender: M/F/NeitherP
- How would you define your ethnicity? _____
- Please pick a category*

- 0. Asian/Asian British (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Other Asian)
- 1. Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- 2. Chinese/British Chinese
- 3. Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
- 4. Other ethnic group (Arab, any other group)
- 5. White (British, Irish, other white)

*Based on UK ONS census groupings

- Are you:
 - 0. Researcher 1. Practitioner 2. Both 3.
 - Other.....(describe)

- What is your job title? _____

- What setting do you work in? (Rate 'yes' for as many as apply) Please give brief details:

NHS/public sector healthcare YES/ NO

Private sector healthcare YES/ NO

University/Higher Education YES/ NO

Third sector – research YES/ NO

Third sector – practice YES/ NO

Other YES / NO(describe):

Describe your job

- How long have you been working in this field? ___years___months
- Have you ever worked or carried out research in a prison/secure/forensic setting? YES /NO / UNSURE If yes please give details:
- If you are not based in England & Wales, which country do you work in?_____

Your views on mother-child separations

Please read the following and then respond below

Approximately 750 women a year are separated from their children under two years whilst they are in prison. Sometimes these separations will be for a short time, for other mothers this separation will be for a long time, i.e. anything from a few months to several years, depending on the length of her sentence. Some mothers will be permanently separated from their children if they are adopted whilst she is in prison.

In some prisons there are Mother and Baby Units. These are special areas of women's prisons where a small group of mothers can stay with their children up until the age of 18 months.

The following statements concern possible mother and child separations that might occur in the prison context. Please could you tick the answer which you agree with most and give any further details when relevant.

Q1. Separations of under a month when a mother goes to prison are acceptable for children under two years and will not cause too much distress for either mother or child.

1-completely agree 2-somewhat agree 3-neither agree nor disagree 4-somewhat disagree 5-completely disagree

agree agree disagree disagree

Please explain your answer:

- Would you have any concerns for the child?

0. No 1. Yes 2. Unsure

IF YES OR UNSURE What would they be?

Describe

- Would you have any concerns for the mother?

0. No 1. Yes 2. Unsure

- IF YES OR UNSURE What would they be?

Describe

Q2. It is acceptable for a mother to go to prison to serve a sentence longer than a month leaving behind her child of under two years.

1-completely 2-somewhat 3-neither agree nor disagree 4-somewhat 5-completely

agree

agree

disagree

disagree

Please explain your answer:

Q3. A few days after giving birth in prison, a mother is separated from her baby for up to six months. This will not be harmful to the mother or baby because it is happening in the first few months.

1-completely 2-somewhat 3-neither agree nor disagree 4-somewhat 5-completely

agree

agree

disagree

disagree

Please explain your answer:

Q4. If a mother gives birth in prison and will be permanently separated from her baby, how much contact should she have with her baby before being separated?

0. None

1. 1-24 hours

2. 25-48 hours
3. 2 days – 1 week
4. 1-4 weeks
5. Other – please give details:

Please explain your answer:

Q5. When mothers are on Mother and Baby Units, they are expected to return to work or education when their baby is six weeks old. The baby attends the on-site nursery during the day. In your view, is this return to work time period:

0. Too soon
1. Suitable but should not be any earlier
2. Suitable but could happen earlier than six weeks

Please explain your answer:

Q6.Mother and Baby Units are based on the idea that 18 months is a suitable age for separation once a child has spent time with their mother. What are your thoughts on this?

- 0.Too early
- 1.Too late
- 2. Suitable for most/all children

Please explain your answer

Q7.Currently Mother and Baby Units are deemed suitable for children to stay in until they are 18 months. Do you think there should be provision for children to stay in prison until they are older?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes
- 2. Unsure

Please explain your answer:

If you answered 'yes', until what age do you think there should provision for children to stay in prison? _____years

Please explain your answer

Q8. If a mother has a long sentence (several years) but will be reunited with her child, she may be given a place on the MBU until the child is 6-9 months. Do you think this is an appropriate age for separation?

- 0. Too early
- 1. Too late
- 2. Suitable for most/all children

Please explain your answer:

General questions

Q8. What are your main concerns for mothers when they are separated from their children under two years?

Describe

Q9. What are your main concerns for children under two years when they are separated from their mothers?

Describe

Q10. Is your work informed by attachment theory?

0. No 1. Yes 2. Unsure

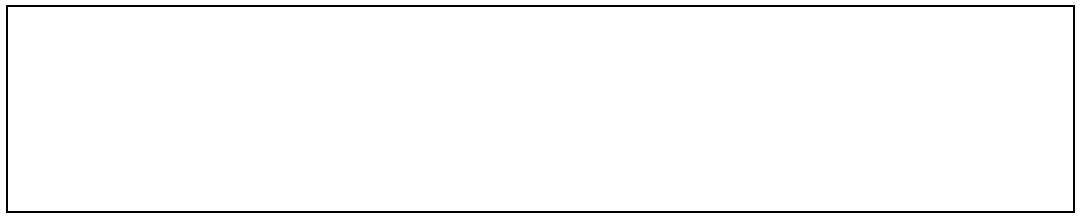
Please explain your answer

If yes, which attachment theorists which have particularly influenced you or which you use in your work?

If yes, please list any attachment measures you use:

- Do you have any further comments about mothers in prison and separation from their children under two years?

- Do you have any other comments about the survey?



11. STUDY B – MOTHERS' INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Demographics – mothers

Can I start with some questions about you? This is just to get a general description of everyone participating in the study.

Q1. What is your current age?_____ Q2. How do you define your gender?

F/Other

(please specify)

Q3a. Where were you born?

Q3b. What is your first

language?

Q3c. What is your nationality?

Q3d. How would you define your

ethnicity?

Q4. Were you in prison only on remand? Y/N (If yes, skip to Q7.)

Q5. If you're happy to tell me, which category did your conviction come in?

Fraud

Drug-related

Theft/burglary

Violent crime

Other (Please specify)

Q6. When was your prison sentence? (dates)

Q7. How long were you sentenced for?

Q8. Did you serve the whole sentence?

Q9. Which prison(s) were

you in?

Q10. Was that your first time in prison?

Q11. Were you living with other people before you went to prison?

(Family/friends/hostel acc etc)

Q12. Did you have a job before you went to prison? Can you tell me a bit about

it? (FT/PT, role, sector)

Q13a. Do you have a partner?
the children?

Q13b. Does he/she support you with

Q14a. Do you have any children? Y/N Q14b. How many children? ____
biological ____ adoptive

____ foster ____ step-children children

Q14c. How many are under 18? ____ Q14d. How many lived with you before
you came to prison? ____

Q14e. How many live with you now? ____

Q14e. How many were under two years when you went to prison? ____

Thank you for answering these questions. We'll go into a little bit more detail
about some of them in the interview.

Interview - mothers

Thank you for agreeing to take part. The interview will be audio recorded so we
can have a conversation, rather than me taking notes throughout. The
interviews will be confidential so nobody from [*organisation name*] will listen to
them and I won't tell them what you've said or show them a typed copy of your
interview. The only time I would need to speak to someone is if you tell me
about any serious plans to harm yourself or others.

People can find it helpful to talk about their experiences but this can also be
upsetting. Please let me know at any point if you would like to stop the
interview. You don't have to answer all the questions and you are free to stop at
any point. If you do find the interview upsetting, who in the organisation can I
contact on your behalf? [*Insert name and role*].

We will also have a chat at the end of the interview to see how you found it and
I'll give you a list of people to contact if you feel distressed after the interview or
later on.

There are two parts to the interview. The first part is a demographics questionnaire. As with the interviews, if there's anything you don't want to answer, that's fine.

The second part of the interview is about your experience of being separated from your baby in prison and also what you think is important in parenting children under two years. Finally at the end, you will have time to give some feedback about how you found it. If there are any questions you don't want to answer that is fine.

I'm now going to turn the tape recorder on.

Questionnaires

So now let us move to the main part about your experiences in prison and your thoughts around parenting children under two years. [Make note from demographics how many children under two years interviewee has.]

Q1. Could you start by giving me an idea of how old your baby was when you first went to prison?

Q2. Were you pregnant when you went to prison or had your child/ren already been born?

Q3. Can you tell me about this? (arrest/remand/prison, how this relates to birth of child and age)

Q4. Did you know about the Mother-Baby Units? (How did you find out about them, what do you know about them)

Q5. Did you apply for a place?

Q5a. If yes, what happened next?

Q5b. If no, can you tell me about your decision?

(Why, why not, application process, decision making process, if you did not apply do you regret it? Have you changed your mind?)

Q6. Are you able to tell me what it was like for you when separated from your baby?

Q6a. If yes, please can you tell me about this?

(Feelings, impact, had you been separated before from this child, other children? Is being away from your children something that has worried you in the past? What about being away from friends/family?)

Q7. Did you see your baby when you were in prison?

Q7a. If yes, how often?

Q7b. If no, what kind of contact what you like?

Q7c. Do you know who is looking after your children while you are in prison? (If not answered above)

Q7d. Are you in touch with your other children? (If relevant)

(What kind of contact and how often would you like to see your baby? Why? What are the obstacles apart from being in prison?)

Q8. How has this affected how you see yourself as a mother?

Q9. How have you got through this? (Have drugs/alcohol been helpful/harmful in any way? Self harm, impact on mental health)

Q10. Have you been supported through this?

Q10a. If yes, please can you tell me about this? (Who, how, in/out prison)

Q11. Do you feel anyone supports you in life?

Q11a. If yes, could you tell me more about this? (Partner/family/friends/listener/staff/professionals)

(Do you have people you can confide in? Do they support you emotionally, so not just with practical things? Do they support you specifically with your child/ren? How often do you have contact with them? How much has this changed since you have been in prison?)

Q12. What is it like asking for support in prison? (Has this changed since you came into prison? Do you see yourself as more or less self-reliant since you

came into prison? How do you look after yourself? How do you keep yourself safe?)

Q13. Are you able to trust people in general? (Is this something that has changed since you've been in prison?)

Q13a. If yes, could you tell me about this? (Who?)

Q13b. If not, why not?

Given your experience I'd like to talk a bit now about your thoughts in general on parenting under twos.

Q14. What do you think children under two need most from their parents or carers?

Q15. What do you think may be specifically difficult or different to parenting under twos, than say a five year old?

Q16. Where do you think your ideas about parenting come from? (How you were brought up, culture, books)

Q17. Is it similar to how you were brought up?

Q17a. If so, how?

(Were your parents around? What was it like? Do you have any parenting role models?)

The final section is thinking about support in prisons for you as an individual and also for mothers of under twos in prison more generally

Q18. Do you feel like you were able to carry on parenting from prison? (What support did you need to do this?)

Q19. What do you think could be helpful for mothers with children under two years in prison? (Support structure, probation, remand, contact, visits, separation, MBUs)

(What would the most important things be for you? What do you think mothers need in prison?)

Q20. In relation to your children, what are your hopes for the future?

We're now near the end of the interview and it would be helpful to hear how you found it.

Q21. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Q.22 How did you find the interview overall? (How are you feeling? Was anything difficult/strange to answer? What would you change?)

If anything comes up later and you'd like to ask questions about it here is a sheet with some more information. I'm now going to switch the tape recorder off.

Just to remind you I have made a recording of the interview and will be analysing all the interviews together. Your name and any information that could identify you will be removed. I'll be writing up a final report for my PhD that doesn't identify anyone and uses what you say to make some recommendations.

Thank you very much for your time.

12. STUDY C – STAFF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Demographics – staff

Can I start with some questions about you? This is just to get a general description of everyone participating in the study.

Q1. What is your current age? _____ Q2. How do you define your gender? M/F/Neither
(please specify)

Q3a. What is your job role?

Q3b. Who is your employer?

Q3c. How long have you been working here? _____ years _____ months

Q3d. Have you worked in other prisons?
total?

Q3e. How long for in

Q3f. What roles did you work in?

Q4a. Where were you born?
language?

Q4b. What is your first

Q4c. What is your nationality?
define your ethnicity?

Q4d. How would you

Thank you for answering these questions.

Interview – staff

Thank you for agreeing to take part. The interview will be audio recorded so we can have a conversation, rather than me taking notes throughout. The interviews will be kept confidential so I will not share them with anyone involved with the prison. I only have to talk to someone if you disclose to me plans that include anything around harming yourself or other people.

There are two parts to the interview. The first is a questionnaire about you, your job role etc. The second part is an interview about your experience of working with women who have been separated from their babies in prison and also what you think is important in parenting children under two years. Finally at the end, you will have time to tell me how you found the interview.

I'm now going to switch the tape recorder on.

Questionnaire

So now let us move to the main part. This study is looking at staff experiences of supporting women who have been separated from their babies in prison. It would be helpful to hear about your experiences and then think in more detail about whether anything else could be put in place.

Q1. Could you start by telling me what your experience of supporting mothers separated from their children under two in x prison has been?

Q2. What, if anything, is challenging about this or different from working with other women?

[How often are you supporting women, how many, do you always know, how does it make you feel, how does it fit into your role more generally?]

Q3. Do you get any additional support around this in particular? (Formal and informal)

Q4. Do you feel you need additional support/training?

Q4a. If so, what?

(What would this entail? What would you want to get from training/support?)

Given your experience, I'd like to talk a bit now about your thoughts in general on parenting under twos.

Q5. What are your thoughts about what it must be like to parent a child under two from prison?

Q6. What are your thoughts about MBUs in prison?

(What do you know about them? Why do you think they are underused? Specifics around prison. What is the process like for getting a place?)

Q7. What could be specifically difficult or different to parenting under twos in general, than say a four or five year old?

Q8. What do you think children under two need most from their parents or carers?

Q9. Where have your ideas about parenting come from? (How you were brought up, culture, books)

Q10. Do you have any children? Y/N Q10a. How many children? ___
biological___adoptive

(If no go to Q10e.) ___foster ___step-
children

Q10b. How many are under 18? _____ Q10c. How many live with you?_____

Q10d. How many are under two years? _____

Q10e. If no, do you regularly care for children as a non-parent?

The final section is thinking about support in prisons for you as an individual and also for mothers of under twos in prison more generally

Q11. Where do you get most of your support from, both in relation to this job and more generally?

Q12. If you were planning the support structures for mothers in prison with under twos, how would you design them? (Contact, visits, separation, MBUs)

We're now near the end of the interview and it would be helpful to hear how you found it.

Q13. Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

Q14. How did you find the interview overall?

(Was anything difficult/strange to answer? What would you change?)

If anything comes up later and you'd like to ask questions about it here is a sheet with some more information. I'm now going to switch the tape recorder off. Just to remind you I have made a recording of the interview and will be analysing all the interviews together. Your name and any information that could identify you will be removed. I'll be writing up a final report for my PhD that doesn't identify anyone and uses what you say to make some recommendations.

Thank you very much for your time.

13. STUDY A – INFORMATION SHEET

Information sheet

26th October 2015

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: using attachment theory to understand how prisons can provide support

Thank you for your interest in this study. This is to give you more information about the research being carried out so you can decide whether or not to take part.

This project aims to make links between current attachment research and practice and prison policy around mothers separated from their infants in prison. Interviews will also be carried out with mothers in prison and prison staff in order to link theory, practice and lived experience.

The interview will take approximately 30minutes (*but can be negotiated*) and includes brief questions about your background and then some open-ended questions around attachment related to specific aspects of prison policy. The interview will be recorded to ensure I capture your words accurately.

The aim is to have some academics/practitioners who are happy to be identified, but only if you agree to this. The idea is for extracts from the interviews to be credited with your name. However, I will send you the transcript for approval and you will have a month to cut/revise as necessary. If you don't agree to be identified but still wish to take part, quotes will be made anonymously and/or aggregated thematically so you cannot be identified.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any point and up to one week after completing the interview. You can stop the interview part way through or send me an email to withdraw. There shouldn't be any risks to taking part.

This project is part of a PhD project and is funded by Middlesex University. All proposals for research using human participants are reviewed by an Ethics Committee before they can proceed. The Middlesex Psychology Department's Ethics Committee have reviewed this proposal.

Thank you for reading this information and please feel free to email any questions.

Claire Powell

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Supervisor

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14. STUDY A – DEBRIEF

Debriefing

DATE

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: using attachment theory to understand how prisons can provide support

Thank you for taking part today. Your participation is really appreciated. It is hoped that this project will bring together the ideas and experiences of women in prison, prison staff and academics in the area to find ways to provide support for mothers of infants separated from their infants in prison.

If you have any questions at a later point or if you change your mind and would like to withdraw your participation from the study, please feel free to get in touch with me. If you would like to withdraw from the study please let me know within one month from the date of this interview *[insert date]* at the following email address: c.powell@mdx.ac.uk.

If we agreed at the end of the interview that you would like to see your transcript before analysis I will send it to you by *[insert date]*. If I have not heard back from you within a month of this date I will assume that you are happy for it to be used – either analysed with other interviews and/or quoted from directly with your name as agreed.

Thank you again for your time.

Claire Powell

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15. STUDY B – INFORMATION SHEET

Information sheet

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: what support can prisons provide?

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you take part, it is important for you to know why the research is being done and what will happen. Please take your time to read the following information and decide whether you would like to take part. Feel free to talk to staff members or friends before you make up your mind and please ask about anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is this project about?

This project aims to find out how mothers experience being separated from their babies and how staff provide support. At the moment there is no research in the UK which looks at this experience and hears from women who have been in prison what they think is important and what they need.

Why was I chosen?

Staff members are suggesting anyone who they know was separated from their child under two years whilst they were in prison and who they think might be interested in taking part. If you know anyone else who might want to take part, please let me know. I hope to speak to about ten mothers of children under two years.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and if you choose to take part an interview will be arranged at a time convenient for you. You can withdraw at any point and you do not need to give a reason. Before starting you will be given an information sheet and be asked to sign a consent form.

What will happen?

The interview will take about 1hr (maybe a bit longer, maybe a bit shorter) but you can let me know how much time you have. In this interview there will be questionnaires asking you about yourself (age, number of children etc) and then questions about having a young child whilst in prison and your experiences. At the end you'll be asked how you found the interview experience and will have a chance to give some feedback. The interview will be tape recorded.

What happens to what I say?

Anything you say will be kept confidential and when the research is published nobody will be able to identify you, or anyone else who has taken part. The interviews will be typed up and then reported all together. Nothing from the interviews will be discussed with staff at any point. The only time when this would not apply is if you tell me that you intend to cause serious harm to yourself or others. In that case I would be duty bound to inform someone. Even then I will try and tell you that this will happen and I would not mention anything else from the interview.

Are there any risks to taking part?

Many people find it helpful to talk about their experiences but this can also be upsetting as there will be questions around sensitive subjects. Please think carefully about whether you want to take part. You are free to stop the interview at any point and if you want to withdraw completely that is fine. There will be a range of questions so you are also welcome just to answer the ones you want and you do not have to answer anything you do not feel comfortable answering. Taking part or not taking part in this interview will not affect your treatment by [organisation name]. The interviews will be scheduled at a time convenient to you. If you change your mind after the interview you have one month to get in touch with me to withdraw. I will give you an information sheet at the interview explaining how to do this.

This project is part of a PhD project and is funded by Middlesex University. All proposals for research using human participants are reviewed by an Ethics Committee before they can proceed. The Middlesex Psychology Department's Ethics Committee have reviewed this proposal. Thank you for reading this information and please feel free to ask any questions.

Claire Powell

Dr Lisa Marzano

PhD student

Director of Studies

(Lisa will not be at the interviews)

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16. STUDY B – SENSITIVITY PROTOCOL

Informed consent: women identified through organisational contacts and advertising will be approached. The study will be fully explained and participants will be offered an opportunity to take part. It will be made clear that women have the option of withdrawing at any point and that this and/or anything mentioned in the interviews will not affect their service from the organisation (either positively or negatively). The limits of confidentiality will be explained (i.e. safeguarding in relation to self, others and children) so that participants have the option not to discuss particular issues. The aims of the study and how it will be disseminated will be clearly explained, including anonymity of participants with regards to data reporting. Consent for recording will also be sought.

Interview procedure: interviews will be scheduled at a later time point to enable participants the time to refuse. The interview will take 60-90 minutes and as the topics being discussed are sensitive and potentially distressing, this will be briefly discussed at the beginning of the interview. If a participant needs to stop the interview or carry it out in parts this will also be accommodated. There are also a range of questions so that the focus is not solely on participants' experiences which should also help in reducing stress. As separation from infants is an extremely sensitive subject, particular care will be made not to probe when participants do not wish to talk about themselves and interview topics include both personal and more general topics so there is the possibility of participating in different ways. Whilst it is clear that interviews will need to fit in with the organisations, as much flexibility as possible will be offered so that women can take part at times convenient to them. The interview will end on less emotive subjects (i.e. non-personal) and participants will have an opportunity to reflect on the process with the researcher.

Participation/access: If participants do not wish to have their interviews recorded but want to take part, a shorter survey option will be available. The schedule will also be translated into French to increase participation.

Post-interview debrief: all participants will be offered information on means of support if they are distressed at the time or become distressed later on. These will have been agreed with relevant staff in advance of interviews. If there are considerable reasons for concern the researcher will report to a pre-agreed, nominated member of staff or management.

Researcher safety: the researcher is fully DBS checked and will be supervised throughout the process. Interviews will be arranged with a key contact in each prison and there will be a named member of staff to whom any concerns will be passed on. The researcher will draw on the expertise of the supervisory team which includes an experienced prison researcher and a clinician.

Safeguarding: this will be carried out in line with organisational procedure. In practice this means that interview confidentiality will only be broken if a participant expresses the intention of harming themselves or others. If any issues around child protection arise, these will also be reported. The researcher has attended safeguarding training and will report regularly to her supervisor and other nominated staff members.

Data protection: all identifying data around participants and details of the prisons themselves will be kept in a password protected database and destroyed at the end of the research. All transcripts will be anonymised so that individuals and institutions cannot be identified in result reporting.

Sensitivity protocol:

- Initial safety plan before the interview identifying preferred contact for support
- Monitor participants for distress during interview
- Stop interview if participant becomes upset. Restart if and when interviewee is ready to do so. If preferred can move to general parenting questions rather than personal questions.
- Any interview will be stopped completely if the participant is too distressed. There will be no blame for stopping and no pressure to reschedule.
- Offer to stay with any participant who becomes too upset.
- Offer full verbal debrief at end of interview or if stopped early: discuss any issues raised by the interview, how they are feeling, how they will keep themselves safe afterwards, explain how they have contributed to research.
- If participant is still distressed at end and after debrief, follow-up immediately with contact and then in following days by email [to be pre-agreed by organisation].

17. STUDY B – DEBRIEF

Psychology Department

Middlesex University

Hendon

London NW4 4BT

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: what support do women and prison staff need?

Thank you for taking part today. Your participation is really appreciated. It is hoped that this project will bring together the ideas and experiences of women who have been in prison, prison staff and academics in the area to find ways to provide support for mothers of infants separated from their infants in prison. I am looking at how mothers experience being separated and how staff experience working with separated mothers. I'm also looking at the policy around separation and will use the interviews to see whether there are any practical things that can be done.

There may have been things that you spoke about that you found upsetting and later on you may feel distressed. If this happens you might want to talk to somebody about how you are feeling. You may find it helpful to talk to**[Include details of a named contact for each organisation]**

If you have any questions at a later point or if you change your mind and would like to withdraw your participation from the study, please feel free to get in touch with me. If you would like to withdraw from the study please let me know within

one month from the date of this interview [*insert date*] through or [*insert relevant third sector organisation*]. They can email me on the address below.

Thank you again for your time.

Claire Powell

Dr Lisa Marzano

PhD student

Director of Studies

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Middlesex University

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18. STUDY C – INFORMATION SHEET

Information sheet

April 2016

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: what support do women and prison staff need?

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you take part, it is important for you to know why the research is being done and what will happen. Please take your time to read the following information and decide whether you would like to take part. Feel free to talk to other staff members before you make up your mind and please ask about anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is this project about?

This project aims to find out how prison supports mothers who have been separated from their babies and what support staff themselves may want for this role. At the moment there is no research in the UK which looks at this experience and hears from women and staff in prison, what they think is important and what they need.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and if you choose to take part an interview will be arranged at a time convenient for you. You can withdraw at any point and you do not need to give a reason. Before starting you will be given an information sheet and be asked to sign a consent form.

What will happen?

The interview will take 45 minutes to an hour. In this interview there will be a questionnaire asking you about yourself (age, job role etc) and then more

detailed questions about supporting women separated from their babies. At the end you'll be asked about how you found the interview experience and have a chance to give some feedback. The interview will be tape recorded.

What happens to what I say?

Anything you say will be kept anonymous and confidential. When the research is published nobody will be able to identify you, or anyone else who has taken part. The interviews will be typed up and then reported all together in a PhD thesis and any related publications or presentations .

Are there any risks to taking part?

The interview may touch on sensitive topics. You are free to stop at any point and if you want to withdraw completely that is fine. There will be a range of questions so you are also welcome just to answer the ones you want and you do not have to answer anything you do not feel comfortable answering. The interviews will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to you. If you change your mind after the interview you have one month to get in touch with me to withdraw. I will give you an information sheet at the interview explaining how to do this.

This project is part of a PhD project and is funded by Middlesex University. All proposals for research using human participants are reviewed by an Ethics Committee before they can proceed. The Middlesex Psychology Department's Ethics Committee have reviewed this proposal.

Thank you for reading this information and please feel free to ask any questions.

Claire Powell

PhD student

Dr Lisa Marzano

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(Lisa will not be at the interviews)

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19. STUDY C – DEBRIEF

Psychology Department

Middlesex University

Hendon

London NW4 4BT

Mothers separated from their infants in prison: what support do women and prison staff need?

Thank you for taking part today. Your participation is really appreciated. It is hoped that this project will bring together the ideas and experiences of women in prison, prison staff and academics in the area to find ways to provide support for mothers of infants separated from their infants in prison. I am looking at how mothers experience being separated and how staff experience working with separated mothers. I'm also looking at the policy around separation and will use the interviews to see whether there are any practical things that can be done.

There may have been things that you spoke about that you found upsetting and later on you may feel distressed. If this happens you might want to talk to somebody about how you are feeling. You may find it helpful to talk to your manager/supervisor or phone the Samaritans (08457 909090).

If you have any questions at a later point or if you change your mind and would like to withdraw your participation from the study, please feel free to get in touch with me. If you would like to withdraw from the study please let me know within one month from the date of this interview [] through the email address below.

Thank you again for your time.

Claire Powell

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20. NOMS RESEARCH SUMMARY

➤ Research summary title:

Imprisoned Mothers Separated from their Infants: Understanding Staff Needs and Experiences

NRC reference number:

2016-320

Names of authors:

Claire Powell

Supervisors: Lisa Marzano and Karen Ciclitira

Organisation/affiliation of researchers:

Middlesex University

Contact email of lead researcher:

c.powell@mdx.ac.uk

Funding body (where relevant):

Middlesex University

Date of research commencement:

Data collection 19th July 2017, 12th September 2017, 14th September 2017

Date of research completion:

January 2018

Will this research be peer-reviewed?

Yes

If yes, what is the estimated date of peer-review completion?

Summer 2018

➤ Introduction

The aim of this research was to explore the experiences and needs of staff supporting women in prison separated from their children under two years old. Research has consistently found that prison staff are crucial for the wellbeing of prisoners (Liebling et al., 2012) and that their work is emotionally demanding (Arnold, 2016). Imprisoned mothers are at increased risk for poor physical health and mental distress both because of separation from their children (11 Million, 2008; Gregoire et al., 2010; Hutchinson et al., 2008), thus staff need to be highly skilled to support these women. However, there is a paucity of research focusing on staff experiences and needs in the women's estate, and particularly around sensitive issues such as mother-child separation. The current prison instructions relating to women prisoners and mother and baby units (PSO 4800, PSO 4801, PSI 49-2014) highlight the importance of supporting staff involved in separation; they do not, however, give any details as to the form of this support.

This research fits in with the NOMS commitment to 'establishing positive, safe, secure and decent environments for managing offenders' and 'reducing reoffending'. Understanding and disseminating staff expertise in working with female prisoner distress around separation from their infants better enables staff to offer a higher level of support. This ties in with priorities around improving working and living conditions and improving staff-prisoner relations. This area of research also fits in with the MOJ call for gender specific policies addressing mental health issues. Furthermore, women who are separated from their children have a higher reconviction rate than those who are not, so this would be an opportunity to understand how women might be supported by prisons and other agencies not to re-offend given the key role of family relationships in desistance (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

➤ Research questions

- 1) What are staff experiences of supporting women in prison separated from their children under two years old?
- 2) How supported do staff feel in this work?
- 3) What do staff identify as most important for them to work with women separated from their children under two years old?

➤ Research methods

Design: This qualitative exploratory study examined the experiences of prison staff working with female prisoners separated from their infants. The approach was influenced by 'appreciative inquiry' (Liebling et al., 2012) in order to draw out strengths and challenges of the current situation.

Participants: 17 staff from two prisons were recruited. Sampling was pragmatic and aimed to be as broad as possible; however, it was carried out according to prison resources which limited its representativeness. Key staff contacts, who advised about relevant staff to invite to take part, were used. A range of staff from a wide variety of backgrounds were approached face to face and by email and offered the opportunity to take part depending on availability. Staff who took part were asked about any relevant colleagues who could be approached (i.e. snowball sampling). Over half the staff had more than five years' experience in their current role and over a third had worked in other women's prisons. Staff interviewed held a range of job roles (prison officer, offender supervisor, probation officer, health-related, children and family-related) although it was not possible to interview staff in all possible roles due to time and resource constraints.

Data collection: Staff took part in a semi-structured interview (20mins to one hour) and filled out a demographic questionnaire.

Data analysis: Demographics were used descriptively to contextualise the interview sample. Transcribed interviews were analysed using thematic analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006) within a framework approach (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) to ensure systematic and thorough data analysis.

Methodological limitations: Whilst the strength of qualitative research is in its detail and nuance, the limitation is its generalisability beyond the context in which it was carried out. The research was carried out in two prisons (and between them staff had worked in nine different women's prisons) however it would have been preferable to have interviewed staff currently working in three or more prisons. Whilst the main staff groups were represented at different levels of seniority, certain groups of healthcare staff and prison officers based in particular parts of the prisons were underrepresented. A more anonymous way of taking part such as an online or paper survey might have reached more staff and encouraged a higher level of participation.

➤ Results

Support available

The support structures described varied and reveal a spectrum of support available for staff supporting mothers in prison, according to staff group.

- 1) **Prison employed:** Staff described having no formal support in place specifically around separation and colleagues provided most support. Management support was described as variable. Most staff were aware of wider support (e.g. care team) but were unclear about how to access it.
- 2) **3rd sector – low support:** The smaller 3rd sector organisations were lacking supervision and meetings so most support came from colleagues in their own or other organisations. Managers were sometimes available, and the relevant governor was seen as a helpful resource.
- 3) **3rd sector – high support:** The larger third sector organisations had systematic support structures in place where separations could be discussed. Managers, team members and the relevant governor were

seen as consistently supportive. Gaps in support appeared to be for managers.

- 4) **Counselling:** Staff based in counselling organisations had the most structured support systems for both front-line and management staff.

Staff support structures suggested by participants
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- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Debriefs following separation to analyse what could be done better next time• Individual/group supervision with a psychologist• Compulsory counselling for staff after separation• Trained staff member on unit to support team through discussions/group counselling• Availability of clinical supervision made more visible• Enough clinical supervision – external to prison but with prison experienced professional• Compulsory group support and optional one to one• Advice on where to go when separation brings up personal issues |
|--|

Challenges

Staff discussed the main challenges in their work and a triad of key over-arching themes was identified. The first was 'Overwhelmed', describing an individual response in the face of their own and the mothers' emotions. The second theme was 'Powerless' and was related to the broader context, both in prison and co-ordination between agencies, particularly social services and their perceived

inconsistency and injustice. The third theme was 'Underskilled', the response to feeling unable to support mothers and lacking knowledge of legal and social services systems.

Staff training suggestions

Four types of training were suggested by staff:

- 1) Specific training on separation – in particular around the emotional impact on women and how to support them, plus relevant information on policies and processes in prison.
- 2) Relevant knowledge/skills – key topics included counselling skills, mental health awareness, domestic violence awareness, knowledge of social work and legal structures and processes, child development.
- 3) Training with/about wider services – this focussed on joint working with social services and all in-prison services to share knowledge and clarify referral pathways.
- 4) Awareness raising for officers – this was raised by specialist staff as important for general awareness in the prison about the emotional impact of separation and ensuing depression for women, so staff could be more supportive in general.

➤ Implications for NOMS

Staff in both prisons had similar concerns and ideas about training and support around separation which suggests that the broad themes could be generalisable across women's prisons but adapted for each prison's specific context.

Potential improvements

Staff requested two types of separation-specific training:

- 1) The emotional impact of separation on women and the specific process and support available.

This training could have two different levels – general awareness-raising for all staff and another in-depth training for those directly involved in working with separated women. Some aspects of this training would apply across all prisons (e.g. emotional impact of separation on women), however parts would have to be adapted to the specific prison (e.g. referral pathways) through a collaboration with relevant experts and experienced staff based in the prison for context.

- 2) Referral pathways and prison liaison.

This training would be for staff working directly with women who are separated and would serve as a space for liaison and shared learning between the different agencies (including social services) and staff groups involved in separation with an aim of improving co-ordination.

In terms of general skills and knowledge, the primary request was for training in counselling skills. This related to suggestions of increasing knowledge about mental health and domestic violence. Given that prisons have highly skilled and experienced counsellors (usually through third sector organisations), these services could be commissioned to develop inhouse training for staff. It was made clear in the interviews that psychological support/training for staff is only effective when providers understand the specificities of the prison setting so would need to be developed by prison experienced staff. This training could include skills specifically related to supporting separated mothers but obviously would be applicable more generally to emotionally demanding work in prisons.

Likewise, in relation to improving support structures for staff, as there are already organisations based in prisons with effective staff support structures

(again primarily counselling services), managers of these services could be consulted on how to strengthen support structures.

Additional research suggestions

Relationships with social services were highlighted as particularly problematic so further research around the specific challenges and how to overcome them needs to be carried out. Ideally this research would be carried out in partnership with social services to sensitively understand the difficulties from both sides. This could take the form of a large scale anonymous survey and qualitative interviews with key informants. Finally, a major challenge in understanding the support needed for separated mothers is the lack of centralised data on the number of women affected across all prisons and their outcomes as they progress through their sentences and on release. This data would be crucial in developing any form of evidence-based practice for this group of vulnerable women.

21. TRANSCRIPTION NOTATION

The interviewer is indicated by the letter I and the participant is indicated by P.

The following forms of notation as used for the transcription of interviews were adapted from Gail Jefferson's version in Potter and Wetherell (1994, p.88).

Brackets indicate an overlap by the other speaker between utterances e.g.:

I: What do you think [P: for separated mothers?] Yes, and those who aren't

Pauses are indicated by: [pause].

Words which are underlined were spoken with emphasis words in uppercase were uttered noticeably louder than the surrounding words e.g.:

A: I REALLY, REALLY don't like it. It makes me so unhappy.

Laughter or crying are indicated in square brackets e.g.: [laughs], [cries].

Words which could not be heard/understood during transcription are indicated by [inaudible].

For prison names, organisations, projects and locations which cannot be given for the sake of confidentiality, these are indicated in square brackets e.g. [prison name].

22. POLICY REVIEW

Mother-infant separations in prison. A systematic attachment-focused policy review

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Abstract

Mothers in prison separated from their young children are an overlooked group. Attachment theory could provide a useful model to underpin interventions and better support women affected by separation from their infants. Current policy draws on a limited body of evidence and research has developed considerably since its first design. This review systematically searched all relevant UK prison policy and government documents with regards to mother and child separation in prison and analysed the extent to which these documents draw on attachment theory. Following initial searches, 58 documents were thematically analysed. Attachment was implicitly referred to in most documents but only explicitly mentioned in four. Global themes identified included 'separation as trauma'. However, document groups varied in focusing either on the mother or the child and there were no joint perspectives. Developing and researching specific attachment-informed interventions might be one way forward as would further attachment-based research in this area.

Keywords: women offenders; prison; child; human attachment

Introduction

In the UK imprisoned mothers are separated from 18 000 children each year (Prison Reform Trust, 2014). Figures are not clear with regard to the ages of the children but one third of women in prison have a child under five years (Prison Reform Trust, 2014) i.e. approximately 1 500 women. The most recent figures on births in custody suggest that approximately 120 women give birth per year

(Ministry of Justice, 2008), and there are around 750 women per year imprisoned with a child under 18 months (Gregoire, Dolan, Birmingham, Mullee, & Coulson, 2010). By combining figures from a 2013 Freedom of Information request on applications and acceptances to Mother Baby Units (described below) and research on women who are eligible to apply (Gregoire et al., 2010), it can be estimated that around 500 women a year are separated from their children under 18 months, but the true figure may be higher.

In England and Wales Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) exist in prison so that some women can remain with their children under 18 months. These are separate to the main prison, with individual rooms and some flexibility from the prison regime. Mothers and expectant mothers apply to a specific unit and can be refused a place if it is not seen to be 'in the best interests of the child', which is generally due to child protection concerns or substance misuse (see 11 Million, 2008). As with any children separated from their mothers by imprisonment, the options are to be placed in kinship care or into state care (Prison Advice & Care Trust, 2011). Some of these children will be placed for adoption and never reunited with their families (Choice for Change, 2015). There are no official records of children of female prisoners, or numbers of children in care and those who are permanently separated from their mothers (Galloway, Haynes & Cuthbert, 2014). There are currently only six MBUs with a maximum capacity of 67 places which is far lower than the 500 women separated per year (see above), thus women affected by separation form by far the largest group of mothers of children under two years in prison.

As is well documented, the pre-natal period is a crucial time for child development (e.g. Deave, Heron, Evans, & Edmond, 2008; Huizink et al., 2003; Mulder et al., 2002), as are the early years (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2010; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010; Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Talge, Neal, & Glover, 2007; Wadhwa, Sandman, & Garite, 2001). A growing literature highlights that separation is also exceptionally difficult for women and can affect their mental health and wellbeing in prison (Byrne, Goshin, & Joestl, 2010). Research into mothers in MBUs and mothers separated from their infants has highlighted that women in

prison and with young children are at particularly high risk of mental health difficulties (Birmingham, Coulson, Mullee, Kamal, & Gregoire, 2006), and those separated are at even greater risk, particularly following recent childbirth (Gregoire et al., 2010; Woolredge & Masters, 1993). This research has also found that depression and exacerbation of existing mental health difficulties could be directly related to separation.

Reuniting with children is understandably a primary concern for women on release (Hutchinson, Moore, Propper, & Mariaskin, 2008). Lack of support with mental health difficulties whilst in prison may have an inevitable impact on the children when reunited with their mothers (Birmingham et al., 2006). Furthermore more recent research has shown that those mothers not reunited with their children were more likely to have re-offended and to have more ongoing mental health difficulties and substance misuse than those mothers who were reunited on release (Dolan, Birmingham, Mullee, & Gregoire, 2013).

Historically research on separation has focused on the impact on the child (e.g. Rutter et al., 2007), however more recent attachment research provides a theory for understanding the impact on the parent as well (e.g. Borelli, Goshin, Joestl, Clark, & Byrne, 2010; Cassidy, Poehlmann, & Shaver, 2010).

At the core of attachment theory is Bowlby's thesis that the biological bond is formed by children seeking proximity to caregivers ensures both physical and psychological survival and adaptive functioning (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment research initially focused on categorising children's attachment in terms of secure, anxious and avoidant (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978), this has now extended to adult attachment style classifications (see Shaver, Belsky, & Brennan, 2000). Attachment is considered to be fundamental to the development of an individual's affect regulation (Schore, 2010), as well as the basis of interpersonal trust. Thus parent-child interactions develop into internal working models of relationships (Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986), which then determine adult support and can be transmitted to the next generation through several mechanisms including parenting capacity and parental reflective functioning (Fonagy, 1999). The importance of adult attachment style in relation

to adult psychological health, coping and interpersonal stress is well-documented (Bifulco & Thomas, 2013). This paper will not cover the debates around attachment theory but examine its use in policy and government documents in acknowledgement of its wide role in academic research, clinical settings and general parenting literature. Current National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines require all services working with children and families at risk to use attachment models and assessment tools where possible (NICE, 2015).

Attachment theory is relevant to a prison setting as it could provide insight into supporting women when distressed (and concomitant mental health and substance misuse difficulties), and for rehabilitation and reducing re-offending, particularly when separations are permanent. Attachment theory offers a psychological model to understand the impact of separation on mothers and how they might cope in the prison environment (Borelli et al., 2010), including their levels of self-harm, substance misuse and mental health. In the current drive towards evidence-based policy (a relevant example might be Early Years policy, Department for Education [DfE], 2014), analysing policy documents from an attachment perspective could shed some light on the rationale behind practice in prisons. There is no UK-based evidence base for outcomes for mother and child separations in prison, however, there is a body of relevant work from attachment researchers in other countries (see for example, Byrne et al., 2010; Kenny, 2012).

Current policies specifically addressing mothers in prison and their babies have been developed since the 1999 review of MBUs and the later Corston report in 2007 which brought women's prison issues to the fore. These documents along with follow-up reports, policies and HM Inspectorate of Prison (HMIP) work form a corpus which refers to mother and baby separations and are the most relevant publically available documents.

In terms of the most recent policy, the National Offender Management Service 'Achieving better outcomes for women offenders' (2015) document identifies seven key areas to improve support for women. These include family contact,

pro-social identity, mental health and substance misuse, which could all be improved by supporting women with separation from their children. Thus this review aims to explore and understand how separation is referred to across relevant policy and government documents as a way of reflecting on the best means of supporting women separated from their babies and the staff who work with them.

Aims

- 1) To systematically search all relevant UK prison policy and government documents with regards to mother and child separation in prison.
- 2) To understand the extent to which these documents draw on attachment theory.

Design

This review applies the principles of a Rapid Evidence Assessment (a research tool used by UK government departments) to policy. This is a more limited form of systematic review using a more focussed research question in a shorter time period. The overall structure of Kitson, Marshall, Bassett, & Zeitz's (2013) review was followed because it drew out the diverse perspectives between different types of documents which seemed appropriate for this review. This review is comprehensive in its scope and the steps are clearly outlined below.

Search method

All policies since the 1999 MBU review, including HMIP reports were systematically searched. Government websites were primarily used for prison policy, however a few could only be found referenced in other documents or third sector websites. Inspection reports and non-policy government documents were searched from 2007, i.e. from the date of the Corston Report. All relevant

third sector sites were searched and any missing references from citations were also tracked down.

All documents were compiled, searched for duplicates and sorted into three categories. First a summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of the documents was carried out to answer the questions 'Is separation referred to?'. The documents were then thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with a particular focus on the issue of separation to understand 'How is separation referred to?'.

Inclusion criteria

All policy documents since 1999 and all other government/inspection documents from 2007 (from the Corston Report). The documents had to be directly relevant to women separated from their child/ren under 18 months. They had to be publicly available and the intended audience to be those working in the sector or women prisoners.

Search terms

The main search terms were mother and/or baby/infant, attachment and separation (and related so attach* and separate*). Relevant documents were scanned for 'child' and 'women' with none of the above words and to ensure there were no alternative terms.

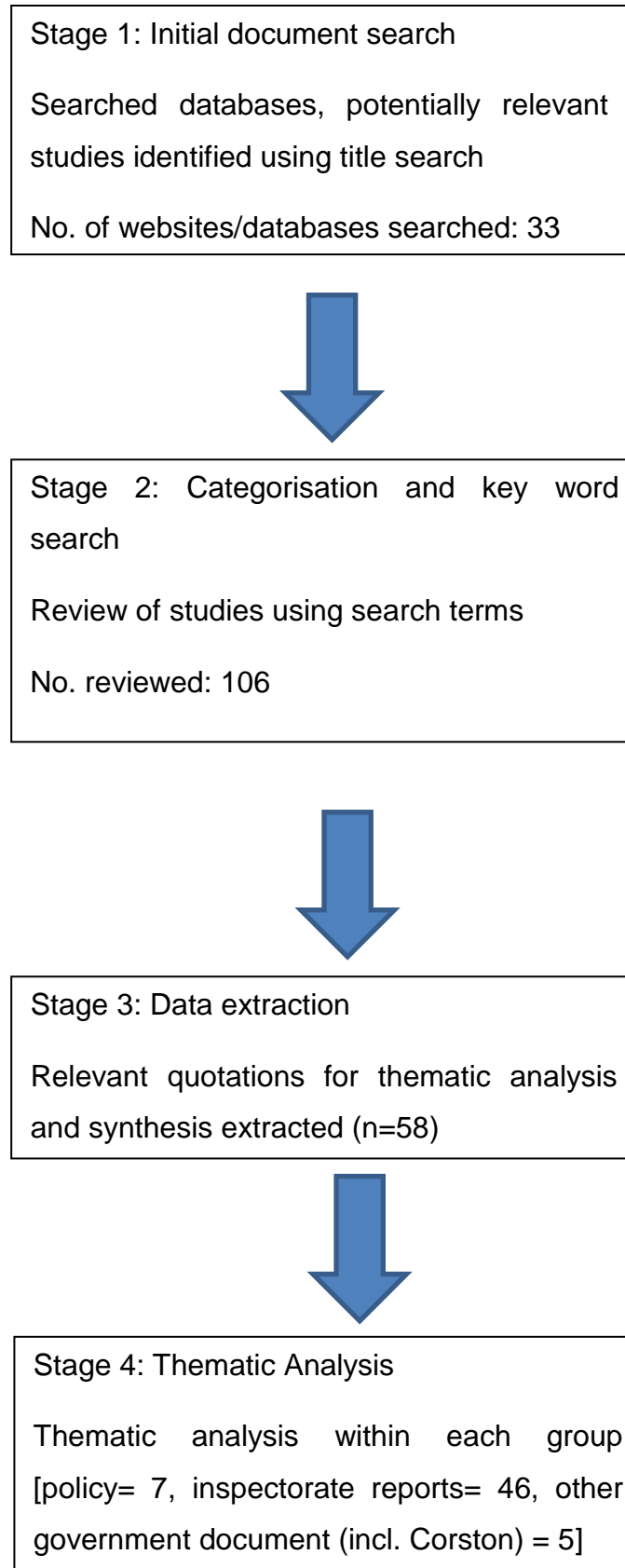
Data analysis

Thematic analysis was carried out following Braun and Clarke's (2005) five stage framework. This was a 'theoretical thematic analysis' as specific references to mother and child separation were highlighted, and by extension any explicit or implicit references to 'attachment' were noted. Themes did not 'emerge' from the data but were driven by the research questions. Prevalence of themes was noted as an additional way of comparing between document

categories. The key themes were developed from the focus on attachment and separation.

Procedure

Figure 1 – Flowchart showing search and analysis stages.



Findings

Stages 1 to 3: A systematic and comprehensive search was carried out to track down all relevant government documents from 1999 to August 2015 for Prison Service Orders (PSO) and Prison Service Instructions (PSI), and from 2007 to August 2015 for all other documents. 115 documents were initially identified as relevant and categorised into three groups for comparison. See Table 1 for details.

Table 1 – Document categorisation.

Document category	Focus	Justification	Websites with relevant docs	Total No. reviewed
Prison policy [Prison Service Orders (PSO), Prison Service Instructions (PSI)]	Policy post 1999 Focusing on women and separation	Following major policy review to understand developments over this time frame	gov.uk justice.gov.uk birthcompanions.org.uk	7
HM Inspectorate of Prison (HMIP) reports	All women's prisons and relevant reports since 2007	Following Corston due to volume of documents	justiceinspectors.gov.uk	43
Other government docs [including Corston]	Any documents relevant to women and separation since 2007	Part of government documents, add further insight, matched dates with HMIP (i.e. following Corston) as not direct policy	birthcompanions.org.uk parliament.uk clinks.org howardleague.org thegriffinsociety.org prisonerseducation.org.uk womensbreakout.org.uk	4

The summative content analysis, focussing on key words, formed part of the initial answer to the first research aim. The key words were present across most documents: 'mother' or 'baby' was referred to in 50 documents, 'separation' in 45 and 'attachment' in 5. It is notable that attachment was referred to directly in policy and other government documents, but not in inspectorate reports. However, it is clear that the issue of separation is a pertinent one given the number of relevant inspectorate reports over the past eight years.

55 documents had relevant data extracts for analysis. Relevant sections of documents were extracted and analysed. Individual data extracts were grouped together because of highly similar/identical turns of phrase. This ongoing grouping of themes made the thematic analysis more straightforward and also enabled a frequency count to see if thematic groups were very different from the emphases in the text.

Stage 4: This stage developed the response to the first research aim and explored the second aim of understanding the extent to which attachment theory is drawn on by comparing the differences between the document groups and also providing an overall picture. As the key word search highlighted, attachment is referred to far less often than separation. These findings will be discussed within each separate literature category for greater clarity.

1) Policy findings

Following the 1999 policy review of mothers and babies/children in prison, several key policies have been developed since 2008, which are crucial to understanding separations between mothers and babies in prison. PSO 4800 was created in response to the Corston Report to ensure that the gender specific needs of women were taken into account. It acknowledges the disproportionate levels of abuse women prisoners have suffered and the impact this has on them. Since 2008 there have been four specific MBU policies which

also deal with separation. Although each new policy overwrites the previous one, all relevant ones were included to examine any changes over time.

The data extracts were grouped into four themes: ‘child focus’, ‘maintaining mother-child relationship’, ‘role of staff/support’ and ‘separation as trauma’. See Table 2 for totals.

Table 2 – Policy document themes.

Theme	1) Child focus	2) Maintaining mother-child relationship	3) Role of staff/support	4) Separation as trauma
Total	12 codes 20 separate instances 5 docs	6 codes 8 separate instances 4 docs	3 codes 4 separate instances 3 docs	1 code 1 separate instance 1 doc

What is most striking is the number of codes that focus on the child in comparison to either the mother-child relationship, or the role of staff. Furthermore, the ‘child focus’ theme draws on specific research in terms of ideas around age limits, ‘damage’ and ‘bonding’ which follows the emphasis of the policy on ‘best interests of the child’. However most of the academic research is not directly cited, rather it is mentioned as ‘expert advice’. There are only three specific references in the policy documents: a mis-cited Quaker Council report (Quaker Council for European Affairs, 2007), one piece of misspelled Spanish research from 2003 (Jiménez & Palacios, 2003) and a partially referenced work from 1984 that relates to six-year olds (Lewis, Feiring, McGuffog & Jaskir, 1984). The Quaker report is a comparative review of conditions in women’s prisons across Europe, the Spanish research assessed the educational context of infants in prison with their mothers, and the final work

assessed the relationship between attachment status of children at one year with behaviour problems at age six. It is striking that more mainstream and directly relevant works were not cited.

The acknowledgement of the impact of separations on mothers, (including 'psychological distress' and 'self-harm') and on staff ('stressful' and 'distressing'), does not lead to specific recommendations, nor does it draw on any research.

There is also a distinct difference between the type of language used in reference to the children and to the mothers. For example in relation to children a typical extract is: 'It is recognised that what a child needs in its early years is a constant caring and stimulating relationship with an adult' (PSO 4801, p25).

This is clear and considerate language (although not particularly well defined), whereas a typical quote in reference to mother and staff needs does not demonstrate the same sensitivity: 'Separations need to be planned well in advance' (PSO 4800, p.52).

There are no details as to what needs to be planned or how these separations might be carried out in the document. The focus is very much on the welfare of the children and not the mothers'. And whilst there are some references to the needs of mothers and staff these are not clearly described or considered. These are interesting omissions given that PSO 4800 is specifically aimed at the treatment of women in prison, and the MBU policies are supposed to consider both mother and child.

2) HMIP reports

All relevant HMIP documents since 2007 were reviewed and these included thematic reports, HMIP Corston submissions, annual reports and inspections. Attachment was not referred to directly in any of these publications, however, the impact of separation on women was referred to repeatedly. It was also mentioned in 13 different sections of inspectorate reports, including 'Safety', 'Respect', 'Self harm and suicide', 'Staff-prisoner relationships' as well as more

obvious ones referring to families and children. The wide scope of categories could signify how much separation has an impact on women across all domains of their time in prison. The codes were categorised in a similar way to the policy group, however, with some distinct differences. See Table 3 for details.

Table 3 – HMIP document themes.

Theme:	1) Child perspective	2) Mother perspective	3) Positive prison practice	4) Negative prison practice	5) Separation as trauma
Total	1 code 1 separate instance 1 doc	14 codes 16 separate instances 5 docs	5 codes 40 separate instances 28 docs	8 codes 31 separate instances 22 docs	1 code 5 separate instances 5 docs

In the inspectorate reports the mothers' perspective is by far the largest category in terms of codes. These all centred on the 'distress', 'suffering' and 'vulnerability' of the women due to separation. By contrast there was one mention of the impact on the child, which was described as 'catastrophic'. Given the nature of the prison reports there were two further themes on prison practice: positive and negative, which included the role of staff. Whilst the inspectorate documents do not mention attachment directly, they do repeatedly mention the impact of separation on the women with regards to distress and mental health in detailed ways. Here are two typical extracts: 'Disrupted relationships with children are a particular source of distress for women' (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2006, p.58) and:

Even where prisons are aware that women are suffering the trauma of separation there is often little understanding about the emotional effect this will

have on them and its repercussions which often just attract a disciplinary response. (Hardwick, 2010, p.14)

In contrast to the policy extracts, the focus is very much on distress and the impact on women as a result of separation from their children. There are lots of examples of positive prison practice (e.g. family support workers, third sector counselling, Samaritans Listeners, and chaplaincies) with regard to separation but, understandably as these are inspectorate reports, there is no sense of the theory or research underpinning these.

3) Other government documents

This small category of documents includes both non-policy government Mother and Baby Unit documents and relevant Corston documents. They were included because they had direct references to separation and attachment. See Table 4 for details.

Table 4 – Other government document themes.

It is noticeable that there are an equal number of codes mentioning the child's perspective and the impact on the mother, however all the 'impact on mother' references were in the Corston documents rather than the government documents. This group of documents does directly mention 'attachment theory' in a summary of the evidence and cites the following works: Bowlby, (1969); Ainsworth, (1982); Black, (1988); Fonagy, Target, Steele, & Steele, (1997); Rutter, (1981).

The extracts referring to the impact on mothers are also similar to those in the inspectorate group, using emotive language and emphasising the impact: 'Separation from their children was mental torture.' (Corston, 2007, p.33) and:

Motherhood is a factor that appears to protect women in the community against suicide but this protection does not apply in prison where mothers are

separated from their children and those serving long sentences may lose their opportunity to have children. (Corston, 2007, p.22)

Whilst this was a small and heterogeneous group of documents, it was interesting that both mothers and children were referred to in equal terms and that attachment theory was referred to in an explicit way.

Themes across all documents

As the category findings demonstrate there are some shared themes with some interesting differences. Firstly all the categories have at least one direct mention of the 'trauma of separation' so it is acknowledged that being separated from a baby can have a very painful impact on a mother. However, there are variations in the emphasis placed on the impact on the mother or the child. Attachment theory is only referred to directly in relation to the child, and even in these cases it is relatively insubstantial, particularly in the prison policy. Specific references to prison practice are mainly in inspection reports, and across all categories there is extremely limited mention of staff needs. Documents seem to lack a joint perspective of both mother and child.

Table 5 shows a summary of the global themes. What it reveals despite the different emphasis in each literature category is how there is a general overall cohesion between the different groups.

Table 5 – Global themes.

Global theme	Sub-theme	Category	Specific examples
'Child perspective'	Child perspective Child support	Policy, Other gov Inspection	Attachment – e.g. age limits for separation
'Mother perspective'	Maintaining mother-child relationship Mother perspective	Policy Inspection, Other gov (Corston only)	Separation as distress Impact on mental health
Staff/policy/practice	Role of staff/support Negative prison practice Positive prison practice	Policy Inspection Inspection	Staff need support Problematic separation visits Good support e.g. counselling
Separation as trauma		ALL	

Discussion

Attachment theory is rarely directly mentioned throughout the documents examined, and generally only in relation to the impact on children. Separation, however, and its impact are repeatedly mentioned. The policy documents highlight the 'best interests of the child' whilst also pointing out that separation can be a 'trigger for extreme distress and self-harm' and that mothers need planning for and support. However the details for this support are lacking. The inspectorate reports repeatedly describe how separation causes distress, increasing anxiety and depression. They also give specific examples of positive and negative practice around separations in prisons. The remaining government documents also highlight that motherhood in prisons increases the risk of suicide and emotively cite separation as 'mental torture' which causes distress and directly affects mental health.

Thus there seems to be a general agreement that separation is traumatic – this was highlighted across the different literature categories. What differed were the nuances in the ways in which attachment theory and separation were referred to in the different categories. Furthermore, there are limited suggestions from a theoretical and practical aspect as to how to support women, particularly in relation to the impact it has on their mental health. Attachment theory and therapy could fit in well with the current drive towards ‘trauma-informed’ approaches in prisons and also the gender-responsiveness highlighted as crucial in both the National Offender Management Service [NOMS] (2015) Analytical Report ‘Effective Interventions for Women Offenders: A Rapid Evidence Assessment’ and the Clinks (2015) response to HMIP thematic inspection of work with women offenders.

On the whole, however, prison policy has been focused on the ‘best interests of the child’, which is comprehensible given the intention of protecting children from the impact of imprisonment. However, attachment is predicated on a relationship with a carer and it is possible that overlooking the impact of separation on mothers is in fact contributing to cycles of difficulty for both mother and child.

Strengths and limitations

There was no involvement from a prisoner or prison worker, which would have added important reflections on the literature (e.g. Sweeney, Beresford, Faulkner, Nettle, & Rose, 2009). It could also be argued that as women are a minority group of prisoners, to focus a review on separation from children under two years is a narrow group which is relevant to only a small number of women. However, this is an age group which is critical in terms of perinatal health and risk of depression and is crucial in terms of women’s mental health, and the long term health of children, if and when they are reunited with their mothers.

Implications

Given that separation from a child is repeatedly referred to as so detrimental to women's mental health this seems to suggest that using attachment theory to inform practice would be of theoretical use. The examples highlighted in the inspectorate report underline what is already being done but it seems as if, particularly in relation to mental health, more could be done to support women through an exceptionally difficult situation. Developing and researching specific attachment-informed interventions might be one way forward as would further attachment-based research in this area.

A multi-pronged approach considering policy, the views of staff, women and attachment experts could help to understand what is happening and whether current research could improve policy to both support women in prison and on their release help them rebuild relationships with their children.

Conclusion

There was clear agreement across the documents that separation is traumatic for women in prison. However, the current emphasis on the 'best interests of the child', has obscured the impact on mothers and left an already vulnerable group of women more at risk of mental health needs which are not being responded to. Attachment theory is referred to implicitly; however, it could be used as a framework to understand the impact of separation on mothers and their mental health. Thus it could inform policy and practice to develop appropriate support for staff and mothers in prison.

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23. GREY AND ACADEMIC REVIEW

Mother-infant separations in prison. A systematic attachment-focused review of the academic and grey literature.

Claire Powell, Karen Ciclitira and Lisa Marzano

Abstract

This review systematically searched UK academic and grey literature in relation to mother and child separation in prison. Attachment theory is referred to in current prison policy for mothers (PSO 4801, 2008), and could provide a framework linking policy and practice. Reviewing grey literature provided an opportunity to explore practice-based literature. 24 academic papers and 51 grey documents were reviewed. Use of attachment theory in the academic literature varied according to discipline, ranging from extensive use to no use. There was greater use of attachment theory in the grey literature. Despite linguistic differences, all documents highlighted the detrimental impact of separation on imprisoned mothers. However, specificity was lacking regarding support for mothers, and staff needs were overlooked. Given its use across the sparse research and practice literature, and its basis for policy, attachment theory could underpin theoretically informed support for imprisoned mothers separated from their infants and staff who support them.

Key words: women offenders; prison; child; human attachment;

Introduction

UK prisons provide some provision for imprisoned mothers of infants in the form of Mother and Baby Units (MBUs) , however, most mothers are separated from their children under 18 months. Whilst the figures are unclear and not routinely collected (Dolan, 2016), there could be around 500 women a year who are in this position (see Gregoire, Dolan, Mullee, & Coulson, 2010). The early years are both crucial for children's development (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Center on the Developing Child, 2010), and are a period of vulnerability for mothers' mental health (Khalifeh, Hunt, Appleby, & Howard, 2016; Khalifeh, Brauer,

Toulmin, & Howard, 2015). This vulnerability is heightened when mothers have experienced previous difficult experiences such as violence (Howard & Bundock, 2013), and have low social support (Khalifeh et al., 2016). These social risks particularly apply to women in prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2015b), so whilst being a relatively small group of women, they are at a very high risk for mental distress arguably due to their often extensive experiences of trauma, including domestic violence and sexual violence (McNeish & Scott, 2014). The context and justification for this review are explored in more detail in an earlier policy review (Powell, Ciclitira & Marzano, 2016), which forms part of this work.

The first years of life are a key time for attachment (Cassidy & Shaver, 2008), and this theory underpins the current policy on MBUs (Prison Service Order 4801, 2008), and early years practice more generally (Department for Education, 2014). This is not reflected in the UK research on imprisoned mothers aside from a recent randomised controlled trial (RCT) (Sleed, Baradon, & Fonagy, 2013), and the remaining sparse literature is generally US-based (e.g. Byrne, Goshin, & Joestl, 2010; Kenny, 2012). Attachment as a concept encompasses a broad spectrum of ideas, however, it is widely understood to be the biological bond ensuring survival which infants form through seeking proximity to their caregivers (Bowlby, 1969). Since Bowlby's initial work, attachment theory has developed both in relation to child categorisations (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), adult classifications (Shaver, Belsky, & Brennan, 2000), cognitive concepts such as mentalization (Fonagy, Gergely & Jurist, 2004), and mind-mindedness (Meins, Fernyhough, Wainwright, Clark-Carter, Das Gupta, Fradley, & Tuckey, 2003). In general, attachment is regarded as crucial to the development of both interpersonal trust and affect regulation (Schore, 2010). Thus, as well as underlying current prison policies, attachment theory offers a psychological model that could aid in understanding the impact of separation on mothers and their ability to cope in the prison environment (Borelli, Goshin, Joestl, Clark, & Byrne, 2010; Bifulco & Thomas, 2013). It also potentially provides a means of linking theory, research, practice and policy in a manner that could lead to further structured research and interventions.

This paper aims to explore and understand how mother-infant separations are referred to across relevant academic and grey literature. For this review, academic literature considered was any commercially published work in either books or journals, and generally peer-reviewed. Grey literature was defined as 'that which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers'. For the purposes of this review it includes third sector (e.g. non-governmental organisations, international bodies, charities, quangos, independent research bodies) reports, briefings and unpublished academic work.

Arguably, these are particularly pertinent when exploring mother-infant separations in prison given the range of third sector organisations that are involved both working directly with women in prison and researching and campaigning on their behalf. Furthermore, certain key publications (e.g. North, 2006) have been repeatedly cited in policy, government and academic literature, highlighting the importance of some of this work.

A further reason for focusing on the grey literature is that practitioners may be more likely to use relevant grey literature in their work than academic publications, for reasons of physical access, direct relevance and its practical application. Whilst some grey literature can be criticised for its lack of rigour (Killoran, 2010), it is this more informal approach, including the use of first person testimony, which can make it more accessible to those in the field and also overcomes potential publication bias such as the exclusion of qualitative data (Hopewell, Clarke, & Mallett, 2006). Finally, as this is an under researched area (for notable exceptions see Dolan, Birmingham, Mullee, & Gregoire, 2013; Gregoire et al., 2010; Birmingham, Coulson, Mullee, Kamal, & Gregoire, 2006), examining grey literature broadens the search to be as systematic as possible in relation to what literatures are drawn on in policy and practice.

Aims

- 1) To systematically search all relevant UK academic and grey literature, including third sector and non-peer reviewed academic work, with regards to

imprisoned mothers separated at any stage from their children under 18 months.

2) To explore the extent to which these documents draw on attachment theory.

Design

The methods are described in more detail in the policy review (Powell et al., 2016). As a brief overview, this review uses the principles of a Rapid Evidence Assessment (a research tool used by UK government departments), and follows the structure of Kitson, Marshall, Bassett, & Zeitz's (2012) review.

Search method and data analysis

Relevant grey and academic literature databases and third sector websites were searched. There was an element of snowball searching as references led to further references, this was particularly the case in relation to grey literature, which was often not searchable through websites. After removing duplicates, documents were sorted into categories based on organisational authorship for grey literature, and academic practice/discipline for the academic literature. The first research aim was addressed using a summative content analysis of references to separation (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and the second with a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to understand how attachment theory is referred to. Themes were driven by the research questions and prevalence was noted as another means of comparison.

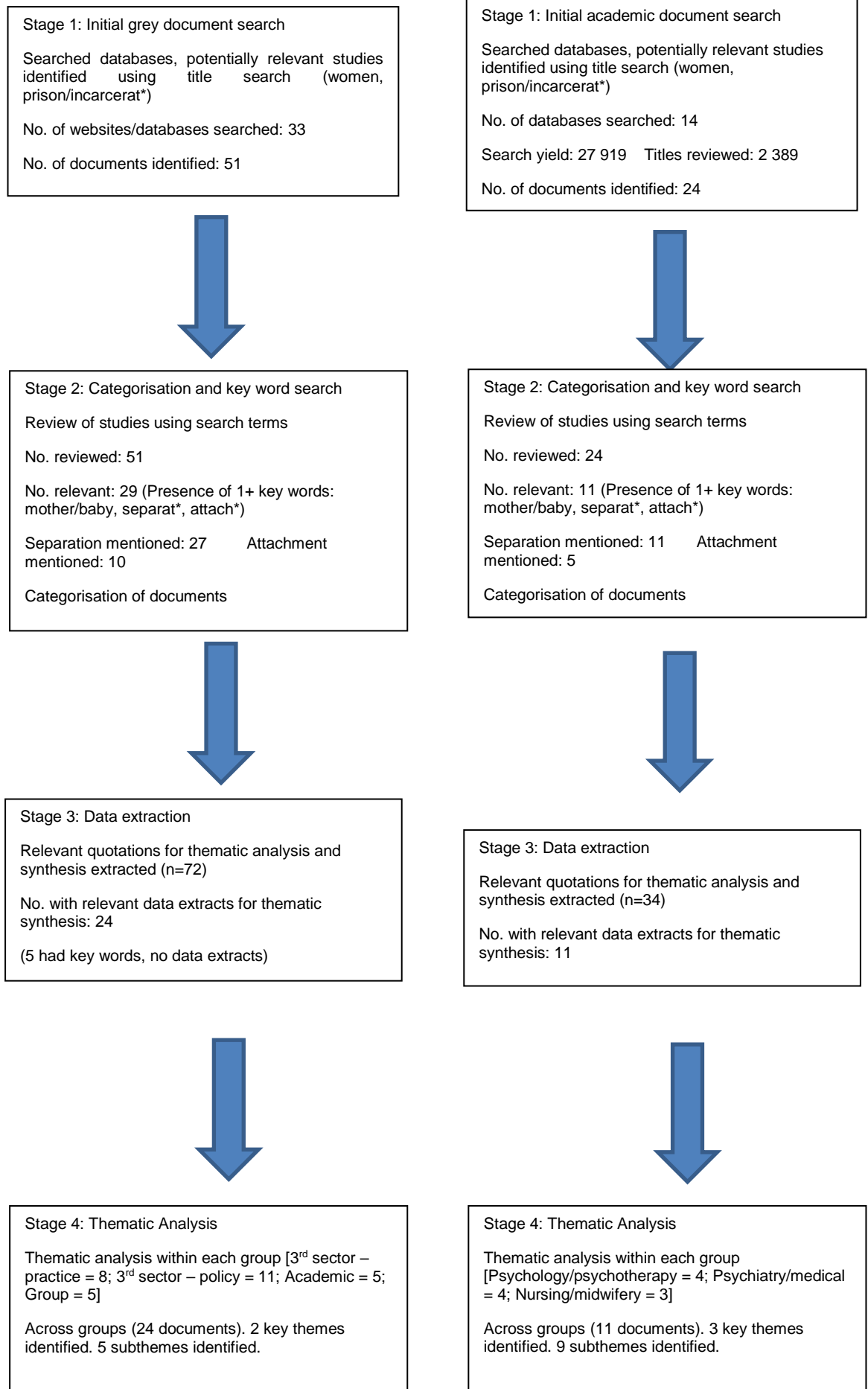
Inclusion and search terms

In order to enable direct comparison with the earlier policy review, relevant UK publications since 2007 to August 2015 were included. There were major changes to the female prison estate in 2007 following The Corston Report (Corston, 2007). The documents had to be relevant to imprisoned women separated from their children under 18 months in the UK. The content search terms were 'mother', 'baby', 'infant', 'attach*' and 'separat*'. When none of these were present, documents were scanned for 'child' and 'women' to ensure there were no alternative terms.

Procedure

The grey and academic searches were carried out separately and are reported alongside each other to enable comparison. 33 websites were searched for grey documents, from which 51 relevant documents were identified. 14 databases were searched for academic documents yielding 27 919 items. Of these 2 389 titles were reviewed, from which 24 relevant documents were identified.

See Figure 1.



Findings

Categorisation

The academic documents (N=24) were categorised according to academic/practice discipline. These fell into three approximately equal groups, with research and theory/discussion papers falling into each category and were determined according to the journal and backgrounds of the authors: 'Psychology/psychotherapy' (n=4), 'Psychiatry/medical' (n=4), and 'Nursing/midwifery' (n=3).

The grey documents (N=51) were organised into four approximately equal groups of organisational authorship. There seemed to be a clear divide between organisations that mainly focused on policy and research ('Third sector – policy', n=11), and those that were primarily practice oriented organisations ('Third sector – practice', n=8), although the latter also often produce policy documents. The category 'Group' (n=5) covered any document authored by several organisations and included a range of academic, third sector and governmental. 'Academic' (n=5) covered any publications by academic institutions (and related) which had not been commercially published. Of note, there were over twice as many grey documents than academic, a further justification of the inclusion of grey literature in this area.

Key words

The summative content analysis, focussing on key words, formed part of the initial answer to the first research aim. 'Mother' or 'baby' was referred to in all grey and academic documents and 'separation' in all academic and nearly all grey documents (27 of 29).

'Attachment' was referred to in 5 of the 11 academic documents. All of the documents in the 'Psychology/psychotherapy' category discussed attachment theory in detail. There was one passing reference to attachment theory in the 'Psychiatry/medical' category and none in the 'Nursing/midwifery' category. For the grey literature, 'attachment' was referred to in all the grey document categories but proportionately most often in the 'Third sector - practice'

documents (5/8) and least often in the 'Third sector-policy' documents (1/11). It was referred to in just under half of the 'Academic' and 'Group' categories.

Themes

Themes were developed through coding the data extracts (extracted through the key word search), and re-coding once all extracts had been examined. The difference in themes between the academic and grey literature is in itself notable and reflects their perspectives. Firstly a general overview is given, followed by a brief look at each document category and a synthesis across the literatures.

In the academic literature, 'Attachment theory' and 'Separation' were the main themes and umbrella themes, which linked the subthemes, capturing the broad spectrum of theory and findings. A third category 'Research findings' was included to provide an overview of the type of research carried out, and whether there were any implications for intervention and/or any direct quotes from women's experiences.

In the grey literature, the two main themes: 'Impact' and 'Practice', were umbrella themes which linked the subthemes and appeared across all groups of documents. These themes captured the main points around separation – how it affects mothers and what can be done. Both themes mainly focused on mothers, however, reference was also made to children and staff.

Academic categories

1) Psychology/Psychotherapy

This category covered three publications concerning the 'New Beginnings' programme and one theoretical review in a special edition on incarcerated parents.

Given the background and the journals in which this work was published it is not surprising that these four documents used attachment theory extensively. They

considered the impact on the child and the mother of separations from a theory-informed perspective, and also considered the impact of the prison setting and the relevant policies. In terms of the research presented it was solely from the RCT of the intervention ‘New Beginnings’, an attachment informed intervention.

See Table 1.

Theme	Separation 3/4				Attachment Theory 4/4			Research findings 2/4		
Subtheme	Impact	Prison setting	Policy, esp forced separation	Reunification	Mothers' history	Impact on child	Early months sensitive mother and child	Type	Lived experience	Intervention
Total (documents out of 4)	1	2	2	0	3	3	2	NB RCT (Theory paper)	No	Yes – New Beginnings Pregnancy/first few months as opportunity

The variety of references to attachment theory are extensive despite the limited focus of the documents: the theory paper only used attachment theory in relation to children, and the ‘New Beginnings’ trial was specific to the intervention which only involved women in MBUs.

There was reference to the mothers’ own attachment histories as ‘highly traumatic’ and the role of the prison environment:

Many troubling aspects of the mothers’ histories are activated by the prison environment, thereby creating major problems for the establishment of care-giving bonds. (Baradon & Target, 2010:73)

This focus on the mother was also highlighted in the importance of the first few months as a sensitive period for both mother and child, something rarely mentioned in the rest of the academic literature, the grey literature or policy documents.

Separation is described as a ‘painful issue’ evoking ‘enormous anxiety’ and the result of the process in MBUs is pointed out:

For example, some mothers on the MBU's will be separated from their infants later on and, without adequate preparation, may become gradually less engaged with their baby as the time of separation draws nearer (Sleed et al., 2013:13).

This reference to the role of the prison in preparing women for separation is also highlighted in an awareness of the impact on staff:

Forced separations of mothers and their babies is a controversial and painful issue within the prison system and often evokes strong responses not only in the inmates but also in MBU staff (Baradon, Fonagy, Bland, Lenard, & Sleed, 2008:244).

The first year after birth was also seen as a 'window of opportunity' as mothers 'are particularly open to change.'

2) Psychiatry/Medical

This category included two reports of the only pieces of mental health research on imprisoned mothers in the UK, one a public health research study on imprisoned women and the other a discussion paper.

See Table 2.

Theme	Separation 4/4				Attachment Theory 1/4			Research findings 3/4		
	Impact	Prison setting	Policy, esp forced separation	Reunification	Mothers' history	Impact on child	Early months sensitive mother and child	Type	Lived experience	Intervention
Total (documents out of 4)	4	0	1	1	0	1	0	Quantitative mental health Quantitative health survey Discussion paper	1	0

As the table shows, there was only one reference to attachment theory (Fonagy, Target, Steele, & Steele, 1997), and this was in reference to child

outcomes and was not recent. However, there were repeated references to separation and its impact, plus the only mention of reunification.

The clinical research into mental health outcomes highlighted the difference between separated and non-separated mothers. These supported all the observations in the practice literature and inspectorate reports in the policy review:

The separation of these mothers and children may contribute to or exacerbate the women's existing mental health problems and increase the negative effects on the child's current and future mental health (Gregoire et al., 2010:390).

Furthermore, it was found that on post-release follow-up, separated mothers were more likely to be unemployed and homeless, and less likely to have care of their children (Dolan et al., 2013). There was also a gendered analysis of the impact of separation on female prisoners:

Separation from family, especially children, adversely affects the mental health of female prisoners and is implicated in why women are more likely to break the rules in prison than men (Douglas, Plugge, & Fitzpatrick, 2009:10).

This consideration of the context was extended to consider sentencing:

Greater use could also be made of community sentences in order to prevent separation occurring (Dolan et al., 2013:435).

And post-release support:

The small number of separated mothers who subsequently had care of their children suggests that more needs to be done to help these women reunite successfully with their children on release (Dolan et al., 2013:435).

The public health research also included a vivid quote on separation by a mother:

'That's a pain that no pain relief – no painkiller can kill'. (Douglas et al., 2010:6)

3) Nursing/Midwifery

This category included three publications, two research reviews and one report of a prison-based support service for pregnant women. These publications were focussed very much on services for pregnant women in prison.

See Table 3.

Theme	Separation 3/3				Attachment Theory 0/3			Research findings 2/3		
	Impact	Prison setting	Policy, esp forced separation	Reunification	Mothers' history	Impact on child	Early months sensitive mother and child	Type	Lived experience	Intervention
Total (documents out of 3)	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	Systematic review Research synthesis (Service report)	1	Pregnancy as opportunity

Whilst there were no references to attachment there were many references to separation, highlighting the impact on mental health. Separation is described as causing depression and anxiety and fills the women with 'dread'. There are first person quotes on the experience which include: 'Words just can't describe how bad it hurts' (Wismount, 2000 in Shaw, Downe, & Kingdon, 2015:1459) and also: 'it is a separation anxiety that you go through.' (Chambers, 2009 in Shaw et al., 2015:1459).

There is reflection on the: 'more serious consequences for foreign nationals who face the added stress of not being in the same country as their children' (Foley & Papadopoulos, 2013:558). This is a rare acknowledgement on the diversity of experience within imprisoned mothers. The role of staff in mitigating the trauma of separation for women is highlighted: 'The attitudes and actions of prison and maternity care staff can reduce or increase this sense of trauma' (Shaw et al., 2015:1459).

Grey literature categories

1) Third sector – practice

The ‘Third sector- practice’ category covered a range of organisational publications, including Women in Prison, Barnardo’s, PACT, Together UK and NSPCC. Understandably the focus varied depending on whether the organisation itself is mother or child focussed, however, child-centred organisations also acknowledged the impact on mothers in their work.

See Table 4 for totals.

Theme	1) Impact			2) Practice	
Subthemes	a) Impact on mother	b) Impact on child	c) Impact on mother-child relationship	a) Support for mother	B)Staff
Total	9 codes 4 docs	3 codes 2 docs	3 codes 3 docs	7 codes 4 docs	2 codes 1 doc

What is initially striking from the totals above is that the themes focus far more on the mother, both impact and support, than the child or the staff. The ‘Staff’ codes were two specific suggestions for trainings rather than any mention of the emotional impact, and the focus in general was very much on the mothers’ needs – both what works and what could be done.

The emotional impact on the mother was explored in detail with vivid language and ranged from ‘worries and fears’ to ‘feelings of isolation and powerlessness’ and ‘severe mental and emotional distress’. It is interesting that it was only in this practice category which had the most complex descriptions of the impact, including detailed awareness of the impact on mental health and this ranged from general references to ‘maternal mental health’ to more specific ones to suicide, self-harm, post-natal depression and post-natal psychosis. This awareness was also reflected in the suggestions for support for mothers which were mainly emotional and psychological:

Perinatal health care services and prisons should ensure that parents, and in particular, mothers who are separated from their babies are provided with multi-agency follow up support packages, with a specific focus on postnatal psychological wellbeing (Galloway, Haynes, & Cuthbert, 2014:39).

This quotation highlights the complexity of the support required ('multi-agency'), and that it needs specifically to be concerned with 'postnatal psychological wellbeing'. This focus on the psychological impact was also reflected in discussions on attachment and separation. There was an emphasis on the impact of separation with descriptions such as 'desperate loss' and the 'emotional trauma of separation' but also with nods to attachment theory in some instances e.g.: 'the CJS [Criminal Justice System] itself disrupts family relationships so that parent or carer-infant bonding is affected' (Raikes, 2009).

In some documents there was also a sophisticated use of attachment theory, although primarily used from a child's perspective. These discussions covered how insecure attachment relates to disrupted relationships and future outcomes, in relation to children. In one extract there was explicit reference to how the mothers themselves are likely to have insecure attachments (Women in Prison, 2013).

2) Third sector – policy

The 'Third sector – policy' category covered documents from: Prison Reform Trust, Fawcett Society, Howard League, World Health Organisation (WHO) and Penal Reform International (PRI). Most of the codes related to the theme 'impact on mother' when separation was referred to.

See Table 5 for details.

Theme	1) Impact		2) Practice
Subthemes	a) Impact on mother	b) Impact on child	b) Staff
Total	10 codes 7 docs	3 codes 3 docs	1 code 1 doc

The documents in this policy category tended to be general, referring to women in prison, rather than specifically referring to imprisoned mothers of infants. They included direct quotes from imprisoned mothers and nearly all the extracts concerned the emotional impact of separation. These were described in vivid terms such as: 'traumatic and lasting effect', 'great distress', 'emotional trauma' 'state of shock' and the impact was compared to the 'trauma of bereavement'.

The impact of separation included references to mental health, life on release and family networks, and was mostly referred to in terms of trauma and directly related to the impact of imprisoning women:

Until more women are diverted from prison the levels of self harm, mental illness, and the long-term effects of the separation of children from their mothers will continue (Fawcett Commission, 2009:9).

There was a first-person description of self-harm as a result of separation and in another extract self-harm was described as a means of coping. There was only one direct reference to attachment, this referenced up to date research, however, it was only mentioned in relation to the impact of children.

3) Academic

Whilst it may seem odd to have an 'academic' category for grey literature, there is a body of work that is not published commercially by academic institutions. There were relevant works concerning mother-child separations in prison, including a key work cited by many others (Albertson, O'Keeffe, Lessing-Turner, Burke, & Renfrew, 2012). The institutions whose work was found through the review were: Huddersfield University, Sheffield Hallam University, Halsbury's Law Exchange and the Separation and Reunion Forum. Most of the codes in this category focussed on the impact on the mother.

See Table 6 for details.

Theme	1) Impact	2) Practice	
Subthemes	a) Impact on mother	a) Support for mother	b) Staff
Total	13 codes 4 docs	7 codes 3 docs	2 codes 1 doc

The documents in this category only discussed the impact on mother, there were no references to the impact on children, and the language used was far less emotive, for example: ‘anxiety’, ‘disruptive’ and ‘negative impact’, except when drawn directly from interviews, e.g. ‘devastating pain’. However, direct separation experiences were theorised, which was not the case in any of the third sector documents:

It is therefore anticipated that, when this dyad are separated, the mother will be preoccupied with anxieties and concerns about her children and engulfed in emotional turmoil. It is this narrative structure that underpins the narrative of the wounded mother (Lockwood, 2013).

There were a couple of aspects mentioned that were not highlighted in other categories. There was a detailed reference to ‘problematic behaviour’ in prison that highlighted this was due to stress caused by separation (Raikes, 2009). There was also a description of the guilt induced by mothers by separation from their child and the resultant lack of opportunities to engage with it (Raikes, 2009). There was one extract which could not be categorised which highlighted that prison uses separation from children as part of punishment (Arnold, 2012).

There were many examples of good practice and in general reference was made to research findings more than in the third sector work. In one example, up to date attachment research was cited (Byrne et al, 2012), however, attachment tended to be directly referred to more generally, particularly in terms of opportunities for mothers to bond and attach.

4) Group

This category was for documents produced by groups which included charities, NGOs, government departments and academic institutions. There was a wide range of perspectives and they included academic, legal, policy and practice. Not one of the documents was specifically about separation from children for female prisoners, they were either about vulnerable women more generally, women in the criminal justice system, or reviewing parenting programmes across the prison estate. The codes extracted were focussed on the mother, except one, and equally divided between support and impact.

See Table 7 for details.

Theme	1) Impact		2) Practice
Subthemes	a) Impact on mother	b) Impact on child	a) Mother support
Total	6 codes 4 docs	1 code 1 doc	6 codes 3 doc

The 'impact' theme covered separation as traumatic and described a range of emotions, particularly grief. Self-harm was also highlighted as particularly likely after separation. An especially powerful quote was from Sheila Kitzinger calling separation 'another form of violence against women and an abuse of children' (McNeish & Scott, 2014:26). This was the only example in any document which linked separation to systemic violence.

Extracts in the 'practice' theme were very practical, with positive practices highlighted, particularly around preparation and family support. The sole reference to attachment was in relation to children who undergo several changes of fostering placements as a result of separation. No research was cited in this instance.

Use of attachment theory

The concept of attachment is very much in the general discourse of parenting and bonding, with the idea of disrupted attachment having negative consequences for children being very present in current discourse. This idea underlies the use of attachment theory in prison policy (Prison Service Order 4801, 2008). The practice category of grey literature had the most references to attachment which suggests practitioners in the field find it a useful concept. It was also highlighted in the academic literature in the psychology/psychotherapy category with reference to a prison-based intervention. Although the women in this intervention had not been separated, attachment theory was used to discuss the impact of separation on women.

Whilst most references to attachment were in relation to children, as in the policy review, there was acknowledgement in the academic literature and particularly in the grey literature, that the mothers are likely to have problematic attachment histories too. Entire grey report sections were titled 'Attachment and separation' and there was repeated description of the extensive trauma it causes to women, as well as more specific details of the impact on their mental health, especially with regards to self-harm and suicide.

When attachment was referred to as a general concept, this was in the grey literature (and the policy) and was often non-referenced. However, relevant and recent research was cited far more often in the grey literature than in the policy review. In fact, in the grey literature there was a relatively sophisticated understanding of the impact but it could be developed further in most cases, particularly in relation to citing research and theory.

In terms of the academic review, the psychiatric, medical, nursing and midwifery literatures did mention the emotional impact of separation on mothers, this was not theorised psychologically or otherwise, and no specific interventions or practice were suggested. Attachment was not mentioned, but diagnoses were, and whilst this doubtless reflects discipline differences, the one reference in the psychiatric literature was nearly ten years old.

The grey literature also highlighted that the policy focus on 'best age of separation', which does imply use of attachment theory, is not based on attachment research and furthermore is legally arbitrary, and therefore can be challenged.

Thus attachment theory appears to be the basis for MBU policy (and by extension mother-child separations in prison), however, this is not systematically reflected in the literature. Both attachment and separation were referred to, across all literatures in terms of the emotional impact on women, but these were generally untheorized and not translated into practice.

Discussion

It is acknowledged across multiple literatures over an eight-year time frame that separation from infants has a serious impact on imprisoned mothers. Whilst this review can make no claim to being completely systematic, given the nature of grey literature, it provides a broad overview of work in the area. The diverse body of work encompassed reports and publications with a variety of aims, audiences and authors; however, it seemed to incorporate a wide selection of policy and academic work, as well as first person testimony and practice. It is clear from this review, and the wider literature, that women separated from their children have worse mental health than women who are not separated. Separation was described as having a clear negative emotional impact both in the words of women interviewed and in descriptions. Different descriptions were used, according to the type of literature, from the 'trauma of separation' to mental health diagnoses and very emotive descriptions, nevertheless the impact described was the same.

However, what was really lacking in general across the literatures (apart from those mentioned) were specific interventions and practice to mitigate this impact on women in prison. There were references to 'preparation' and 'support', and the example given most often was counselling. However, there was no discussion of what form this might take or how different women serving different sentences might benefit (or not). The impact of separation was made evident in

the literature with reference to diversion from prison as a way of avoiding separation. However, community sentences can also act as a 'back door' into custody, as Hedderman and Barnes (2015:113) explain. If structures are not available to enable female participation in community sentencing, then their failure to carry this out leads to a custodial sentence as punishment. This problem and the issue of 'uptariffing', when women are given prison sentences to enable them to access support services (see Gelsthorpe & Sharpe, 2015), mean that more women end up in prison, separated from their children, despite efforts to avoid this or attempts for them to access support. This important subject area requires its own focus (see Prison Reform Trust, 2015a, and Epstein, 2012, for further details).

Staff needs were occasionally acknowledged but generally overlooked, and again very little specificity in terms of what might be supportive. There were some hints at the complexity of staff responses – one grey report analysed so-called 'problematic behaviours' of prisoners as a response to separation. These were highlighted in inspectorate reports as the kind of behaviours that attract harsh punishment without staff understanding the causes. However, despite being highlighted, this has not been translated into anything practical for staff to use. It is troubling to consider that the effects of separation are further punished by staff and this requires further investigation.

If policy is going to draw on psychological theory (in this case attachment theory), and a psychological theory that practitioners appear to find useful (as reflected in the grey literature), then this needs to be reflected in the literature and this theory could probably be used in interventions to mitigate the harms caused by the policy in use. Indeed, since this review was completed, the first book aimed at practitioners working with mothers in the criminal justice system has been published (Baldwin, 2015), and attachment is taken into account by a range of practitioners. The book highlights examples of good practice but there is further scope to consider how to use attachment theory for working with women and reflecting on the impact on practitioners.

Strengths and Limitations

Given the date range, some of the key work in the area was excluded (e.g. Edge, 2006), however, these particular works were referred to in the more recent documents. Involvement from a prisoner or prison worker would have added critical reflections on the literature (e.g. Sweeney, Beresford, Faulkner, Nettle, & Rose, 2009). However, there were direct quotations from women who had been separated from their infants which added more detail to the impact of the experience of separation. Whilst the focus on the UK kept the review directly relevant to the policy, a review of international literature might have added some further insights around the use of attachment theory in prison policy and practice.

Implications and recommendations

This review adds further support to the idea that using attachment theory to inform practice around mother child separations in prisons would be of theoretical use. The scale of references to attachment, even as a general rather than a scientific concept, highlight its popularity across a range of organisations working directly with women in this situation. Whilst this is not to suggest it should be used uncritically, it could add some theoretically informed and specific suggestions to support women who are being affected by separation and the staff who work with them. More broadly, an attachment informed perspective could inform sentencing practice (and its consequences) when considering the impact on women as a result of separation. The review of grey literature suggests that this is a resource that should be drawn on further to inform practice and training, and that the academic literature needs to be made more widely available to practitioners. Combining an attachment perspective and use of the grey literature may help in designing training and addressing punitive attitudes.

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