

RUNNING HEAD: Prisoners' Involvement in Community-based Crime

Incapacitation and Imprisonment: Prisoners' Involvement in Community-based Crime.

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**Abstract:**

The impact of incapacitation on prisoners' offending behavior is a neglected area of research. The aim of this study was to examine the extent and nature of prisoners' involvement in community-based crime in the U.K. Participants were selected from nine prisons in the UK and consisted of 360 prisoners, 81 females and 279 males. Offenders were interviewed to assess levels and forms of involvement in community-based crime and perceptions of other prisoners' involvement. Levels of prisonization and institutional and demographic characteristics were used to identify vulnerability to involvement in community-based crime. Twenty-five percent of the sample admitted personal involvement and 63% reported other prisoners' involvement in a diverse range of crimes. Analyses revealed prisoners involved in community-based crime are likely to be young, male recidivists who hold prisonized attitudes. Prisoners who are white, prisonized and recidivist reported highest levels of other prisoners' involvement in community-based crime. No age or gender differences delineated prisoners' reports of others' involvement. The results show that incarcerating offenders may not prevent their involvement in community-based offending. Discussion centres on the characteristics of involved prisoners and considers the implications of the results for rehabilitation and penal policy.

**Keywords:** Criminal Incapacitation; Prison Gangs; Prisonization; Community Crime; Penal Policy.

### Incapacitation and Imprisonment: Prisoners' Involvement in Community-based Crime.

Imprisonment is an appealing form of punishment. This may stem from its potential to satisfy several diverse aims. Incarceration can redress the harm done by offending behavior (retribution) and work to reform offenders (rehabilitation) into law abiding citizens (e.g. Duff & Garland, 1994). Incapacitation is the most obvious and least contentious purpose of imprisonment. Offenders are removed from further offending in the community, at least for the duration of the prison sentence. Empirical evidence suggests that imprisonment as a deterrent or reformatory measure is not remarkably successful (e.g. West, 1982; Burnett & Maruna, 2004; Drago, Galbrati & Vertova, 2007). Recidivism rates reveal more than half of adult offenders are reconvicted within 2 years of release (Elkins & Olagundoye, 2001). In contrast, incapacitation does not suffer from this affliction of unfulfilled social expectations, as it appears to succeed in keeping offenders dependably away from the community. For example, it has been estimated that for every prisoner admitted to prison as many as 17 (property-related) index crimes may be averted (Marvel & Moody, 1994), and as Zimring and Hawkins (1995) observe, '*It is incontrovertible that an offender cannot commit crimes in the general community while he or she is incarcerated.*' (p 44).

Accordingly, imprisonment seems to have enjoyed a popular appeal that other forms of punishment (e.g. community service) have not. Since a very small percentage of offenders commit a very large percentage of crime (e.g. Farrington, 1986) incarceration is thought to substantially reduce crime levels (e.g. DiIulio & Piehl, 1991). In the UK, although no systematic research has examined this effect, British Crime Survey data indicate a fall in crime rates while Home Office data shows imprisonment rates are increasing (Green, 2003). In contrast, research in the USA shows that an increase in rates of imprisonment during the 1980s and 1990s did not lead to a simultaneous reduction in crime levels (Wilson & Ashton, 2001). Some explain these results from problems associated with basing probative crime

reduction on the crime levels of incarcerated offenders (e.g. Visher, 1987). Others point to cases of collaborative crime and observe that co-offenders who are not incarcerated may continue offending with one less member, or simply replace the incarcerated member (Nagin, 1998).

It is unlikely that incarceration will lose credibility because offending rates in the community remain static. Incapacitation has an ideological appeal as a protector of the public (e.g. Paternoster & Bynum, 1982), which has earned it a role in political rhetoric. For example, former British Conservative Home Secretary Michael Howard's 'prison works' speech, given at the 1993 Conservative Party Conference, claimed society was protected from the activities of murderers, muggers, and rapists by the use of imprisonment. Similarly, the incapacitative effects of imprisonment are a central tenet of the 'three strikes and you're out' principle currently favoured in the USA and to some extent in the UK (Cavadino & Dignan, 2002).

However, theft, assault and drug possession are common occurrences *in* prisons (e.g. Elkins & Olagundoye, 2001; King & McDermott, 1995) and drug-related debt has led to an increase in prisoner on prisoner violence (Crewe, 2005). This suggests that many prisoners do not leave their offending inclinations at the prison gates and raises the question that if prisoners are involved in offences in prison are they also maintaining some involvement in community-based crimes. Prison gang research in the U.S.A. suggests that gang activity stretches from prison to the community (Crouch & Marquart, 1989; Fong & Buentello, 1991; Sullivan, 1991). By building on their illicit yet lucrative activities in prison, these groups have evolved into large organisations with power bases that extend into the community (Knox, 1994) by forging close links with community-based criminal networks (Bobrowski, 1988). These links have resulted in a close and reciprocal relationship where street gang alliances influence the amalgamation of prison gangs (Bobrowski, 1988) and prison gangs

exert power and influence over community-based crime (Buentello, Fong and Vogel, 1991; Sikes, 1997).

Prison gang research in the UK is limited in comparison to the US (e.g. Wood & Adler, 2001; Wood, 2006; Wood, Moir & James, in press) and cultural differences may influence the findings. For example, street gangs in the UK tend to form along regional lines (Mares, 2001), while US gangs form along racial divides (Camp & Camp, 1985). However, even if there are cultural differences, the U.K. prison system is just as likely as the U.S.A. prison system to be vulnerable to gang activity either through the importation of street gang members or the formation of gangs within the system. Wood and Adler (2001) and Wood (2006) reveal that illegal and gang-related activities are common in the English and Welsh prison estate just as they are in the U.S.A. If U.K. prisoners are involved in activities similar to their American counterparts *in* the prison, then it seems reasonable to consider that they may also be involved in similar activities *outside* the prison. Certainly, the supply of recreational drugs, which is a common feature of UK prisons (e.g. Swann & James, 1998; Wood & Adler, 2001; Wood, 2006), requires criminal links in the community.

The current study extends previous work on UK prison gangs by specifically examining individual and group involvement in community-based crime during imprisonment. If prisoners continue to be involved in community-based crime then clearly assumptions that incapacitation protects the public will need to be re-evaluated. Similarly, prisoners' involvement in community-based offences appears to be antithetical to the goals of offending behavior treatment programmes. If prisoners persist in their community-based crime during imprisonment, it is unlikely that they will engage wholeheartedly with treatment programmes designed to rehabilitate them. For example, prison gang members are typically uninterested in schemes to earn privileges or address offending behavior (Huff, 1996) and their continued criminal activity is testament to this effect. Nevertheless there are

rehabilitative benefits to prisoners maintaining links in the community. The benefits of family relationships were highlighted in the Home Office (Woolf) Report (1991), which recommended that prisoners be held close to home to preserve family ties since maintaining close and meaningful family relationships relates to a decrease in offending behavior (Wright & Wright, 1992). Clearly, community ties can have positive rehabilitation effects for prisoners. However, as prisons strive to sanction prisoners' family ties, they risk opening the floodgates to the maintenance of prisoners' external criminal associations.

*Our study*

As yet, the extent and nature of prisoners' criminal involvement in community-based crime is unclear. Therefore there were 3 main aims of our study:

First, we aimed to relatively gauge the numbers of prisoners who currently are, or have been, involved in some form of community-based crime, and to identify the nature of those crimes. Given the apparent correlation between gang membership and community-based crime (e.g. Crouch & Marquart, 1989; Fong & Buentello, 1991; Sullivan, 1991), our study aimed to explore prisoners' collective involvement in crimes committed within the community, through an assessment of individuals' self-confessed involvement, and their knowledge of others' involvement.

Second, we aimed to find demographic and institutional predictors useful for identifying prisoners who are vulnerable to involvement in community-based crime.

American research indicates that prisoners involved in prison gangs are more likely to be younger than non-gang prisoners (Ralph, Hunter, Marquart, Cuvelier & Merianos, 1996). They are likely to have been arrested more frequently than their non-gang counterparts and probably serve longer sentences than non-gang prisoners (Sheldon, 1991). They are also likely to be male, although female prison gang membership is increasing (Knox, 1994). Consequently, the current study included a number of demographic variables (e.g. age,

number of sentences and length of current sentence, gender and ethnic origin) that might relate to prisoners' involvement in community-based crime.

Our third aim was to examine prisonization as a predictor of involvement in community-based crime. Prisonization involves assimilation into the prison's subculture and adopting pro-prisoner, anti-authority attitudes consistent with that subculture (Clemmer, 1940); it also relates to involvement in groups in prison (Buentello et al, 1991). Prisonization is facilitated by a number of factors including prison conditions, exposure to other prisoners, and pre-prison criminal values and experiences (Irwin & Cressey, 1964). According to Clemmer (1940), prisonized prisoners will be involved in prisoner groups who engage in illicit or illegitimate behavior. Prisoners who hold pre-existing criminal values may also have pre-existing criminal networks and if such prisoners continue to be in contact with these networks they may also continue to be involved in criminal activity (albeit modified) during imprisonment.

## Method

### *Participants*

Three hundred and sixty prisoners from 9 prisons participated in the study. There were 81 female prisoners (Age M = 32.5, SD 9.2) and 279 male prisoners (Age M = 28.5, SD 6.87). Participating facilities included: 4 category C prisons (medium/low security); 2 Female establishments (not classified for security: hold females from 15 years old); 2 Young Offenders' Institutions (male offenders aged 15-21 years) and 1 Category B prison (medium/high security). The selection of these particular categories was based in part on the total number of prisons within each category and in part on levels of gang-related activities outlined by Wood and Adler (2001). Wood and Adler's (2001) study indicated that category C prisons, Young Offender Institutions, female prisons and category B prisons seemed to be especially vulnerable to gang-related activity. Dispersal prisons (Highest security) and Open

prisons (Low security) were not included in the current study since they do not have high levels of gang-related activity (Wood & Adler, 2001). Only prisoners who had been in the current prison for at least 6 months took part in this study as they were likely to be familiar with the prison and be able to offer informed perspectives on activities of other prisoners. Table 1 shows the demographic/institutional variables of the sample by category of prison. Since 78% of prisoners in this study were white, it seemed sensible to classify prisoners as white and non-white rather than use each ethnic category individually.

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*Measures*

Prisoners' demographic details such as age, gender, length of current sentence and the number of prison sentences served were noted. The number of prison sentences prisoners had served is relevant since those familiar with the prison system may be more prisonized, and more involved in prison groups and offending in the community than novice prisoners might be.

Thomas and Zingraff's (1976) Organizational Structure and Prisonization Scale (OSPS) was used to assess prisoners' level of prisonization since it has been successfully used to assess prisoner adjustment (e.g. Goodstein, MacKenzie & Shotland, 1984; Gover, MacKenzie & Armstrong, 2000). Items included statements signifying attitudes consistent with: a reluctance to associate with prison staff; a condemnation of prisoners who confide in staff; a desire to carry out only what is absolutely necessary in terms of formal prison activities; a belief that staff should be told only what they want to hear if prisoners want to

leave prison soon; an intention to stick to one's own beliefs and not adopt the attitudes of staff; an assessment of prisoners' beliefs that they have more in common with staff than other prisoners; and an assessment of a determination not to allow others to push them around and get away with it. Items were coded from one to five, with five indicating higher levels of prisonization. Two items, '*I probably spend more of my free time talking to members of staff than most of the other prisoners do*' and '*I have more in common with people on the staff than I do with most of the prisoners*' were reversed in coding. Despite being an established scale, Cronbach's Alpha was modest (0.52) and was not improved by deleting any items. Consequently, results based on this scale may *underestimate* the actual relationship between prisonization and other variables in the analyses.

Prisoners were asked to rate, using a five-point scale (1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral; 4 = disagree; 5 = strongly disagree), their agreement that they, together with other prisoners, are involved in illicit activity with individuals outside the prison. The use of a continuum of agreement (as opposed to a simple dichotomous approach) was designed to reflect that prisoners may be involved in only some of the possible community-based criminal activities available, and that their involvement may be either peripheral or central to its execution.

Forensic populations are prone to 'faking good' (Gudjonsson, 1992) and self-reporting personal involvement in community-based crime may motivate some prisoners' inclinations to fake good. As a result, we also included measures of prisoners' perceptions of other prisoners' involvement in community-based crime since they may be more forthcoming when referring to other prisoners' behaviour than their personal behaviour and so the tendency to 'fake good' may be bypassed. Consequently, prisoners were also asked to rate their agreement that other groups of prisoners are involved in illicit activity with individuals

outside prison. If respondents agreed that they were involved in crime committed in the community, they were then asked to describe what sort of activities they were involved in.

Responses to open ended questions were written down verbatim and coded into one of 4 categories, '*drugs*', '*other trades*', '*violent*' and '*non-violent*' crime. Coding the data had a high inter-rater reliability (.91).

### *Procedure*

After gaining Prison Service approval we approached the Governing Governors of nine prisons in the English and Welsh prison estate to ask for research access for this study; all agreed to allow us access to their prison population. Selection of participants differed according to the prison. In some prisons every 5<sup>th</sup> prisoner was selected from a list of all prisoners, whereas in other establishments whichever prisoners happened to be available were approached by either the researcher or prison staff. Consequently, the sample was more opportunistic than random. Interviews took place individually in a room that allowed for total privacy. The aims of the study were outlined before informing participants of their participant rights. In accordance with customary research practice in a prison setting, before beginning the interview, prisoners were assured that confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed unless they revealed an *intention* to harm others, themselves or to escape. Once the prisoner was fully briefed and s/he agreed that the issues of confidentiality were clear, the interview began. All items on the interview schedule were read to participants to mitigate against literacy problems.

At the end of the interview participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. Again, to offset any literacy problems the researcher read aloud the debriefing sheet. Participants were then thanked for their cooperation and given a written copy of the debriefing sheet which also contained a contact telephone number and their participant number should they wish to withdraw from the study at a later date.

## Results

### *Prisoners' Reports of Other's Involvement in Community-Based Crime;*

Of the 360 prisoners interviewed, 226 (63%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that '*Some groups of prisoners are involved in illegal activities with people outside the prison*' ('other involvement').

To examine how responses to this statement differed according to individual characteristics, a multiple regression analysis was conducted (see Table 2). As Table 2 shows, prisonization and ethnicity were important predictors of 'other involvement.' White prisoners were more likely to report 'other involvement' than non-white prisoners. Ethnicity and prisonization were examined for an interaction effect but none was found.

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A one-way ANOVA was used to examine the effects of category of prison on reports of 'other involvement.' Results indicated that reports did not differ between categories,  $F_{(3, 356)} = 1.35, p = 0.26$ .

### *Prisoners' Own Involvement in Community-Based Crime*

Ninety (25%) participants 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement that since being in prison, '*My friends and I have at some time been involved in illegal activities with people outside the prison.*' Since prisoners are likely to be more forthcoming when reporting 'other involvement' than 'own involvement,' the data were analysed to examine differences between reported involvement. A paired-sample t-test showed that prisoners reported lower

levels of their own involvement ( $M = 2.47$ ,  $S.D. = 1.05$ ) than they did other prisoners' involvement ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $S.D. = .87$ ),  $t_{(357)} = 17.92$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

An examination of own involvement by category of prison also revealed a difference  $F_{(3, 354)} = 5.76$ ,  $p < 0.005$ . Post hoc analysis showed that female prisoners reported less 'own involvement' ( $M = 2.09$ ) than males in category B ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), category C ( $M = 2.47$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) or Young Offender Institutions ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ). However, male categories did not differ from each other.

To examine how prisoners' responses differed according to personal characteristics and imprisonment history, a standard multiple regression analysis was conducted. Results showed that age, gender, prisonization and number of prison sentences served were important predictors of prisoners' own involvement in community-based crime. Younger male prisonized prisoners who had served several prison sentences were most likely to be involved in community-based crime (see Table 3).

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*Content Analysis*

*drugs and other trades.*

Prisoners mentioned a number of 'trades' that they and other prisoners were involved in with individuals outside the prison (see Table 4). As shown in Table 4 the most common trade overall was drugs, followed by money and goods such as tobacco and alcohol.

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*violent and non-violent crime.*

Prisoners also mentioned a number of other crimes they and others were involved in. These were classified into violent and non-violent crimes (see Table 5). As shown in Table 5, the most common violent crime overall was robbery followed by arranging physical assaults and gun crime. The most common non-violent crime overall was car theft and fraud followed by burglary.

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### Discussion

Our results show that prisoners involved in community-based crime are generally young male white and non-white recidivists who hold prisonized attitudes. This is consistent with the stereotype of the typical prison gang member (e.g. Sheldon, 1991; Ralph, Hunter, Marquart, Cuvelier & Merianos, 1996). Prisonization and ethnicity predicted prisoners' reports of others' community-based crime, with white prisoners reporting higher levels than non-white prisoners. Drug offences characterised the type of offending most frequently reported. Criminal networks spanning the community and prison may foster lucrative activities such as drug trafficking in prison. Indeed, comments made by prisoners demonstrated the financial advantages to drug trafficking in prison, for example:

*“Drug baroning. They send cash out for H for example ..... then it’s brought in ..... often through the farm workers ..... the cat D prisoners ..... or even the screws ..... people are making thousands in here.” (356).*

Since younger prisoners reported more involvement in community-based crime than did older prisoners, we might expect the higher levels of involvement to be more apparent in young offender establishments. However, no differences in personal involvement were found between categories of prison, which shows that prisoners held in young offender institutions are no more involved in community-based crime than adult prisoners. Also, our findings show that older prisoners were as aware of other prisoners’ involvement as young prisoners were. This suggests that prisoners involved in community-based crime, although younger than non-involved prisoners, are just as likely to be held in adult institutions as they are in young offender institutions. This finding echoes American research indicating prisoners involved in illicit activities in the community, albeit younger than non-involved prisoners, were often adults (Sheldon, 1991).

It is possible that young offenders did not admit personal involvement in an effort to ‘fake good’ as described by Gudjonsson (1992). However, equally it could be that maintaining a criminal career across the prison/community boundary requires a level of expertise, interpersonal skill and manipulation, all of which are abilities that develop over time. The finding that recidivism predicts involvement in community-based offending supports this idea. For instance, recidivists’ repeated involvement in criminal behavior suggests that they have available community networks. Such networks, that young offenders may not yet have developed or become part of, will be valuable assets in maintaining a hand in community-based criminal activity during imprisonment. Further, a lack of expertise may hinder young offenders’ ability to recognise or make the most of the criminal opportunities

available to them in prison, since they may not yet have engaged in the types of criminal activity which can still be committed from behind bars (e.g. fraud, deception). This idea is consistent with Marvel and Moody's (1994) conclusions regarding incapacitation. Young offenders, by merit of age and/or inexperience, will not have the same levels of expertise to sustain criminal interests in the community, and it is reasonable to assume that prisoners may reach their twenties or even thirties before being sufficiently established in a criminal lifestyle to preserve their offending interests from inside prison. Certainly, the more experienced members of the prison community are probably better able to maximise trades and minimise detection by staff than the less experienced prisoners.

Results also showed that although female prisoners reported less personal involvement than did male prisoners, there was no difference between male and female reports of other prisoners' involvement. It is not particularly surprising that males reported more personal involvement than did females. This reflects previous work revealing prisoners involved in gang-related community-based crime are likely to be male (e.g. Knox, 1994). It could be that females are not involved in criminal networking to the same extent as male offenders. Given that there are fewer female prisons in the UK, many female prisoners are held far from home, therefore it is possible that, for female offenders, criminal connections in the community are simply lost due to distance. Nevertheless, since female reports of other prisoners' involvement did not differ from male reports it may be that female prisoners 'faked good' (e.g. Gudjonsson, 1992) when asked about personal involvement. Alternatively, and this consideration applies equally to young offenders, female prisoners who agreed to take part in this study may not be as involved as women prisoners who did not participate.

It is interesting to note that despite differences in age and gender in prisoners' personal involvement; there were few differences in perceptions of other prisoners' involvement. Male and female, older and younger prisoners all had similar perceptions of

other prisoners' involvement, suggesting that the incidence of community-based crime is relatively static between demographic groups, and that individual prisoners gave accurate information in their interviews. However, interestingly although white and non-white prisoners reported similar levels of personal involvement, non-white prisoners reported lower levels of *other* involvement than did white prisoners. Possibly some self-selecting racial segregation may mean that some non-white prisoners are not privy to the illicit activities of white prisoners and so cannot report on their activities.

The finding that prisonization predicted prisoners' reports of their own and other prisoners' involvement lends support to Clemmer's (1940) claims that prisonized prisoners form the membership of groups involved in illicit or illegitimate behavior. What is not clear from the current results is any cause and effect relationship between prisonized attitudes and community-based crime. For instance, maintaining a criminal link in the community (e.g. through gang affiliation) may indicate a commitment to a criminal lifestyle that in turn, facilitates the development of prisoners' prisonized attitudes. Equally, prisonized prisoners may become involved in illicit activity in prison and extend their interests to community based crime if the opportunity arises. Nevertheless, the knowledge that prisoners involved in community-based crime are likely to be prisonized may help in the development of rehabilitative interventions: first by identifying prisoners' needs for interventions on the basis of their prisonized attitudes and second by developing strategies aimed at modifying such attitudes. That prisonized prisoners reported higher levels of other prisoners' involvement in community-based crime supports the notion that non-prisonized prisoners will have limited knowledge of others' activities. As Clemmer (1940) points out, prisonized attitudes are facilitated by assimilation into the prison subculture. Consequently, only members of a prison's subculture will be fully aware of the illicit activities of other members.

The extent and nature of community-based criminal activity that prisoners reported they and others were involved in was wide and diverse. The high levels of personal (25%) and other involvement (63%) supports American claims that prisoners' criminal activity is not confined to the prison. (e.g. Crouch & Marquart, 1989; Fong & Buentello, 1991; Sullivan, 1991). It was not remarkable, given the high levels of drugs in UK prisons (e.g. Swann & James, 1998; Wood & Adler, 2001; Wood, 2006), that drug trafficking featured so prominently in prisoners' reports of self- and other-involvement in community-based crime. However, the broad range of crimes prisoners are involved in was less expected and suggests that prisoners' criminal activity is versatile. It also demonstrates how prisoners' roles in criminal activity may evolve due to the constraints of incarceration. Prisoners observed how prisoners may maintain a hand in crimes that incarceration should prevent:

*"...they have illegal relationships with staff and civvies."* (204);

*"...information goes outside ..... for example find out where people live ..... then target their houses."* (59).

This reveals that prisoners' families may become victims of crime due to another prisoner discovering where they live. Qualitative responses also demonstrate how individuals in the community or even in another prison may be targets for violence by prisoners' contacts:

*"They'll get someone on the out or at another jail beaten up."* (327).

On the other hand, prisoners also reported offering those leaving prison useful contacts for further criminal activity;

*"when someone is getting out I'll put them on to an earner ..... like burglary or ..... soft drug dealing."* (157).

Whether it is targeting or teaming, what is clear is that some prisoners maintain criminal aims and appear to have little intention of giving up criminal activity.

One issue that threads throughout our results is the collaboration between prisoners and individuals in the community, in other prisons or even staff. This implies a level of resolve to maintain a criminal lifestyle despite the impediment of imprisonment. It also builds on Nagin's (1998) argument that imprisonment of one offender may not reduce community-based crime in any substantial way since that offender may be replaced, or the group will carry on offending with one less member. The current study adds to this concept by revealing how an incarcerated group member may continue to maintain criminal links and, as far as possible, criminal activity, for example;

*“Trading still happens ..... there's phone calls to organise stuff ... ..  
like drugs ..... merchandise or violence.”* (145).

Previous work shows that groups formed along regional lines is perceived as one of the most frequent prison gang activities in the U.K., (Wood, 2006) and that loyalties that do not necessarily exist between other prisoners, are steadfast among prisoners from the same region or who share the same ethnicity (Crewe, 2005). However, Crewe (2005) also notes that some prisoners are pressed into activities they would rather avoid, such as storing and distributing goods. Thus, it seems that some prisoners may be reluctant accomplices in the criminal activity of others and that they agree to such pressures because their reputations outside prison would be seriously undermined if they failed to back up their peers (Crewe, 2005). Indeed, some prisoners who are held far from home have expressed relief at the restriction on their regional connections and their ability to live socially anonymous (Crewe, 2005).

Here there are implications for the Prison Service in terms of where to hold prisoners. The rehabilitative and familial benefits to holding prisoners close to home are well documented (e.g. Wright & Wright, 1992) as is the suffering inflicted on female prisoners due to the tenuous ties they have to children and family who are held far from home (see

Irwin & Owen, 2005). That prisoners need a base to return to and support from others following release is demonstrated in the striking findings that the post-release suicide risk among newly released prisoners is much higher than that for the general population (Pratt, Piper, Apleby, Webb & Shaw, 2006). Ironically, those who maintain criminal bases in the community and thus have a niche carved in readiness for their return to the community may fair better. In this sense the Prison Service faces an enormous task of resolving the *need* for prisoners to maintain community ties with the *risk* that they may maintain the *wrong ties* (i.e. criminal networks). Calls for introducing phones into prisoners' cells in order to offset the feelings of isolation from loved ones (e.g. Johnson, 2005), may also result in the undesirable side effect of making prisoners' involvement in community based crime all the easier.

Those involved in community based crimes are often motivated by financial profit and so endeavour to maintain criminal financial interests following incarceration. These prisoners seem to consider prison as a temporary set-back to their offending careers and strive to maintain links with criminal-others to secure a post-release place in offending circles. For instance, in a statement reminiscent of Marvel and Moody's (1994) findings, one prisoner observed;

*"... prison only interferes with physical crimes like burglary ..... not fraud or deception ..... forgery or stuff like that."* (72).

Also, financial profits gleaned from criminal enterprises during a prison sentence may help offset hardships inflicted on family members left behind in the community;

*"Getting money sent to certain people ..... I don't want to add anymore to this."* (19).

Although asking prisoners directly for information on prisoners' behavior promises to reveal important information about involvement in community-based crime, there will be

limitations and problems associated with the information we receive (e.g. Koehler, 2000). Prisoners are unlikely to tell us everything they know on a given topic and even if they were willing to share information with us they may not actually know very much. Also, our findings will be constrained by our choice of methodology and the items we select for our interview schedules. Although these limitations are likely, we found the prisoners in the current study quite willing to discuss involvement in community-based crime. However, enthusiasm on the part of the participant should not be mistaken for complete honesty. It must be borne in mind that forensic populations are likely to include individuals well versed in protecting the truth from interested parties. Even if prisoners were entirely candid, it still remains that answers are based on subjective perceptions. Such perceptions will be subject to memory lapses or inattention on the part of the respondent. Consequently, even the most sincere responses may be coloured by cognitive processes difficult to overcome methodologically. Nevertheless, given the inherently difficult nature of prison-based research, prisoners' reports certainly seem to offer one of the most effective ways of developing our understanding of prisoner behavior.

Since recidivist and prisonized prisoners are most likely to be involved in community-based crime, future work could examine the development of prisonized attitudes in the community. It seems unlikely that prisonized attitudes are put on hold following release. It might be that difficulties reintegrating into the community foster prisonized attitudes and offending behavior. On the other hand, due to prisonization and/or gang affiliation, ex-prisoners may continue to offend regardless of opportunities to lead law-abiding lives. For instance, drug users may continue to offend to support a habit they feel unable to break. Further, the setbacks of imprisonment may be minimal compared with the financial benefits of crime. Certainly recidivist prisoners seem to be undeterred by the negative impact of imprisonment on their criminal enterprises and so perhaps it would be worthwhile to examine

recidivist prisoners' attitudes to incarceration: do they see it as a temporary hindrance to their criminal aims, or does it have the desired effect of deterrence for at least some?

The activities of penal/community criminal networks have implications for prisons and the community and warrant further study. There may be physical boundaries between the prison and the community, but crime is contextual and our findings show there is little that truly separates these two social contexts in the intended sense. Our findings also show that the reliance on imprisoning individuals to curb their criminal activity is not achieving the primary goal of crime control. This supports Haney's (2005) argument that the imprisonment binge that has consumed the Western world in the last quarter of a century is a waste of time if the criminogenic contexts in the future life of a prisoner are not also addressed. Our results take this concept a step further by showing that we also need to consider the criminogenic contexts in the *current* life of prisoners before we can successfully achieve even the most fundamental aims of imprisonment.

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**Table 1. Demographic and Institutional Characteristics of Participants**

Demographic/ Institutional characteristics	Category of prison				
	<u>All</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>YOI</u>	<u>Female</u>
		Medium/high security	Medium security	Young Offenders 15-21 yrs	Females all ages
N	360	40	158	81	81
Mean Age (in years)	30.45(10.4)	31.00 (7.73)	35.00 (10.08)	19.41 (2.8)	32.50 (9.2)
Mean no of prison sentences served	2.78 (2.56)	4.43 (3.02)	3.45 (2.87)	1.95 (1.61)	1.47 (1.25)
Mean length of sentence (in years)	6.51 (7.04)	6.25 (7.04)	8.29 (7.88)	2.97 (1.42)	6.63 (7.41)
Mean time served in current prison (in years)	1.27 (2.32)	.90 (1.23)	1.59 (3.15)	.80 (.52)	1.32 (1.73)
Percentage of white (W) and non-white (NW) prisoners	78% (W) 12% (NW)	88% (W) 12% (NW)	79% (W) 21% (NW)	70% (W) 30% (NW)	80% (W) 20% (NW)



## Incapacitation and Imprisonment

Table 2. Effects of demographic, institutional and prisonization on prisoners' perceptions of other group involvement in 'outside crime'

Variable	$\beta$	t	p
Age	.02	.35	.725
Gender	-.07	-1.19	.236
Number of prison sentences served	.08	1.37	.172
Length of current sentence	.06	.89	.373
Ethnicity (white/non white)	-.13	-2.47	.014
Time served in current prison	.02	.33	.742
Prisonization	.12	2.08	.038

Adj.  $R^2$  = .03, df, 7, 345, F = 2.63, p < 0.05

## Incapacitation and Imprisonment

Table 3. Demographic/Institutional and psychological characteristics of prisoners involved in 'outside crime'.

Variable	$\beta$	t	p
Age	-.24	-3.95	.000
Gender	-.11	-2.16	.031
Number of prison sentences served	.21	3.84	.000
Length of current sentence	.08	1.21	.228
Ethnicity (white/non white)	-.05	-.92	.357
Time served in current prison	-.01	-.19	.853
Prisonization	.17	3.25	.001

Adj.  $R^2$  = .14, df, 7, 343, F = 8.83, p < 0.001

## Incapacitation and Imprisonment

Table 4. Numbers of prisoners involved in trading activity with outsiders to the prison

Drug	Drugs		Trade	Other trades	
	Self	Other		Self	Other
Heroin	15	29	Money	8	17
Cannabis	13	20	Alcohol	0	5
Cocaine	1	6	Mobile (cell phones)	0	4
Unspecified class A	1	3	Tobacco	2	3
Crack	1	2	Clothing	0	3
Unspecified class B	1	2	Phone cards	2	1
LSD	0	1	Medication	0	3
Amphetamines	0	1			
Ecstasy	0	1			

## Incapacitation and Imprisonment

Table 5: Prisoners' reports of own and other prisoners' involvement in violent and non-violent crime with outsiders.

Violent crime			Non-violent crime		
Crime	Self	Other	Crime	Self	Other
Arranging physical assaults	11	12	Car theft	6	12
Robbery	9	20	Burglary	6	11
Witness intimidation	3	2	Fencing stolen goods	5	1
Gun crime	1	5	Forgery	2	2
Running protection rackets	1	2	Fraud	1	17
Threatening other people	1	1	Money laundering	1	1
Kidnapping	1	0	Any crime	0	17
Murder	0	3	Organising escapes	0	3
Arson	0	2	Shop lifting to order	0	3
Organised racism	0	1	Deception	0	2
			Tax evasion	0	1
			Running brothels	0	1
			Organised pick pocketing	0	1