



While you were locked up

An empirical study on the characteristics, social surroundings
and wellbeing of partners of prisoners in The Netherlands

Susanne van 't Hoff-de Goede

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WHILE YOU WERE LOCKED UP

An empirical study on the characteristics, social surroundings
and wellbeing of partners of prisoners in The Netherlands

TERWIJL JIJ OPGESLOTEN ZAT

Een empirische studie naar de kenmerken, sociale omgeving
en het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden in Nederland

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In most western societies, the severest legal punishment that is imposed by governments in reaction to criminal behaviour is imprisonment (Nagin, Cullen, & Johnson, 2009). Questions have been raised in the criminal justice sphere about the consequences of imprisonment for prisoners, both intended (e.g. the prevention of future crimes) and unintended (e.g. unemployment after release) (Western, 2002; Pager, 2003; Schnittker & John, 2007; Von Hirsch, Ashworth, & Roberts, 2009; Wermink, Nieuwbeerta, Ramakers, De Keijser, & Dirkzwager, 2017). Unfortunately, the unintended consequences of imprisonment for other people than the prisoners themselves, e.g. their romantic partners, have been severely neglected in the academic discourse (Murray, 2005; Comfort, 2007; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Cooke, 2014; Wakefield, Lee, & Wildeman, 2016).

Through their linked lives (Elder, 1998), numerous partners of prisoners are affected by imprisonment. Each year there are an estimated 10,000 partners of prisoners in The Netherlands, and 3,000,000 partners of prisoners in The United States. Moreover, on any given day in 2015, an estimated 50,000 prisoners in the United Kingdom and 370,000 prisoners in Europe had a partner on the outside (Grinstead, Zack, Faigeles, Grossman, & Blea, 1999; Comfort, Grinstead, McCartney, Bourgois, & Knight, 2005; De Goede, Nieuwbeerta, Van der Lippe, Dirkzwager, & Reef, 2012; Walmsley, 2013; Eurostat, 2017). Although prisoners' partners are people that have not been convicted of the crimes the prisoners committed, they may be nevertheless punished for them.

For prisoners' partners, the consequences of imprisonment can be multiple and far reaching. It has been argued that partners of prisoners "do time outside" (Fishman, 1990; Comfort, 2003; Sharp, 2005; Light & Campbell, 2007; Condry, 2010; Chamberlain, 2015) and that imprisonment can lead to financial difficulties (Chui, 2009; Bruns, 2015; Turney & Schneider, 2016) depression (Braman, 2004; Wildeman, Schnittker, & Turney, 2012) and health problems (Wildeman, Lee, & Comfort, 2013; Cooke, 2014; Lee, Wildeman, Wang, Matusko, & Jackson, 2014) for prisoners' partners. On the other hand, imprisonment can also have positive consequences. New found independence may, for example, increase the self-worth of partners of prisoners (Fishman, 1990; Shirlow & Dowler, 2010; Foca, 2015).

The consequences of imprisonment for partners of detainees, in turn, can also have significant further implications (Ewald & Uggen, 2012). First, if the imprisonment negatively affects the lives of partners of prisoners, their relationship with the prisoner may deteriorate or even end (Comfort et al., 2005; Chui, 2009; Christian & Kennedy, 2011; Turney, 2015a, 2015b). This may complicate the prisoners' reintegration

into society after release, since having a partner has been found to be an important protective factor for recidivism (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Visher, La Vigne, & Travis, 2004; Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Berg & Huebner, 2011). Secondly, the collateral damage of imprisonment may extend beyond prisoners' partners to their children if the imprisonment causes partners of prisoners to have a hard time dealing with their household and parenting responsibilities (Hairston, 2003; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Geller, Garfinkel, Cooper, & Mincy, 2009; Wildeman, 2010; Arditti, 2012; Shaw, 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012; Turney, 2014). Third, the secondary consequences of imprisonment may have a financial cost. Due to the stress caused by imprisonment, mental and physical health problems may arise among partners of prisoners. These health problems can result in health costs, decreased labour participation and increased welfare receipt (Folland, Goodman, & Stano, 2007; Sugie, 2012; Wildeman et al., 2013; Cooke, 2014; Lee et al., 2014).

It remains unclear, however, in what other ways imprisonment affects partners of prisoners for several reasons. The first reason is that theoretical work on partners of prisoners is still in the early stages. Theories on the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners and the roles that different factors may play need to be developed further. Paradigms from family sociology and criminology need to be brought together to form new hypotheses. The second reason is that empirical studies on the consequences of imprisonment for the partners of prisoners have rarely been conducted. One need only to search for studies on prisoners' families and it is clear that the vast majority focuses on prisoners' children (see, for example, overviews in Murray (2005) and Wildeman and Muller (2012)). Moreover, studies in this field most often focus on the negative effects of incarceration, thereby overlooking the possibility that for some prisoners' partners imprisonment may have positive consequences (Sampson, 2011; Turanovic et al., 2012). Third, the work that is available is rarely systematic (Chui, 2009; Wildeman et al., 2012, Cooke, 2014). Since the first systematic study on prisoners' partners in 1965, "almost every study on prisoners' families emphasized the lack of statistics on families of prisoners and stressed the need for statistics to be gathered" (Woodward, 2003, p. 47). However, the work since then has mostly been based on small samples, from a specific geographical area, such as women who visited their imprisoned partners in a certain prison (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Comfort, 2008; Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012). Moreover, longitudinal research designs are virtually inexistent (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). It is necessary to develop a detailed profile of the population of prisoners' partners (Cooke, 2014). With such a profile, the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners can be studied and it can then be estimated to what extent findings can be generalised.

Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge on prisoners' partners and the ways that imprisonment may affect their lives. While previous studies have brought the field far by describing the ripple effects of imprisonment for prisoners' partners (Breen, 2008), it is time to move the field further and take the research a step beyond describing and study the actual consequences of imprisonment on the lives of prisoners' partners.

1.2 THE GOALS OF THIS STUDY

This dissertation aims to fill in these gaps in the existing research by examining the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners, using a longitudinal quantitative design. Given the fact that criminals are mostly men, in this dissertation we focus on female partners of male prisoners.

This dissertation's *first goal* is to outline a detailed profile of a population of prisoners' partners by studying the demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics of a large group of prisoners' partners. Given that there is reason to assume the group to be heterogeneous in terms of these factors (De Goede et al., 2012), this information can then be used to determine if the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners are partly dependent on their characteristics.

This dissertation also researches consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners and focusses on three areas that have unjustly received very little attention in the academic discourse; the experience of negative reactions, changes in social contacts and wellbeing of prisoners' partners (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016).

Examining the consequences of imprisonment for the social surroundings of partners of prisoners, with a focus on the experience of negative reactions, is this dissertation's *second goal*. Partners of prisoners may have to face negative reactions from the people around them about the imprisonment (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007). However, due to the before mentioned methodological shortcomings, it remains unclear to what extent they experience such reactions, from whom, and how this may be explained (Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). This dissertation therefore researches which factors explain the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from the people around them, such as their family, friend and neighbours.

A different consequence of imprisonment for the social surroundings of prisoners' partners is that they may lose contact with others, such as friends and neighbours (Reidpath et al., 2005; LeBel, 2008). The *third goal* of this dissertation

is therefore to examine to what extent partners of prisoners experience a change in their social contacts. Moreover, this dissertation researches if the experience of negative reactions is related to these changes in the social contacts of prisoners' partners. Namely, if partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from, for example, their friends, they may experience a change in the amount of contact they have with their friends (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Van 't Hoff-de Goede, van der Lippe, Nieuwbeerta, Dirkzwager, & Reef, 2014). A causal relationship, however, has not yet been established.

The *fourth goal* of this dissertation is to research consequences of imprisonment for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, focussing on subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction. We expect that imprisonment affects the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, but is not clear beforehand in what way. On the one hand, being separated from one's partner can be detrimental for one's wellbeing, as has been found in the cases of deployment and bereavement (Burkhauser, Giles, Lillard, & Schwarze, 2005; Bauserman, 2012). On the other hand, if your spouse is a criminal and possibly addicted or violent, their imprisonment may be a welcome relief (Turanovic et al., 2012). Moreover, the wellbeing of prisoners' partners is likely affected by their social surroundings (Sayce, 1998; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Bada, Balogun, & Adejuwon, 2014a). In difficult times, family and friends are an important source for support (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969; Neyer & Lang, 2003; Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013). Increased contact with the people around them may make it easier for partners of prisoners to resolve negative feelings about the imprisonment (Bada et al., 2014a; Hannem & Leonardi, 2015). However, these people may also express negative reactions about the imprisonment and pull back from contact with the prisoners' partner, which may have a negative impact on her wellbeing (Turanovic et al., 2012; Bada, Balogun, & Adejuwon, 2014b). Therefore, this dissertation researches if the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contacts are related to wellbeing for prisoners' partners, while taking several characteristics of partners of prisoners into account.

1.3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Theories on the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners are still in the early stages. This dissertation therefore brings several theories that were developed in other research areas of family sociology and criminology together to form expectations about the characteristics, experience of negative reactions, social contacts and wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Homogamy theory is used to

form the expectations about the characteristics of prisoners' partners as compared to those of the prisoners (Kalmijn, 1998; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Expectations about the consequences of imprisonment for the experience of negative reactions and social contacts of partners of prisoners are based on stigma theory (Goffman, 1963). Finally, Amato's (2000) adaptation of family stress and coping theory is used to form expectations about the positive and negative consequences of imprisonment for the wellbeing of prisoners' partners.

1.3.1 Homogamy theory

Theories on homogamy allow forming expectations about partner similarity among prisoners and their partners. It is often argued that people are likely to be in a relationship with someone who resembles them, due to 1) assortative mating and 2) the process of influence (Kalmijn, 1998; McPherson et al., 2001; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). Assortative mating is the selection of a partner that is similar to oneself, and this is caused either by someone preferring a partner similar to them, because the opportunities led them to a similar partner or because others influenced their partner choice (Kalmijn, 1998; McPherson et al., 2001). Second, the reinforcing process of influence causes partners to become more similar as they are together longer because they influence each other's behaviour and attitudes. For example, according to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and differential association theory (Sutherland, 1947) criminal behaviour can be learned from a criminal partner. Therefore, prisoners and their partners may be similar with respect to demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics. Moreover, due to partner influence, these partner similarities may be greater among partners who were living together than dating partners. Finally, since there are far more male criminals than female, many male prisoners with a partner must have "married up" and have found a non-criminal partner (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Therefore, they may have also "married up" in terms of other characteristics, meaning that the prisoner's partner might be, for example, educated better than the prisoner. This would mean that partner similarity is larger for couples of whom both partners are criminal.

1.3.2 Stigma theory

Expectations about the consequences of imprisonment for the social surroundings of partners of prisoners can be deducted from stigma theory (Goffman, 1963). Stigmatized individuals possess a characteristic that is devalued in society (LeBel, 2008). Members of a stigmatized group find themselves discriminated against by others (Reidpath, Chan, Gifford, & Allotey, 2005; LeBel, 2008). A stigma can also stem from a relationship with another. This is called a courtesy stigma or stigma

by association (Goffman, 1963). For partners of prisoners, a courtesy stigma means being regarded “as one” with the prisoner (Goffman, 1963) and being treated like a criminal (Fishman, 1990; Granja, 2016).

Members of a stigmatized group may suffer from negative reactions as a result of this stigma (Reidpath et al., 2005; LeBel, 2008). Stigma theory predicts that partners of prisoners, as stigmatized individuals, encounter negative reactions to a different extent, depending on the network group and several contributing factors. For example, partners of prisoners may encounter negative reactions to a different degree from family than neighbours (Morris, 1965; Moerings, 1977). An example of a contributing factor is that partners of prisoners may encounter more negative reactions if they remain in a relationship with the prisoner than if they end the relationship, because others may feel that their stigma is voluntary, since it is the prisoners’ partner’s choice to remain in the relationship with the prisoner.

Stigmatised individuals often feel that others avoid them (Reidpath et al., 2005; LeBel, 2008). For partners of prisoners, their courtesy stigma may cause them to experience a decrease in their social contacts. The negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience, due to stigma, may also influence their social contacts (Goffman, 1963; Kurzban & Leary, 2001). For example, prisoners’ partners may not want to spend time with people who have given them negative reactions about the imprisonment (Link, Struening, Rahav, Phelan, & Nuttbrock, 1997; Sayce, 1998). On the one hand, this may be true for different network groups. On the other hand, negative reactions may have less of an effect on prisoners’ partners’ social contact with people who they have a close, intimate and stable relationship with, such as their family, than acquaintances, such as neighbours (Moerings, 1977). Moreover, because family is an important source of support in troubling times, partners of prisoners may even increase their contact with their family if they experience negative reactions from, for example, their friends (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969; Neyer & Lang, 2003; Wrzus et al., 2013; Shehadeh, Dawani, Saed, Derluyn, & Loots, 2016).

1.3.3 Family stress and coping theory

In order to form expectations about the consequences of imprisonment for the well-being of partners of prisoners, we use Amato’s (2000) adaptation of family stress and coping theory (Hill, 1949; McCubbin, Cauble, & Patterson, 1982), called the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective. We apply the rationale of this theory on the consequences of divorce to the case of prisoners’ partners.

According to the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective, people’s adjustment to a stressful family event, in this case imprisonment of one’s partner, depends on two factors: the a) accumulation of stressors and b) protective factors (Amato, 2000).

Stressors are stressful events, caused by the imprisonment, that negatively affect the wellbeing of prisoners' partners. Protective factors are the resources prisoners' partners may have for coping with this stress, that act as shock absorbers (Amato, 2000). Thus, the consequences of imprisonment on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners may be dependent on the presence of a variety of stressors and protective factors. For example, the experience of negative reactions and the loss of social contacts may be stressors. Experiencing hostile or disapproving remarks can intensify the pain of losing a partner to imprisonment (Turanovic et al., 2012) and may thus negatively affect the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Also, contact with friends is important for wellbeing and loss of such contacts may have a great deteriorating effect on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners (Moerings & Ter Haar, 1990; Turanovic et al., 2012). Fortunately, partners of prisoners may also have several protective factors; resources for coping with the stress of imprisonment. For example, increased contact with family for support may make it easier for partners of prisoners to resolve negative feelings about the imprisonment (Wang & Amato, 2000; Bada et al., 2014a; Shehadeh et al., 2016). Also, now that the prisoner is absent, partners of prisoners may experience more peace and quiet at home, especially if the prisoner was abusive or addicted. This may increase the wellbeing of partners of prisoners (Turanovic et al., 2012).

1.4 PRIOR EMPIRICAL STUDIES ON PARTNERS OF PRISONERS

Roughly fifty years ago in the United Kingdom, Morris (1965) completed the first systematic study of prisoners' families. Since then, numerous academics have argued that more large scale studies on prisoners' families should be undertaken. Unfortunately, since then systematic empirical studies on the consequences of imprisonment for the families of prisoners have mainly focused on prisoners' children (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012). Given the shortage of relevant large scale studies, qualitative studies are perhaps the richest source of information on partners of prisoners (Wildeman & Muller, 2012). These studies, primarily small scale, have uncovered in-depth information about prisoners' partners.

Below, prior quantitative and qualitative (inter)national work on the characteristics, social surroundings and wellbeing of partners of prisoners and their shortcomings are discussed in order to show how the current study progresses on previous work. More extensive overviews of the literature will be provided in the empirical chapters of this dissertation (*chapter 2-5*).

1.4.1 Characteristics of prisoners' partners

Research on the characteristics of prisoners and their partners and the possible similarities between them is extremely rare. The three most prominent studies that focused on homogamy among prisoners and their partners are discussed. The first study focused on criminal homogamy and has found that 26/37 percent of the 126 female prisoners had been in a relationship with respectively a property or drug criminal in the last three years (Carbone-Lopez & Kruttschnitt, 2009). Given the differences between male and female criminals, it is unclear to what extent this finding can be generalized to male prisoners. The second study focused on the demographic characteristics of 20 prisoners and their partners and has found partner similarity for ethnicity, but not for age: partners of prisoners were often younger than the prisoners (Comfort et al., 2005). The third study examined the characteristics of 172 recently released male prisoners and their female partners (Wildeman et al., 2013). These former prisoners and their partners resembled each other in the areas of demographic factors, being poor, having health insurance, health problems, drug use, and criminal justice contact. The results, however, should be interpreted carefully due to methodological issues and the fact that data was gathered up to a year after release from prison.

1.4.2 The social surroundings of partners of prisoners

The available studies mostly agree that imprisonment can deeply affect the social surroundings of prisoners' partners. Partners of prisoners may experience negative reactions (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Codd, 2000; Condry, 2007; Chui, 2016). However, while some studies have found a high prevalence of negative reactions experienced by partners of prisoners (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Chui, 2016), other studies have found the experience to be less common (Morris, 1965; Jongman & Steenhuis, 1975; Van Genabeek & Godefrooy, 1982). The extent to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions depends on the network groups that gives the negative reactions. For example, studies have indicated that partners of prisoners experienced negative reactions to a greater extent from their neighbours than from their family (Morris, 1965; Moerings, 1977).

Also, there are several factors that may influence the experience of negative reactions. For example, it has been found that partners of first-time prisoners experience more negative reactions than partners of repeat-offenders (Morris, 1965; Lowenstein, 1986; Condry, 2007). Also, partners of prisoners may experience more negative reactions if they are on welfare (Davies, 1980), unemployed (Uggen, Manza, & Behrens, 2004; Condry, 2007), have a poor financial situation or use illegal substances (LeBel, 2008). However, these studies have methodological shortcomings

and samples were often too small to uncover variations and establish actual group differences (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016).

Other studies focused on the social contacts of partners of prisoners and have found that these mostly diminished due to the imprisonment (Fishman, 1990; Yeşilgöz, 1990; Miedema, 2000; Condry, 2007). However, a possible relationship between experienced negative reactions and changes in social contacts of partners of prisoners has rarely been examined. In-depth studies have suggested that partners of prisoners avoided contact with persons who had expressed negative feelings about their husband's imprisonment (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007). A causal relationship, however, has not yet been established because quantitative research on this topic is virtually inexistent.

1.4.3 The wellbeing of partners of prisoners

Systematic studies on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners are rare. The three most prominent systematic studies will be mentioned. In 1977, a systematic study on 60 prisoners' wives was published in The Netherlands (Moerings, 1977). Its primary goal was to see what imprisonment really means for prisoners and the people around them and which problems are caused by the imprisonment. More recently, the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study focused on the wellbeing of 1492 mothers with children by ever incarcerated fathers (Wildeman et al., 2012; Bruns, 2015, 2017). Logically, this also encompassed a group of prisoners' partners. Finally, the influence of social support, religion and education for psychological wellbeing was studied among 109 female partners of prisoners in Nigeria (Bada et al., 2014a, 2014b).

The available quantitative and qualitative studies that examined how imprisonment affects the wellbeing of partners of prisoners have had mixed results. While some studies have found that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners deteriorated when the prisoner was imprisoned (Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Woodward, 2003; Braman, 2004; Condry, 2007), causing partners of prisoners, for example, to feel stressed and drained (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Hannem & Leonardi, 2015), there is also evidence that partners of prisoners may benefit in terms of their wellbeing from the imprisonment of their spouse (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Turanovic et al., 2012).

Some studies shed light on factors that may influence how imprisonment affects the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. For example, how imprisonment affects the financial situation of partners of prisoners may furthermore affect their wellbeing (Turanovic et al., 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012; Bruns, 2015, 2017). Also, the negative reactions and change in social contacts that partners of prisoners experience may influence their wellbeing (Woodward 2003; Turanovic et al., 2012; Bada et al., 2014a,

2014b). Finally, experiencing more peace and quiet at home now that the prisoner is incarcerated may positively affect the wellbeing of prisoners' partners (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Turanovic et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, the factors that may influence the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners have previously not been studied simultaneously. Moreover, contradictory findings from previous studies have not yet been explained. For that reason, more research into the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, focussing on a wide range of contributing factors, is needed.

1.4.4 Shortcomings of prior empirical studies

While previous studies have contributed to the field, their results should be interpreted cautiously due to some shortcomings. Previous studies have often focused on marital relationships alone (Krueger, Moffitt, Caspi, Bleske, & Silva, 1998; Comfort, 2007; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007; Wildeman et al., 2013; Rodriguez, 2016), thereby ignoring the non-marital romantic relationships of prisoners. Moreover, because data are not systematically collected on the romantic relationships of prisoners, we do not know how many prisoners have a partner (Paylor & Smith, 1994; Murray, 2005; Comfort, 2007; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Geller, Jaeger, & Pace, 2016; Wakefield et al., 2016).

The primary shortcoming of the homogamy research area is the lack of studies into the topic of partner resemblance for (male) prisoners and their partners. Moreover, the available studies have had a narrow focus on criminal and demographic characteristics of prisoners and their partners only, and excluded others, such as socioeconomic, health and substance use characteristics.

Furthermore, knowledge on the social surroundings and wellbeing of partners of prisoners is lacking (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Previous studies on the social surroundings and wellbeing of partners of prisoners have almost exclusively been qualitative in nature. Making statements about causal relationships is therefore difficult (Wakefield et al., 2016). Since most previous studies used small samples and often focused on women who visited their imprisoned partners often or joined a support group (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Comfort, 2008), or focused on partners of prisoners who had a child with the prisoner (Turanovic et al., 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012), or were based in a non-western country (Chui, 2009; Bada et al., 2014a, 2014b; Foca, 2015), making generalising statements is, likewise, problematic (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Also, since existing knowledge comes from the US or the UK, or from the Netherlands in the 1970-1990's, contemporary Dutch research is lacking. Moreover, even though imprisonment can have positive consequences for partners of prisoners,

most previous studies have focused only on the negative effects of incarceration (Sampson, 2011; Turanovic et al., 2012). Finally, longitudinal research focusing on the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners is rarely conducted.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THIS STUDY

Building on previous work, the four empirical research chapters of this dissertation correspond with its four goals (described in paragraph 1.2). They pose research questions that address previously unexplored areas in the field of consequences of imprisonment or revisit topics that have not been researched with use of large scale, longitudinal data. Table 1.1 offers an overview of these research questions and Figure 1.1 represents a visual overview of this dissertation's empirical chapters.

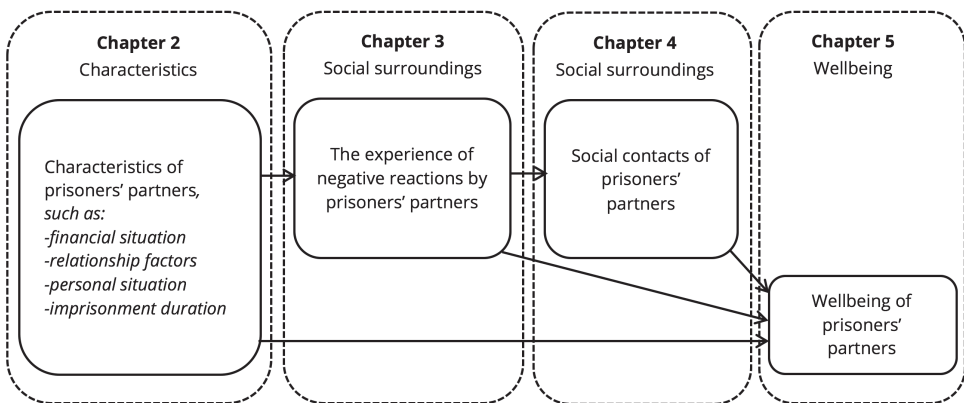


Figure 1.1 Schematic overview of this dissertation's empirical chapters

The first empirical chapter (*chapter 2*) compares the demographic, socio-economic, behavioural and criminal characteristics of prisoners and their partners (RQ1). Moreover, it researches if prisoners and their partners are more similar to each other a) if they were living together before the imprisonment (versus not living together) or b) if the partners also engage in criminal behaviour (versus partner is not criminal). In doing so, this chapter outlines a detailed profile of a population of prisoners' partners. Based on this profile, we can determine to what extent findings from the following chapters, based on a smaller subsample, can be generalised. Moreover, several of the characteristics from this chapter are revisited in later chapters in order to determine if the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners are partly dependent on their characteristics.

Table 1.1 Overview of research questions in this dissertation

Chapter	Research question	Dependent variable(s)	Independent variables
2	RQ 1. Are prisoners and their partners similar to each other with respect to demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics? And, are prisoners and their partners more similar to each other if they were living together before the imprisonment than dating? And, are prisoners and their partners more similar to each other if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not?	Demographic – Socioeconomic – Behavioural – Criminal characteristics of partners of prisoners	Demographic – Socioeconomic – Behavioural – Criminal characteristics of prisoners
3	RQ 2. To what extent do partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from different network groups (family, family-in-law, friends and neighbours)? And, which factors are related to these experienced negative reactions?	Experience of negative reactions	Characteristics of the crime Relationship factors Negative personal circumstances
4	RQ 3. Do partners of prisoners experience a change in their social contacts with family, family in law, friends and neighbours, since the start of the imprisonment? And, to what extent can this be explained by the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience from these groups?	Changes in social contacts with -family -friends -family in law -neighbours	Experience of negative reactions from -family -friends -family in law -neighbours
5	RQ 4. Do prisoners' partners experience a change in their wellbeing since the start of the imprisonment? And, which factors influence the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners over time?	Subjective wellbeing Life satisfaction	Stressors (deterioration of financial situation, experience of negative reactions, decreased contact with friends) Protective factors (improvement of financial situation, increased contact with family, more peace and quiet at home)

Moving onto the topic of consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners, this dissertation investigates the social surroundings of partners of imprisonment in two empirical chapters. *Chapter 3* aims to provide insight into one of the negative consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners, namely the experience of negative reactions, and the role that different factors may play. This chapter examines to what extent partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from different network groups, and tests if this can be explained by characteristics of the crime (e.g. severity of the offence the prisoner committed) relationship factors (e.g. living together before imprisonment), and negative personal circumstances (e.g. having a poor financial situation) (RQ2). *Chapter 4* examines the social contacts of partners of prisoners with their family, family in law, friends and neighbours. It investigates to what extent partners of prisoners experience a change in their social contacts since the start of the imprisonment and tests if these changes in social contact can be explained by the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience (RQ3). Together, *chapter 3 and 4* provide insight into the consequences of imprisonment for the social surroundings of partners of prisoners, and also serve as a stepping stool for examining the consequences of these changes in their social surroundings for the wellbeing of prisoners' partners in the next chapter.

Finally, *chapter 5* studies how the wellbeing of partners of prisoners may change, in a negative or positive way, after the prisoner is incarcerated. It researches what factors determine how imprisonment affects the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners (RQ4). This chapter brings together the factors from *chapters 2, 3 and 4*, namely the characteristics and social surroundings of partners of prisoners, to explain the changes in the wellbeing of prisoners' partners. This chapter intends to increase knowledge concerning the theoretical mechanisms underlying the effect of imprisonment on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners, such as increased contact with family and a deterioration of their financial situation.

1.6 DATA

To answer the research questions, a unique research sample on the lives of prisoners and their partners is analysed. The analyses in this dissertation are based on data from the Prison Project. The Prison Project is a large-scale, longitudinal research project in The Netherlands that studies the effects of imprisonment on the lives of prisoners, their partners and their children (Dirkzwager et al., 2018).

1.6.1 Data on the characteristics of prisoners and their partners

The first empirical chapter (*chapter 2*) compares the characteristics of prisoners and their partners based on data that was gathered in the Prison Project. The Prison project targeted men who entered a Dutch detention facility between October 2010 and April 2011. These detainees qualified for participation if they were male, aged between 18 and 65, in pre-trial detention¹, born in the Netherlands² and did not suffer from severe psychological problems that prevented active study-participation.

The incarcerated men that participated in the Prison Project were approached when they were still in pre-trial detention. Thus, they were technically still “detainees” at that time; they were incarcerated during the period leading up to their trial and not (yet) convicted. Over the course of the year of data collection in the Prison Project, most detainees were convicted and their status either changed to prisoner or they were released upon sentencing. In order to prevent confusion, and to make a clear connection to previous studies on the consequences of imprisonment for prisoners’ partners, this dissertation refers to these incarcerated men as “prisoners” throughout.

Of the 3,981 prisoners who entered a Dutch detention facility in the research period and qualified for participation, 2,837 (71 percent) were successfully contacted and 1,904 (67 percent) of them participated in the study. The computer assisted personal interview (CAPI) took place in a private room and prisoners filled out written questionnaires in their own cells, one about themselves and one, if applicable, about their partner (Dirkzwager & Nieuwebeerta, 2014a). This wave took place three weeks after the prisoners had entered a Dutch detention facility.

The data from the respondents was supplemented using registered data from administrative sources. Records from the General Documentation Files (GDF) of the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice were used (also called Research and Policy Database of Judicial Documentation (OBJD)). This data contained detailed information about the current offence, criminal history and previous imprisonment.

Using registered data, it was tested if the 1,904 respondents differed from the non-respondents and the prisoners who were not approached. Respondents on

1 Thus, prisoners who were convicted to a short sentence or released after trial are included in the study, but prisoners who entered a Dutch detention facility after conviction are not.
2 Prisoners born outside the Netherlands are not included because they often leave the country sometime after their release (and are thus hard to follow up on) and because of language problems.

average had a higher age of onset (19 vs. 17), fewer previous convictions (8 vs. 10) and fewer previous prison spells (3 vs. 5) than non-respondents. Moreover, participants were more often employed before the imprisonment (46 vs. 39 percent) and their actual time served was higher (5 vs. 4 months). There were very small (negligible) differences found on age, marital status and offence type between the two groups (Cuyper, Dirkzwager, Völker, Van der Laan & Nieuwbeerta, 2013; Ramakers, 2014).

In order to determine if prisoners had a partner, they were asked during the first wave if they were in a romantic relationship that started at least three months before the arrest. Of the 1,904 prisoners 50 percent (N=954) indicated that they were in a relationship with a partner for at least three months. Of the prisoners who were in a relationship, 78 percent (N=747) filled out an extensive questionnaire about the characteristics of their partner. This questionnaire included questions about ethnicity, religion, education, employment, health, criminal behaviour, drug use, alcohol use and diverse questions about their relationship before and during the imprisonment, such as relationship satisfaction, division of household chores and domestic violence (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014a).

1.6.2 Data from partners of prisoners

Previous studies that researched the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners often either only had information about the prisoners (and no information about their partners) or collected information about prisoners' partners from the prisoners (Lopoo & Western, 2005; Apel, Blokland, Nieuwbeerta, & Van Schellen, 2010; Massoglia, Remster, & King, 2011). Previous studies that did try to collect data from partners of prisoners have found it difficult to reach this population (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Comfort, 2008). Partners of prisoners usually only become visible when they visit a prison or join a support group and previous studies have therefore approached partners in these contexts (e.g. Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Comfort, 2008). These studies thus excluded partners who did not visit the prison or a support group, among them partners who ended their relationship with the prisoner. There is, however, another way to reach partners of prisoners: through the prisoners themselves.

The other three empirical chapters (*chapters 3, 4 and 5*) of this dissertation used data from the Home Project. As part of the Prison Project, the Home Project studies the effects of imprisonment on the lives of prisoners' partners and children. The Home Project was able to approach a large number of prisoners from the Prison Project about contacting their partner. This made it possible for us to contact a comparatively large group of prisoners' partners. Of the 954 prisoners from the Prison Project who had a partner, 744 gave the Home Project permission to approach their

partner for the research, and 542 of them gave the researchers contact information to reach the partner.

As the Home Project research coordinator, I initiated the data collection four months after the first prisoners had entered a Dutch detention facility. The first wave of data collection took place roughly six months after the start of the imprisonment³. The contact information that was provided by the prisoners was checked to make sure it was a real address and/or telephone number, and was supplemented with contact information from the probation office and online search engines. The 542 partners were approached, and the researchers were able to find 299 partners⁴. These prisoners' partners were asked to participate in the research in a personalised letter (in an envelope that also contained a brochure about the study, the questionnaire and a reply envelope) and/or, if their phone number was available to the researchers, during a telephone call with one of the researchers or trained research assistant (see Appendix A). A common reaction, that was also found in previous studies (Fishman, 1990), was that these women were grateful that someone was paying attention to them, their children and their situation. They expressed how all of the attention normally is addressed to the prisoner and that we were the first "institution" to be interested in how they were doing themselves.

Partners were promised an incentive; a gift voucher of 10 euros for participating in the study. In order to raise response rates, we send reminder letters after two weeks. If we had been unable to make contact with a partner after four weeks, a second invitation to participate (with questionnaire) was send. Partners who had agreed to participate (during a phone call), but had not yet filled out the questionnaire, were called once a week in the evening as a reminder⁵.

A total of 155 female partners of male prisoners participated in the first wave. Participants filled out a questionnaire about themselves and, if applicable, about

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- 3 At first we tried to reach out to the 542 prisoners' partners exactly four months after the prisoner had entered a Dutch detention facility. However, because prisoners had entered detention facilities everyday over a period of six months, this became unmanageable. Therefore we decided to divide the 542 prisoners' partners into three groups, based on the month that the prisoner was imprisoned. We then approached all the prisoners' partners in one of these groups at once. Thus, partners of prisoners were approached around six months after the prisoner had entered a detention facility, with a margin of one month (so between 5 and 7 months after the prisoner had entered the detention facility). On average, partners participated 5.4 months after the start of the imprisonment.
 - 4 The contact information for the other partners turned out to be false or too incomplete to get into contact with them.
 - 5 Contact the author for more information about the data collection process as well as for the study brochure and formats for contact and response sheets.

each of their children. These were questionnaires on paper that had to be submitted through the mail (free of charge). The questionnaire about themselves contained questions about ethnicity, religion, education, employment and income (before the imprisonment and current), personality and personal attributes (current and before the age of 16), hobbies, criminal behaviour, their relationship before the imprisonment (relationship satisfaction, division of household chores and domestic violence), their relationship during imprisonment (disappointment, contact, visiting, plans for future) and the experience of negative reactions. Moreover, we asked if and how the following life domains had changed since the start of the imprisonment: social contacts, financial situation (income, welfare), wellbeing (life satisfaction, subjective wellbeing, confidence, loneliness), relationship, home situation, alcohol and drug use, physical and psychological health, raising children and relationship satisfaction (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014b). Partners were also asked for updated contact information and email addresses in order to optimise the response rate in the second wave.

The second wave took place twelve months after the start of the imprisonment⁶. The 155 partners of prisoners who participated in the first wave received a personalised email and/or letter asking them to participate in the study again. One or two weeks later, I personally called every respondent in order to increase response rates. If partners agreed to participate, I called them each week, switching between the morning, afternoon and evening, to kindly remind them to fill in their questionnaire. Partners were again promised an incentive; a gift voucher for each questionnaire that was filled out fully (20 euros for the questionnaire about themselves and, if applicable, 5 euros for each questionnaire filled out about one of their children).

A total of 119 (77 percent) partners of prisoners participated again in the second wave. In wave two the questionnaire(s) could either be filled out on paper, and submitted through the mail (free of charge), or online (a personal link was sent by email). The questionnaire for wave two contained several new questions: we asked about the biggest disadvantages and advantages they experienced due to the imprisonment, their contact with workers in the field of imprisonment (e.g. lawyers, parole, social workers), their health after the imprisonment (if applicable), if they ever experienced any of the events from a provided list (e.g. living in foster care, being

6 At wave two, the division into three groups is maintained (approached twelve months after the start of the imprisonment with a margin on one month). On average, partners participated 13.3 months after the start of the imprisonment.

homeless, suffering severe trauma, severe family problems) and (if applicable) how their relationship with the prisoner ended. Furthermore, it repeated questions from wave one about their current employment and income, personal attributes, hobbies, criminal behaviour and their relationship during imprisonment (disappointment, contact, visiting, plans for future). Moreover, we again asked if and how the following life domains had changed since the start of the imprisonment: social contacts, financial situation (income, welfare), wellbeing (life satisfaction, subjective wellbeing, confidence, loneliness), relationship, home situation, alcohol and drug use, physical and psychological health, raising children and relationship satisfaction (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014b).

Due to the limited response rate (119 out of a potential 954 partners of prisoners), the selectivity of the sample was investigated. The 119 participating partners were compared with non-participating partners of prisoners from the Prison Project, based on data from the 747 questionnaires that were filled out by the prisoners. Respondents are older (33 vs. 29 years old), more often married (33 vs. 14 percent) or living together while unmarried (40 vs. 29 percent), more often have a Dutch ethnic background (72 vs. 62 percent), less often go to school (10 vs. 18 percent) and use drugs less often (17 vs. 22 percent). The differences between these groups in the other areas (education, employment/unemployment, problematic drug and alcohol use, criminal behaviour and having been arrested or imprisoned) are negligible (De Goede et. al., 2012). Nevertheless, given the relatively low response rate, results should be interpreted cautiously.

We note that the timing of both Home Project waves was dependent on the timing of the start of the incarceration of the prisoner. All prisoners' partners were approached around six (wave 1) and twelve (wave 2) months after the prisoner had been incarcerated. Because prisoners serve different lengths of imprisonment spells, this could mean that the prisoner had already been released at the time of the Home Project data collection. Also, prisoners had indicated to be in a romantic relationship at the start of their incarceration, but these relationships could have ended by the time the Home Project collected its data. Therefore, at both waves, partners could participate independent of whether or not the prisoner was still imprisoned and whether or not they were still a couple at that time. We controlled for these differences in the analyses of *chapters 3, 4 and 5*.

1.7 INNOVATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The studies described in this dissertation make substantial scientific progress in several areas. First, this dissertation contributes to the literature by addressing unexplored research areas in the field of unintended secondary consequences of imprisonment, in particular the consequences of imprisonment for experience of negative reactions, social contacts and wellbeing of prisoners' partners. Moreover, this dissertation revisits research questions from a new perspective by quantitatively measuring concepts that had previously mostly been the scope of qualitative in-depth studies.

Second, this dissertation aims to make theoretical contributions. New hypotheses are tested regarding the characteristics of partners of prisoners and the effects of imprisonment on the experience of negative reactions, social contacts and wellbeing of partners of prisoners, based on sociological and criminological theories, such as a) homogamy theory, b) stigma theory and c) family stress and coping theory. Thereby, this study is one of the first to apply homogamy theory to this new group of couples (i.e. prisoners and their partners). Moreover, the chapters focussing on the experience of negative reactions and the social contacts of partners of prisoners compare different network groups and study how the expectations derived from stigma theory apply to family, friends, family in law and neighbours. Furthermore, this dissertation applies a theory that has been developed to explain the effects of divorce on families, Amato's (2000) divorce-stress-adjustment perspective, to the case of prisoners' partners.

Third, methodological progress is made by addressing the research questions using unique large scaled, detailed and longitudinal survey data from the Netherlands. The data contains information about both prisoners and their partners, which is a great advantage for studying the characteristics of prisoners and their partners, compared to studies with data on only the prisoner (Lopoo & Western, 2005; Apel, Blokland, Nieuwbeerta, & Van Schellen, 2010; Massoglia, Remster, & King, 2011; Turney, 2015b; Apel, 2016) or the partner (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Foca, 2015) because it allows us to not only compare their characteristics (something that has been rarely done before) but also to control for factors relating to both the prisoners and their partners when estimating effect sizes. Also, this data focuses on a comparatively large group of prisoners' partners. Because the study was carried out nationwide, participating prisoners' partners were living all around the country, and were connected to all the detention facilities in the country, making the data's scale unique. Its location, The Netherlands, adds a new country to existing recent studies. Furthermore, this dissertation's data is unique in that it includes partners of

prisoners who were incarcerated for all types and severities of crimes, in all types of romantic relationships (dating, living together, married), and did not exclude partners of prisoners who have ended the relationship with the prisoner since the start of the imprisonment. Moreover, whereas previous studies have mainly focused only on the deteriorating effects of incarceration (Sampson, 2011; Turanovic et al., 2012) the current study investigates if imprisonment can have positive consequences for partners of prisoners. Finally, this study is one of the first to research the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners over time.

1.8 IMPRISONMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

Since this study was conducted in The Netherlands, it is relevant to provide some background information on the Dutch correctional system and its implications for partners of prisoners. Even though crime trends in The Netherlands have been comparable to most European countries, prison rates stand out in a European context. While the Dutch penal system was considered to be the most liberal and humane among Western countries in the 1970s, and the incarceration rates were the lowest in Europe, the country experienced a rapid prison expansion in the three decades thereafter. Around 2004, The Netherlands even had one of the highest prison rates in Western Europe, but since then there has been a clear decline in the number of persons in confinement (Boone & Van Swaaningen, 2013). Compared to most Western European countries and the United States, a large portion of the Dutch prison population consists of pre-trial detainees (40 percent versus 20 percent) (Walmsley, 2017). Detainees are incarcerated on a “pre-trial” title for a maximum of 110 days, after which the trial starts (Rijksoverheid, 2017a). Since trials for serious offences can be lengthy, they may remain incarcerated without being convicted for a long time after that. Although the duration of imposed prison sentences has increased in The Netherlands (Linckens, Valstar & Van Gemmert, 2015), they are relatively short compared to, for example, the United States where the average prison sentence was two years in 2010 (Guerino, Harrison, & Sabol, 2011). In 2012⁷ in The Netherlands, an average prison spell lasted less than four months, and over 80 percent of all Dutch prisoners were incarcerated for a maximum of six months (Linckens & De Loeff, 2013).

Once incarcerated, prisoners have the right to keep contact with their partner through phone calls, mail and one hour-long supervised visit per week (Rijksoverheid,

7 Data collection for the current study took place in 2010-2012.

2017b), unless they have been given restrictions⁸ by a judge. These rights are outlined in pamphlets, available in many different languages and are both handed out to inmates and easily accessible online (Rijksoverheid, 2017b). Unsupervised visits are only permitted for inmates serving long-term sentences (Tonry & Bijleveld, 2007).

Prisoners' partners, however, are not informed by any legal or other agency of their rights. They only find out that their boyfriend or husband is imprisoned, and where, when he is allowed and able to make a phone call to them (Rijksoverheid, 2017b). No pamphlets are currently available to inform prisoners' partners on how to get in touch with their imprisoned partner or how they might send money or goods and these details are also hard to find online. In practice, partners often have to be informed of the possibilities by the prisoners themselves⁹. If the prisoner has been given restrictions by a judge, the prisoner is not allowed to contact or see his partner and the only source of information for his partner is his attorney.

But even if the prisoner has not been given restrictions, contact is difficult and costly. The first phone call that a prisoner's partner receives from the prisoner is short and has to be used to receive the prisoners' identification number, because the prisoner needs money for further contact with his partner and his partner can only transfer money if she has this number. Prisoners' partners are not allowed to make phone calls to the prisoner and can only come see him when the prisoner organises a visit, so they can only initiate contact by sending letters or email (that is printed and delivered to the prisoner by prison staff). Visitation is often difficult to organise, since this is only possible during weekdays, and taking time off from work and organising day care for children can be problematic. This means that many partners of prisoners do not see their partner face to face for great lengths of time. When they do visit, partners of prisoners are confronted with a harsh environment and invasive searches.

8 In the interest of the trial or the safety of others, some prisoners are given restrictions ("in beperkingen") by a judge and cannot have contact with persons other than their attorney.

9 A prison guard that I spoke to, for example, found out in his private time that there is a website with information on transferring money to inmates, and since then tells inmates to explain to their partners/family how to find this website via google.





CHAPTER 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTNERS OF PRISONERS

A slightly different version of this chapter was published in Dutch as: De Goede, M.S., Nieuwbeerta, P., van der Lippe, A.G., Dirkzwager, J.E., & Reef, J. (2012). Overeenkomsten tussen Nederlandse gedetineerden en hun partners op het gebied van demografische, sociaaleconomische en criminele kenmerken. *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie*, 33(3-4), 487-503. Van 't Hoff-de Goede wrote the main part of the manuscript and conducted the analyses. Nieuwbeerta, Van der Lippe and Dirkzwager substantially contributed to the manuscript. Dirkzwager, Nieuwbeerta, Reef and Van 't Hoff-de Goede contributed to the data collection. The authors jointly developed the idea and design of the study. The authors also thank Jesper Rözer, Hilde Wermink and Sara Geven for their valuable comments.

ABSTRACT

Even though partners of prisoners are ascribed an important role in facilitating desistance after imprisonment, knowledge about partners of prisoners is lacking. This study presents a criminological analysis of the similarities between the characteristics of male prisoners and their female partners. Data from the Prison Project from 2011 on 1904 prisoners and 747 partners was analysed. To examine the resemblance between prisoners and their partners, odds ratios were estimated using logistic regression models. Prisoners and their partners resemble each other greatly on demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics. In contrast to what was expected, partners who were living together before imprisonment, married or not, only resemble each other more than dating partners on one characteristic. Interestingly, prisoners and their partners are more similar to each other on many characteristics when the partner also engaged in criminal activity than when the partners did not. We conclude by considering the importance of these findings for criminological studies which draw conclusions about the effects of romantic relationships on reintegration and desistance.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Eurostat (2017), in 2015, on an average day, roughly 775,000 persons were in prison in Europe. Most of them will re-enter society after their prison sentence. Workers in the field of imprisonment and probation often say that three things are important for desistance after imprisonment: having a house, a job and a partner. Given the importance that is being ascribed to having a partner, it is surprising that “despite major and on-going data collection on many aspects of inmates’ lives, little is known about even their basic family characteristics” (Hairston, 1989, p. 23). Although this was stated in 1989, it still holds true today.

Because data are not systematically collected on the romantic relationships of prisoners, it is even unclear how many prisoners have a partner (Paylor & Smith, 1994; Murray, 2005; Comfort, 2007; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Geller et al., 2016; Wakefield et al., 2016). The studies that have been able to indicate how many prisoners have a partner mostly only focused on marital relationships. In the US, According to the Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities from 1997, 20 percent of prisoners were married (Mumola, 2000). Other studies have found that 30 percent (Arditti et al., 2003) or 16 percent (Hairston, 1989) of the prisoners were married. A US study that included non-marital relationships has found that 58 percent of the 414 prisoners they interviewed were in a committed relationship prior to imprisonment (Grinstead et al., 1999). In Europe, Van Haegendoren, Lenaers and Valgaeren (2001) have found that 19 percent of the 345 Belgian prisoners they interviewed were married. In The Netherlands, Janssen (1999) has found that 45 out of 100 prisoners did not have a partner, 13 were married, 19 were living together while unmarried and 23 were dating a girlfriend. Because of country differences, selection criteria and limited sample sizes, generalizability of these findings is limited. Moreover, given the lack of focus on prisoners who were dating or living together while unmarried, it is unclear how many prisoners were in a stable relationship.

It is also unclear who these partners of prisoners are (Comfort, 2007; Cooke, 2014; Wakefield et al., 2016). Partners of prisoners may have similar characteristics as prisoners themselves, because partners in the general population resemble each other greatly on many characteristics, such as age, socioeconomic status, educational attainment (Mare, 1991; Qian, 1998; Kalmijn, 1998, 2005; Blossfeld, 2009), but also on undesirable characteristics such as antisocial behaviour (Krueger et al., 1998; Galbaud du Fort, Boothroyd, Bland, Newman, & Kakuma 2002; Simons, Stewart, Gordon, Conger, & Elder, 2002; Leonard & Mudar, 2003; Zwirs et al., 2011; Boutwell, Beaver, & Barnes, 2012), drug use (Yamaguchi & Kandel, 1993) and criminal behaviour (Taylor, McGue, & Iacono, 2000; Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001; Haynie, Giordano,

Manning, & Longmore, 2005; Zwirs et al., 2011; Boutwell et al., 2012; Frisell, Pawitan, Långström, & Lichtenstein, 2012). Partner resemblance, however, has been mainly examined in the general population. For criminals and even more for prisoners, “research has been slow to examine how, and in what ways, mates might resemble each other” (Boutwell et al., 2012, p. 1240). Very few studies have been able to study the characteristics of prisoners and their partners simultaneously (Comfort et al., 2005; Carbone-Lopez & Kruttschnitt, 2009; Wildeman et al., 2013).

Insight into the characteristics of partners of prisoners is needed, because the criminal tendencies of prisoners may make it likely that their partner is also criminal, uneducated, out of work or even homeless (Farrington, Jolliffe, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber, & Kalb, 2001; Simons et al., 2002; Haynie et al., 2005; Wildeman et al., 2013). If so, prisoners with, for example, a criminal partner may benefit less from this relationship in terms of desistance than prisoners with a non-criminal partner. It is likely that a criminal partner sustains, or even stimulates, an offender’s engagement in criminal activities (Simons et al., 2002; Haynie et al., 2005; Capaldi, Kim, & Owen, 2008; Van Schellen, 2012). Criminal spouses probably have similar criminal norms and pass on their criminal knowledge and skills (Simons et al., 2002; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). Furthermore, having a criminal partner may increase criminal behaviour because partner similarity for antisocial and criminal behaviour is a risk factor for domestic violence (Kim & Capaldi, 2004), especially among prisoners and their partners (Carbone-Lopez & Kruttschnitt, 2009).

This chapter reports the findings of a study which aimed to extend the current knowledge about characteristics of prisoners in comparison to their spouses. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. Are prisoners and their partners similar to each other with respect to demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics?
2. Are prisoners and their partners more similar to each other if they were living together before the imprisonment than dating?
3. Are prisoners and their partners more similar to each other if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not?

By studying these research questions, our study aims to advance current knowledge in several ways. This is the first study to compare the characteristics of prisoners and their partners using large-scale data on a wide range of factors. The study will not only focus on partner similarity for criminal characteristics, but also on partner similarity for demographic (age, religion), socioeconomic (education, day activities) and behavioural (drug and alcohol use) characteristics. Moreover,

previous studies on partner similarity in criminal populations have often focused on marital relationships alone. Given that criminals have relationships of greater instability (Quinton, Pickles, Maughan, & Rutter, 1993) and are relatively young, it is more informative to not only focus on marital spouses but also on other forms of relationships (Krueger et al., 1998; Comfort, 2007; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007; Wildeman et al., 2013; Rodriguez, 2016). Therefore, this study differentiates between different types of couples by comparing partners who are living together, married or not, to “dating partners”, who were not living together nor married before imprisonment but who were in a relationship for at least three months. Moreover, this study compares partners from couples of which the non-prisoner has shown criminal behaviour and partners from couples of which the non-prisoner is non-criminal, in order to investigate if partners from criminal couples are more similar on other characteristics than partners from non-criminal couples.

This chapter uses data from the Prison Project, a longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands among Dutch prisoners and their families (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). Prisoners qualified for participation if they were male, aged between 18 and 65, in pre-trial detention, were born in the Netherlands and staying there legally. Pre-trial detention means that these prisoners were detained during the period leading up to their trial and were not (yet) convicted at the time that they participated in the study. The prisoners were interviewed in the period between October 2010 – March 2011 (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014a). They were asked about their personal characteristics, their relationship and, if applicable, about the characteristics of their partners (N=954).

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It is often argued that people are likely to be in a relationship with someone who is similar to themselves (Kalmijn, 1998; McPherson et al., 2001; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). This phenomenon, often called homogamy or partner similarity, would mean that prisoners and their partners share characteristics. There are two (cumulative) processes that result in homogamy.

The first process that leads to homogamy is assortative mating; the selection of a partner that is similar to oneself. Researchers have argued that who people are in a relationship with depends on three factors: people's *preferences*, the *opportunities* people have and the influence of *others* (Kalmijn, 1998; McPherson et al., 2001). According to consensual validation theories, criminals may have a *preference* for a criminal partner: someone who understands them and supports their (criminal)

choices and lifestyle and does not disapprove of them (Simons et al., 2002; Knight, 2011). *Opportunities* to meet certain partners further increase the odds that prisoners have a partner that shares their characteristics. The composition of the local marriage market is often quite homogeneous. Opportunities to meet similar others are generally greater than opportunities to meet dissimilar others (Kalmijn 1998; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). Furthermore, criminals have a relatively larger chance to meet each other than non-criminals because criminal activities are often concentrated in certain neighbourhoods (Bernasco & Elffers, 2010) and friendship networks (Warr, 2002). The odds that prisoners end up with a similar partner are further presumed to be influenced by *others*: it is likely that relatives of non-criminals object to a non-criminal starting a relationship with a criminal. By using group identification non-criminals impose norms that prevent group members from being interested in a relationship with a criminal. If a non-criminal does start a relationship with a criminal, others might use sanctions such as disapproval to cause the relationship to end. For this reason it becomes harder for a criminal to choose a non-criminal for a partner. Moreover, there is competition for non-criminal partners. The outcome of this competition for the best possible partner is that persons with the most attractive characteristics have a high likelihood of selecting each other first, leaving the less fortunate to end up together (Kalmijn, 1998). Thus prisoners may end up with partners who are likewise criminal, out of work or even homeless.

Homogamy between prisoners and their partners could also be the result of a second – but reinforcing – process: the process of influence (McPherson et al., 2001; Kalmijn, 1998, 2005). This concerns the process in which partners become more similar as they are together longer because they influence each other's behaviour and attitudes (Kalmijn, 2005). There are different theories that argue that behaviour is learned through the behaviour of others. According to differential association theory (Sutherland, 1947) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) criminal behaviour can be learned from a criminal partner. Someone can also become more and more embedded in the criminal network of his or her partner. In this way, norms, values and knowledge related to criminal behaviour can be transferred (Kalmijn, 2005; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). Through this process, partners can come to resemble each other in criminal behaviour more and more during their relationship. This chapter's first hypothesis therefore is: *Prisoners and their partners are similar in terms of their demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics.*

However, homogamy may differ between types of couples. A first example of this is that partner similarity may be greater among partners who are living together (Knight, 2011), because partner influence starts at the moment of partner selection and is likely to continue to make partners more similar over time, and partners who

are living together are generally in a longer relationship than partners who are not. Also, sharing a household possibly spikes the influence partners have on each other's behaviour. The second hypothesis is as follows: *If a prisoner and his partner shared a household before the imprisonment, their characteristics are more similar than if they did not share a household.*

Second, prisoners and their partners may be more similar to each other on non-criminal characteristics if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not. This is because, since there are far less female than male criminals, many male prisoners with a partner must have "married up" and have found a non-criminal partner (Laub & Sampson, 2003). Therefore, they may have also "married up" in terms of socioeconomic and other characteristics – i.e. the non-criminal partners are more educated and have less substance use problems – and are therefore less similar to the prisoners than a criminal partner would be. Our third and final hypothesis reads: *Prisoners are more similar to their partner if their partner is criminal than if the partner is not criminal.*

2.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON PARTNER SIMILARITY

It is expected that partners of prisoners are likely to resemble the prisoners' characteristics. For example, studies have noted that prisoners' family members, including prisoners' partners, resemble prisoners in the sense that they are often young, from low-income backgrounds and poorly educated (Arditti et al., 2003; Arditti, 2005; Geller et al., 2009; Cooke, 2014). Very few studies on homogamy used a prisoner research sample. The three most prominent studies will be discussed. One study on the assortative mating of female prisoners has found that around 26 percent and 37 percent of the 162 prisoners from Minnesota had been in a relationship with respectively a property or drug criminal in the last three years (Carbone-Lopez & Kruttschnitt, 2009). Given the differences between male and female criminals, it is unclear to what extent this finding can be generalized to male prisoners. The second study (Comfort et al., 2005) has found partner similarity among 20 prisoners and their partners for ethnicity, but not for age: partners of prisoners were often younger than the prisoners. The study did not give information on the criminality of these partners. Finally, Wildeman et al. (2013) studied the health of 172 recently released male prisoners and their female partners. The researchers concluded that the former prisoners and their partners are much alike in the area of demographic factors. Moreover, both groups are likely to be poor and without health insurance and showed high levels of criminal justice contact, drug use and health problems

(Wildeman et al., 2013). These results are noteworthy but should nonetheless be interpreted carefully, because the data was gathered up to a year after release from prison and the study only compared descriptive statistics.

Given the lack of studies on partner similarity among prisoners and their partners, studies that used two other research samples that may shed light on homogamy for prisoners will be discussed; *high risk persons* and *criminals* (See Rhule-Louie & McMahon (2007) and Knight (2011) for a literature reviews). For people from *high risk samples*, portraying for example antisocial behaviour, partner similarity has been found for low self-control (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010), drug dependence (Sakai et al., 2004) and antisocial and criminal behaviour (Capaldi & Crosby, 1997; Rowe & Farrington, 1997; Peters, 1999; Farrington et al., 2001; Kim & Capaldi, 2004). For example, Boutwell and Beaver (2010) have found a correlation between paternal and maternal low self-control among parents from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. The authors concluded that “there is a tendency for individuals to mate assortative on levels of self-control” (Boutwell & Beaver, 2010, p. 193). Moffitt et al. (2001) have found that antisocial persons formed unions with partners who were involved in criminal behaviour. Capaldi and Crosby (1997) examined 118 at risk couples, who were mostly unmarried, from the Oregon Youth Study and have found significant homogamy for official offences, self-reported delinquency and aggression. When Kim and Capaldi (2004) redid this study, using a subsample of 79 mostly married couples, they found partner similarity on antisocial behaviour and heterotypic concordance for women’s antisocial behaviour and men’s aggression. Interestingly, Farrington et al. (2001) have found partner similarity across generations. They did not only find homogamy among the parents of 1395 boys from the Pittsburgh Youth Study on self-reported arrests (OR=11.5), but also among their grandparents and aunt and uncles (OR=19.1 and 13.7 respectively).

Previous research that focused on partners of *criminals* has found similarities between criminals and their partners on several forms of problem behaviour, such as criminal offences, antisocial behaviour, aggression and alcohol and drug dependence (Guze, Goodwin, & Crane, 1970; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007; Van Schellen, Poortman, & Nieuwbeerta, 2011; Van Schellen, 2012). Several of these (most often) cross-sectional studies provided insight in partner similarity for criminal behaviour (See Van Schellen (2012) for a literature review). Guze et al. (1970) examined a sample of 116 convicted felons and their wives and have found partner similarity, not only on criminal behaviour but also on family background, characterized by instability, alcoholism and criminality. Van Schellen et al. (2011) have found that offenders had a higher chance to marry a criminal partner than a non-criminal partner if they themselves had previous convictions, if they had ever been incarcerated, or

if they were convicted for a violent offence. For example, the odds for marrying a criminal partner are 95 per cent higher for men who had ever been incarcerated as compared with never-incarcerated offenders (Van Schellen et al., 2011). Analysing the data further, Van Schellen (2012) has found that partners resembled each other in terms of the number of offences and the type of offences they committed. The higher the number of convictions offenders had, the higher the number of convictions their partners had (Van Schellen, 2012). Because these studies used official data, the researchers could not control for possible covariates, such as education and employment. Moreover, the findings only applied to marital relationships and crimes that lead to a conviction.

As to the processes that lead to partner similarity, studies have suggested that spousal similarity for criminality resulted, at least partly, from criminals selecting partners who were supportive of their behaviour (Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007; Knight, 2011). It seems that some criminals made an active choice to be with a similar partner who shared their values and therefore would not disapprove of their antisocial lifestyle (Moffitt et al., 2001). Consequently, criminals in a committed relationship might have persisted in criminal behaviour because their partner also engaged in criminal behaviour (Van Schellen, 2012). Through mutual influence, a relationship with a criminal partner may even have reinforced criminal behaviour (Simons et al., 2002; Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007; Knight, 2011).

In sum, research on partner similarities of prisoners is extremely rare. It was therefore necessary to broaden our scope and look at previous studies that investigated partner similarities for drug use and antisocial and criminal behaviour in high risk and criminal samples. Most studies, however, have been unable to study drug use and criminal behaviour simultaneously and none have been able to study them alongside other possible “assortative characteristics” that are included in the current study, such as education and religion. Moreover, previous studies have had methodological shortcomings (Wildeman et al., 2013), have used small samples (Guze et al., 1970; Capaldi & Crosby, 1997; Kim & Capaldi, 2004), data on only a few characteristics (Farrington et al., 2001; Boutwell & Beaver, 2010), data from official conviction records (Rowe & Farrington, 1997; Van Schellen et al., 2011), or were restricted to samples of married couples, or were unable to distinguish between married, living together while unmarried and dating partners (Simons et al., 2002; Van Schellen et al., 2011). Because of these shortcomings and because it is uncertain to what extent results from studies using risk and criminal samples can be generalized to prisoners and their partners, further research is needed and the current study intends to address this gap.

2.4 DATA AND OPERATIONALISATION

2.4.1 Respondents: prisoners

In order to answer the research questions, this chapter used data from the Prison Project. This project is a longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands among Dutch prisoners and their families (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). The project researched intended and unintended consequences of imprisonment on 1,904 prisoners, their partners and their children. Prisoners qualified for participation if they were male, aged between 18 and 65, in pre-trial detention, were born in the Netherlands and were staying in the country legally and did not suffer from severe psychological problems. Pre-trial detention means that these prisoners were incarcerated during the period leading up to their trial and were not (yet) convicted. Thus, prisoners who were convicted to a short sentence or released after trial were included in the study, but prisoners who were incarcerated after conviction were not. Prisoners born outside the Netherlands were not included because they often leave the country sometime after their release (and are thus hard to follow up) and because of language problems.

Men who entered a Dutch detention facility in the period between October 2010 and March 2011 and qualified for participation were asked to participate. In this period 3,981 prisoners who qualified for participation entered a Dutch detention facility, of whom 2,837 could be approached for the research. The main reason that some prisoners could not be approached was that they had left the centre prematurely. Of the 2,837 prisoners who have been approached 1,904 prisoners (67 percent) participated in the research. The data from the first wave on 1,904 prisoners were used in the current study. The first wave took place three weeks after the prisoners had entered a Dutch detention facility (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014a). Prisoners were asked questions about their life before and during imprisonment, focusing on a large number of different life domains, including their home life. Participants completed an interview and filled out a questionnaire about themselves and, if applicable, about their partner and all of their children.

2.4.2 Partners

In order to determine if prisoners had a partner at the moment of entering a Dutch detention facility, they were asked if they were in a romantic relationship that had started at least three months before the arrest. Then they were asked whether they were living with their partner before the imprisonment and whether they were married. Of the 1,904 prisoners 50 percent (N=954) indicated that they were in a relationship with a partner for at least three months. Of these 954 prisoners, the

smallest group was married (N=164). Another group was living together unmarried (N=335) and the largest group was neither living together nor married with their partner (N=365). Another 91 prisoners did not indicate whether he was married and/or living together. Of the prisoners who were in a relationship, 78 percent (N=747) filled out an extensive questionnaire about the characteristics of their partner and their relationship.

The prisoners with a partner who filled out a partner questionnaire were compared with the prisoners with a partner who did not fill out a partner questionnaire. Prisoners with a partner who filled out a partner questionnaire were less often lowly educated (24 percent vs. 37 percent) and more often highly educated (36 percent vs. 24 percent), had committed a violence offence less often (57 percent vs 65 percent) and had been incarcerated less often (57 percent vs 65 percent) than prisoners with a partner who did not fill out a partner questionnaire. They did not differ on all other characteristics, e.g. age, having an immigrant background, religion, day activity, living situation, health, having had a psychological disorder, drug and alcohol use, problematic drug and alcohol use, having undergone treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, previous arrests, previous offences (all types), previous property offences and having been to prison within the last five years.

2.4.3 Demographic characteristics

Concerning the demographic characteristics of the prisoners and their partners, this chapter concentrates on age, immigrant background and religion. The *age* of the prisoners has been calculated from the date of birth of the official registration of the Department of Judicial Centres. The prisoners were asked about the age of their partner. To establish if prisoners and their partners had a native Dutch background or an *immigrant background*, prisoners were asked in which country their father and mother, their partner and their partner's father and mother were born. These countries were used to classify the respondents and their partners into three categories, by definition of the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics: Dutch (both parents born in The Netherlands), first generation immigrant (born abroad and at least one parent born abroad) or second generation immigrant (born in The Netherlands and at least one parent born abroad) (CBS, 2017).¹⁰ To establish *religion*, the respondents were asked if they and their partner saw themselves as a member of a faith or religion, and if so, which religion.

10 Due to selection criteria, prisoners can only be Dutch or second generation immigrant.

2.4.4 Socioeconomic characteristics

The socioeconomic characteristics of the prisoners and their partners that this chapter focuses on were education level and main day activity. In order to determine their *education level*, the prisoners were asked about their and their partner's highest completed level of education. The given education levels were classified into three categories: 1) "none or only primary school" if the prisoner indicated that they did not finish primary school, or did not finish any education after primary school, 2) "high school" if it was indicated that high school was finished without further education and 3) "further education" if further education such as (community) college or university was completed. In order to determine the *day activity* before imprisonment, prisoners were asked what their and their partner's main day activity was before their incarceration. One answer had to be chosen from the following possibilities: entrepreneur, employed (fulltime or part-time), unemployed, sick/incapacitated, education, care for household/family, or retired. Considering respondents are relatively young, these were grouped into "employed", "unemployed", "sick" and "education". Finally, prisoners were asked about their *living situation before imprisonment*. One answer had to be chosen from the following possibilities: house (owned), house (rented), rented room at private home, living with parents/foster parents, living with relatives, living with non-relatives, group home, protected living project, home/boarding school/clinic, guest/boarding house, homeless shelter, living with varying relatives/friends, homeless with zip code, homeless without zip code. These were grouped into: "permanent residence", "temporary residence" or "homeless".

2.4.5 Health and substance use

Prisoners were asked what their *health* was generally like: very good, good, ok, poor or very poor. The health of the prisoner was considered to be poor if he answered "poor" or "very poor". Respondents were asked if they had been treated for a *disorder* in the twelve months before their arrest from this list: depression, anxiety disorder or phobia, ADHD, psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia, personality disorder or a different emotional or psychological problem. Moreover, prisoners were asked if they agreed with the statement "my partner has had serious psychological problems".

In order to determine the prisoners' substance use before imprisonment, prisoners were asked if they *used alcohol* and if they *used drugs* during the 12 months before their arrest. The use of drugs was characterized as *problematic* if the prisoner answered one of the following questions with "yes": 1) "Has there been a time in the 12 months before your arrest in which your drugs use repeatedly hindered your proceedings at school, your job or at home?" 2) "Did you repeatedly have problems with family members or friends because of your drugs use in the 12 months before

your arrest?" 3) "Did you have such a strong need for drugs that you could not think of anything else in the 12 months before your arrest?" 4) "Did the use of drugs cause you to quit or greatly reduce important activities, such as sports, going to school or your job, or socializing with family or friends in the 12 months before your arrest?" The same questions were also asked about alcohol use. Prisoners were also asked if they were *treated for alcohol addiction* and *treated for drug addiction* in the twelve months before the arrest.

In order to determine the substance use of partners of prisoners, prisoners were asked if their partner had *used drugs* in the last year, was ever *addicted to drugs* or ever *addicted to alcohol*.

2.4.6 Criminal characteristics

In order to determine contact with the legal system the prisoners were asked if they had been *arrested* before the arrest that led to their current stay in the Dutch detention facility. In order to determine crime patterns, the Research and Policy Database of Judicial Documentation (OBJD) was used. This data allowed us to research if prisoners had ever been *convicted*, and if so, how many times and for what *type of crime* (property, violent, other). Furthermore, it contains information on possible *previous imprisonments*.

Prisoners were also asked if their partner had ever been *arrested*. In order to determine if the partner had previously committed a *crime* the prisoner was asked the following questions: 1) "Did one of the following things ever happen to your partner? My partner a) committed an offence, b) committed an offence with me, c) was convicted by a judge?" 2) "Has your partner been involved in criminal activities in the past year?" If any of these (sub)questions was answered positively, it was assumed that the partner was ever criminally active. Prisoners were also asked if their partner had ever been in (juvenile) *prison*.

2.4.7 Control variables

This study controls for the following characteristics of the prisoners (see 2.4.3-2.4.6.): age, having an immigrant background, being religious, being Islamic, education level, day activity, having a permanent residence, having poor health and drug use. Moreover, prisoners indicated in which year they started dating their partner and this was compared to the year that the prisoner entered the Dutch detention facility, thereby creating the variable *number of years together*. Prisoners were also asked if he and his partner had *children* (biological or other) together and if they were *living together* before this imprisonment (married or unmarried).

2.5 METHOD

To examine spousal similarity, multivariate logistic regressions were conducted to estimate odds ratios (OR), presented in Table 2.3 and 2.4. In each of the logistic regression models, a characteristic of the partner was taken as the dependent variable and that same characteristic of the prisoners was used as an independent variable (see Zwirs et al. (2011) for a similar method). In the Tables the exponents of the effect parameters ($\exp(b)$) are shown. These represent the odds ratios. Because a unique logistic regression model had to be estimated for *each* characteristic, *each* odds ratio is a separate logistic regression analyses. To test group differences, between for example partners who were living together, married or not, versus dating partners, the models were estimated separately for the different groups.

Partner similarity may partly result from social homogeneity, because structural factors such as socioeconomic status and ethnic heterogeneity are correlated with criminal behaviour, which limits the scope of possible mates (Knight, 2011). To assess whether spousal similarity was explained by such factors, a conservative analysis was done by entering characteristics of the prisoners (age, having an immigrant background, being religious, being Islamic, education level, day activity, having a permanent residence, having poor health and drug use) and relationship factors that likely influence partner similarity (the duration of the relationship, living together and the presence of children) into the logistic regression equation (with exception of the concerning models in which the control variable was the characteristic of which the similarity was being tested)¹¹.

11 It is, however, important that there are enough persons included in the calculation of the odds ratio. If there are few people in each cell of the cross table, than the odds ratio is of little meaning. A rule for logistic regression is that every expected frequency should be greater than 1 and that no more than 20% of the expected frequencies should be smaller than five (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). For a 2x2 cross table, this comes down to the rule that the expected frequency must be five or greater in each cell. The odds ratios therefore have only been shown if this condition was met. For a number of variables the expected frequency was lower than five for at least one cell in all models. Therefore these odds ratios are not shown in the tables (in this case # is shown).

2.6 DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

2.6.1 Prisoners

Table 2.1 presents information on the characteristics of the prisoners with a partner. The largest group is Dutch with Dutch parents (58 percent) and religious (56 percent). About one in four prisoners has never finished an education after primary school and one in three has finished both high school and further education. While eight percent was going to school, 45 percent was employed before imprisonment. Almost all (95 percent) prisoners with a partner had a permanent residence before their arrest. A relatively high prevalence of drug use (52 percent), problematic drug use (19 percent) and problematic alcohol use (13 percent) was found. In the area of criminality, most prisoners with a partner are not first timers. Over 90 percent was convicted for a crime before (with 77 percent within the last five years). Moreover, 59 percent had served time in prison before and 43 percent had been in prison within the last five years.

The characteristics of the prisoners without a partner are also shown in Table 2.1. This makes it possible to determine if prisoners with a partner differ on average

Table 2.1 Characteristics of prisoners - by with/without partner (N=1904)

				Prisoners With Partner (N = 954) ^(A)		Prisoners No Partner (N = 950) ^(A)		T-test
		Min	Max	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Age		18	65	30.76	10.68	29.81	10.68	ns
Immigrant background	Dutch	0	1	0.58		0.62		ns
	2nd generation immigrant	0	1	0.42		0.38		ns
Religion ^(B)	Yes	0	1	0.56		0.52		ns
Education	None or only primary school	0	1	0.27		0.31		ns
	High School	0	1	0.40		0.41		ns
	Further education	0	1	0.34		0.29		*
Day activity	Employed	0	1	0.45		0.32		**
	Unemployed	0	1	0.38		0.46		**
	Sick	0	1	0.09		0.12		*
	Education	0	1	0.08		0.09		ns

Table 2.1 Continued

		Min	Max	Prisoners With Partner (N = 954) ^(A)		Prisoners No Partner (N = 950) ^(A)		T-test
				Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Living situation	Permanent residence	0	1	0.95		0.88		**
	Temporary residence	0	1	0.03		0.06		**
	Homeless	0	1	0.01		0.06		**
Health ^(B)	Generally poor or very poor	0	1	0.09		0.12		ns
Treated for disorder ^(B)	Yes, in last year	0	1	0.15		0.22		**
Drug use	Yes, in last year	0	1	0.52		0.67		**
Problematic drug use	Yes, in last year	0	1	0.19		0.33		**
Treated for drug addiction ^(B)	Yes, in last year	0	1	0.11		0.23		**
Alcohol use	Yes, in last year	0	1	0.79		0.82		ns
Problematic alcohol use	Yes, in last year	0	1	0.13		0.18		**
Treated for alcohol addiction ^(B)	Yes, in last year	0	1	0.07		0.10		*
Arrested	Yes, ever	0	1	0.84		0.86		ns
Convicted for crime	Yes, ever	0	1	0.91		0.90		ns
	Yes, within last five years	0	1	0.77		0.82		**
	Ever convicted for property crime	0	1	0.69		0.67		ns
	Ever convicted for violent crime	0	1	0.59		0.53		*
Previous imprisonment	Yes, ever	0	1	0.59		0.56		ns
	Yes, within last five years	0	1	0.43		0.46		ns

(A) The means are based on the number of respondents of whom the characteristics are known.

(B) Source for prisoners is the questionnaire, total N = 1748, of whom 866 prisoners have a partner.

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

from prisoners without a partner. There are several significant ($p < 0.05$) differences between the two groups in the areas of socioeconomic status and criminal behaviour. Prisoners with a partner are, for example, less often unemployed (38 percent vs. 46 percent) and homeless (1 percent vs. 6 percent) before imprisonment than prisoners who did not have a partner. They also scored lower on problematic drug use (19 percent vs. 33 percent) and problematic alcohol use (13 percent vs. 18 percent) than prisoners without a partner. Noteworthy is that there are fewer significant differences between these groups in the area of crime and imprisonment. While prisoners with a partner had been convicted of a crime within the last five years less often (77 percent vs. 82 percent), they had been convicted of a violent crime more often (59 percent vs. 53 percent) than prisoners who do not have a partner.

2.6.2 Partners of prisoners

The characteristics of the partners of the prisoners are presented in Table 2.2. Most partners are Dutch (62 percent), non-religious (58 percent) women, who had finished high school (57 percent) or further education (37 percent) and were employed (49 percent) at the time of the arrest of the prisoner. About one in five partners had used drugs (22 percent), committed a crime (18 percent) or had been arrested (22 percent). Only five percent had been imprisoned themselves. The prevalence of drug use and criminal behaviour among these partners seems to be relatively high, since it concerns women who are 29 years old on average, of whom a quarter is younger than 21 years old. Criminal behaviour is especially high when it is taken into consideration that only 0.4 percent of Dutch women come into contact with the police as a suspect (Blom, Oudhof, Bijl, & Bakker, 2005).

When the characteristics of the prisoners were compared with the characteristics of their partners *on a group level*, it was found that partners of prisoners had significantly ($p < 0.01$, not in table) more often finished high school than prisoners. Herewith it should be taken into account that partners are on average younger than the prisoners, which has given them fewer years to finish their education. Drug use and problematic drug and alcohol use occurred significantly ($p < 0.01$, not in table) less often among partners than among prisoners.

2.7 SIMILARITY BETWEEN CHARACTERISTICS OF PRISONERS AND THEIR PARTNERS

This study researches if prisoners and their partners are similar with respect to demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics. First, it

Table 2.2 Characteristics of partners of prisoners (N=747)

		Min	Max	Mean ^(A)	SD
Age		15	70	28.88	10.59
Immigrant background	Dutch	0	1	0.62	
	1st or 2nd generation immigrant	0	1	0.38	
Religion	Yes	0	1	0.42	
Education	None or only primary school	0	1	0.05	
	High School	0	1	0.57	
	Further education	0	1	0.37	
Day activity	Employed	0	1	0.49	
	Unemployed	0	1	0.29	
	Sick	0	1	0.08	
	Education	0	1	0.15	
Had serious psychological problems	Yes, ever	0	1	0.14	
Drug use	Yes in last year	0	1	0.22	
Was addicted to drugs	Yes, ever	0	1	0.10	
Was addicted to alcohol	Yes, ever	0	1	0.06	
Arrested	Yes, ever	0	1	0.22	
Committed crime	Yes, ever	0	1	0.18	
Prison	Yes, ever	0	1	0.05	

(A) The percentages are based on the number of respondents of whom the characteristics are known.

was examined to what extent prisoners and their partners resemble each other on different characteristics for all couples in the Prison Project data. Next, it was researched to what extent the similarities between the demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics of prisoners and their partners differ based on their relationship status (partners who were living together, married or not, versus dating partners). Finally, it was examined to what extent the similarity between the characteristics of prisoners and their partners is greater among criminal couples than couples of whom the non-imprisoned partner has never committed a crime.

2.7.1 All couples

Following this study's first research question, it was expected that prisoners and their partners are similar in terms of their demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics (hypothesis one). Table 2.3 presents the similarity between the characteristics of prisoners and their partners. Several odds ratios were statistically significant, indicating that there is a strong similarity between their demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics. The largest similarities –and thus resemblance- were found for drug use and religion. Prisoners who used drugs have 5.6 greater odds to have a partner that also used drugs than to have a partner that did not use drugs. For religion, the odds are 9.8 times greater that a religious prisoner is in a relationship with a religious partner than a non-religious partner. Prisoners and their partners are also similarly educated and have a high similarity for a history of drug addiction and arrest. The odds ratios of the socioeconomic characteristics are the smallest, but they are statistically significant. Taken together, it was found that prisoners and their partners are similar with respect to many demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics, and hypothesis one can therefore be accepted.

2.7.2 Partners who are dating versus partners who were living together

This study's second research question, on the differences between the partner similarity of partners who live together and partners who are dating, led us to expect that if a prisoner and his partner shared a household before the imprisonment, their characteristics are more similar than if they did not share a household (hypothesis two). The characteristics of partners who were living together were compared with the characteristics of dating partners to determine in which group partners have higher partner similarity. This study controlled for the number of years the couples were together in order to compare partners who were living together and dating partners as statistically "purely" as possible and to control for the fact that some dating partners may have been in a relationship longer than some partners who were living together. Thus, differences between the partners who are dating and the partners who were living together are contributed to fact that the former group is not sharing a house.

It was found that for two characteristics there is quite a strong partner similarity (measured in odds ratios) for both types of partners (Table 2.3). Namely, prisoners and their partners are similar in their drug use and religion, whether they were living together or not. Among partners who were not living together, partner similarity was only found for these two characteristics. Among partners who were living together, partner similarity was also found for other characteristics. For example, prisoners

Table 2.3 Coherence between characteristics of prisoners and their partners (in odds ratio) by relationship status

		All couples N=747 ^(A)	Not living together N=379 ^(A)	Living together (married or unmarried) N=366 ^(A)
Demographic				
Immigrant background	1st or 2nd generation immigrant	1.5	1.0	2.2*
Religion	Yes	9.8*	5.0*	15.7*
Socioeconomic				
Education	None or only primary school	#	#	#
	High School	2.1*	2.0	2.6*
	Further education	2.3*	1.7	3.1*
Day activity	Employed	1.4	1.4	1.4
	Unemployed	1.4	2.0	1.1
	Sick	#	#	#
	Education	1.3	1.3	#
Health and substance use				
Disorder		#	#	#
Drug use	Yes in last year	5.6*	6.4*	5.6*
Drug addiction	Yes in last year	3.0*	#	3.2
Alcohol addiction	Yes in last year	#	#	#
Crime				
Arrest	Yes	3.0*	1.5	6.1*
Crime	Yes	3.5	0.8	146802079.1
Prison	Yes	#	#	#

* = $p < 0.05$

(A) The results are based on the number of respondents of whom the characteristics are known.

The odds ratio is not presented because the expected frequency is lower than 5 (see footnote 11).

who were living together before the imprisonment have 6.1 greater odds to have a partner that has also been arrested than a partner that has never been arrested. Moreover, among partners who were living together, partner resemblance was found for having an immigrant background, education and drug use.

In order to test if the odds ratios significantly differ between groups, an interaction between the group and the characteristic (e.g. yes/no living together*yes/no drug use) was added to the logistic regression model. The similarity between characteristics of partners who live together is generally larger than among partners who are dating. Many of these differences between the two groups, however, are not statistically significant. Only the similarity for “having been arrested” significantly ($p < 0.05$, not in table) differs between these groups. Partner similarity for “having been arrested” is larger among partners who were living together than among partners who were dating. Since the expectation that prisoners who live together with their partner resemble each other more than prisoners who were dating their partner before imprisonment can only be confirmed for one characteristic, hypothesis two is rejected.

2.7.3 Criminal couples versus couples of whom the partner is not criminal

The final research question is: Are prisoners and their partners more similar to each other if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not? It was expected that prisoners are more similar to their partner if their partner is criminal than if the partner is not criminal (hypothesis three). It was found that, for both groups, several of the odds ratios for partner resemblance are significant (Table 2.4). Thus, there appears to be a relatively strong similarity between the characteristics of prisoners and their partners, regardless if this partner has shown criminal behaviour. For both types of couples, partners are similar for religion, education (high school) and drug use. Only prisoners with a non-criminal partner are similar to their partner for higher education. As may be expected, the similarity in the area of drug abuse appears to be much higher among partners from criminal couples.

Finally, in order to test if the odds ratios differ significantly between groups, an interaction between the group and the characteristic (e.g. yes/no criminal*yes/no drug use) was added to the logistic regression model. The partner similarity for being unemployed, drug use, drug addiction, having been arrested and having been in prison is significantly larger among partners from criminal couples (not in table). It seems that for these characteristics, criminality of both partners is related to increased partner similarity, in the sense that prisoners and their partners are more similar to each other on these characteristics if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not. Hypothesis three can therefore be accepted.

Table 2.4 Coherence between characteristics of prisoners and their partners (in odds ratios) by criminality of the non-prisoner

		Non-criminal partner N=576 ^(A)	Criminal partner N=122 ^v
Demographic			
Immigrant background	1st or 2nd generation immigrant	1.4	2.0
Religion	Yes	12.9*	9.4*
Socioeconomic			
Education	None or only primary school	#	#
	High School	1.7*	9.9*
	Further education	2.3*	5.7
Day activity	Employed	1.1	#
	Unemployed	1.3	1.8
	Sick	#	#
	Education	1.1	#
Health and substance use			
Disorder		#	2.0
Drug use	Yes in last year	3.6*	75.7*
Drug addiction	Yes in last year	#	#
Alcohol addiction	Yes in last year	#	#
Crime			
Arrest	Yes	#	#
Prison	Yes	#	3.4

* = $p < 0.05$

(A) The results are based on the number of respondents of whom the characteristics are known. The partners of whom it is unknown if they are criminal (7%) are excluded from this Table.

The odds ratio is not presented because the expected frequency is lower than 5 (see footnote 11).

Control variables: age, immigrant background, religion, being Islamic, education, day activity, permanent residence, poor health, drug use, number of years couple is together, couple has child, living together (married or unmarried).

2.8 DISCUSSION

This chapter is about a very specific group in our society: prisoners and their partners. Data from the Prison Project was used. This study aims to answer the questions if 1) prisoners and their partners are similar to each other with respect to demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics; 2) prisoners and their partners are more similar to each other if they were living together before the imprisonment than dating; and 3) prisoners and their partners are more similar to each other if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not.

Many similarities have been found between the characteristics of prisoners and those of their partners. These results support previous studies that have found partner similarities in the general population for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics (Qian, 1998; Blossfeld, 2009) and criminal characteristics (Farrington et al., 2001; Zwirs et al., 2011; Van Schellen, 2012). Interestingly, no significant partner similarity was found between prisoners and their partners for “having committed a crime”, while Zwirs et al. (2011) have found a significant odds ratio of 3.6 in the general population in the Netherlands. It seems that, in the current study, prisoners and their partners did not select each other based upon the fact that they both had committed a crime, nor that there was a process in which one of the partners was influenced into committing a crime by the other partner. However, there is partner similarity on other criminal characteristics. Prisoners and their partners are similar for drug use, drug addiction and “having been arrested”. Zwirs et al. (2011) have found a higher odds ratio for “having been arrested” in the general population than this study has found (OR = 5 vs. 3). It is, however, important to keep in mind that Zwirs et al. (2011) only controlled for age and education level. It is possible that the resemblance they have found is partly due to other characteristics that the current study controlled for, such as religion, day activity and the number of years that a couple had been together.

The current study has found partner similarity for religion and drug use for both partners who were dating and partners who were living together before the imprisonment. This indicates that the concept of partner similarity applies to all kinds of romantic relationships. This finding underlines the importance that future research does not only focus on married couples or couples who live together. Partners who were living together are more similar to each other for “having been arrested” than partners who were not living together. Because this study controlled for the number of years the couples were together, this difference is contributed to fact that the former group is not sharing a house. Perhaps women who live together with a (future) prisoner have a higher chance of becoming a criminal suspect themselves and subsequently being arrested. A different reasoning may be that prisoners are more likely

to cohabit with a partner that has been arrested, because they prefer a partner who is similar to themselves.

For most characteristics, however, the similarities are not significantly greater among partners who are living together than partners who are dating. This is in line with the study by Zwirs et al. (2011), who have found few differences in the similarities between partners who were dating, married or living together while unmarried. The finding that prisoners and their partners who live together are not more similar in their characteristics, other than “having been arrested”, than dating partners would suggest that partner similarity between prisoners and their partners arises before they start living together. Future research will have to focus on the question whether partner similarity between prisoners and their partners can be explained by the theoretical mechanism of influence (while dating) or selection.

This study also compared the homogamy of prisoners with a criminal versus a non-criminal partner. It is noteworthy that this study has found a lower percentage of prisoners in a relationship with a criminal partner than Carbone-Lopez and Kruttschnitt (2009) have found (18 percent vs. 26-37 percent). This is partly due to the fact that prisoners were asked about the partner that they were currently in a relationship with instead of all partners in the last three years and possibly due to the difference between male and female prisoners (Einat, Harel-Aviram, & Rabinovitz, 2015). The current study has found that prisoners and their partners are more similar to each other if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not for several characteristic, for example being unemployed, drug use and “having been to prison”. This indicates that prisoners can “marry up” by choosing a non-criminal partner and thereby may be “marrying up” in other characteristics as well, such as in the areas of education and employment (Laub & Sampson, 2003). It also follows that having a partner may indeed be important for desistance after release from prison (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Hairston, 1991, 2002; Arditti et al., 2003; La Vigne, Visser, & Castro, 2004) but that this is more likely if the partner is non-criminal, since this study showed that criminal partners are also more likely to use drugs, be unemployed and be a former prisoner, and these factors do not contribute to desistance.

The odds ratios for partner similarity were estimated while controlling for the influence of demographic, socioeconomic and behavioural factors. Noteworthy is that the odds ratios of the demographic, socioeconomic and most criminal characteristics became (marginally) lower, but remained significant, when the control factors were included. Shared environment, such as education and day activity, also called social homogamy, thus can only partially explain partner similarities in the areas of criminal behaviour. This is consistent with previous research (Sakai et al., 2004; Zwirs et al., 2011). However, controlling for the number of years a couple has been together and

the presence of a child decreases the odds ratios further, some to the extent that they are no longer significant. This was the case for being employed and unemployed. This indicates that the number of years a couple has been together and the presence of a child are strongly related to partner similarity. Future research should aim to deepen our understanding of the relationships between these factors.

The current study has some limitations that warrant future research. Due to the nature of cross-sectional data it is unknown to what extent the characteristics of the prisoners and their partners existed before they started their relationship or if these characteristics had arisen during the relationship. Although this chapter did control for the number of years a couple had been together, final conclusions on the roles that selection and influence play in partner similarity cannot be drawn. Future research is needed to collect longitudinal data to test selection and influence mechanisms.

All data, on which this chapter's results are based, have been obtained from prisoners. Prisoners gave information about themselves and about their partner. This has two large advantages. First, self-reported data contains information on much more variables than registered data that previous studies have used from municipalities (marital data) and judicial departments (criminal history data). Second, the group of prisoners that participated in this research is very large, giving us information on many partners. However, there are also disadvantages to using information from a respondent about another person. First, respondents may have a tendency to give socially desirable answers, whereby the prisoner possible does not want to be honest about the drug use and criminal behaviour of his partner, or the knowledge of the prisoners about their partners is not always complete or correct. This may have caused lower reports of such behaviour. The fact that the prevalence of criminal behaviour and drug use among partners is much higher than in the general population indicates that this problem may be limited. Second, when one partner is asked to report on characteristics of the other partner, this may result in inflated similarity. Indirect measurements may overestimate similarity between respondents and network members because of people's tendency to depict others similar to oneself and assume similarity (Weerman & Smeenk, 2005). This is a shortcoming of the current study that should be taken into account when interpreting the results. Future research should not only include prisoners, but also a large group of their partners.

Despite these shortcomings the current study adds new knowledge to the field. This study is the first in the criminological literature in the area of partner similarity for criminal and non-criminal characteristics among prisoners and their partners. Herewith has been taken an important first step. The results of this study

have implications for the research field that focuses on the preventive effects of relationships on criminal behaviour and programs that aim to deter from crime after imprisonment. Researchers need to account for partner similarity in their analysis of the good marriage effect, because the criminal characteristics of prisoners seem to be related to their partners.

Finally, this study indicates that many children of prisoners may have not one, but two parents with problems in the areas of crime, drugs and deviance. This finding is relevant for researchers in the field of intergenerational transmission of criminal behaviour (Van de Rakt, Nieuwbeerta, & De Graaf, 2008; Zwirs et al., 2011). Taking partner similarity into account for not only criminal behaviour, but also other deviant behaviours such as drug use, may help to understand the complex influence that parents can have on the criminal behaviour of their children.





CHAPTER 3

NEGATIVE REACTIONS EXPERIENCED BY PARTNERS OF PRISONERS

This chapter is co-authored by Paul Nieuwbeerta, Tanja van der Lippe and Rachel Condry (Oxford University) and is under review. Susanne van 't Hoff-de Goede is the first author. Van 't Hoff-de Goede wrote the main part of the manuscript, coordinated the data collection and conducted the analyses. Nieuwbeerta, Van der Lippe and Condry substantially contributed to the manuscript. Nieuwbeerta - together with co-PI Dirkzwager- contributed to the data collection. The authors jointly developed the idea and design of the study.

ABSTRACT

Partners of prisoners can be confronted with negative reactions from others about the crime the prisoner committed and the prison sentence that was imposed. This may be caused by the stigmatisation that partners of prisoners experience through their relationship with a prisoner. This study researches to what extent prisoners' partners experience negative reactions from family, friends, family in law and neighbours and to what extent this can be explained by factors relating to the characteristics of the crime, their relationship with the prisoner and negative personal circumstances. Longitudinal data from the Prison Project on 119 partners of prisoners was analysed using multivariate regression models. It was found that most partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment, both six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Prisoners' partners experience negative reactions more often from neighbours and family than friends and family in law. Partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions if the prisoner was imprisoned for an offence from the least serious category, if the prisoner was previously imprisoned, and if the partner has a second stigmatising quality, such as receiving welfare or being in debt.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Imprisonment can have a range of unintended negative consequences, not only for prisoners but also for their partners (Fishman, 1990; Peelo, Stewart, Stewart, & Prior, 1991; Comfort, 2007; Wildeman et al., 2012). Due to the imprisonment, partners of prisoners may face a poor financial situation, relationship problems and problems with the care of their children (McDermott & King, 1992; O'Keefe, 2000; Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Foca, 2015; Turney & Schneider, 2016). For partners of prisoners, the imprisonment can also influence their social surroundings. They may lose friends and not receive the support they need (Morris, 1965; Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Turney, Schnittker, & Wildeman, 2012; Bada et al., 2014a). Moreover, partners of prisoners may have to face negative reactions from the people around them about their spouses' crime and imprisonment (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007).

Academics should concern themselves with these consequences of the most severe legal punishment that can be imposed - i.e. imprisonment, especially since it concerns people that did not commit the crime but still may suffer the consequences. Unfortunately, the situation of partners of prisoners in general, and their experience of negative reactions in particular, have been somewhat neglected in the academic discourse. More research on this topic is necessary because of its severe consequences. When a spouse is imprisoned, the experience of negative reactions can be very powerful for those left outside and can have a profound influence upon their lives. For partners of prisoners, receiving negative reactions from outsiders about the imprisonment can result in social isolation and lead to a deterioration in their wellbeing, thereby further victimising the partner (Sayce, 1998; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Bada et al., 2014b).

This chapter focuses on the negative reactions partners of prisoners experience about the imprisonment. Based on stigma theory it can be expected that partners of prisoners may experience negative reactions, because of their label of "prisoners' partner" (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963). Indeed, almost all previous studies have found that partners of prisoners experienced negative reactions to some degree (Morris, 1965; Moerings, 1977; Van Genabeek & Godefrooy, 1982; Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Chui, 2016). However, these studies disagree on the extent to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions. On the one hand, several studies have found that partners of prisoners often experience negative reactions about the imprisonment from outsiders (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Chui, 2016). For example, many of the 30 American partners of prisoners who were interviewed by Fishman (1990) indicated they experienced negative reactions about the fact that their husband was imprisoned. Condry (2007) has also found that the

10 partners of prisoners who had committed serious offences that she interviewed in the UK experienced negative reactions. Hannem and Leonardi (2015), moreover, have found that 40 percent of 140 family members of prisoners felt stigmatized a lot. However, other studies have found that only few partners of prisoners experienced negative reactions (Morris, 1965; Jongman & Steenhuis, 1975; Van Genabeek & Godefrooy, 1982). For example, Morris (1965) concluded that only 10-25 percent of the English partners of prisoners experienced negative reactions from family, friends and neighbours. Also, merely one third of the 31 Dutch partners of prisoners interviewed by Van Genabeek and Godefrooy (1982) experienced negative reactions. Due to these contradictory findings and, moreover, methodological shortcomings (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016), firm conclusions about the current experience of negative reactions among partners of prisoners cannot be drawn.

There are two aspects that may explain the different results previous studies have had. First, stigma theory predicts that the degree to which partners of prisoners encounters negative reactions depends on the network group that the partner receives the negative reactions from (Morris, 1965; Moerings, 1977). For example, both Morris (1965) and Moerings (1977) have found that partners of prisoners experienced more negative reactions from their neighbours than from their family.

Second, stigma theory points to several other factors that may influence the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions. For example, the severity of the offence the prisoner committed (Condry, 2007) might cause some prisoners' partners to be stigmatised more severely than others. Partners of serious offenders may then encounter more negative reactions than the partners of those imprisoned for petty crime.

Therefore, this chapter will use stigma theory to identify factors that may influence the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions and test these expectations. In this dissertation, "negative reactions" are any form of communication perceived by the respondent to be negative. Thus, while the term "negative reactions" includes - but is not limited to - direct negative comments, it also includes other negative reactions such as judgemental facial expressions.

This chapter also researches how differences in experienced negative reactions can be explained. First, since partners of prisoners may encounter different degrees of negative reactions from different network groups, this study distinguishes between the negative reactions that partners of prisoners encounter from family, family-in-law, friends and neighbours. Moreover, this chapter focuses on three groups of factors that may influence the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions and have produced testable hypothesis; the characteristics of the crime, relationship factors and negative personal circumstances.

The study focuses on female partners of male prisoners and attempts to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from different network groups (family, family-in-law, friends and neighbours)?
2. Are a) characteristics of the crime, b) relationship factors, and c) negative personal circumstances related to these experienced negative reactions?

This research aims to contribute to the field in several ways. First, this study addresses the experience of negative reactions by prisoners' partners, a topic that has unjustly received very little attention in the academic discourse (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Second, this chapter combines stigma and labelling theories from the fields of criminology and sociology to create hypotheses on the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners that have not previously been tested. Third, the current study extends the focus of prior research by taking differences between network groups into account and examine if partners experience negative reactions to a different degree from, for example, family as compared with neighbours. Fourth, this study advances the field of secondary consequences of imprisonment by targeting research problems, that have previously mostly been the focus of qualitative studies, with quantitative data.

This study uses unique longitudinal, large scale data on the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners. This chapter uses data from the Prison Project, a longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). In the Prison Project a large sample of male Dutch prisoners (N=954) were asked permission to approach their wife or girlfriend. Although this type of sampling also has some limitations, it overcomes many of the greater limitations of previous studies: partners do not have to have visited the prison or a support group to participate and partners of both short and long-term sentenced prisoners are included. In the current study a relatively large group of partners of prisoners from areas throughout the country could be reached (N=119) overcoming another problem of many previous studies that took place in a specific geographical area (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007).

This study draws upon two waves of data from the Prison Project collected in 2011/2012, six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. In both waves, 119 female partners of male prisoners were asked questions about their life, work and wellbeing and if they experienced negative reactions from family, family-in-law, friends and neighbours about their partner's imprisonment.

The size of the dataset allows us to compare different groups of prisoners' partners, based on, for example, socioeconomic characteristics and family situation. This is important since there is reason to assume the group to be heterogeneous in terms of these factors (De Goede et al., 2012), as opposed to the way most previous studies have seen prisoners' partners as a homogenous group. Moreover, the longitudinal nature of the data allows us to study the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience over time. Measuring the experience of negative reactions and explanatory factors at more than one time point gives us more information about the experience of negative reactions by prisoners' partners and makes this study's results more robust. Lastly, studying this subject from a contemporary Dutch perspective will provide us with further knowledge, because existing knowledge comes from the UK or the US, or from the Netherlands in the 1970's.

3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

3.2.1 Why do partners of prisoner experience negative reactions?

Expectations about the consequences of imprisonment for the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners can be deduced from sociological and criminological literature on stigma and labelling theories (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963). Goffman's classic study on stigma describes stigma as "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (1963: 3). Stigmatized individuals possess some characteristic that is devalued in society or a particular social context (LeBel, 2008). Members of a stigmatized group are devalued and discriminated against by the general public and often suffer from social exclusion and status loss as a result (Reidpath et al., 2005; LeBel, 2008).

An example of stigmatized persons is prisoners (Pager, 2003; Uggen et al., 2004; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Murray, 2007; LeBel, 2012). Many prisoners feel permanently branded with the label "felon" (Uggen et al., 2004). This label defines the relationship that former prisoners have with society and can worsen adaptation problems after release (Becker, 1963; Uggen et al., 2004; Foster & Hagan, 2007), for example by diminishing the odds of them finding a job (Pager, 2003).

A stigma can also stem from a relationship with another. Goffman named this a *courtesy stigma*, which is attached to "the individual who is related through the social structure to a stigmatized individual – a relationship that leads the wider society to treat both individuals in some respects as one" (Goffman, 1963: 43). Courtesy stigma is commonly understood as a stigma by association. Courtesy stigma has, for example, been identified in the families of Alzheimer's patients (MacRae, 1999) and

in parents of children with mental retardation (Birenbaum, 1970, 1992) and ADHD (Norvilitis, Scime, & Lee, 2002; Koro-Ljungberg & Bussing, 2009).

In criminology, it is generally thought that partners of prisoners can be subjected to a courtesy stigma (Goffman, 1963; Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Foster & Hagan, 2007). For partners of prisoners, a courtesy stigma means being treated “as one” with the prisoner (Goffman, 1963). This courtesy stigma is often one of the heaviest burdens these women must bear (Fishman, 1990). Wives of offenders have described that they were “treated like a criminal” (Fishman, 1990: 113), “tarnished with the same brush” as the offender and treated “all alike” (Condry, 2007: 67).

According to Condry (2007), the stigma of prisoners' partners also has another important dimension, besides being treated as one with the offender. Partners of prisoners can also receive their “own” stigma due to being a “wife of a criminal”, called a secondary stigma (Condry, 2007). In this second dimension culpability plays a role. People may feel that the partner of the prisoner is partly to blame for the crime that was committed. The culpability works through *omission*, *commission* and *continuation* (Condry, 2007). Partners can be blamed for *omission* if they are deemed blameworthy for something they failed to do: they either knew, or should have known, about the offending or the likelihood of an offence and therefore could have stopped it. This blame stems from their perceived failure to attain ideals of family roles and relationships. The ideals to which women are still held – of “good wife” for example – are pervasive and powerful in our society (Moerings, 1992; Codd, 2000; Poortman & Van der Lippe, 2009). Wives have particular “duties” and responsibilities for maintaining family values and are blamed for not fulfilling them when things go wrong. They thus attract blame for their own - perceived - role in the offence that has occurred (Condry, 2007). Partners can be blamed for *commission* if they did something before discovery of the offence, like colluding or covering up the offence, or actually being involved in the offending. Finally, partners can be blamed for *continuing* their relationship with the offender and offering the offender their support. They are deemed responsible for the maintenance of their stigma. Together, these factors cause that partners may suffer not only from a courtesy stigma, but also from their own stigma for being a criminal's spouse.

These interlined dimensions of stigma form a web from which it is hard for partners of prisoners to escape; although partners could eliminate the dimension of continuation by breaking off contact with the prisoner, the dimensions of omission and commission, which refer to the past and to their past kin relationship, remain. Moreover, even if they can avoid all dimensions of blame, they will still be facing the dimension of contamination.

Members of a stigmatized group often suffer from negative reactions (Reidpath et al., 2005; LeBel, 2008). Thus, courtesy and secondary stigmas can cause partners of prisoners to experience negative reactions from the people around them about the crime and the imprisonment. Due to their “tainted status” as the partner of a stigmatized individual – i.e. the prisoner (Goffman, 1963; Condry, 2007; Foster & Hagan, 2007) – partners of prisoners might hear things like “you’re nothing but trash” (Fishman, 1990, p. 122) or “you murderer’s wife” (Condry, 2007, p. 80). This chapter’s first hypothesis therefore is: *Partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment.*

3.2.2 The experience of negative reactions from different network groups

Partners of prisoners may encounter different levels of negative reactions from different social groups, such as their family, friends and neighbours. The degree of closeness between the partner and these groups may play a role here (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980; Jones et al., 1984; MacRae, 1999; Wrzus et al., 2013). Angermeyer, Matschinger and Corrigan (2004), for example, have argued that stigmatised individuals are stigmatised less by persons close to them than by outsiders. The theoretical concepts of social and personal identity, first described by Goffman (1963) and later applied to the case of prisoners’ partners by Moerings (1977), can shine light on this.

According to Goffman (1963), each individual has two different identities. The first is the social identity – the identity of the person in relationships with others who know the person superficially. These others only know a few characteristics of the person and classify the person in a certain social category according to these characteristics. For example, they know the person’s profession and marital status and add other characteristics based on the characteristics of other persons in that category. The second is the personal identity – the identity of the person that is known to others who know the person intimately. In these relationships, others know what makes the person unique.

Based on this divide between social and personal identity, it can be argued that partners of prisoners are more likely to experience negative reactions from network members who know only their social identity (Moerings, 1977). This is because persons who only know the prisoner’s partner’s social identity are likely to make negative assumptions about the prisoner’s partner based on what they know about prisoners and their partners from other sources, such as the media.

An individual’s family would presumably be at the closest relational distance and therefore know the personal identity, as might friends (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980; Jones et al., 1984; Wrzus et al., 2013). Neighbours and family-in-law may know only the

social identity of the prisoner's partner and therefore stigmatise her more (Morris, 1965; Schwartz & Weintraub, 1974; Moerings, 1977; Angermeyer et al., 2004). It would then follow that: *Partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions from neighbours and family-in-law than from family and friends* (H2).

3.2.3 Factors that influence the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners

Stigma theory predicts that, based on their circumstances, some partners of prisoners may suffer from a greater stigma than others and others may even suffer from several stigmas at once (Davies, 1980; Condry, 2007). Opposed to the way previous studies have seen prisoners' partners as a homogenous group, stigma theory gives reason to assume the group to be heterogeneous in terms of several factors that influence the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from family, friends and neighbours (Morris, 1965; Lowenstein, 1986; Codd, 1998; Condry, 2007; Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). In the stigma literature, several factors have been said to influence the extent to which persons are stigmatised. This study will focus on those factors that are relevant for the case of prisoners' partners and have provided testable hypotheses. They have been categorized into three categories: *characteristics of the crime, relationship factors* and *negative personal circumstances*.

Characteristics of the crime

The degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment might be influenced by the characteristics of the crime, i.e. the severity of the offence and whether or not it was the prisoners' first imprisonment.

First, the *severity of the offence* for which the prisoner was imprisoned might influence the degree to which their partner experiences negative reactions (Condry, 2007). Partners of serious offenders may encounter more negative reactions than partners of those imprisoned for petty crime, because the degree of societal outrage is related to the severity of the crime. Previous qualitative studies in the UK and US indeed have found that partners of prisoners who committed a violent (Codd, 1998; Condry, 2007) or sexual (Lowenstein, 1986; Codd, 1998; Condry, 2007) offence experienced more negative reactions. Our third hypothesis reads: *If the offender was imprisoned for a less serious offence, his partner will experience negative reactions about the imprisonment to a lesser degree than if the offender was imprisoned for a serious offence.*

Second, whether or not the offender was *previously imprisoned* might influence the degree to which their partner experiences negative reactions. On the one hand, partners of repeat-prisoners might experience fewer negative reactions than

partners of first-time prisoners. Partners of repeat-prisoners may have already lost contact with persons who had reacted negatively in the past about previous offences or prison spells. Moreover, being in a relationship with a repeat-prisoner might mean that the people you know are not surprised when the offender is imprisoned again and are therefore less likely to react negatively about the imprisonment. Findings that partners of first-time prisoners experience more negative reactions than partners of repeat-prisoners (Morris, 1965; Lowenstein, 1986; Condry, 2007) would support this suggestion. The fourth hypothesis (4a) is as follows: *If the offender has been imprisoned before, the partner will experience negative reactions about the imprisonment to a lesser degree than if it is the offender's first imprisonment.* On the other hand, being in a relationship with a first-time prisoner might mean that people you know are more forgiving or feel sorry for you. This might mean that first-time partners of prisoners experience fewer negative reactions about the imprisonment than if the offender had previously been imprisoned. Indeed, Moerings (1977) has found that wives of recidivists experience more stigmatisation. This leads to a conflicting hypothesis (4b): *If the offender has been imprisoned before, the partner will experience negative reactions about the imprisonment to a greater degree than if it is the offender's first imprisonment.*

Relationship factors

Two relationship factors may also influence the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment, namely whether or not the partner was living together with the prisoner before the imprisonment and whether or not she terminated her relationship with the prisoner after his arrest.

First, negative reactions about the imprisonment may be particularly likely if partners of prisoners *were living together* with the prisoner before imprisonment (Condry, 2007; Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). People likely assume that partners who share a house are more likely aware of each other's criminal activities and more able to intervene in such behaviour than partners who live separately. Partners of prisoners who lived together with the prisoner before the imprisonment may therefore be blamed more for omission (failing to prevent the crime) and commission (being involved in the crime) than partners who did not live together with the prisoner (Condry, 2007). Previous qualitative studies have found that partners who were living together before the imprisonment encounter more stigma and negative reactions than partners who did not (Lowenstein, 1986; Condry, 2007; Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). This leads to hypothesis five: *If the partner was living together with the offender, she will experience negative reactions about the imprisonment to a greater degree than if she was not living together.*

Second, whether or not a partner is *still in a relationship* with the prisoner could influence the degree to which she experiences negative reactions. Namely, partners of prisoners could either stay in a relationship with the prisoner during the imprisonment or end the relationship, thereby becoming an ex-partner of a prisoner. It is expected that partners of prisoners who stay in their relationship with the prisoner experience more negative reactions because of a) additional stigma or b) voluntary stigma. For instance, partners of prisoners who stay in the relationship with the prisoner may experience additional stigma (on top of the stigma that arose the moment they became a prisoners' partner), stemming from continued support (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990). This additional stigma may cause additional negative reactions. Moreover, stigmatised persons particularly experience negative reactions if the stigma originated from their own behaviour because they are thought to have some control over their behaviour and can thus be blamed for the stigmas' existence (Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, & Hull, 2000). Staying in a relationship with a prisoner may be construed as a voluntary bond with a stigmatised individual (Sigelman, Howell, Cornell, Cutright, & Dewey, 1991), i.e. the prisoner. Indeed, previous qualitative studies have found that if a partner chooses to support the offender following a sentence of imprisonment, they are likely to experience additional stigma (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007). The sixth hypothesis therefore is as follows: *If the partner is still in a relationship with the prisoner, she will experience negative reactions about the imprisonment to a greater degree than if she ended the relationship when the prisoner was incarcerated.*

Negative personal circumstances

Beside characteristics of the crime and relationship, there are also personal circumstances that may determine to what extent partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment.

Building on stigma theory, it can be argued that people with one stigmatising quality, such as being a prisoner's partner, are more likely to experience negative reactions if they have a second stigmatising quality (Davies, 1980; Condry, 2007). For example, it has been suggested that prisoners and their partners may not only be stigmatised due to the imprisonment, but also due to being on welfare (Davies, 1980), being unemployed (Uggen et al., 2004; Condry, 2007), having a poor financial situation or using illegal substances (LeBel, 2008). Thus, partners of prisoners may experience additional negative reactions if they have an additional stigma. As discussed in *chapter 2*, partners of prisoners in our study scored highly on several dimensions that may be stigmatising: for 57 percent, their highest level of educational attainment was high school and five percent reported that they had no education or only to primary level; 29 percent were unemployed and eight percent on sickness benefit (De Goede

et al., 2012). If stigmatised persons experience more negative reactions if they have additional stigma's, it can be expected that (hypothesis 7): *If partners of prisoners have negative personal circumstances, i.e. being on welfare, having a poor financial situation, having debts, using alcohol or drugs in a problematic way or being criminal, they will experience negative reactions about the imprisonment to a greater degree.*

3.3 DATA

3.3.1 Sample

This chapter uses data from the Prison Project, a longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). The project investigates intended and unintended consequences of imprisonment on 1,904 prisoners, their partners and children. Prisoners qualified for participation if they were male, aged between 18 and 65, in pre-trial detention, were born in the Netherlands and were staying in this country legally and did not suffer from severe psychological problems. Prisoners born outside the Netherlands are not included because they often leave the country sometime after their release (and are thus hard to follow up on) and because of the practicality of language problems.

Men that entered a Dutch detention facility in the period between October 2010 and March 2011 and qualified for participation were invited to participate. In this period a total of 3,981 prisoners within the research population entered a Dutch detention facility. In total 2,837 prisoners were invited to participate. The main reason that some prisoners could not be approached was that they had left the centre prematurely (76 percent of the prisoners who were not approached). Of the 2,837 prisoners who have been approached 1,904 prisoners (67 percent) participated in the research.

Three weeks after the prisoners had entered a Dutch detention facility, they were asked if they were in a romantic relationship that started at least three months before their arrest. Then they were asked whether they were living with their partner before imprisonment and whether they were married. Of the 1,904 prisoners 50 percent (N=954) indicated that they were in a relationship with a partner for at least three months. Of the 954 prisoners who had a partner, 744 gave consent for the researchers to approach their partner for the research and 542 of them gave the researchers contact information to reach the partner.

Six months after the start of the imprisonment period, the researchers tried to approach these 542 partners and were able to find 299 of them. These partners were invited to participate in the study. A common reaction, that has also been found

in previous studies (e.g. Fishman, 1990; Condry 2007), was that these women were grateful that someone was paying attention to them, their children and their situation. They expressed how all of the attention normally is addressed to the prisoner and that the Prison Project was the first “institution” to be interested in how they were doing themselves.

A total of 155 female partners of male prisoners participated in the first wave, six months after the start of the imprisonment and 119 (77 percent) of them participated again in the second wave, twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Participants filled out a questionnaire containing questions about their job, health, background and social contacts (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014b). Partners could participate independent of whether or not the prisoner was still imprisoned and whether or not they were still a couple.

The 119 participating partners were compared with non-participating partners of prisoners from the Prison Project, about whom the prisoner filled out a questionnaire¹². Respondents are older (33 vs. 29 years old), more often married (33 vs. 14 percent) or living together while unmarried (40 vs. 29 percent), more often have a Dutch ethnic background (72 vs. 62 percent), less often go to school (10 vs. 18 percent) and use drugs less often (17 vs. 22 percent). The differences between these groups in the other areas (education, employment/unemployment, problematic drug and alcohol use, criminal behaviour and having been arrested or imprisoned) are negligible (De Goede et. al., 2012).

Partners of prisoners were included in the current study’s analysis if they participated in both waves and answered the questions on the dependent (average experienced negative reactions), independent and control variables for both waves (N=91).

3.3.2 Dependent variable

The dependent variable, negative reactions, was measured at 6 and 12 months after the start of the imprisonment by asking the partners: “To what extent do you experience negative reactions about the fact that your partner is/was imprisoned from the following persons: your parents, brothers/sisters, partner’s parents, partner’s brothers/sisters, your/your partner’s friends, people who live in your neighbourhood: not at all (0), a little (1), some (2), much (3), very much (4)?” In Dutch, the term for “negative reactions” (negative reacties) firstly refers to negative comments but also encompasses any form of communication perceived by the

12 747 of the 954 prisoners (78%) who had a partner filled out a questionnaire about their partner

respondent to be negative. Respondents decided for themselves what they thought were negative reactions and to what extent they experienced these.

Partners could also indicate that the question on the experience of negative reactions did not apply to certain network groups because this group was unaware of the prisoners' incarceration¹³. The categories "parents" and "brothers/sisters" were combined and averaged to form the category "family". The categories "partner's parents" and "partner's brothers/sisters" were combined and averaged to form the category "family in law". This resulted in four network groups, namely family, family in law, friends and neighbours. The average of these four groups constitutes the category "total network".

3.3.3 Characteristics of the crime

Data from the Research and Policy Database of Judicial Documentation (OBJD) was used to determine criminal patterns. It contains information on possible *previous prison spells*. Furthermore, this data allowed us to uncover for what crime (property, violent, other) the prisoner was currently imprisoned. The *severity of the crime* is determined by the maximum years of imprisonment that can be imposed by a judge for that crime. The severity of the crime is mild (maximum punishment is less than four years imprisonment), severe (maximum punishment is between four and eight years imprisonment) or very severe (maximum punishment is more than eight years imprisonment), based on definitions of the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC).

3.3.4 Relationship factors

Six months after the start of the imprisonment, the partners of prisoners were asked if they wanted to live with the prisoner after imprisonment and if they wanted to marry him. For both questions, partners could indicate that the question was not applicable, because they were already living together and/or married. If respondents chose either of these options, it was concluded that they were *living together* with the prisoner before the imprisonment. Otherwise, partners of prisoners are considered to have been dating the prisoner before imprisonment. Both six and twelve months

13 Therefore, they could not have experienced negative reactions about the imprisonment from them. These groups were left out of the analysis (coded as missing). "Average experienced negative reactions" was then calculated based on the experienced negative reactions from other groups. Some partners of prisoners indicated that none of the network groups were aware of the imprisonment and they were left out of the analysis (N=5).

after the start of the imprisonment, partners of prisoners were asked if they were *still in a relationship with the prisoner*.

3.3.5 Negative personal circumstances

Partners of prisoners were on *welfare* if they received unemployment, disability or other benefits or if they indicated that their source of income was from welfare. Partners of prisoners were asked what their financial situation was like and were considered to have a *poor financial situation* if they indicated that they had to borrow money to make ends meet. Partners were asked if they had a *debt* with the bank (excluding mortgage), family or friends, stores or mail-order-, telephone-, credit card-, insurance- or electricity company, judicial collection agency, social services, landlord, housing association or a student loan.

In order to determine problematic substance use respondents were asked if they used alcohol and if they used drugs. *Problematic drug use* means that the respondent answered one of the following questions with "yes": 1) "Has there been a time in the 12 months before your partner's arrest in which your drugs use repeatedly hindered your proceedings at school, your job or at home?" 2) "Did you repeatedly have problems with family members or friends because of your drugs use in the 12 months before your partner's arrest?" 3) "Did you have such a strong need for drugs that you could not think of anything else in the 12 months before your partner's arrest?" 4) "Did the use of drugs cause you to quit or greatly reduce important activities, such as sports, going to school or your job, or socializing with family or friends in the 12 months before your partner's arrest?" The same questions were also asked in order to determine *problematic alcohol use*.

Partners of prisoners have committed *criminal behaviour* if they answered one of the following questions with "yes": 1) "Have you ever committed a crime?" 2) "Have you ever committed a crime with your partner?" 3) "Have you ever been convicted by a judge?" 4) "Have you ever been in prison or juvenile prison?" 5) "Have you been involved in criminal activities in the last year?"

3.3.6 Control variables

The *age* of the prisoners' partners was calculated by subtracting their date of birth from the date that the researchers received the filled out questionnaire by mail. Data from the Judicial Institutions Department ([Tenuitvoerlegging vrijheidsbenemende straffen en maatregelen in penitentiaire inrichtingen] TULP) was used to retrieve the dates that prisoners were imprisoned and released (if applicable). It was determined if the *prisoner was still imprisoned* at the time the questionnaire by comparing the date of release (if applicable) and the date that the researchers received the filled

out questionnaire by mail. This data also allowed us to calculate the *imprisonment duration* (number of months between the start of the imprisonment and the time of his release or, if he had not been released, the time the partner participated in the study) and the *time between the start of the imprisonment and the moment the partner participated in the study* (in months).

3.4 METHOD

In order to answer research question one, a descriptive table (Table 3.1) shows to what extent partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from family, family-in-law, friends and neighbours, six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment.

In order to establish which determinants are related to the experience of negative reactions, multivariate regression models were estimated. For each of the regression analyses the dependent variable was the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners. The models in Table 3.3 and 3.4 estimate the effect of crime characteristics (model I), relationship factors (model II), negative personal circumstances (model III) or all characteristics (model IV) on the experience of negative reactions from the total network after six (Table 3.3) and twelve months (Table 3.4) after the start of the imprisonment. The control factors were added to all models.

3.5 RESULTS

3.5.1 Experienced negative reactions

Table 3.1 shows the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience, six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Most partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment. Six months after the start of the imprisonment, on average, over half of the partners experience a little or some negative reactions and 13 percent experiences many or very many negative reactions about the imprisonment. Merely one third of the partners do not experience negative reactions from any network group. Twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, a similar degree of negative reactions was reported. The first hypothesis, partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment, thus holds up for most partners of prisoners.

Table 3.1 Descriptive statistics negative reactions six and twelve months after start of the imprisonment

	N ^(A)	M	SD	Negative reactions	No negative reactions (0)	A little or some negative reactions (1-2)	Many or very many negative reactions (3-4)
Six months after start of the imprisonment							
Average total network (0 - 4)	91	.86	(1.06)		33 %	54 %	13 %
Family (0 - 4)	85	.95	(1.36)		51 %	34 %	15 %
Friends (0 - 4)	78	.67	(1.10)		63 %	28 %	9 %
Family-in-law (0 - 4)	81	.76	(1.22)		56 %	33 %	11 %
Neighbours (0 - 4)	65	1.20	(1.48)		46 %	31 %	23 %
Twelve months after start of the imprisonment							
Average total network (0 - 4)	91	.81	(0.96)		30 %	63 %	7 %
Family (0 - 4)	85	.88	(1.32)		53 %	33 %	14 %
Friends (0 - 4)	86	.67	(1.03)		58 %	35 %	7 %
Family-in-law (0 - 4)	84	.65	(1.01)		60 %	32 %	8 %
Neighbours (0 - 4)	69	.94	(1.33)		54 %	33 %	13 %

0=not at all, 1=a little, 2=some, 3=many, 4=very many

(A) If partners of prisoners did not answer the question concerning a certain network group or indicated that the question did not apply because that network group was unaware of the imprisonment, this was coded as missing (also see footnote 14). Therefore the N for family, friends, family in law and neighbours is lower than 91 in Table 3.1.

3.5.2 The experience of negative reactions from different network groups

Partners of prisoners experience negative reactions to a different degree from family, family in law, friends and neighbours. Six months after the start of the imprisonment, they experience the highest degree of negative reactions from their neighbours (mean = 1.20). One in four partners of prisoners experiences “many” or “very many” negative reactions from their neighbours. Partners experience the lowest degree of negative reactions from their friends (mean = .67) and family-in-law (mean = .76). For example, almost two-thirds of the partners does not experience any negative reactions from their friends about the imprisonment at that time. Twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from their neighbours has somewhat decreased ($p < 0.10$). Partners of prisoners now experience the highest degree of negative reactions from their neighbours (mean = .94), followed closely by their family (mean = .88). Partners still experience the lowest degree of negative reactions from their family-in-law (mean = .65) and friends (mean = .67). Thus, the expectation that partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions from neighbours and family-in-law than from family and friends (H2) cannot be supported by this study’s results.

3.5.3 Factors that influence the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners

Having found that most partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment to some extent, we now turn to the determinants for the experience of negative reactions by prisoners’ partners¹⁴.

Characteristics of the crime

Most prisoners were imprisoned for a very severe offence (Table 3.2). While 57 percent of the prisoners was imprisoned for a crime in the severest category (where the maximum punishment is eight years or more), only five percent of the prisoners was imprisoned for a crime in the “mild” category, with a maximum punishment of four years or less. Focusing on the types of crime the prisoners had committed, it was found that most prisoners were imprisoned for a property (39 percent) or

14 Partners of prisoners could indicate that network groups were unaware of the imprisonment and these groups were coded as missing (footnote 13). The researchers also estimated the effects of the determinants for negative reactions when these groups are coded as 0 (partner did not experience negative effects from this group). Most results are similar, with a few exceptions. The effect of “severity of offence” was not significant in model IV at both waves. Moreover, the effect of “prisoner was previously imprisoned” was found at both waves instead of only the first wave.

Table 3.2 Descriptive table of independent variables (N=91)

		Min	Max	Mean
Characteristics of the crime				
Severity of offence committed by prisoner	Mild (max. punishment < 4 years)	0	1	0.05
	Severe (max. punishment < 8 years)	0	1	0.37
	Very severe (max. punishment > 8 years)	0	1	0.57
Prisoner was previously imprisoned	Yes, ever	0	1	0.38
Relationship factors				
Living together before imprisonment	Yes	0	1	0.74
Still in relationship with prisoner	Yes ^(A)	0	1	0.86
	Yes ^(B)	0	1	0.77
Negative personal circumstances				
On welfare	Yes ^(A)	0	1	0.44
	Yes ^(B)	0	1	0.45
Poor financial situation	Yes ^(A)	0	1	0.30
	Yes ^(B)	0	1	0.22
Debts	Yes ^(A)	0	1	0.45
	Yes ^(B)	0	1	0.60
Problematic alcohol use	Yes ^(A)	0	1	0.02
	Yes ^(B)	0	1	0.03
Problematic drug use	Yes ^(A)	0	1	0.03
	Yes ^(B)	0	1	0.04
Criminal behaviour	Ever	0	1	0.31

(A) = Six months after start of the imprisonment

(B) = Twelve months after start of the imprisonment

violent crime (21 percent) (not in table). It was expected that if the offender was *imprisoned for a mild offence*, his partner would experience fewer negative reactions than if the offender was imprisoned for a severe offence (H3). In the first model, partners of prisoners who were imprisoned for a mild or severe offence experience more negative reactions, in comparison to a very severe offence (Table 3.3 and Table 3.4, Model I). This result was found in both waves, six months ($b= 1.36, p<0.05$) and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment ($b= 1.14, p<0.05$). This effect is still (marginally) significant in the final model (Table 3.3, Model IV). However, it is no longer significant twelve months after the start of the imprisonment (Table 3.4, Model IV). This finding contradicts hypothesis three; partners of prisoners do not experience more negative reactions if the prisoner committed a very severe offence compared to a mild offence and therefore the hypothesis is rejected.

It was also expected that if the offender had *previously been imprisoned*, the partner experiences negative reactions to a lesser (H4a) or greater (H4b) degree than if it was the prisoners' first imprisonment. Many of the prisoners had previously been imprisoned within the last five years (23 percent, not in table) or ever (38 percent, Table 3.2). In accordance to the expectation that partners of first time prisoners experience fewer negative reactions (H4b), it was found that, six months after the start of the imprisonment, partners of prisoners who were previously imprisoned experience more negative reactions than partners of prisoners who had not been imprisoned before (Table 3.3, $b= 0.51, p<0.05$ (Model I) and $b= 0.46, p<0.05$ (Model IV)). This result is in line with hypothesis 4b and therefore hypothesis 4a is rejected. However, it should be noted that the effect of previous imprisonment on the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners was no longer found at the second wave that took place twelve months after the start of the imprisonment (Table 3.4, Model I and IV).

Relationship factors

One in four partners of prisoners were not living together with the prisoner before the imprisonment, while the other 74 percent was living together (Table 3.2). Six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, the majority of the partners stayed in the relationship with the prisoner (86 percent and 77 percent respectively).

It was expected that if the partner was *living together* (either married or unmarried) with the offender before the imprisonment, she would experience negative reactions to a greater degree than if she was not living together with the prisoner before the imprisonment (H5). As shown in both in Table 3.3 and Table 3.4 (Model II and Model IV), there was no difference found between partners who were

living together and partners who were dating. This result is contradictory to what was expected and therefore hypothesis five is rejected.

It was also expected that if the partner is *still in a relationship* with the prisoner, she would experience negative reactions to a greater degree than if she ended the relationship (H6). Six months after the start of the imprisonment, the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions indeed appears to be related to whether or not she was still in a relationship with the prisoner (Table 3.3, Model II). Partners of prisoners who are still in a relationship with the prisoner seem to experience fewer negative reactions ($b = -0.60$, $p < 0.10$) than partners of prisoners who are no longer in a relationship with the prisoner. This result, however, was no longer significant in the final Model (Table 3.3, Model IV) and was not found twelve months after the start of the imprisonment (Table 3.4). Thus, partners of prisoners do not seem to experience negative reactions to a different degree if they stay in the relationship with the prisoner or end it. This result is contradictory to what was expected and therefore hypothesis six is rejected.

Negative personal circumstances

Table 3.2 shows the prevalence of negative personal circumstances among partners of prisoners before and during the imprisonment, namely being on welfare, having a poor financial situation, having debts, using alcohol or drugs in a problematic way or being criminal. The findings from the first wave, which took place six months after the start of the imprisonment, will first be discussed. While 34 percent of the partners was on welfare before the imprisonment (not in table), 27 percent say they have had to apply for (extra) welfare (not in table) and 44 percent are on welfare at the time of the questionnaire. Moreover, almost one in three partners of prisoners describes their financial situation as poor and 45 percent of prisoners' partners have a debt. While 15 and 11 percent of the partners indicate that their use of alcohol or drugs, respectively, increased during the imprisonment, only two and three percent, respectively, indicate that their alcohol or drug use is problematic. Finally, 31 percent of partners of prisoners reported previous criminal behaviour. At the second wave, roughly the same results were found. Slight differences were found in two areas. The number of partners of prisoners that indicates their financial situation to be poor decreased from 30 to 22 percent and the number of partner of prisoners with debts increased from 45 to 60 percent.

It was expected that if partners of prisoners have negative personal circumstances they experience negative reactions to a greater degree (hypothesis 7). Six months after the start of the imprisonment, two negative personal circumstances affect the experience of negative reactions (Table 3.3, Model III). Partners of prisoners

Table 3.3 Effect parameters of regression models on average experienced negative reactions, six months after the start of the imprisonment (N=91)

	Model I			Model II			Model III			Model IV		
	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign
Characteristics of the crime												
Severity of offence committed by prisoner	Mild	1.36	.52	*						1.01	.56	~
	Severe	.32	.25							.17	.25	
	Very Severe	ref								ref		
Prisoner was previously imprisoned	Yes, ever	.51	.24	*						.46	.23	*
Relationship factors												
Living together before imprisonment	Yes				-.08	.27				.04	.25	
Still in relationship with prisoner	Yes ^(A)				-.60	.32			~	-.20	.32	
Negative personal circumstances												
On welfare	Yes ^(A)									.50	.23	*
Poor financial situation	Yes ^(A)									.32	.27	
Debts	Yes ^(A)									.31	.25	
Problematic alcohol use	Yes ^(A)									2.03	.83	*
Problematic drug use	Yes ^(A)									-.30	.65	
Criminal behaviour	Ever									.13	.24	

Table 3.3 Continued

	Model I			Model II			Model III			Model IV		
	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign
Control												
Age	-.01	.01		.00	.01		-.01	.01		-.01	.01	
Prisoner still in prison	.40	.43	Yes ^(A)	.06	.45		.09	.42		.30	.43	
Imprisonment duration	-.02	.11	Months ^(A)	.01	.11		-.08	.11		-.07	.11	
Time between start of imprisonment and participation in study	.21	.10	Months ^(A)	.11	.16	*	.10	.10		.18	.10	~
Constant	-.61	.66		.79	.71		.33	.64		-.21	.76	
R ²	.20			.07			.25			.35		

~p<0.10, *p<0.05

(A) = Six months after start of the imprisonment

Table 3.4 Effect parameters of regression models on average experienced negative reactions, twelve months after the start of the imprisonment (N=91)

	Model I			Model II			Model III			Model IV		
	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign
Characteristics of the crime												
Severity of offence committed by prisoner	Mild	1.14	.49	*						.43	.54	
	Severe	.48	.24	*						.20	.24	
	Very Severe	ref								ref		
Prisoner was previously imprisoned	Yes, ever	.18	.22							.23	.22	
Relationship factors												
Living together before imprisonment	Yes		.04	.24						.12	.24	
Still in relationship with prisoner	Yes ^(B)		-.30	.24						-.05	.26	
Negative personal circumstances												
On welfare	Yes ^(A)						.47	.25	~	.44	.26	~
	Yes ^(B)						.21	.28		.18	.29	
Poor financial situation	Yes ^(A)						-.15	.27		-.09	.27	
	Yes ^(B)						.27	.26		.21	.27	
Debts	Yes ^(A)						.02	.24		-.05	.24	
	Yes ^(B)						.39	.23	~	.41	.25	~
Problematic alcohol use	Yes ^(A)						2.24	1.17	~	1.88	1.23	
	Yes ^(B)						-.62	1.07		-.48	1.08	

Table 3.4 Continued

	Model I			Model II			Model III			Model IV		
	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign
Problematic drug use												
Yes ^(A)				.28	.57		.39	.62		.39	.62	
Yes ^(B)				-.03	.58		-.01	.64		-.01	.64	
Ever				.24	.22		.15	.24		.15	.24	
Control												
Age	.00	.01		.01	.01		-.00	.01		-.01	.01	
Prisoner still in prison	.73	.39	~	.75	.41	~	.46	.39		.55	.41	
Imprisonment duration	-.01	.04		-.04	.04		-.03	.03		-.02	.04	
Time between start of imprisonment and participation in study	.01	.09		-.03	.09		-.08	.08		-.05	.09	
Constant	.19	1.17		1.19	1.19		1.40	1.11		.83	1.21	
R ²	.18			.08			.38			.41		

~p<0.10, *p<0.05

(A) = Six months after start of the imprisonment

(B) = Twelve months after start of the imprisonment

experience more negative reactions if they are on welfare ($b = 0.50, p < 0.05$) or use alcohol in a problematic way ($b = 2.03, p < 0.10$). While the effect of being on welfare was also found to be marginally significant in the fourth model ($b = 0.40, p < 0.10$), the relationship between problematic alcohol use and the experience of negative reactions is no longer significant. Twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions if they received welfare ($b = 0.44, p < 0.10$) or had debts ($b = 0.41, p < 0.10$) (Table 3.4, Model IV). Thus, several negative personal circumstances seem to increase the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions¹⁵ and therefore hypothesis seven can be accepted.

3.6 DISCUSSION

Our study investigates the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment from different network groups. Moreover, it was researched whether or not characteristics of the crime, the relationship and negative personal circumstances explain differences in experienced negative reactions. Longitudinal data from the Prison Project was used.

As predicted by stigma theory, and some studies of prisoners' families, most partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment from others. It was expected that partners of prisoners would experience more negative reactions from family in law and neighbours than family and friends. Indeed, partners of prisoners report the most negative reactions from their neighbours. However, contrary to this expectation, it was found that partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions from their family than from their family in law. As this opposes the theoretical concepts of personal and social identity, it may be questioned how this can be explained. Perhaps partners of prisoners are not close with their family

15 Partners of prisoners may experience several negative personal circumstances simultaneously (Wynn, 2001; LeBel, 2012; Vrooman & Hoff, 2013). It was researched if partners of prisoners with compounded negative personal circumstances (two or more from the following list: poor financial situation, having debts, problematic alcohol use, problematic drug use and criminal behaviour) experience more negative reactions. At both waves, partners of prisoners have 1.5 negative personal circumstances on average (76 percent has one or more, 48 percent has two or more and 23 percent has three or more). If partner of prisoners have two or more negative personal circumstances, they experience more negative reactions about the imprisonment, both six ($b = 0.67, p < 0.01$, not in table) and twelve ($b = 0.63, p < 0.01$, not in table) months after the start of the imprisonment.

in law or have little contact with them and therefore experience little negative reactions from them. A different reasoning would be that the family in law, being the prisoners' family, has fewer negative feelings about the imprisonment and can relate to the prisoner's partner better, and therefore stigmatise less and react less negatively than, for example, her own family. It is also possible that, since criminality runs in families (Farrington et al., 2001; Van de Rakt et al., 2008), some partners of prisoners have a criminal family in law that therefore may not react negatively about the imprisonment. The fact that partners of prisoners experience a high degree of negative reactions from their own family might still mean that her family knows her personal identity, but perhaps in such close relationships the family members still feel they need to express their negative thoughts on the imprisonment, perhaps even urge the partner to end the relationship with the prisoner in order to prevent the prisoner's partner from further harm. Since the theoretical notions of social and personal identity do not seem to explain the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners from different social groups, future research is needed to deepen our understanding in this matter.

Findings also demonstrate that there are factors that influence the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment. Surprisingly, partners of prisoners seem to experience more negative reactions if the prisoner was imprisoned for a mild offence than if he was imprisoned for a very severe offence. This finding is contrary to stigma theory and there is no straightforward answer as of yet to how this may be explained. Perhaps family members and friends feel more sorry for partners of prisoners if the prisoners committed a serious offence, and therefore react less negatively towards them, since the odds are that he will be imprisoned for a long time as compared to prisoners who committed mild offences and who will likely be released within a few months. Moreover, it can be imagined that partners of prisoners more often conceal the offence type if the offence is very severe than if it is a mild offence. Consequently, others cannot stigmatise the partner more based on the offence type. It is unknown if network groups, such as neighbours, know for which crime the prisoner was imprisoned in the current study. Results may have been different if this had been taken into account. Another line of thought is that perhaps others are more likely to sever all ties to the prisoners' partner if the prisoner committed a very severe offence. The prisoners' partner would then experience fewer negative reactions. The result, however, may also have been caused by the definitions the current study used to divide mild from severe or very severe offences, originating from the Dutch Research and Documentation Centre (WODC). Other researchers have argued that there are various ways to distinguish between

petty offenders and serious criminals and that different methods may cause different research outcomes (Wakefield & Powell, 2016).

The finding that partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions if the prisoner was previously imprisoned was previously described in the Netherlands by Moerings (1977) but is not in line with several other studies (Morris, 1965; Lowenstein, 1986; Condry, 2007). These contradictory findings may be explained by the fact that these studies took place in other countries, a long time ago (Morris, 1965; Lowenstein, 1986) or used different methods (Condry, 2007). It is unclear if the finding that partners of prisoners experience fewer negative reactions if the prisoner was never imprisoned before, means that their network members feel sorry for them more, and therefore react less negatively, than if the prisoner is a repeat offender. It is noteworthy that there have been indications that shame, that partner of prisoners may feel about the crime or the imprisonment, may be a factor that explains the experience of negative reactions (Condry, 2007) and perhaps shame is related to whether or not the prisoner is a repeat offender. Since the current study was unable to control for the effects of shame, future research is needed that includes shame as an explanatory factor.

Another unexpected finding that contradicts stigma theory is that relationship factors (i.e. living together before the imprisonment and staying in the relationship after the arrest), do not seem to influence the degree to which the prisoner's partner experiences negative reactions. Previous studies described that partners of prisoners who lived with the prisoner before the imprisonment experience more negative reactions because they are blamed for omission (failing to prevent the crime) and commission (being involved in the crime) and that staying in the relationship increases their "voluntary" stigma (Lowenstein, 1986; Condry, 2007; Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). The current study's findings may be explained by the fact that living together before the imprisonment and staying in the relationship may increase the odds that others learn about the imprisonment and that may explain previous findings. The current study focussed on the experience of negative reaction for prisoners' partners from others who *know* about the imprisonment (and can give (negative) reactions about it). The results indicate that once others know about the imprisonment, the extent to which prisoners' partners experience negative reactions from them is not influenced by these relationship factors.

This study also asked if having a second stigmatising quality influenced the extent to which prisoners' partners experience negative reactions. This chapter focused on the effects of several negative personal circumstances and has found that the negative financial circumstances in particular seem to be important in explaining the experience of negative reactions. For partners of prisoners, being on welfare and

in debt increases the extent to which they experience negative reactions, which is in line with previous studies that focused on the stigmatisation of prisoners (LeBel, 2008) and prisoners' families (Davies, 1980).

This study's main finding thus is that partners of prisoners often experience negative reactions about the crime the prisoners committed and the imprisonment. Six months after the start of the imprisonment, the degree to which they experience negative reactions is mostly influenced by the characteristics of the crime and their financial situation. Twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, only the financial situation of partners of prisoners seems to explain the degree to which they experience negative reactions about the imprisonment.

Some data limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. First, the research group differs somewhat on several factors from the partners of prisoners who did not participate in the research, as discussed in the data section. Briefly, it appears that participants were more often in a "serious" relationship with the prisoner (married and/or living together), somewhat older, less often going to school and more often Dutch than non-participants. These differences should be taken into account when generalizing from the results. A second data limitation is that the data was gathered at six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. The current study may have underestimated effects because results might have been different if the data would have been gathered sooner. Moreover, no conclusions can be drawn about the long term relationship between the determinants and the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience. A final limitation of the data is that it is uncertain how much network groups, such as neighbours, know about the offence, the imprisonment and factors such as the prisoners' partner's financial situation. This may have influenced our results.

The current study focuses on the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions. A focus on subjective negative reactions also has some downsides. First, it is possible that some reactions about the imprisonment were not meant to be negative, but were nevertheless interpreted that way by the prisoner's partner. The high prevalence of experienced negative reactions that this study has found, does not automatically mean that there was a high prevalence of objective negative reactions. Although it is good to keep this in mind, the current study argues that a focus on subjective negative reactions is preferable to objective negative reactions. Second, it should be noted that results on differences between network groups may be influenced if partners of prisoners interpret negative reactions coming from family in a different way than coming from, for example, neighbours. The degree to which partners of prisoners indicate that they experience negative reactions is not only determined by the degree to which these neighbours give negative reactions

but also by how much it bothers the prisoner's partner. There are, however, no data available on this topic. Future research will have to take into account the differences between the relationships that partners of prisoners have with network groups, like the closeness between network members.

This study focuses on the year after the start of the imprisonment, but does not differentiate between the experience of negative reactions during and after the imprisonment. This study was able to control for whether or not the prisoners were still in prison when their partners filled out the questionnaire. However, the data does not allow us to differentiate between the experience of negative reactions during and after imprisonment, because both groups of partners answered the question about the entire research period, including the time of imprisonment and, if applicable, the time after that. Future research should answer the question if partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment even after the imprisonment is over, and if so, to what extent and for how long. Further research, that follows prisoners' partners for a longer period, both during and after imprisonment, is needed.

Despite the mentioned limitations, this study makes an important contribution to the field by focusing on a neglected area, using longitudinal data with a relatively large number of respondents. This study adds new knowledge about the experience of negative reactions by prisoners' partners and underlines the importance for future studies to include this topic in their studies on the consequences that imprisonment can have on the lives of partners of prisoners.





CHAPTER 4

SOCIAL CONTACTS OF PARTNERS OF PRISONERS

An earlier version of this chapter was published in Dutch as: Van 't Hoff-de Goede, M.S., van der Lippe, A.G., Nieuwbeerta, P., Dirkzwager, J.E., & Reef, J. (2014). Negatieve reacties en sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden in Nederland: Een empirisch onderzoek. *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie*, 56(2), 90-107. Van 't Hoff-de Goede wrote the main part of the manuscript, coordinated the data collection and conducted the analyses. Van der Lippe, Dirkzwager and Nieuwbeerta substantially contributed to the manuscript. Dirkzwager, Nieuwbeerta and Reef contributed to the data collection. The authors jointly developed the idea and design of the study. The authors also thank Marieke van Schellen for her valuable comments.

ABSTRACT

Not only prisoners, but also their partners may experience negative consequences of imprisonment for their social contacts. Although these consequences may be far reaching, the field of consequences of imprisonment research paid little attention to this topic. This study focuses on the social contacts that partners of prisoners have with their family, friends and neighbours and researches if any changes in these social contacts may be explained by the negative reactions prisoners' partners experience. This study uses longitudinal data from the Prison Project on 119 partners of prisoners. Results show that if partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from family, family in law, friends or neighbours, they have less social contact with these groups. If partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from their friends, their contact with their family increases and vice versa.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

It is often presumed that an imprisonment spell influences not only the lives of prisoners, but also those of their partners (Peelo et al., 1991; Wildeman et al., 2012). Partners of prisoners may be punished on the outside (Fishman, 1990). They may have to face several negative consequences of imprisonment, such as a deterioration in their finances, relationship problems, social isolation and additional worries concerning their children and may even be forced to move (McDermott & King, 1992; O’Keefe, 2000; Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Foca, 2015; Turney & Schneider, 2016). In troubling times, people often need support from the people around them. But if imprisonment affects the social contacts of partners of prisoners, they may not receive the support they need (Turney et al., 2012; Wrzus et al., 2013; Shehadeh et al., 2016). Unfortunately, systematic research on the consequences of imprisonment for the social contacts of partners of prisoners has been rarely conducted recently (Murray, 2005; Dirkzwager, Nieuwbeerta, & Fiselier, 2009; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016).

This chapter aims to bring insight into how the social contacts of partners of prisoners with their family, family in law, friends and neighbours may change due to imprisonment. Stigma likely plays a role here; the partner of an incarcerated man can be labelled as “wife of prisoner” (Goffman, 1963). Stigmatised partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from the people around them (Condry, 2007; Chui, 2016, see also *chapter 3* of this dissertation). These negative reactions may influence the social contacts of partners of prisoners. A prisoner’s partner may, for example, not want to spend time with persons who have given her negative reactions about the imprisonment and therefore pull back from contact with them (Link et al., 1997; Sayce, 1998).

This study therefore researches if imprisonment in The Netherlands causes female partners of male prisoners to experience a change in their social contacts and if this can be explained by the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience. This study poses the following research questions:

1. Do partners of prisoners experience a change in their social contacts with family, family in law, friends and neighbours, since the start of the imprisonment?
2. To what extent can this be explained by the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience from these groups?

This study aims to contribute to the research field of secondary consequences of imprisonment in three ways. First, this study focuses on a neglected area in

criminology and sociology. Research on the social contacts of partners of prisoners is rarely current or of a quantitative nature (Murray, 2005; Dirkzwager et al., 2009; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Previous studies that focused on the social contacts of partners of prisoners in The Netherlands mostly originate from the 1970s-'90s (Jongman & Steenhuis, 1975; Moerings, 1977; Van Genabeek & Godefrooy, 1982; Van Baaren & Van Son, 1984; Yeşilgöz, 1990). Even though the insights from previous studies are immensely valuable, knowledge on the social contacts of partners of prisoners is currently limited. This is worrying, because partners of prisoners who lose social contacts, may also lose important resources (Christian, Mellow, & Thomas, 2006; Dykstra et al., 2006; Turney et al., 2012; Bada et al., 2014a) while at the same time needing the emotional and practical help of others more than ever (Carlson & Cervera, 1991). Moreover, the loss of social contacts and social support, from for example family and friends, can have a negative effect on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners and their children (Moerings & Ter Haar, 1990; Sayce, 1998; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Bada et al., 2014a).

Second, this study has a theoretical contribution. Expectations about the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners in general, and for their experience of negative reactions and social contacts in particular, have not been worked out in detail up until now. By combining existing theoretical insights from criminology and sociology, it is possible to make statements about the consequences that the experience of negative reactions may have for the social contacts of partners of prisoners.

Third, this research used a new research method. Previous studies have almost exclusively been qualitative in nature, with a small number of participating prisoners' partners because they did not aim to generalise their findings to the larger population of partners of prisoners (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). The current study builds on previous work and aims to further the field by using quantitative longitudinal data on a relatively large number of respondents. This study uses data from the Prison Project on 119 female partners of male prisoners, collected in 2011 (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). These prisoners' partners were asked to fill out a questionnaire in two data collection waves. Six months after the start of the imprisonment, they were asked to what extent they experienced negative reactions from the people around them. Twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, they were asked to what extent their social contacts had changed. This allowed us to research the longitudinal relationship between the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contacts.

4.2 NEGATIVE REACTIONS AND SOCIAL CONTACTS OF PRISONERS' PARTNERS: HYPOTHESES

Based on sociological and criminological literature on stigma and labelling theories (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963), expectations about the social contacts of partners of prisoners can be formed. A stigma is "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963: 3). In the case of a prisoners' partner, the discrediting attribute is their relationship with a stigmatised individual – i.e. the prisoner. Prisoners' partners can thus be subjected to a stigma by association (Goffman, 1963; Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Foster & Hagan, 2007). Due to this stigma, they are treated "as one" with the prisoner (Goffman, 1963) and thus treated like a criminal themselves (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007).

If a prisoner's partner has a negative label, it can be expected that others would not want to associate with the partner because of this label (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963). The stigma can cause others to avoid the prisoner's partner (Reidpath et al., 2005; LeBel, 2008). For example, friendships may end and acquaintances may cross the road to avoid conversation (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007). A stigma might also cause partners of prisoners to avoid others. For example, Nussbaum (2004) has argued that partners of prisoners may be "forced to hide from the shaming gaze of others" (p.284). But whether it is the prisoner's partner or the other person that pulls back, the result is less social contact. The first hypothesis reads: *The social contacts of partners of prisoners decrease after the start of the imprisonment.*

There may be a direct relationship between the negative reactions that stigmatised partners of prisoners experience (Morris, 1965; Moerings, 1977; Van Genabeek & Godefrooy, 1982; Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Chui, 2016, see also *chapter 3* of this dissertation) and the changes in their social contacts. The presumption here is that the experience of negative reactions decreases the social contacts of partners of prisoners (Goffman, 1963; Kurzban & Leary, 2001). People who give a prisoner's partner negative reactions may want to spend less time with them, especially if they blame the partner for her situation (LeBel, 2008). At the same time, the prisoner's partner may not want to spend time with persons that have given her negative reactions. In this case, she will pull back from contact with them (Link et al., 1997; Sayce, 1998). This brings us to the second hypothesis: *The more negative reactions prisoners' partners experience, the greater the decrease in their social contacts.*

When theoretical expectations about the consequences of experiencing negative reactions for changes in social contacts are being formulated, it is important to distinguish between different network groups, such as family and friends (LeBel, 2008). It would initially be expected that the negative relationship formulated in

hypothesis two applies to all network members of partners of prisoners, whether they are family, family in law, friends or neighbours. The third hypothesis is as follows: *The more negative reactions prisoners' partners experience from a certain group in their social network, the less contact they have with that group.*

Experiencing negative reactions could, however, decrease the contact that partners of prisoners have with some groups to a larger extent than other groups (Dykstra et al., 2006; Voorpostel, 2007). The degree of closeness between the prisoner's partner and the concerning group may play a role here. For example, Angermeyer et al. (2004) have argued that people avoid stigmatised others less if they know them intimately. The theoretical concepts of social and personal identity by Goffman (1963) may shine some light on this matter. Goffman speaks of two separate identities that everyone possesses. The first is the social identity – the identity that a person has in relationships with others who only know the person superficially. They only know a few characteristics of the person and categorize the person in a certain social category based on these characteristics. For example, people know the profession and marital status of a person and fill in other characteristics based on characteristics of other persons in that same category. The second identity is the personal identity – the identity that a person has in relationships with others who intimately know the person. In this case, the things that make the person unique are known to the others. Based on this divide into social and personal identity categories, it can be expected that for prisoners' partners, experiencing negative reactions leads to a larger decrease in social contact if it comes from network members who only know their social identity, than network members who know their personal identity. After all, only knowing the prisoners' partner's social identity points to a weaker relationship and weaker relationships are more unstable (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980; Wrzus et al., 2013). Based on this, it is expected that family and friends of partners of prisoners know the prisoners' partner's personal identity and family in law and neighbours only know their social identity (Moerings, 1977). This chapters' fourth hypothesis is as follows: *The negative effect of negative reactions on social contacts is larger for neighbours and family in law, than family and friends.*

A further theoretical expectation is that, while experiencing negative reactions causes a decrease in social contact with certain groups, it can simultaneously cause an increase in social contact with persons in other groups (Goffman, 1963). Namely, experiencing negative reactions may bring prisoners' partners to reach out to the people they are close with and can expect support and help from; their family and friends. After all, family and friends are an important source for support (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969; Neyer & Lang, 2003), especially in troubling times (Wrzus et al., 2013). This study's fifth and sixth hypotheses therefore are: *The more negative reactions*

prisoners' partners experience from non-family, the more contact they have with their family and: The more negative reactions prisoners' partners experience from non-friends, the more contact they have with their friends.

4.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON SOCIAL CONTACTS OF PARTNERS OF PRISONERS

Several previous studies have aimed to research a number of the above mentioned theoretical expectations. The results of these studies will be discussed here.

4.3.1 Consequences of imprisonment: changes in social contacts

Almost all studies on the social contacts of partners of prisoners have found that the social contacts of prisoners' partners do in fact decrease during imprisonment (Van Genabeek & Godefroy, 1982; Fishman, 1990; Yeşilgöz, 1990; Miedema, 2000; Condry, 2007). An example of this is that partners of prisoners were avoided by neighbours (Fishman, 1990). Prisoners' partners from Condry's study (2007) in the UK on the stigmatisation of the relatives of serious offenders noted that "we are pariahs, so no-one wants to know us" (p. 61) and "all my friends, my personal friends, didn't want to know me [...] so now I've got no friends" (p. 79). In the Netherlands, Van Genabeek and Godefroy (1982) have found that 39 percent of the prisoners' partners they interviewed indicated that others had avoided them due to the imprisonment or that they themselves had avoided contact. Yeşilgöz (1990) confirmed these findings; seven partners of Dutch Turkish prisoners all indicated that their relationships with family and friends had deteriorated. The prisoners' wives all faced social isolation, either because others had shunned them or because they themselves had pulled back from contact. However, there has also been one study that concluded that the social contacts of wives of prisoners hardly change due to imprisonment (Jongman & Steenhuis, 1975).

Several studies have indicated that changes in social contacts of partners of prisoners are partially dependent on the situation and the type of network members studies have focused on (Moerings, 1977; Van Genabeek & Godefroy, 1982; Miedema, 2000). While the contact prisoners' partners had with their family more often increased than decreased, their contact with family in law more often showed a decrease than an increase. Moreover, their social contact with friends on average stayed the same or decreased and their contact with neighbours decreased or increased just as often (Moerings, 1977; Van Genabeek & Godefroy, 1982; Van Baaren & Van Son, 1984). Another example is Miedema's (2000) finding that 18 partners of

prisoners sometimes cut off contact with their family and family in law, but their contact with their neighbours mostly did not change.

4.3.2 Relationship between negative reactions and change in social contacts

A possible causal relationship between the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contacts of partners of prisoners has seldom been researched up until now, and never using quantitative data. Two qualitative studies pointed out that, for partners of prisoners, experiencing negative reactions due to imprisonment may lead to a decrease in social contacts (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007). Namely, some partners of prisoners avoided contact with persons who had expressed themselves negatively about their husband (Fishman, 1990). The study by Condry (2007) also showed that some partners of prisoners pull back from social contact with persons outside their family, due to negative reactions.

Taken together, due to methodological shortcomings, lack of recent research (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016) and the fact that previous studies have found conflicting findings in some cases, conclusions about the changes that partners of prisoners may experience in their social contacts, and if this may be explained by the experience of negative reactions, cannot be drawn based on previous studies.

4.4 DATA

4.4.1 Sample

This study uses data from the Prison Project to research changes in the social contacts of partners of prisoners. This project is a longitudinal study on the consequences of imprisonment for the life courses of Dutch prisoners and their partners and children (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). The Prison Project approached all male prisoners who entered a Dutch detention facility between October 2010 and April 2011 and who were aged between 18 and 65 years old, were born in the Netherlands and were staying in this country legally, had been in pre-trial detention for approximately three weeks and did not suffer from severe psychological problems. Of the 2,837 prisoners who were approached, 1,904 prisoners (67 percent) participated in the research. Participating prisoners were compared with non-participants on several characteristics. These groups were found to be of similar age, marital status, work status and had committed similar types of offences.

Almost half of the prisoners (50 percent, N=954) reported that they had been in a romantic relationship that had started at least three months before their imprisonment. Among these prisoners who were in a relationship, the smallest group was married (14 percent), almost a third were living together while unmarried (29 percent) and the largest group was neither married nor living together (57 percent). Of the 954 prisoners who had a partner, 744 gave consent for the researchers to approach their partner for the study and 542 of them gave the researchers contact information to reach their partner.

Six months after the start of the imprisonment, these 542 prisoners' partners were approached by the researchers. They were able to find 299 of these partners¹⁶ and asked them to participate in the study. A total of 155 female partners of male prisoners participated. They were compared with non-participating partners on several characteristics, based on the questionnaires that had been filled out by the prisoners about their partners¹⁷. Participating partners were more often married (33 vs. 14 percent) or living together while unmarried (40 vs. 29 percent), older (33 vs. 29 years old), less often going to school (10 vs. 18 percent), more often had a Dutch ethnic background (72 vs. 62 percent) and used drugs less often (17 vs. 22 percent). The differences between these groups in the other areas of education, employment/unemployment, problematic drug and alcohol use, criminal behaviour and having been arrested or imprisoned are negligible (De Goede et. al., 2012).

Six months after the imprisonment had started, the 155 participating partners filled out a questionnaire, that was developed based on previous studies, containing questions about their background, employment, health and social contacts (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014b). Partners could participate independent of whether or not the prisoner was still imprisoned and whether or not they were still a couple at the time of the questionnaire.

Twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, 119 (77 percent) of these 155 prisoners' partners participated again in the study's second wave by filling out a second questionnaire. Partners of prisoners were included in the current study's analysis if they participated in both waves and answered the questions on the dependent, independent and control variables (N=97).

16 The contact information for the other partners turned out to be false, insufficient, or too incomplete to get into contact with them.

17 747 of the 954 prisoners (78%) filled out a questionnaire about their partner.

4.4.2 Dependent variable: Social contacts

Twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, participating partners of prisoners were asked: "To what extent do you have more or less contact with the following persons since your partner's imprisonment: your parents, brothers/sisters, partner's parents, partner's brothers/sisters, your/your partner's friends, people who live in your neighbourhood: far less (-2), less (-1), no change (0), more (1) or far more (2)?" The categories "parents" and "brothers/sisters" were combined and averaged to form the category "family". The categories "partner's parents" and "partner's brothers/sisters" were combined and averaged to form the category "family in law". This resulted in four network groups, namely family, family in law, friends and neighbours. The average of these four groups constitutes the category "contact total network".

4.4.3 Independent variable: Negative reactions

Six months after the start of the imprisonment, respondents were asked: "To what extent do you experience negative reactions about the fact that your partner is/was imprisoned from the following persons: your parents, brothers/sisters, partner's parents, partner's brothers/sisters, your/your partner's friends, people who live in your neighbourhood: not at all (0), a little (1), some (2), much (3), very much (4)?" Partners could also indicate that the question on the experience of negative reactions did not apply to certain network groups because this group was unaware of the prisoners' incarceration (this was coded as 0). Again, the categories "parents" and "brothers/sisters" were combined and averaged to form the category "family" and the categories "partner's parents" and "partner's brothers/sisters" were combined and averaged to form the category "family in law". This again resulted in four network groups. The average of these four groups constitutes the category "negative reactions total network".

4.4.4 Control variables

In the analyses concerning the relationship between the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contact, this study accounted for the *age* of prisoners' partners, whether they were *living together* before the imprisonment (yes/no), whether they were *still in a romantic relationship* with the prisoner when they participated in the second wave of the study (yes/no), and the presence of *children* in the family (yes/no). Finally, this study controlled for the *type of offence* (violent, property, and sexual with "other type of offence" as reference) the prisoner was incarcerated for, as was registered in the Research and Policy Database of Judicial Documentation (OBJD).

4.5 METHOD

In order to answer the first research question and test the first hypothesis, descriptive analyses were executed. Table 4.1 shows the degree to which the social contacts of partners of prisoners changed, with their total network (average) and with each network group separately. Besides averages (on a scale of -2 to 2), the percentages of prisoners' partners who indicated a decrease, no change or increase in contact are reported.

In order to answer research question two, multivariate regression analyses were conducted. Table 4.2 portrays if the experienced negative reactions from network groups, six months after the start of the imprisonment, are related to changes in social contact with those same network groups, measured twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. In Table 4.2, each parameter is a separate multivariate regression analysis between one independent variable (negative reactions network group X), plus control variables and one dependent variable (social contact network group X). Table 4.3 shows if the negative reactions experienced from one group influenced the social contacts with *other* groups. In Table 4.3, each column therefore is a multivariate regression between four independent variables (negative reactions from four network groups), plus control variables and one dependent variable (contact with network group X).

4.6 RESULTS

4.6.1 Social contacts

The first research question lead us to form the first hypothesis: the social contacts of partners of prisoners decrease after the start of the imprisonment. Table 4.1 shows that most partners of prisoners experience a change in social contacts since the start of the imprisonment. While 23 percent indicated that they, on average, had experienced an increase in social contacts, 43 percent reported an average decrease in social contacts. These findings refute hypothesis one.

Clear differences were found between different network groups. In contrast to other network groups, partners of prisoners experience an average increase in contact with their family. Namely, almost a third of the prisoners' partners reported an increase in contact with their family, while only one in ten partners indicated that their contact with friends and neighbours had increased. Moreover, while 30-34 percent of prisoners' partners experience a decrease in contact with friends, family

Table 4.1 Descriptive characteristics social contacts

Network group	N	Contact after twelve months		Contact decreased	No change in contact	Contact increased
		M	SD	(-2 tot -1)	(0)	(1-2)
Total network (-2 - 2)	97	-.20	(.79)	43.3 %	23.7 %	23.0 %
Family (-2 - 2)	97	.09	(1.00)	18.6 %	50.5 %	30.9 %
Friends (-2 - 2)	97	-.46	(.98)	34.0 %	54.6 %	11.3 %
Family in law (-2 - 2)	97	-.28	(1.15)	34.0 %	39.2 %	26.8 %
Neighbours (-2 - 2)	97	-.37	(.94)	29.9 %	60.8 %	9.3 %

-2=far less, -1=less, 0=no change, 1=more, 2=far more

in law and neighbours, only 19 percent of prisoners' partners indicated that their contact with family had decreased.

4.6.2 Relationship between negative reactions and social contacts

It was expected that the more negative reactions prisoners' partners experience, the greater the decrease in their social contacts is (hypothesis 2). Table 4.2 shows that when partners of prisoners experience negative reactions six months after the start of the imprisonment, they have less social contacts twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Namely, the average experienced negative reactions – for all network groups combined – and the average change in the frequency of social contacts with the total network are significantly and negatively related ($b = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$). These results confirm this study's second hypothesis.

Furthermore, Table 4.2 indicates that the experience of negative reactions from family ($b = -0.14$, $p < 0.05$), friends ($b = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$), family in law ($b = -0.25$, $p < 0.05$) and neighbours ($b = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$) are related to a decrease in contact with these same groups. Thus, it was found that the more negative reactions prisoners' partners experience from a certain group in their social network, the less contact they have with that group, thereby confirming hypothesis three.

Our fourth hypothesis is: the negative effect of negative reactions on social contacts is larger for neighbours and family in law, than family and friends. The analyses have also shown that the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience on average, from whichever network group, decrease the contact with friends ($b = -0.26$, $p < 0.05$) and neighbours ($b = -0.33$, $p < 0.01$), but do not have a significant effect on contact with family ($b = -0.15$, n.s.) and family in law ($b = -0.19$, n.s.) (Table 4.2). Contrary to what was expected, the negative effect of the experience

Table 4.2 Effect parameters of regression analyses on the relationship between experienced negative reactions from network groups (independent variable) and changes in social contacts (dependent variable) – Separate regression for each independent variable (N=97)

	Contact total network			Contact family			Contact friends			Contact family in law			Contact neighbours		
	B	SE	sign	B	SE	sign	B	SE	sign	B	SE	sign	B	SE	sign
Negative reactions total network	-.22	.08	*	-.15	.11		-.26	.11	*	-.19	.12		-.33	.10	**
Negative reactions family	-.11	.07	~	-.14	.08	*	-.04	.08		-.10	.09		-.14	.08	~
Negative reactions friends	-.04	.07		.04	.13		-.28	.09	**	.03	.10		-.05	.09	
Negative reactions family in law	-.24	.07	**	-.15	.10		-.25	.09	**	-.25	.10	*	-.35	.09	**
Negative reactions neighbours	-.13	.06	*	-.05	.08		-.19	.07	**	-.10	.08		-.27	.07	**

These analyses controlled for the influence of age, children, living together before imprisonment, still in romantic relationship and committed offence.
 ~ = p < 0.10 * = p < 0.05. ** = p < 0.01

of negative reactions on contact with neighbours and family in law is not larger than the negative effect on contact with family and friends. Hypothesis four therefore has to be rejected.

4.6.3 Special relationships between negative reactions and social contacts

It was also expected that the more negative reactions prisoners' partners experience from non-family, the more contact they have with their family (hypothesis five). This hypothesis can be accepted based on the results of the multivariate regression analyses in Table 4.3, which indicate that if partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from friends, their contact with their family increases ($b = 0.23, p < 0.10$). This also seems to be the case the other way around. A positive significant effect was found between the experience of negative reactions from family and contact with friends ($b = 0.20, p < 0.05$). The sixth hypothesis – the more negative reactions prisoners' partners experience from non-friends, the more contact they have with their friends – is accepted.

4.7 DISCUSSION

This study researches to what extent partners of prisoners experience a change in the frequency of their social contacts since the start of the imprisonment and to what extent this change might be explained by their experience of negative reactions. This was examined with use of longitudinal data on partners of prisoners from the Prison Project.

This study shows that the social contacts of partners of prisoners with others most often decrease, but that this is dependent on the network group. The finding that prisoners' partners' contact with friends and family in law shows an average decrease while their contact with family shows an average increase is in line with previous research (Moerings, 1977; Van Baaren & Van Son, 1984), but the decrease in contact with neighbours that the current study has found, is not (Moerings, 1977; Miedema, 2000). Our findings also contradict the study of Jongman and Steenhuis (1975) that did not find changes in the social contacts of partners of prisoners. A possible explanation for these discrepancies is the fact that previous studies have used samples too small to uncover variation (Miedema, 2000) or originated from the 1970's (Jongman & Steenhuis, 1975; Moerings, 1977).

An important conclusion that this study made is that the decrease in contacts with others that partners of prisoners report can partly be explained by the negative reactions that they experience, but the effect is dependent on the network group

Table 4.3 Effect parameters of regression analyses on the relationship between experienced negative reactions from network groups (independent variable) and changes in social contacts (dependent variable) – Multivariate regressions that include all independent variables (N=97)

	Contact family			Contact friends			Contact family in law			Contact neighbours		
	B	SE	sign	B	SE	sign	B	SE	sign	B	SE	sign
Negative reactions family	-.18	.10	~	.20	.10	*	-.06	.11		.02	.09	
Negative reactions friends	.23	.13	~	-.24	.12	*	.29	.14	*	.36	.11	**
Negative reactions family in law	-.16	.12		-.18	.11		-.30	.13	*	-.31	.10	**
Negative reactions neighbours	-.02	.11		-.09	.10		-.10	.12		-.35	.09	**
Constant	.77	.42	~	-.85	.40	*	-.10	.46		-.14	.37	
R ²	.19			.24			.27			.29		

These analyses controlled for the influence of age, children, living together before imprisonment, still in romantic relationship and committed offence.

~=p<0.10 *=p<0.05 **=p<0.01

focused on. The negative reactions that prisoners' partners experience from family, friends, family in law and neighbours causes the contact that they have with these groups to decrease. This effect is smallest for the contact that partners of prisoners have with their family. This corresponds with the stability of family relationships that has been found in previous studies with the general population (Dykstra et al., 2006; Voorpostel, 2007). Family is an important source of support in hard times and the prisoners' partner's need for support from her family and the family's tendency to give support both likely remain, even if the prisoner's partner experiences negative reactions about the imprisonment from them. The finding that contact with family increases when partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from friends underlines the expectation that families are likely an important source of support for partners of prisoners.

It was expected that the social contacts of partners of prisoners would decrease more if they experienced negative reactions from people they were only somewhat close to (family in law and neighbours) than from people they were closest to (family and friends). This study, however, shows that the negative effects of experiencing negative reactions are not larger for family in law and neighbours than friends and family. The fact that our expectations are not confirmed might be due to the theoretical notions that were used to split up people who prisoners' partners are and are not close to. A previous American study, for example, has found that partners of prisoners often live in a close community (Fishman, 1990). It is unclear if this is true for the Netherlands as well, but Moerings (1977) did find that Dutch partners of prisoners received help from neighbours twice as often as from friends. Since criminal activities are often concentrated in certain neighbourhoods (Bernasco & Elffers, 2010), perhaps partners of prisoners are, in fact, close to their neighbours meaning that neighbours know the prisoners' partners intimately. Likewise, partners of prisoners may be closer to their family in law than expected, since criminality runs in families (Farrington et al., 2001; Van de Rakt et al., 2008). Therefore the relationship between prisoners' partners and their family in law and neighbours may be more stable and their contact less dependent on negative reactions than expected.

While this study contributed to the field by providing insight into the social contacts of partners of prisoners, it also has some limitations that warrant future research. First, this study concerns female partners of male prisoners and results should not automatically be applied to other groups, such as partners of female prisoners. Second, the research group differs somewhat from non-participating partners of prisoners, as was discussed in the method section. Taken together, it appears that partners of prisoners in a more "serious" relationship (married and/or living together) more often participated in the study. It follows logically that they are

slightly older and attend school less often. That participating partner more often had a Dutch ethnicity than non-participating partners may be due to a language barrier: the questionnaires were written in Dutch and during field work it became apparent that not all partners of prisoners speak Dutch. These differences between the participating and non-participating prisoners' partners should be taken into account in generalising statements.

A third limitation of the data is the fact that the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contacts were measured at respectively six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. It is possible that results would have been different if they had been measured closer to the start of the imprisonment, which may have caused the current study to underestimate effects. Moreover, statements about long term effects of negative reactions on social contacts are not possible based on these two measurements. Fourth, there are indications that shame, that partners of prisoners may feel about the crime the prisoner committed or his imprisonment, may be a factor in explaining both the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contacts (Condry, 2007). Future research is warranted to disentangle the possible relationships between negative reactions, social contacts and shame. These future endeavours should, furthermore, aim to deepen our understanding of any explanatory factors behind the relationships between these factors, perhaps through respondent interviews and mixed methods. Finally, future studies should include other partner populations and follow up over a longer time period.

Despite the mentioned limitations, this study made an important contribution to the field of secondary consequences of imprisonment by researching an understudied topic using longitudinal data on a relatively large number of respondents. This study gained new insights into the far reaching consequences that imprisonment can have on the lives of partners of prisoners.





CHAPTER 5

WELLBEING OF PARTNERS OF PRISONERS

This chapter is co-authored by Paul Nieuwebeerta, Tanja van der Lippe and Anja Dirkzwager and is submitted for publication. Susanne van 't Hoff-de Goede is the first author. Van 't Hoff-de Goede wrote the main part of the manuscript, coordinated the data collection and conducted the analyses. Nieuwebeerta and Van der Lippe substantially contributed to the manuscript. Dirkzwager and Nieuwebeerta contributed to the data collection. The authors jointly developed the idea and design of the study.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify factors that determine how imprisonment affects the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. The rationale of Amato's (2000) adaptation of family stress and coping theory was combined with two waves of the Prison Project, a longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands among prisoners and their families, to examine the effects of stressors and protective factors, related to imprisonment, on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners. It was found that the stressor "deterioration of the financial situation" has a negative effect on the development of prisoners' partners' wellbeing. Moreover, two protective factors, namely the "improvement of the financial situation" and the experience of "more peace and quiet at home", positively affect the change that partners of prisoners experience in their wellbeing since the start of the imprisonment. This study thereby shows that changes in the wellbeing of partners of prisoners are not only a matter of changes in economic circumstances.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Being separated from one's partner can affect one's wellbeing. This has been examined extensively in the cases of divorce (Mastekaasa, 1994; Shapiro & Lambert, 1999; Bokker, Farley, & Bailey, 2006; Bauserman, 2012; Amato, 2000, 2014), military deployment (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003; Lapp et al., 2010; Allen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2011) and bereavement (Mastekaasa, 1994; Fry, 2001; Bisconti et al., 2004; Burkhauser et al., 2005; Janke, Nimrod, & Kleiber, 2008; Naef, Ward, Mahrer-Imhof, & Grande, 2013). For example, for army wives, the separation from their deployed partner can decrease their life satisfaction. Wellbeing is especially negatively affected if the separation is involuntary, for example if the divorce was initiated by the other partner (Wang & Amato, 2000) or if the other partner passed away (Kitson, Babri, Roach, & Placidi, 1989; Luhmann, Hofmann, Eid, & Lucas, 2012).

Another instance of involuntary separation, that has received very little attention from scholars in comparison, is being separated due to imprisonment. The lack of research on the topic of prisoners' partners' wellbeing is unfortunate for several reasons. First, it is important the consequences of the most severe sentence that can be imposed (i.e. imprisonment) are investigated, especially the consequences for people that did not commit the crime, such as prisoners' partners, but who may be, in some ways, punished because of their "linked lives" with a prisoner (Elder, 1998). Second, the effects of imprisonment on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners deserve attention from scholars because of the possible undesirable consequences. For example, if the imprisonment deteriorates prisoners' partners' wellbeing, this may take a toll on their relationship (Turney, 2015) - a relationship that has been found to be of vital importance for prisoners' successful reintegration after release from prison (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Hairston, 1991, 2002; Arditti et al., 2003; La Vigne et al., 2004; Visher et al., 2004; Berg & Huebner, 2011; Mears, Cochran, Siennick, & Bales, 2012). Moreover, if the wellbeing of prisoners' partners deteriorates, this likely affects their parenting abilities and the wellbeing of the prisoners' children. Also, the deterioration of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners can cause mental and physical health problems, which may bring costs to society, such as health costs and decreased labour participation (Folland et al., 2007; Wildeman et al., 2013; Cooke, 2014; Lee et al., 2014).

This study focuses on how imprisonment affects the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. On the one hand, the wellbeing of partners of prisoners may deteriorate when the prisoner is imprisoned (Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Woodward, 2003; Braman, 2004; Condry, 2007). Prisoners' partners can feel stressed,

depressed, drained, sleep all day, smoke and eat more due to stress and even think about suicide (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Arditti et al., 2003; Hannem & Leonardi, 2015). This is not surprising, because apart from dealing with the imprisonment itself, the separation from ones partner and feelings of shame and loneliness, partners of prisoners have a lot on their plate, such as financial and housing difficulties and problems with their children (McDermott & King, 1992; O'Keefe, 2000; Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Foca, 2015; Turney & Schneider, 2016). There is, on the other hand, also literature describing that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners can improve upon the imprisonment (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Turanovic et al., 2012). Turanovic et al. (2012), for example, have found that for partners of prisoners who had suffered from domestic violence, the incarceration increased their quality of life. Partners of prisoners thus vary in the way the imprisonment affects their wellbeing.

The purpose of this study therefore is to identify factors that determine how imprisonment affects the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners over time, by adapting Amato's (2000) family stress and coping theory to the case of prisoners' partners. Although the effects of imprisonment on the wellbeing of partners of prisoners have been the focus of some studies, the importance of family stress for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners has been neglected since the work of Lowenstein (1984). Moreover, while most previous studies have focused on the deteriorating effects of incarceration only (Sampson, 2011; Turanovic et al., 2012), this study investigates the influence of both negative and positive factors on the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. An example of such a factor is the financial situation of prisoners' partners. The imprisonment may deteriorate the financial situation, due to loss of the prisoners' income, and thereby negatively affect the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. But it is also possible that the financial situation of prisoners' partners improves due to the imprisonment, for example because the prisoner was a drain on the household income due to an addiction, and their wellbeing may then improve accordingly. While it has been well-documented that imprisonment can have vast financial consequences for partners of prisoners (Grinstead, Faigeles, Bancroft, & Zack, 2001; Murray, 2005; Smith, Grimshaw, Romeo, & Knapp, 2007; Geller & Franklin, 2014; Bruns, 2015; Turney & Schneider, 2016), it has rarely been examined how this may affect their wellbeing.

The current study seeks to fill in three gaps in the existing research. First, it focuses on the development of the wellbeing of female partners of male prisoners, an understudied group (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Very few studies directly measured the wellbeing of partners of prisoners (Daniel & Barrett, 1981; O'Connel, 2006; Wildeman et al., 2012; Bada et al., 2014a, 2014b)

or followed partners of prisoners over time (Fishman, 1990). Second, this study will be the first to apply Amato's (2000) adaptation of family stress and coping theory (Hill, 1949; McCubbin et al., 1982), a theory that has been used to explain the effects of army deployment and divorce on families, to the case of prisoners' partners. This theory allows us to step away from the focus in previous studies on negative consequences of imprisonment and to argue that imprisonment has consequences for the lives of partners of prisoners, that can be either classified as stressors or protective factors, and that these consequences influence the wellbeing of prisoners' partners in a negative or positive way respectively. Third, this study advances the field of secondary consequences of imprisonment by using quantitative data to target research problems that have previously mostly been the focus of qualitative studies. In order to investigate the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners over time and the relationship between life circumstances and wellbeing, quantitative information is needed on characteristics of partners of prisoners, their financial situation, social surroundings and factors relating to the imprisonment, such as imprisonment duration, in a longitudinal context (Wildeman et al., 2012). Unfortunately, most previous studies on the wellbeing of partners of prisoners were based in a specific geographical area (Chui, 2009; Bada et al., 2014a, 2014b; Foca, 2015), focussed on women who joined a support group or who visited their imprisoned partners often (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Comfort, 2008; Turanovic et al., 2012), or focussed on partners of prisoners who had a child with the prisoner (Turanovic et al., 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012). Moreover, several previous studies examined prisoners' family members, including their spouses, without differentiating between spouses and other family members in the analysis (Naser & Visher, 2006; Turanovic et al., 2012), which is problematic given that consequences of imprisonment are likely very different for partners of prisoners than for parents or siblings of prisoners. The current study uses data from the Prison Project, a national, longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). Our design makes it possible to determine which consequences of imprisonment, such as changes in the financial situation of prisoners' partners, affect the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners.

5.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In order to understand how imprisonment may affect the wellbeing of prisoners' partners, this chapter adapts Amato's (2000) divorce-stress-adjustment perspective. Although the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective was developed to explain the

effects of divorce on families, this study argues that the rationale can be applied to the case of prisoners' partners.

5.2.1 The divorce-stress-adjustment perspective

Amato (2000) incorporated family stress and coping theory (Hill, 1949; McCubbin et al., 1982), which explains people's adjustment to a stressful family event, and other stress frameworks into the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective. According to the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective, people's adjustment to a stressful family event, such as divorce, depends on two factors: the a) accumulation of stressors and b) resources for coping with stress (protective factors) (Amato, 2000). Stressors are events, for example caused by divorce, that people experience as stressful and that negatively affect their wellbeing, such as loss of custody. People also have resources for coping with this stress, called protective factors, which act as shock absorbers, such as social support (Amato, 2000). When this perspective is applied to the case of prisoners' partners, it can be expected that the effects of imprisonment on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners depend on the presence of a variety of stressors and protective factors.

5.2.2 Accumulation of stressors

Imprisonment can cause disruptive life changes for partners of prisoners that act as stressors. Partners of prisoners may experience a *deterioration of their financial situation*, for example due to the loss of income of the prisoner and having to spend scarce family resources on travelling to visit the prisoner, accepting collect telephone calls, sending care packages, and providing money for commissary accounts (Davis, 1992; Grinstead et al., 2001; Christian, 2005; Comfort, 2008; Christian, Martinez, & Martinez, 2015; Hutton, 2016). These prisoners' partners struggle to keep their household running (Morris, 1965; Daniel & Barrett, 1981; Davis, 1992; Braman, 2004; Smith et al., 2007; Comfort, 2008; Chui, 2009; Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller, & Garfinkel, 2011; Bruns, 2015). This increases feelings of stress, reduces self-reliance and thus reduces wellbeing (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990). Studies have targeted socioeconomic consequences of imprisonment as the root from which other difficulties grow, but have paid little attention to how they may affect the wellbeing of prisoners' partners (Wildeman et al., 2012). Two studies, though they focused on mothers and caretakers of prisoners' children rather than prisoners' partners, should be mentioned. Wildeman et al. (2012) have found that mothers with children by recently incarcerated fathers more often reported life dissatisfaction and had increased odds of being depressed than mothers attached to never incarcerated men. They have found that the negative effects of incarceration

on the wellbeing of mothers of prisoners' children "stem in no small part from the well-known effects of incarceration on socioeconomic status" (p. 234). Thus, the effect of imprisonment on their wellbeing could be explained for a large part by the negative effects the incarceration had had on their financial situation. Moreover, Turanovic et al. (2012) have found that caregivers of prisoners' children described financial burdens as "stressful" and indicated that it "takes a toll" on their wellbeing.

Another significant stressor that is associated with imprisonment is that partners of prisoners may *experience negative reactions* from the people around them about the crime that was committed (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; see also *chapter 3* of this dissertation). These negative reactions may come from friends and family, but most often come from family in law and neighbours (Morris, 1965; Moerings, 1977). If the prisoner is serving a long sentence or has been imprisoned before, his partner is especially likely to experience negative reactions (Moorings, 1977; see also *chapter 3* of this dissertation). These indifferent, hostile or disapproving remarks can intensify the pain of losing a partner to imprisonment (Turanovic et al., 2012). The most prominent quantitative study in this area focussed on the relationship between stigma and wellbeing and has found that partners of prisoners who experienced low stigmatisation reported a higher psychological wellbeing than those who experienced high stigmatisation (Bada et al., 2014b). Since the effects of experiencing negative reactions on wellbeing have rarely been examined among partners of prisoners, this study broadens its scope. Studies on stigma have found that experiencing negative reactions may lead to a deterioration in wellbeing in the general population (Sayce, 1998; Link & Phelan, 2001; Cheng, Li, Leung, & Chan, 2011), for persons with a mental illness (Markowitz, 1998; Cruwys & Gunaseelan, 2016) and prisoners (Foster & Hagan, 2007). Moreover, Valkenburg et al. (2006) have found that experiencing negative reactions on friend networking sites decreased wellbeing among adolescents. Together, this suggests that a negative effect may be expected for other groups, such as prisoners' partners, as well.

Decreased contact with friends is another stressful outcome of imprisonment (see also *chapter 4* of this dissertation) that may affect the wellbeing of prisoners' partners (Moorings, 1977; Moorings & Ter Haar, 1990; Woodward, 2003; Turanovic et al., 2012; Bada et al., 2014a; Hannem & Leonardi, 2015). Losing friends can be the result of friends avoiding the prisoner's partner because they see the partner as the same as the prisoner, a criminal, or because they feel the partner is in some way to blame for the prisoners' crime (Condry, 2007). Moreover, some partners of prisoners avoid contact with friends that have expressed negative feelings about the prisoner (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; see also *chapter 4* of this dissertation). Contact with friends is important for wellbeing and loss of social contacts may have

a great deteriorating effect on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners (Moerings & Ter Haar, 1990; Turanovic et al., 2012; Bada et al., 2014a). For example, Moerings (1977) has found that decreased contact with friends increased loneliness and isolation for partners of prisoners.

Based on these theoretical expectations and empirical findings, the hypotheses about the influence of stressors, caused by imprisonment, on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners read: *The wellbeing of partners of prisoners diminishes due to a deterioration in their financial situation (H1), the experience of negative reactions (H2) and a decrease in social contact with friends (H3)*. These hypotheses are displayed in Figure 5.1.

5.2.3 Protective factors

According to the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective, partners of prisoners may also have several resources for coping with the stress of imprisonment. These protective factors act like shock absorbers and weaken the links between imprisonment-related events and wellbeing (Amato, 2000). Resources that lessen the negative impact of imprisonment may come from within the individual (e.g. coping skills), from interpersonal relationships (e.g. social support) and from settings (e.g. financial and home situation) (Amato, 2000). One example of such a protective factor is that partners of prisoners can experience an *improvement of their financial situation*. This may be because, now that prisoners' partners are no longer caught in restrictive household roles and domestic routines and get freedom from a relationship in which they were dependent on the other, they may get a job or start to work more hours and thus improve their financial situation (Bruns, 2017). The improvement of the financial situation might also be due to an increase in the welfare or financial help from others that partners of prisoners receive or because the prisoner is no longer spending

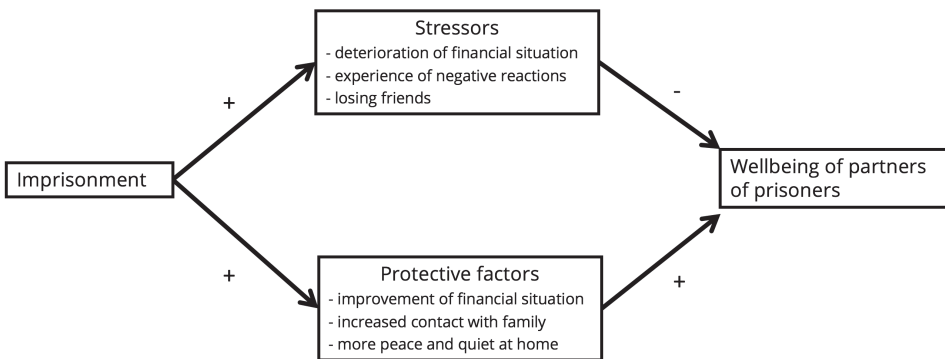


Figure 5.1 Theoretical influence of imprisonment on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners.

scarce family resources on, for example, an addiction (Sugie, 2012; Turanovic et al., 2012; Bruns, 2015; Foca, 2015). The absence of the prisoner gives the partner control over their own money and thus feel “better off” (Fishman, 1990). Indeed, economists have found that an improved financial situation is positively associated with wellbeing (Easterlin, 2001; Gardner & Oswald, 2007).

Increased contact with family is another example of a protective factor that may help partners of prisoners cope with the imprisonment. Families are an important source of support (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969; Moerings, 1977; Wellman & Wortley, 1989; McGlone, Park, & Roberts, 1999; Neyer & Lang, 2003; McCubbin & Sussman, 2014), especially in troubling times (Wrzus et al., 2013). The family can provide warmth, affection and support in times of crises (Moerings, 1977; Walsh, 1996; McCubbin & Sussman, 2014). Previous research showed that contact within families increased due to negative events, such as a death in the family (Dykstra, 1990; Barrett & Lynch, 1999). Imprisonment of a family member may also lead to more contact within families (see also *chapter 4* of this dissertation). Having support from their own family may make it easier for partners of prisoners to resolve negative feelings about the imprisonment (Wang & Amato, 2000; Bada et al., 2014a; Hannem & Leonardi, 2015).

Finally, factors that lessen the negative impact of imprisonment may also come from settings, such as the home situation (Amato, 2000). Partners of prisoners may experience *more peace and quiet at home* now that the prisoner is absent, especially if the prisoner was addicted or abusive. Offenders often have volatile relationships with much conflict, violence or infidelity (Giordano, 2010). Partners of prisoners may therefore have experienced a lot of stress due to their relationship before the imprisonment. They may have felt they had to be “on guard” when they were around their unstable or violent partner (Giordano, 2010). Especially in the case of domestic violence, the imprisonment of the instigator likely brings relief (Moerings, 1977). An empirical example is Fishman’s (1990) study, which has found that over a third of the prisoners’ partners interviewed mentioned that they had enjoyed more peace and quiet since the start of the imprisonment. This could positively affect their wellbeing. As one prisoner’s partner described, “I don’t enjoy being alone, but I like living alone”, “I feel more relaxed. I don’t have to deal with his problems” (Fishman, 1990, p. 203-204). Moreover, Turanovic et al. (2012) have found that the incarceration of the instigators of relational conflict allowed the quality of life to improve for remaining partners.

Based on the theoretical expectations and empirical findings, the hypotheses about the influence of protective factors, related to imprisonment, on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners’ partners are as follows: *The wellbeing of partners of prisoners improves due to an improved financial situation (H4), increased*

contact with family (H5) and the experience of more peace and quiet at home (H6). These hypotheses are displayed in Figure 5.1.

5.2.4 The effects of stressors and protective factors over time

According to Amato (2000), the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective views divorce as a process, instead of a discrete event, that begins while the couple is still together and ends long after the legal divorce is concluded. Imprisonment, too, can be seen as a process, that begins when the prisoner is arrested and incarcerated and ends long after the prisoner is released, since the effects of imprisonment, on for example employment, can be found long after release (Pager, 2003; Ramakers, Apel, Nieuwbeerta, Dirkzwager, & Wilsem, 2014). The duration of the effects of imprisonment likely differ from person to person, depending on the presence of stressors and protective factors over time (Amato, 2000).

It is, however, unclear if the effects of stressors and protective factors change over time. On the one hand, it might be expected that the influence of stressors and protective factors remains stable over time. On the other hand, the effect of some stressors, for example experiencing negative reactions, may be short-lived if partners of prisoners become desensitised to experiencing negative reactions over time. Moreover, while some stressors and protective factors arise directly (called short term outcomes of imprisonment), some may arise at a later stage (called medium term outcomes of imprisonment) (Amato, 2000). Therefore, studies should follow partners of prisoners over time, from the early stage of imprisonment to, for example, a year later. However, while some studies have focused on partners of recently imprisoned prisoners and others have focused on partners of long-term prisoners, almost none have followed partners of prisoners over time (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). At best, previous studies have used cross-sectional designs. The most prominent study that investigated the wellbeing of partners of prisoners over time is Fishman (1990), who examined the wellbeing of 30 partners of prisoners retrospectively by interviewing them two times over a period of 2 years. Fishman (1990) described that although the consequences of imprisonment that prisoners' partners encountered varied over time, this did not seem to be due to the length of separation but due to life events that were happening at the time, such as a child that fell ill. This indicates that the presence of stressors and protective factors over time is indeed relevant for explaining the respectively negative and positive effects of imprisonment on the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Therefore, this study focuses on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners at different stages after the start of the imprisonment.

5.3 DATA AND OPERATIONALISATION

5.3.1 Sample

This chapter draws upon two waves of data from the Prison Project collected in 2011/2012. This project is a longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands among Dutch prisoners and their families (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). The project researches intended and unintended consequences of imprisonment on prisoners, their partner and children. The prisoners were approached within the first three weeks after the prisoner had entered a Dutch detention facility, if they were male, aged between 18 and 65, in pre-trial detention, were born in the Netherlands and were staying in this country legally and did not suffer from severe psychological problems. Of the 2,837 prisoners who were approached, 1,904 prisoners (67 percent) participated in the research. In order to determine if prisoners had a partner at the moment of entrance in the Dutch detention facility they were asked if they were in a romantic relationship that started at least three months prior to the interview. Of the 1,904 prisoners, 50 percent (N=954) indicated that they were in a relationship with a partner for at least three months. Of the 954 prisoners who had a partner, 744 gave consent for the researchers to approach their partner for the research and 542 of them gave the researchers contact information to reach the partner.

Six months after the start of the imprisonment, the researchers approached these 542 partners and were able to find 299¹⁸ of them. They were asked to participate in the research. Participants filled out a questionnaire, that was developed based on previous studies, containing questions about their wellbeing, job, health, background and social contacts. Partners could participate independent of whether or not the prisoner was still imprisoned and whether or not they were still a couple at the time of the questionnaire.

A total of 155 female partners of male prisoners participated in the first wave¹⁹, six months after the start of the imprisonment and 119 (77 percent) of them participated again in the second wave, twelve months after the start of the imprisonment (Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2014b). Partners of prisoners were included in the current study's analysis if they participated in both waves and

18 The contact information for the other partners turned out to be false, insufficient, or too incomplete to get into contact with them.

19 A common reaction, that was also found in previous research (Fishman, 1990), was that these women were grateful that someone was paying attention to them, their children and their situation. They expressed how all of the attention normally is addressed to the prisoner and that we were the first "institution" to be interested in how they were doing themselves.

answered the questions on the dependent variables for both waves (N=110). Due to missing data for the independent variables the analysis for wave one contains 94²⁰ partners and the analysis for wave two contains 104 partners²¹.

5.3.2 Dependent variables

Based on previous studies, a questionnaire was developed on wellbeing that focused both on subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Sirgy, 2012)²².

Change in subjective wellbeing. At both waves, 6 and 12 months after the start of the imprisonment, the prisoners' partners were asked: "To what extent has your wellbeing diminished, stayed the same or increased since the start of the imprisonment of your partner?" Answer possibilities were: diminished very much (-2), diminished (-1), stayed the same (0), increased (1) or increased very much (2).

Change in life satisfaction. At both waves, the prisoners' partners were asked: "To what extent has your satisfaction with your life diminished, stayed the same or increased, since the start of the imprisonment of your partner?" Answer possibilities were: diminished very much (-2), diminished (-1), stayed the same (0), increased (1) or increased very much (2).

5.3.3 Independent variables

Deterioration and improvement of financial situation. At both waves, the prisoners' partners were asked to what extent their financial situation had deteriorated, stayed the same or had improved, since the start of the imprisonment of their partner, on a five point scale. A "deterioration of the financial situation" means that the partner indicated that her financial situation deteriorated or deteriorated very much and an "improvement of the financial situation" means that the partner indicated that her financial situation improved or improved very much. When these dummies were both

20 At wave one, there were missing data on the following variables: deterioration (and improvement) of financial situation (4), experience of negative reactions (2), decreased contact with friends (12), increased contact with family (7), more peace and quiet at home (6), and still in romantic relationship (2).

21 At wave two, there were missing data on the following variables: deterioration (and improvement) of financial situation (1), experience of negative reactions (2), decreased contact with friends (5), increased contact with family (3), more peace and quiet at home (3), and still in romantic relationship (1).

22 Subjective well-being has several major components, one of which is the (judgmental) "life satisfaction" component (Sirgy, 2012). Although similar, subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction are thus not the same. Focussing on these two dependent variables simultaneously therefore is more informative than a singular outcome.

included in the regression models, the reference category was “financial situation stayed the same”.

Experience of negative reactions. The variable “experience of negative reactions” was measured at both waves by asking the partners: “To what extent²³ do you experience negative reactions about the fact that your partner is/was imprisoned from the following persons: your parents, brothers/sisters, partner’s parents, partner’s brothers/sisters, your/your partner’s friends, people who live in your neighbourhood: not at all (0), a little (1), some (2), much (3), very much (4)?” All categories were combined and averaged. The researchers note that in Dutch, the term “negative reactions” implies that these reactions were verbal, but the term is not limited to verbal reactions. Respondents decided for themselves what they thought were negative reactions and to what extent they experienced these.

Decreased contact with friends and increased contact with family. At both waves, the prisoners’ partners were asked to what extent they had more, the same, or had less contact with a list of persons, among who were listed: 1) your parents, 2) your brothers/sisters and 3) your or your partner’s friends. Categories 1 and 2 were combined and averaged to create the group “family”. “Increased contact with family” means that the partner indicated that she had more or much more contact with her family since the start of the imprisonment. For this dummy, the reference category was “contact stayed the same or decreased”. “Decreased contact with friends” means that the partner indicated that she had less or much less contact with her or her partners friends since the start of the imprisonment. For this dummy, the reference category was “contact stayed the same or increased”.

More “peace and quiet” at home. At both waves, the prisoners’ partners were asked to what extent their experience of “peace and quiet” at home had diminished, stayed the same or had increased, since the start of the imprisonment of their partner on a five-point scale. “More peace and quiet at home” means that the partner indicated that her experience of peace and quiet at home increased or increased very much. For this dummy, the reference category was “experience of peace and quiet at home stayed the same or had diminished”.

5.3.4 Control variables

Still in romantic relationship. At both waves, 6 and 12 months after the start of the imprisonment, partners of prisoners were asked if they were still in a relationship with the prisoner (yes (1) / no (0)).

23 Respondents could also indicate that this question did not apply if the persons were not aware of the imprisonment. This answer was coded as 0.

Imprisonment duration, prisoner still in prison and timing study. Data from the Judicial Institutions Department ([Tenuitvoerlegging vrijheidsbenemende straffen en maatregelen in penitentiaire inrichtingen] TULP) was used to determine when the prisoner was imprisoned and if and when he was released. These dates were compared with the date that the partner participated to both waves of the study. This allowed the researchers to calculate the number of months between the start of the imprisonment and the moment the partner participated in the study, if the prisoner was still in prison at the time when his partner participated in the study (yes/no) and how long the prisoner had been imprisoned in total (in months), since the start of the imprisonment to the time of his release (if applicable), or, if he had not been released, to the time the partner participated in the study.

5.4 METHOD

Multivariate relationships between the independent variables about stressors, protective factors and controls and the dependent variables on wellbeing were estimated with regression models. Table 5.2 presents the findings from the analysis on data from wave one, that took place six months after the start of the imprisonment, and wave two, that took place twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. For each of the regression analyses the dependent variable was the change of the subjective wellbeing or the change of the life satisfaction of prisoners' partners, from one of the waves, and the independent variables were based on data from that same wave. The models for the second wave also contain a control variable for the dependent variable from wave one. The stressor and protective factor variables and control variables were added simultaneously to the multivariate models (Wang & Amato, 2000).

5.5 RESULTS

5.5.1 The development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners

Table 5.1 displays the descriptive statistics for the changes in wellbeing that partners of prisoners have reported since the start of the imprisonment. The change in subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction of partners of prisoners show similar patterns and are correlated both six ($R=.79$, $p<0.01$, not in table) and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment ($R=.58$, $p<0.01$, not in table). Table 5.1 demonstrates that, six months after the start of the imprisonment, partners of prisoners on average

report a decrease in both their subjective wellbeing (-.64 on a scale of -2 to 2) and their life satisfaction (-.67) since the start of the imprisonment. More than half of the respondents report a diminishment in subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction (59 and 63 percent respectively) while one in four report no change (25 percent) and the smallest group indicates that their subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction has improved since the start of the imprisonment (16 and 12 percent respectively). Six months later, twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, partners of prisoners still report an average decrease in their subjective wellbeing (-.16) and their life satisfaction (-.26) since the start of the imprisonment, but the decrease is smaller than before. At this wave, the largest group of partners reports no change in their subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction since the start of the imprisonment (47 and 43 percent respectively). Only roughly 1 in 3 partners still indicate that their subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction has decreased since the start of the imprisonment (35 and 39 percent respectively). The number of partners that indicates that their subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction has improved since the start of the imprisonment grew to almost 1 in 5 (18 and 17 percent respectively). There is no bivariate relationship between these changes in subjective wellbeing/life satisfaction and the duration of the imprisonment ($b = -0.72$ and $b = -0.78$ respectively, *n.s.*, not in table).

5.5.2 Stressors for the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners

This study includes three stressors that may have a negative effect on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners: a deterioration of the financial situation, the experience of negative reactions and decreased contact with friends. Results show that "a deterioration of the financial situation" is the only stressor that is significantly related to the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Table 5.1 shows that most partners of prisoners indicate that their financial situation has deteriorated, both six months and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment (56 and 54 percent respectively).

Table 5.2²⁴ shows a significant negative relationship between deterioration of the financial situation and change in subjective wellbeing ($b = -0.74$, $p < 0.01$) and change in life satisfaction ($b = -0.56$, $p < 0.01$), six months after the start of the imprisonment. If partners of prisoners experience a deterioration in their financial situation, they report a more negative or less positive change in their subjective wellbeing and life

24 Note that the multivariate models in Table 5.2 control for the influence of the other stressors, but also for the influence of the protective factors and control variables.

Table 5.1 Descriptive table

	Six months after start of the imprisonment (N=94)				Twelve months after start of the imprisonment (N=104)						
	Scale	Average		No change (0)	Improved (1 or 2)	Average		No change (0)	Improved (1 or 2)		
		M	SD			M	SD				
Dependents											
Change in subjective wellbeing	-2 / 2	-.64	1.12	58.5%	25.5%	16%	-.16	1.02	34.6%	47.1%	18.3%
Change in life satisfaction	-2 / 2	-.67	1.02	62.8%	25.5%	11.7%	-.26	.99	39.4%	43.3%	17.3%
Stressors											
Deterioration of financial situation	0 / 1	.56	.50				.54	.50			
Experience of negative reactions	0 / 4	.71	.95				.63	.78			
Decreased contact with friends	0 / 1	.34	.48				.34	.47			
Protective factors											
Improvement of financial situation	0 / 1	.11	.31				.11	.31			
Increased contact with family	0 / 1	.37	.49				.30	.46			
More peace and quiet at home	0 / 1	.30	.46				.37	.48			
Controls											
Still in romantic relationship	0 / 1	.86	.35				.80	.40			
Imprisonment duration (months)	0 / 11	3.77	2.19				6.47	4.73			
Prisoner still in prison	0 / 1	.60	.49				.27	.45			

satisfaction six months after the start of the imprisonment. However, twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, the multivariate models in Table 5.2 no longer indicate a significant relationship between a deterioration of the financial situation and change in subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction of prisoners' partners²⁵. This suggests that the hypothesis that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners diminishes due to a deterioration in their financial situation (hypothesis one) can be accepted, but that this effect is short lived and is no longer found a year after the start of the imprisonment. It was also expected that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners diminishes due to the experience of negative reactions and the decrease in social contact with friends, but these hypotheses (hypotheses two and three) have to be rejected.

5.5.3 Protective factors for the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners

It was expected that there are also protective factors that influence the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. This study focuses on the improvement of the financial situation, increased contact with family and the experience of more "peace and quiet" at home. Results show that two of these protective factors are related to the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. The first is the improvement of the financial situation. Six months and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, one in ten partners report an improvement in their financial situation since the start of the imprisonment (Table 5.1, mean is .11 for both waves).

The multivariate models in Table 5.2 show that an improvement of the financial situation is marginally positively related to the change in subjective wellbeing, twelve months after the start of the imprisonment ($b = 0.55$, $p < 0.10$), marginally related to a positive change in life satisfaction for partners of prisoners, six months after the start of the imprisonment ($b = 0.59$, $p < 0.10$), and significantly positively related to the change in life satisfaction ($b = 0.64$, $p < 0.05$), twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. As expected, if partners of prisoners experience an improvement of their financial situation, they report a more positive or less negative change in their wellbeing. Hypothesis four can therefore be accepted.

The second protective factor that is significantly related to the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners is the experience of more "peace and quiet" at home. Six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, roughly one

25 We did find a significant bivariate relationship between a deterioration in the financial situation and both types of wellbeing, but this relationship was no longer significant in the multivariate models.

Table 5.2 Effect parameters of regression analyses on the relationship between wellbeing and stressors, protective factors and controls, six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment

	Change in subjective wellbeing						Change in life satisfaction					
	Six months after start of the imprisonment			Twelve months after start of the imprisonment			Six months after start of the imprisonment			Twelve months after start of the imprisonment		
	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign
Stressors												
Deterioration of financial situation	-.74	.23	**	-.21	.22		-.53	.23	*	-.16	.21	
Experience of negative reactions (average)	.09	.11		.17	.13		.08	.11		.13	.12	
Decreased contact with friends	-.08	.23		-.04	.20		-.05	.22		-.13	.19	
Protective factors												
Improvement of financial situation	.30	.37		.59	.34	~	.59	.36	~	.68	.33	*
Increased contact with family	-.01	.23		-.17	.21		-.09	.22		.20	.20	
More peace and quiet at home	.83	.24	**	.56	.21	**	.35	.24		.16	.20	
Controls												
Still in romantic relationship	.27	.31		.11	.24		.30	.30		-.05	.24	
Imprisonment duration (months)	-.11	.09		.00	.03		-.21	.09	*	-.01	.03	
Prisoner still in prison	.37	.41		-.15	.36		.87	.40	*	.18	.36	
Time between start of imprisonment and participation in study (months)	.02	.09		.03	.07		.10	.08		.03	.07	

Table 5.2 Continued

	Change in subjective wellbeing				Change in life satisfaction				
	Six months after start of the imprisonment		Twelve months after start of the imprisonment		Six months after start of the imprisonment		Twelve months after start of the imprisonment		
	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign	B	S.E.	sign
Change in subjective wellbeing, six months after the start of the imprisonment		.17	.09	~					
Change in life satisfaction, six months after the start of the imprisonment							.37	.10	**
Constant	-.67	.57		-.74	1.05		-1.05	.55	~
R ²	.32			.29			.25		
N	94			104			94		104

~p<0.10, *p<0.05, **p<0.01

third of prisoners' partners report that they experience more peace and quiet at home (Table 5.1).

Focussing on the multivariate models in Table 5.2, it seems that when a prisoner's partner experiences more peace and quiet at home, the change in her subjective wellbeing since the start of the imprisonment is more positive or less negative at both waves ($b = 0.82, p < 0.01$ and $b = 0.56, p < 0.01$ respectively). The experience of more peace and quiet, however, does not seem to be related to the change in life satisfaction that partners of prisoners report since the start of the imprisonment in the multivariate models at either wave. In the case of subjective wellbeing, the hypothesis that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners improves due to the experience of more peace and quiet at home (hypothesis six) can be accepted. It was also expected that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners improves due to increased contact with family, but this hypothesis (five) has to be rejected for both waves.

Summarising, several protective factors and one stressor seem to be related to the change in their wellbeing that partners of prisoners report since the start of the imprisonment²⁶. The development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners is negatively influenced by the stressor "deterioration in financial situation" and positively influenced by the protective factors "improvement in financial situation" and "experience of more peace and quiet at home". However, the effect of the stressor "deterioration in financial situation" seems to be short-lived, since the effects of this stressor on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners is only found six months after the start of the imprisonment and does not seem to continue its influence twelve months after the start of the imprisonment.

5.6 DISCUSSION

The goal of the current study was to identify factors that determine how imprisonment affects the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. This study's focus on the wellbeing of partners of prisoners was motivated by pointing out that the topic

26 Additional analyses were conducted with education added as a control factor (Sirgy, 2012). The results in Table 5.2 changed somewhat. The effects, found six months after the start of the imprisonment, increased in size and remained significant. However, other effects, found twelve months after the start of the imprisonment, became smaller (more peace and quiet at home) or non-significant (improvement of financial situation).

has unjustly been overlooked in the research field of consequences of imprisonment. A second reason for focusing on the effects of imprisonment on the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners is the detrimental consequences that it can have, not only for the prisoners' partner, but also for the prisoners' reintegration after release from prison and society.

Although for decades almost every study on prisoners' partners emphasized the lack of statistics on families of prisoners and underlined the need for statistics to be gathered, surprisingly few studies have done so (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Our results are based on data from the Prison Project, a longitudinal study on the effects of imprisonment in the Netherlands among Dutch prisoners and their families. Using this data allows us to study a comparatively large group of partners of prisoners. The unique data contains quantitative information on the changes that partners of prisoners may experience in many life circumstances during the first year after the start of the imprisonment. The longitudinal design makes this the first quantitative study to research the wellbeing of prisoners' partners over time.

This study applied insights from Amato's (2000) adaptation of family stress and coping theory to the case of prisoners' partners. Based on this perspective, it was expected that the effects of imprisonment on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners depend on the presence of a variety of stressors and protective factors.

This study focuses not only on subjective wellbeing, but also on one of its components: life satisfaction. Although the two are highly correlated, they are not the same (Diener et al., 1999; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Sirgy, 2012). By focussing on these two dependent variables simultaneously, this study was able to uncover different stressors and protective factors that either are related to subjective wellbeing or life satisfaction (if not both), something that would have been missed if this study had only focused on either one.

This study's key finding is that several protective factors and one stressor, which were caused by the imprisonment, affect the change that partners of prisoners experience in their wellbeing since the start of the imprisonment, namely the deterioration or improvement of the financial situation and the experience of more peace and quiet at home. The results provide empirical support for several theoretical expectations that were derived from the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective (Amato, 2000) and thereby partially support figure 5.1.

The results make abundantly clear that a deterioration in the financial situation of prisoners' partners since the start of the imprisonment negatively influences their wellbeing. This finding corresponds with previous research among a related research

group that focused on the negative effects of a deteriorated socioeconomic status on the wellbeing of mothers of prisoners' children (Turanovic et al., 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012). The current study shows that the deterioration of the socioeconomic status seems to influence the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, independent of whether they are mothers or not. As the current study is one of the first to establish a quantitative effect of a deterioration in the financial situation of prisoners' partners on their wellbeing, the researchers urge further research to expand on this. Interestingly, it was found that a deterioration in the financial situation of prisoners' partners only negatively influences their wellbeing for a short time. Although a strong effect was found six months after the start of the imprisonment, this effect was no longer detected twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Perhaps this negative effect is short lived because after some time, other factors beyond the scope of the current study, like increased autonomy and self-worth (Fishman, 1990; Shirlow & Dowler, 2010), become more important for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners than their financial situation.

The other stressors (the experience of negative reactions and the decrease in social contact with friends) and one protective factor (increased contact with family), relating to the social surroundings of partners of prisoners, do not seem to affect their wellbeing. This opposes previous studies that have suggested that there is a connection between these factors (Sayce, 1998; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Bada et al., 2014b). This study's findings would suggest that the relationships these studies described are no longer significant when other factors, in particular the financial circumstances and home situation, are taken into account. The current study's results indicate that financial security and peace and quiet at home are important for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners to such an extent that experiencing negative reactions and changes in contact with friends and family do not have a direct effect on their wellbeing. Although family and friends may still be important for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, it is perhaps the socioeconomic resources they provide, such as money and help with the children, and not the amount of contact they have with the partner that affects her wellbeing.

In line with earlier work from Fishman (1990), this study has also found that the change in wellbeing of prisoners' partners since the start of the imprisonment is positively influenced by an improvement in their financial situation. This is also in line with previous work from economics that showed that an improved financial situation is positively associated with wellbeing (Easterlin, 2001). An improved financial situation might reduce the stress of the imprisonment and reduce problems in the areas of housing and child care costs. Future research could research if the financial situation of some partners of prisoners improved because of increased

income, decreased spending by the prisoner, increased welfare, help from others or a different factor. This information could help policy makers who look for ways to limit the negative effects of imprisonment on the wellbeing of prisoners' partners.

Another notable finding is that changes in the wellbeing of partners of prisoners are not only a matter of changes in economic circumstances. To be sure, the results also point to an important effect of the home situation. It was found, in line with previous qualitative work from Fishman (1990), that if partners of prisoners experience more peace and quiet at home when the prisoner is imprisoned this positively influences the change in their wellbeing. Some studies suggested that this may be due to the domestic violence that the prisoner's partner had suffered from before the imprisonment (Moerings, 1977; Turanovic et al., 2012). Other studies have suggested that the stress that comes from being in a relationship, or sharing a household, with an addict may play a role here (Fishman, 1990). This raises the question for future research if, and to what extent, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, or other factors can explain the positive effect of experiencing more peace and quiet at home on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners.

The results indicate that the consequences of imprisonment for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners 'soften' over time. Their wellbeing shows a larger decrease six months after the start of the imprisonment than twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Perhaps the decrease would have been even greater had it been measured shorter after the start of the imprisonment, since the first shock of one's partner being imprisoned can be devastating (Condry, 2007). Our hope is that follow-up studies will help untangle the impact that time has on the effects of imprisonment on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners by following partners of prisoners over a longer period, and from an earlier time point after the start of the imprisonment.

Despite the insights that were gained in this study, some limitations should be addressed. First, this research examines female partners of male prisoners, making it unclear to what extent results can be generalized to, for example, partners of female prisoners (Einat et al., 2015). Second, the research group differs somewhat on several factors from the partners of prisoners who did not participate in the research. Partners of prisoners who had a more "serious" relationship with the prisoner (married and/or living together) participated more often. The facts that they are somewhat older and less often students than non-participating partners seem to be logical consequences of that finding. Participating partners are more often Dutch than non-participating partners and this is possibly due to a language barrier: the questionnaire was written in Dutch and when the partners were approached for

this study, it was established that some partners from minority ethnic groups did not speak Dutch. These differences should be taken into account when generalizing from the results. A third data limitation is that the data was gathered at six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Possibly the picture would be different if the data would have been gathered sooner after the start of the imprisonment or over a longer period. The current study therefore may have underestimated effects. Moreover, no conclusions can be drawn about the long term relationship between the stressors and protective factors and the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, after the first year after the start of the imprisonment. Fourth, this study focuses on the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners during the year after the start of the imprisonment, but cannot differentiate between the development of their wellbeing during versus after the imprisonment. This study was able to control for the difference between partners who filled out the questionnaire when the prisoner was still in prison and partners who filled out the questionnaire after the prisoner was released from prison. However, the data did not allow us to differentiate between the development of their wellbeing during versus after imprisonment, because both groups of partners answered the questions on their wellbeing about the entire research period (six and twelve months), including the time of imprisonment and, if applicable, the time after that. Further research, that follows prisoners' partners for a longer period, both during and after imprisonment, is needed. These studies should answer the question if partners of prisoners experience a change in their wellbeing even after the imprisonment is over, and if so, to what extent, in which direction (deterioration or improvement of wellbeing after imprisonment) and for how long. Fifth, this study measured wellbeing retrospectively in terms of degree of change ("to what extent has your wellbeing diminished, stayed the same or increased"), making it difficult to assert precise changes in wellbeing over time. Future endeavours should, therefore, aim to study the wellbeing of prisoners' partners prospectively. Sixth, though it was assumed that the stressors and protective factors were caused by the imprisonment, the current study cannot be certain that this is the case. For example, participants were asked to what extent they experienced a change in their experience of peace and quiet at home since the start of the imprisonment, but it is unknown if this change was actually caused by the imprisonment. This study did statistically control for the influence of several factors that might have contributed to the stressors and protective factors, for example whether or not the prisoner and his partner ended their relationship. Nevertheless, caution should be used when interpreting the results because there may be other possible relevant factors that influence the role that stressors and protective factors

play in the way that imprisonment influences the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners that this study was not able to statistically control for.

To close, our findings demonstrate that imprisonment affects the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. While most partners of prisoners' wellbeing is harmed by the imprisonment, for some of them the imprisonment allows their wellbeing to improve. This study thus emphasizes the need for future studies to focus on both the positive and negative consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners. While this study highlights the centrality of the financial consequences of imprisonment, it also points to the importance of other factors, relating to imprisonment, that influence the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Thus, our study demonstrates that future research should extend their focus beyond socioeconomic consequences of imprisonment.





CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 SUMMARY OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This dissertation focused on the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners. The four empirical chapters proposed research questions focused around four larger topics, namely the characteristics, negative reactions, social contacts and wellbeing of partners of prisoners (see Figure 1.1 in *chapter 1* for a schematic overview of this dissertation's empirical chapters).

6.1.1 Chapter 2 - Characteristics of prisoners and their partners

Partners of prisoners are ascribed an important role in promoting desistance after release. It is therefore surprising that very little is known about these partners (Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Geller et al., 2016; Wakefield et al., 2016). This study aimed to extend the current knowledge about the characteristics of partners of prisoners by comparing their demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics with those of the prisoners. Are prisoners and their partners similar to each other with respect to these characteristics? This study, moreover, investigated whether partners and prisoners are more similar if they were living together before the imprisonment than if they were not. Furthermore, this chapter researched whether prisoners and their partners are more similar if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not. Based on homogamy theory, we expected that prisoners and their partners have similar characteristics, because people are likely to select a similar partner and because partners influence each other and thus become more similar over time.

To examine the resemblance between prisoners and their partners, odds ratios were estimated using logistic regression models. We accounted for possible selection effects by controlling for a wide range of characteristics of the prisoners and their partners, such as age, living together, health and day activity. Results showed that prisoners and their partners resemble each other greatly on demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics. Prisoners and their partners are most similar in the areas of drug use and religion. For example, prisoners who use drugs more often have a partner who also uses drugs than a partner who does not (5.6 greater odds). Prisoners and their partners also have a high similarity for a history of drug addiction and arrest. Moreover, they are similarly educated. These results indicate that partner similarities that have been found in the general population for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics (Qian, 1998; Blossfeld, 2009) and criminal characteristics (Farrington et al., 2001; Zwirs et al., 2011; Van Schellen, 2012) also apply to prisoners and their partners.

In contrast to what was expected, partners who were living together only resemble each other more than dating partners on one characteristic, namely “having been arrested”. Thus, if prisoners were living with their partner before the imprisonment, they are both more likely to have been arrested, than if they were not living together. Since these analyses controlled for the number of years the couples were together, this result could not be contributed to the fact that partners who live together have often been together longer than dating partners. Perhaps women who share a house with a (future) prisoner are more likely to become a criminal suspect themselves and subsequently be arrested. The finding that, for all other characteristics, prisoners and their partners are not more similar if they live together than if they do not would suggest that prisoners and their partners do not become more similar by living together. Perhaps this is because prisoners are relatively young and could thus not have been living together long (Quinton, Pickles, Maughan, & Rutter, 1993; De Goede et. al., 2012).

We also compared prisoners with a criminal partner to prisoners with a non-criminal partner to see if partner similarity is greater in the former group. It was found that partner similarity for being unemployed, drug use, drug addiction, having been arrested and having been in prison is significantly larger for prisoners with a criminal partner than prisoners with a non-criminal partner. Thus, prisoners and their partners are more similar if the partners also engage in criminal activity than if the partners do not. This is in line with the notion that male criminals can “marry up” by choosing a non-criminal partner (Laub & Sampson, 2003), and indicates that they consequently “marry up” in other characteristics as well, such as in the areas of drug use and employment.

6.1.2 Chapter 3 - Negative reactions experienced by partners of prisoners

When a prisoner is incarcerated, his partner may experience reactions from others (Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007). This study researched to what extent partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from their family, family-in-law, friends and neighbours about the crime he committed or his imprisonment. Moreover, it examined which factors are related to these experienced negative reactions. Using stigma theory, we expected that partners of prisoners experience negative reactions and that they experience more negative reactions from neighbours and family-in-law than from family and friends, because of a difference in closeness (Goffman, 1963; MacRae, 1999; Wrzus et al., 2013). Stigma theory also suggests that the degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions can be explained by several factors, namely the characteristics of the crime, relationship factors, and

negative personal circumstances (Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, & Hull, 2000; Uggen et al., 2004; Condry, 2007; Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009).

The experienced negative reactions were measured at both six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. It was found that most partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment and that they most often experience them from neighbours (six months after the start of the imprisonment) or family (twelve months after the start of the imprisonment) and least often from friends and family in law. This finding contradicts what was expected. Perhaps the family in law, being the prisoners' family, stigmatise her less and therefore react less negatively about the imprisonment because they can relate to the prisoner's partner better than, for example, her own family. The fact that partners of prisoners experience a high degree of negative reactions from their own family might still mean that they have a close relationship, but perhaps family members feel that they need to express their negative feelings about the imprisonment and urge the partner to end the relationship with the prisoner in order to prevent further harm.

Using multivariate regression analyses, several models estimated the relationship between crime characteristics, relationship factors, and negative personal circumstances (independent variables) and experienced negative reactions (dependent variable). In line with stigma theory, it was found that prisoners' partners experience more negative reactions if prisoners were previously imprisoned. Contrary to what was expected, partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions if prisoners were imprisoned for an offence from the least severe category, compared to a severe offence. The effect, however, was only found six months after the start of the imprisonment. This finding, that was contrary to the expectations, may be explained by the fact that prisoners who committed a severe offence will be imprisoned longer than prisoners who committed mild offences and others may therefore feel less need to protect the prisoners' partner by expressing their negative feelings about him. Another line of thought would be that perhaps others are more likely to sever all ties to the prisoners' partner if the prisoner committed a very severe offence. The prisoners' partner would then experience fewer negative reactions.

Previous studies described that partners of prisoners who lived with the prisoner before the imprisonment and who stay in the relationship experience more negative reactions (Lowenstein, 1986; Condry, 2007; Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009). The current study, however, has found that these relationship factors do not seem to influence the experience of negative reactions. Living together before the imprisonment and staying in the relationship may increase the odds that others learn about the imprisonment and that may explain previous findings. Namely, the current study only focussed on the experience of negative reaction for prisoners'

partners from others who *know* about the imprisonment (and can give (negative) reactions about it). The results would suggest that once others know about the imprisonment, the extent to which prisoners' partners experience negative reactions from them is not influenced by relationship factors (i.e. living together before the imprisonment and still being in the relationship six/twelve months after the start of the imprisonment).

Finally, two negative (financial) personal circumstances affect the experience of negative reactions. Partners of prisoners experience more negative reactions if they are on welfare or have debts. This finding supports the notion that having a second stigmatising quality increases the level of negative reactions (Davies, 1980; Condry, 2007).

6.1.3 Chapter 4 - The social contacts of partners of prisoners

When prisoners are incarcerated, their partners may need support from the people around them. But if their social contacts are affected by the imprisonment, they may not receive the support they need (Turney et al., 2012; Wrzus et al., 2013; Shehadeh et al., 2016). This study aimed to bring insight into the changes in social contacts that partners of prisoners may experience, with family, family in law, friends and neighbours, and the extent to which this can be explained by the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience from these groups. Based on stigma and labelling theories (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963), we expected that the social contacts of partners of prisoners decrease due to the imprisonment and that this may be partly explained by the negative reactions that partners of prisoners experience. Moreover, we expected that the negative effect of negative reactions on social contacts is larger for neighbours and family in law, than family and friends, because family and friends know the prisoner's partner intimately, stigmatise less, and have a more stable relationship (Moerings, 1977).

It was found that most partners of prisoners experience a change in social contacts after the start of the imprisonment, but while some report an average decrease in social contacts, others describe an average increase. The changes in social contacts differ between network groups. While prisoners' partners' contact with their family most often increases, their contact with family in law, friends and neighbours most often decreases.

In order to research the relationship between negative reactions and social contact, multivariate regression analyses were executed. It was estimated if the experienced negative reactions from network groups are related to changes in social contact with those same network groups. While the experienced negative reactions

were measured six months after the start of the imprisonment, the changes in social contacts were measured twelve months after the start of the imprisonment.

It was found that the changes in social contact are indeed related to the experienced negative reactions by partners of prisoners. If partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from family, family in law, friends or neighbours, their contact with these groups decreases. The effect of negative reactions is smallest for the contact that partners of prisoners have with their family and this underlines the stability of family relationships (Dykstra et al., 2006; Voorpostel, 2007). Contrary to what was expected, this effect is not significantly larger for neighbours and family in law than for family and friends. Perhaps partners of prisoners are closer to their neighbours and family in law than we expected, because criminality runs in families (Farrington et al., 2001; Van de Rakt et al., 2008) and criminal activities are often concentrated in certain neighbourhoods (Bernasco & Elffers, 2010). The relationship between the prisoners' partner and her family in law and neighbours would then be more stable and the contact between them not more dependent on negative reactions than the prisoners' partners' contact with friends and family. Finally, cross-relationships were found; if partners of prisoners experience negative reactions from family, their contact with their friends increases and vice versa. This points to the importance of contact with family and friends in difficult times (Neyer & Lang, 2003; Wrzus et al., 2013; Shehadeh et al., 2016).

6.1.4 Chapter 5 - The wellbeing of partners of prisoners

This study researched the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. That one's wellbeing is affected when one is separated from their partner has been established in the cases of military deployment (Lapp et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2011) and bereavement (Bisconti, Bergeman, & Boker, 2004; Burkhauser et al., 2005). The consequences of separation due to imprisonment for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, however, are uncertain (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wildeman et al., 2012). Do prisoners' partners experience a change in their wellbeing and which factors, related to imprisonment, affect the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners?

Using insights from Amato's (2000) adaptation of family stress and coping theory, this study examined how stressors and protective factors, related to imprisonment, affect the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners. In particular, this chapter focused on three stressors, namely a deterioration of the prisoners' partner's financial situation, the experience of negative reactions and losing friends, and three protective factors, namely an improvement of the prisoners' partner's financial situation, increased contact with family and the experience of more

peace and quiet at home. This study also researched if the effects of these stressors and protective factors differ over time.

Results showed that partners of prisoners on average experience a decrease in their subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction, both six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Multivariate regression analyses indicated that one stressor in particular has a negative effect on the development of prisoners' partners' wellbeing. Namely, if the financial situation of partners of prisoners deteriorates since the start of the imprisonment, their wellbeing diminishes. This effect was, however, only found six months after the start of the imprisonment.

Contrary to previous studies that suggested that the experience of negative reactions and the decrease in social contact with friends negatively affect the wellbeing of partners of prisoners (Sayce, 1998; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Bada et al., 2014b), our findings would suggest that these relationships are not significant when other factors are taken into account, in particular the financial circumstances and home situation. Our results indicate that financial security and peace and quiet at home are important for the wellbeing of prisoners' partners to such an extent, that experiencing negative reactions and changes in social contacts do not have a direct effect on wellbeing. It is likely that the support and socio-economic resources that family, family in law, friends and neighbours provide are important for the wellbeing of prisoners' partners (Bada et al., 2014a), but this study's results suggest that the negative reactions they give or the changes in their contact with the prisoners' partner, are not.

Two protective factors seem to positively affect the change that partners of prisoners experience in their wellbeing since the start of the imprisonment. Namely, if prisoners' partners experience more peace and quiet at home or if their financial situation improves upon the imprisonment, this benefits their wellbeing. For example, an improved financial situation may reduce the stress of the imprisonment and reduce problems in the areas of housing and child care costs, thereby positively affecting wellbeing. Contrary to what was expected, increased contact with family does not seem to positively affect the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Perhaps the socioeconomic resources they provide, such as money and help with the children, are more important for her wellbeing than the amount of contact they have with the prisoners' partner.

The results demonstrated that the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective (Amato, 2000) is useful for explaining the wellbeing of partners of prisoners and provide empirical support for several theoretical expectations that were derived from it. This study showed that the financial situation of prisoners' partners is important

for their wellbeing, but that a change in economic circumstances is not the only factor that may explain changes in the wellbeing of partners of prisoners.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS FROM FOUR EMPIRICAL STUDIES

The answers to this dissertation's research questions can be summarised as follows:

- a) Prisoners and their partners resemble each other in demographic, socio-economic, and behavioural characteristics, even more so if partners also engage in criminal activity.
- b) The consequences of imprisonment extend beyond the prisoner; imprisonment influences the lives of partners of prisoners. These consequences can be negative and undesirable, such as experiencing negative reactions, losing social contacts and experiencing a decreased wellbeing. However, some partners of prisoners experience positive consequences of imprisonment, such as in improvement in their wellbeing.
- c) Partners of prisoners often experience negative reactions about the imprisonment, even more so if they are on welfare or have debts.
- d) If partners of prisoners experience negative reactions, this affects their social contacts.
- e) The wellbeing of partners of prisoners is affected by changes in their financial situation and home life; while an improvement in their financial situation and experiencing more peace and quiet at home improves their wellbeing, their wellbeing diminishes if their financial situation deteriorates.
- f) Imprisonment affects some partners of prisoners more than others; partners of prisoners who are, for example, on welfare and in debt, experience more negative reactions, lose more social contacts and experience a greater deterioration of their wellbeing as a result.

When we apply our conclusions to Figure 1.1 (in *chapter 1*) it becomes clear that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners indeed seems to be affected by several characteristics, such as their financial situation and home situation. However, we also have to conclude that not all the relationships that were visualised in this Figure have been substantiated by our findings. Although the experience of negative reactions by partners of prisoners indeed seems to be influenced by their characteristics, and affects (changes in) their social contacts, neither of these "social surroundings factors" are significantly related to their wellbeing. Instead, the wellbeing of partners

of prisoners seems to be explained by their characteristics and not their experience of negative reactions or changed social contacts. Our results indicate that having financial security and peace and quiet at home is important for the wellbeing of prisoners' partners to such an extent, that experiencing negative reactions and changes in social contacts do not have a direct effect on wellbeing. It would go too far to state that changes in the social surroundings of partners of prisoners do not affect their wellbeing, but our findings suggest that we should look to other "social surroundings factors" than the experience of negative reactions or change in contact.

6.3 REFLECTION ON THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This dissertation set out to advance on earlier theoretical work in the field of secondary consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners. This dissertation posed new research questions and formulated new hypotheses accordingly, using several sociological and criminological theories. Moreover, each chapter focused on theoretical mechanisms underlying the major effects and was able to test the empirical validity of the hypotheses derived from a) homogamy theory, b) stigma theory and c) family stress and coping theory. Below, it will be discussed how the empirical findings relate to the assumptions derived from these main theories.

Homogamy theory

This study was one of the first to apply homogamy theory to a new subgroup of couples, namely prisoners and their partners. In accordance with the hypothesis derived from this theory, the current study has found homogamy, or partner resemblance, among prisoners and their partners in *chapter 2*. In particular, prisoners are more likely to have a partner with the same religion and education and to be with a partner that resembles them in terms of substance use and criminal behaviour.

However, several findings contradict homogamy theory. Prisoners and their partners do not seem to share the same day activity. While most prisoners and prisoners' partners are employed (45 and 50 percent respectively), and a large number of prisoners and prisoners' partners is unemployed (30 and 38 percent respectively), prisoners who were employed before the imprisonment are not more likely to be in a relationship with a partner who is also employed than with a partner who is unemployed. This is not in accordance with previous studies that have found homogamy for unemployment in The Netherlands (Ultee, Dessens, & Jansen, 1988). For prisoners, unemployment is related to criminal behaviour, previous prison spells and substance use (Ramakers, 2014). These factors make these prisoners an

unreliable source of income and perhaps therefore out-of-work prisoners are more likely to have a working partner.

In contrast to what was expected, partners who were living together do not resemble each other more than dating partners for most characteristics. This would suggest that prisoners and their partners are similar to each other because they selected a partner who was already similar to themselves or because they influenced each other and became more similar during the period that they were dating. Perhaps living together did not increase partner similarity for prisoners and their partners because they were not living together long enough, since criminals have relationships of greater instability and are relatively young (Quinton, Pickles, Maughan, & Rutter, 1993).

Still, this dissertation has found partner similarity among prisoners and their partners for demographic, socioeconomic, behavioural and criminal characteristics. Thus, it showed that homogamy theory can be applied to prisoners and their partners and that this theory from the field of family sociology is useful for researchers investigating the characteristics of this dissertation's specific research group.

Stigma theory

Stigma theory was used to formulate expectations about the consequences of imprisonment for the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contacts of partners of prisoners. In accordance with stigma theory, the current study has found that partners of prisoners, as stigmatized individuals, encounter negative reactions from family, friends, family in law and neighbours (*chapter 3*) and often experience a decrease in social contacts (*chapter 4*).

The degree to which partners of prisoners experience negative reactions is, as stigma theory would suggest, influenced by several factors, such as the characteristics of the crime. For example, our results indicated that if a prisoner was previously imprisoned, their partner experiences more negative reactions. According to stigma theory, this is due to the partner of a repeat offender having a greater stigma than a partner of a first time offender. However, the finding that partners of serious offenders experience fewer negative reactions than partners of prisoners serving time for a milder crime contradicts stigma theory. It is possible that partners of prisoners are more prone to concealing the offence type if the offence is very severe than if it is a mild offence. Others, for example neighbours, cannot stigmatise partner based on the offence type if they are unaware of type of crime the prisoner committed. This would explain why a severe crime results in fewer negative reactions. A different line of thought is that perhaps partners of prisoners are stigmatised because of the imprisonment to such an extent, that the severity of the crime does

not increase stigma. Other factors than stigma may then explain why a severe crime results in fewer negative reactions than a mild crime. For example, because prisoners who committed serious offences are imprisoned longer, family members may feel more sorry for the prisoners' partner, now that she will likely be separated from her partner for a long time, and express fewer negative feelings. This would result in fewer experienced negative reactions by prisoners' partners.

Furthermore, this study researched how the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners may differ between social groups. Indeed, it was found that the way imprisonment affects, for example, the social contacts partners of prisoners depends on the social group focussed on. However, we must conclude that the theoretical concepts of personal and social identity do not adequately explain the findings. Since we did not have information on the quality and closeness of the relationships of prisoners' partners, it was, perhaps wrongly, assumed that partners of prisoners are closer to their family and friends than their family in law and neighbours. If partners of prisoners are, in fact, close to their family in law and neighbours, and because close relationships are stronger and more stable in difficult times (Litwak & Szelenyi, 1969; Neyer & Lang, 2003; Wrzus et al., 2013; Shehadeh et al., 2016), this would explain why the effect of experiencing negative reactions on changes in social contact is not larger for neighbours and family in law than family and friends. Moreover, perhaps partners of prisoners experienced fewer negative reactions from their family in law than expected because they stigmatise her less and can relate to her better than her own family, since they are the prisoners' family and are therefore experiencing stigmatisation themselves due to his imprisonment. Moreover, since criminality runs in families they might be criminal themselves and thus not stigmatise the prisoners' partner for the imprisonment (Farrington et al., 2001; Van de Rakt et al., 2008). Research is needed to determine to what extent different social groups stigmatise partners of prisoners.

Also, it should be noted that a small group of prisoners' partners did not report any negative reactions or reported an increase in social contact since the start of the imprisonment instead of a decrease. Some partners of prisoners are dominated, perhaps even abused, by the prisoner before the imprisonment (Turanovic et al., 2012; Foca, 2015). In these circumstances, partners of prisoners may be less likely to experience negative reactions about the imprisonment. The people around them may even react relieved and positive. Now that they are free from an overbearing partner, these women may increase and intensify their social contacts outside the home (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Shirlow & Dowler, 2010).

Although stigma theory has been adequately developed to explain several negative consequences of imprisonment for the social surroundings of partners of

prisoners, it currently does not explain the full range of (positive) consequences. Our results indicate that imprisonment can also positively affect the social contacts of partners of prisoners. Thus, nuance and a focus on both negative and positive consequences are needed in this area (Sampson, 2011; Turanovic et al., 2012). In order to enhance theoretical insights, future research could expand on the studies presented in *chapters 3 and 4* by using more detailed longitudinal data on (mechanisms related to) stigma, the experience of negative reactions and the social contacts of partners of prisoners.

Family stress and coping theory

Amato (2000) adapted family stress and coping theory into the divorce-stress-adjustment perspective. This dissertation showed that this perspective, although it was developed to explain the effects of divorce on families, can be applied to the case of prisoners' partners. Namely, this study showed that imprisonment can cause stressors that negatively affect the wellbeing of partners of prisoners and protective factors that help cope with the stress of imprisonment.

The theory would suggest that the stress of experiencing financial difficulties, caused by the imprisonment, negatively affects wellbeing and that an improved financial situation helps partners of prisoners cope with the imprisonment, thereby improving their wellbeing. The financial situation of prisoners' partners was indeed found to significantly influence their wellbeing as predicted. Moreover, as family stress and coping theory argues, factors other than the financial situation were also found to be of importance. Namely, experiencing more peace and quiet at home is also a protective factor.

Some stressors and protective factors, however, were more useful than others to explain the consequences of imprisonment on the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. The protective factor "more contact with family" was not statistically relevant for the wellbeing of prisoners' partners. For partners of prisoners, it seems that it is not the amount of contact that they have with their family that affects their wellbeing, but perhaps the content of the contact. Namely, the support, financial help, and child care that their family provides may still be important for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners (Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013; Bada et al., 2014a).

Moreover, not all stressors derived from the theory were found to be important for the wellbeing of prisoners' partners. The theory suggested that experiencing negative reactions about the imprisonment is stressful for partners of prisoners and negatively affects their wellbeing. Surprisingly, our findings suggested that the experience of negative reactions does not affect wellbeing. This may be explained by that fact that the current study also took the influence of other stressors and

protective factors, the financial and home situation in particular, into account. It seems that factors like financial security are more important for explaining wellbeing than the experience of negative reactions. This also applies to the stressor “less contact with friends”, which also did not significantly affect wellbeing. While losing friends may still indirectly affect wellbeing, because of decreased support and help and increased loneliness, there does not seem to be a direct effect between a decrease in contact with friends and the subjective wellbeing and life satisfaction of partners of prisoners.

Having made the first step in applying Amato’s (2000) adaptation of family stress and coping theory to the case of prisoners’ partners, we urge future researchers to deepen our understanding of the consequences of imprisonment for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Focusing on both the negative and positive consequences of imprisonment for the wellbeing of prisoners’ partners is of vital importance for future endeavours (Sampson, 2011; Turanovic et al., 2012).

6.4 STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

By studying the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners, this study made huge steps in the fields of consequences of imprisonment, family criminology and family sociology. With respect to the unique qualities of this dissertation’s studies, we want to make three remarks. First and foremost, this dissertation addressed topics that have unjustly received very little attention in the academic discourse (Murray, 2005; Dirkzwager, et al., 2009; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Cooke, 2014; Wakefield et al., 2016). It was one of the first to compare characteristics of prisoners and their partners and to simultaneously study the consequences of imprisonment for the experience of negative reactions, social contacts and wellbeing of prisoners’ partners. Moreover, while in most cases previous studies merely focused on the deteriorating effects of incarceration (Sampson, 2011; Turanovic et al., 2012), this study has been able to advance on this limited scope by investigating the influence of both negative and positive factors on the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Second, the current study applied original theoretical insights. Expectations about the consequences of imprisonment for the lives of partners of prisoners had been worked out in a limited way up until now. By combining theoretical insights from the fields of criminology and sociology, this dissertation formed hypotheses that had not previously been tested. For example, this dissertation applied a theory that has been used to explain the effects of divorce on families to explain the consequences

of imprisonment for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Third, this study was able to use a uniquely rich dataset, consisting of a relatively large number of partners of prisoners from the Netherlands. The longitudinal design allowed us to investigate the development of the wellbeing of prisoners' partners over time. The data's quantitative nature and its broad scope in areas such as the characteristics of partners of prisoners, their financial situation and their social contacts allows the current study to advance the field further by studying the relationship between life circumstances and wellbeing for partners of prisoners. Moreover, because previous studies were conducted in the UK or the US, or in the Netherlands in the 1970's, this data provides us with a contemporary Dutch perspective on the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners.

Although this study made great advancements, a number of limitations have to be addressed. We also want to make some suggestions regarding issues that have been brought up as a result of this study, which may deserve attention in future research, with respect to design, research questions and data.

This study's design has been extensive. However, we cannot go around the fact that the consequences of imprisonment have not been studied by use of a randomized controlled trial (Murray, 2005; Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Ideally, the effects of imprisonment on the lives of partners of prisoners would be studied by taking a group of couples of whom the man is about to be sentenced for a criminal offence, then randomly assign prison sentences to half the men and then follow up on their partners and the partners from the control group. This being impossible, we have aimed to study the effect of imprisonment in a different way. For example, partners of prisoners were asked if they experienced negative reactions *about the imprisonment* (chapter 3), as previous studies on this topic have done (Moerings, 1977; Fishman, 1990; Condry, 2007; Chui, 2016). However, in other instances, we have had to very carefully assume that the changes that partners of prisoners report in their lives were caused by the imprisonment. For example, chapter 5 examined how the wellbeing of prisoners' partners is affected by a change in their experience of peace and quiet at home and financial situation since the start of the imprisonment. However, it cannot be ascertained if these change were actually caused by the imprisonment. The experience of peace and quiet at home may have been influenced by other factors than the imprisonment that were happening at the same time, such as the birth of a child or the death of a family member. In a similar vein, it is possible that the prisoners' partner's financial situation was affected by the loss of her job that was independent of the imprisonment. Therefore, caution should be used when interpreting the results. An essential avenue for future research is to examine effects of imprisonment on partners of prisoners by, for example, following

partners of prisoners and partners of men who had almost become prisoners, but were given a probation or fine, over time (Wakefield et al., 2016). Such endeavours should also research how prisoners were influencing their partner before the (almost) incarceration, in order to capture the impact of imprisonment on partners of prisoners (Rodriguez, 2016).

Based on stigma and family stress and coping theory, as well as several previous studies (Sayce, 1998; Foster & Hagan, 2007; Bada, Balogun, & Adejuwon, 2014a), this dissertation posed research questions about the experience of negative reactions and social contacts of partners of prisoners and its consequences for their wellbeing. However, findings suggest that these factors are not directly related to the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Future studies should therefore include other “social surroundings factors” that likely affect wellbeing. A factor that may be important, for example, is socioeconomic resources. Namely, imprisonment may affect the socioeconomic resources prisoners’ partners have available, such as money, goods and babysitting, and such factors may be important for the wellbeing of partners of prisoners. Moreover, the support and helping hands others provide may help partners of prisoners cope with the separation from their partner and his imprisonment, and be important for their wellbeing (Wrzus, Hänel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013; Bada et al., 2014a).

Furthermore, there are some limitations to the data used by this study that have to be addressed. Although this study was able to include a comparatively large sample, only partners of male prisoners from the Prison Project were included (Dirkzwager et al., 2018). The current study’s selection of respondents is thus secondarily affected by selection criteria from the Prison Project, namely that prisoners had to be male, aged between 18 and 65, in pre-trial detention and were born in the Netherlands. Even though the Prison Project thus included the larger part of the total prison population, they were relatively serious offenders. Moreover, female prisoners, a rapidly growing population, and prisoners born outside the Netherlands were excluded for practical reasons. Furthermore, this dissertation focussed only on female partners of prisoners, making it unclear to what extent results can be generalised to, for example, partners of female prisoners (Einat et al., 2015).

A total of 119 out of a potential 954 partners of prisoners participated in both waves of this study. We therefore investigated the selectivity of this sample. Using data from the questionnaires that were filled out by the prisoners, the characteristics of the 119 participating partners and 628 non-participating partners of prisoners were compared. We discovered that partners of prisoners who participated in the current study differed somewhat from the partners who did not participate in the research on several factors. For example, prisoners’ partners who participated

are more often married or living together than partners who did not participate. They are also somewhat older, more often Dutch, less often go to school and use drugs somewhat less often. In other areas (i.e. education, employment, problematic drug and alcohol use, criminal behaviour and having been arrested or imprisoned) the differences between these groups were negligible (De Goede et al., 2012). The differences between participating and non-participating partners of prisoners likely influenced the current study's results. The relatively large number of respondents and the fact that respondents were connected to all the detention facilities in the country speaks for the representability of the sample. Nevertheless, given the low response rate, results should be interpreted cautiously and future researchers on prisoners' partners samples will have to show to what extent the findings of this dissertation can be generalised to the wider population of Dutch partners of prisoners. Moreover, given country differences in judicial systems and social climates, cross-national research on the consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners is warranted.

Moreover, the data was limited by the fact that it was gathered at six and twelve months after the start of the imprisonment. Results might have been different if the data would have been gathered sooner after the start of the imprisonment or over a longer period (Wildeman & Muller, 2012; Wakefield et al., 2016). Future work could examine whether this study's observations stand when a longer period of follow-up is used. It also means that we gathered data at specified time periods after the start of the imprisonment and not necessarily during and after the imprisonment. For example, while some prisoners may have been imprisoned at the first wave of data collection among their partners and released at the second, others may have been released before the first wave or may still have been imprisoned at the second wave. While we were able to control for those differences, all partners of prisoners answered the questions from the questionnaire regarding the entire six or twelve months since the start of the imprisonment, including the time of imprisonment and, if applicable, the time after the prisoners' release. Therefore, the data did not allow us to differentiate between effects of imprisonment during and after the imprisonment. Future research is warranted to examine if and how partners of prisoners are affected by the imprisonment even after the prisoners' release, especially since prisoner re-entry research is primarily focused on the housing, employment and recidivism of former prisoners and how partners of prisoners may facilitate in these matters, but has rarely focused on the consequences of release for the lives of partners of prisoners (Murray, 2005; Harman, Smith, & Egan, 2007; Foster, 2016; Wakefield et al., 2016).

The data is also limited by the manner in which certain factors were measured. Partners of prisoners were asked to what extent they had experienced changes in, for example, their social contacts or wellbeing since the start of the imprisonment. This resulted in a score that indicated the degree of *change* (-2, -1, 0, 1 or 2), but this information is limited. For example, it does not tell us if their life satisfaction was low or high before the imprisonment, only that it decreased, stayed the same, or increased. We recommend future researchers to include measurements for base rates before the imprisonment and to collect more detailed information on changes over time. Furthermore, *chapters 3 and 4* used stigma theory to explain the experience of negative reactions and change in social contacts but the data did not contain measurements of stigma itself. Although the experience of negative reactions is an important part of stigmatisation, stigmatisation extends beyond negative reactions to, for example, being avoided, gossiped about and discriminated against. Future studies should not only focus on the experience of negative reactions and changes in social contacts of partners of prisoners, but also include measurements on their experience of stigmatisation and mechanisms related to stigma (Goffman, 1963; Condry, 2007; LeBel, 2008, 2012).

Finally, the self-report data used in this dissertation included very extensive information. Yet a possible downside is that responses may be invalidated by memory loss and social desirability. We recommend future endeavours to pay attention to how different ways to collect self-report data differ in their influence on socially desirable responding (Kreuter, Presser, & Tourangeau, 2008; Blair, Czaja, & Blair, 2013). A second down-side of the self-report data used in *chapter 2* is that in this data the information about both the prisoners and their partners came from the prisoners. Using information from a respondent about another person may lead to socially desirable answers, in the sense that prisoners may not want to be honest about their partner's drug use or criminal activities. This problem may be limited, however, since the prevalence of these sorts of negative qualities among partners of prisoners is high in our data, as compared with the general population. Also, using information from prisoners about their characteristics and those of their partners and then comparing these characteristics may result in inflated similarity because of people's tendency to assume similarity and portray others similar to oneself (Weerman & Smeenk, 2005). Future research that compares the characteristics of two partners should attempt to collect information from both of them directly. In particular, future studies into prisoners and their partners should include both the prisoners and their partners in the same study.

6.5 SOCIETAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This dissertation can be of interest to policymakers in the field of imprisonment, health, welfare, poverty and social exclusion and family welfare organisations, services and community groups that support families of prisoners. This dissertation's general observation is that more information is needed on the family situation of prisoners (*chapter 2*) and that imprisonment can have far reaching consequences for many partners of prisoners, in particular in the areas of social surroundings (*chapters 3 and 4*) and wellbeing (*chapter 5*). The section below discusses the policy implications of our findings.

This dissertation's study on the characteristics of partners of prisoners has shown that very little is known about how many prisoners have a partner or children, who they are and what happens to them after the start of the imprisonment. Although data is routinely collected from prisoners upon their arrival in prison, information about their relationship and parenting status is rarely included. We advice (government) researchers to gain more information on the family situation of incarcerated persons for two reasons. Firstly, correctional policies are currently developed in absence of this crucial situation (Healey, Foley, & Walsh, 2001). Knowledge about the family situation of prisoners can, on the one side, help make correctional policies more effective, for example by including the partner in treatment or parole plans, and, on the other side, reduce the harmful outcomes of other policies, by for example planning visitation hours based on the wishes and needs of family members instead of only institutional preferences. Secondly, information on partners of prisoners can be used to identify their level of resource utilization, and thereby make it possible to assure that resources, such as welfare or support from an organisation for prisoners' families (Gevangenzorg Nederland), are available for the families that need them. These resources may not only be important for their wellbeing, as this study has shown, but also provide support for children of incarcerated men, and reduce the risk of intergenerational incarceration (Van de Rakt et al., 2008; Cooke, 2014). Also, such resources increase the likelihood that these families can support the prisoner after his release, which has been shown to benefit desistance after imprisonment (Sampson & Laub, 1993; Hairston, 1991, 2002; Arditti et al., 2003; La Vigne et al., 2004; Naser & La Vigne, 2006; Berg & Huebner, 2011). The costs of providing these resources may even be compensated by reduced costs in other areas, such as recidivism, health costs and decreased labour participation (Folland, Goodman, & Stano, 2007; Wildeman et al., 2013; Cooke, 2014; Lee et al., 2014).

This dissertation's studies have found that partners of prisoners may experience negative reactions and a decrease in social contacts. We would suggest policy makers and politicians to establish policies that create awareness of the secondary stigmatisation of imprisonment in order to lessen the negative impact of imprisonment on the social surroundings of partners of prisoners. Such a goal may also be achieved in other ways, such as a Dutch biography or television show on partners of prisoners. For example, the popular BBC series "Prisoners' wives" depicts how every prisoner has a wife, girlfriends or mother doing time on the outside. The series visualises how for some of them the imprisonment is a nightmare, but for others a liberation, and shows the impact of the stigma that partners of prisoners face. The series reached over 5 million Brits with their message (POPS, 2012).

This study also showed that the wellbeing of partners of prisoners may deteriorate when the prisoner is incarcerated. The wellbeing of prisoners' partners is influenced in particular by changes in their financial situation and home situation due to the imprisonment. If the financial situation of prisoners' partners deteriorates when the prisoner is imprisoned, their wellbeing deteriorates and vice versa. We would therefore suggest policy makers to prioritise the financial situation of partners of prisoners. Partners of prisoners should, at the very least, be familiar with their rights for access to welfare, housing benefits and health benefits, and to the Dutch welfare called "personal budget" (persoonsgebonden budget). Moreover, families of prisoners could be appointed a personal coach that could help attract further income²⁷. If we could improve the financial situation of partners of prisoners, or at least lessen the negative effects of imprisonment on their financial situation, we may directly improve their wellbeing.

Although the current study has shown that not all partners of prisoners experience negative effects of imprisonment in each research area, we have uncovered much harm that comes to partners of prisoners. The case of prisoners' partners warrants a fuller accounting of the unintended consequences of custodial sentences (Bushway, Stoll, & Weiman, 2007). These insights can then conduce to the political and societal debates on punishment (Ramakers, 2014). For example, given these harmful consequences of imprisonment for partners of prisoners, alternatives for

27 Such a personal coach could help lessen all sorts of difficulties for prisoners' partners. For example, some of the partners I spoke to had no idea how to contact or visit their imprisoned spouse, which caused a lot of stress. Some of these women are so dependent on their partner that, upon his imprisonment, they find themselves in an unfamiliar situation and they don't know what to do. They don't know how to contact the authorities, or even that they should do so in order to get help.

imprisonment deserve more attention (Bülow, 2014). This would, moreover, reduce high prison, health care and welfare costs to society (Folland et al., 2007; Sugie, 2012; Wildeman et al., 2013; Cooke, 2014; Lee et al., 2014). In the Dutch justice system, an example would be to less often impose pre-trial detention. With so many prisoners going home after only a few weeks of pre-trial detention, and the far reaching negative consequences this incarceration can have none the less, one must question if these few weeks of pre-trial detention are really necessary in all cases, and if other solutions, such as home-monitoring, would not be likewise effective for the criminal trial while far less detrimental for prisoners' partners. Especially since even short prison spells may have vastly negative consequences for prisoners' partners (Comfort, 2016). Another example is that there are effective and inexpensive alternative sentences to incarceration available for drug offenders and parole violators, such as intensive community supervision (Wildeman & Western, 2010).

Prisoners are not an island, but embedded in networks comprised of people who can be deeply affected by the prisoners' incarceration. A more social treatment of prisoners would serve society and families of prisoners much better (Wakefield et al., 2016). Policy makers and workers in the field of criminal justice must recognise this and beware of the harms to prisoners' partners caused by imprisonment. Naturally, this can only be achieved with clear evidence on the secondary consequences of imprisonment. This dissertation has added some of this evidence to a growing body of knowledge. Henceforth, workers in the field of criminal justice should consider prisoners' families when imposing and executing legal punishments, so that these punishments are not only just and effective, but also humane.

On a final note, we urge future endeavours to be undertaken to deepen our understanding of how imprisonment affects the lives of the people around the prisoners, in particular their partners. On the one hand, this dissertation suggests that imprisonment can benefit partners of prisoners in the sense that they may have a better financial situation, they may experience more peace and quiet at home and their wellbeing may improve. On the other hand, this dissertation also indicates that many partners of prisoners suffer from the imprisonment because they experience negative reactions from the people around them, they lose contact with friends, their financial situation worsens and their wellbeing deteriorates. It is my hope that future studies will take off from here and help us understand why some partners of prisoners benefit and others suffer from the imprisonment and how we might improve the situation of partners of prisoners. They are, after all, not the ones who committed the prisoners' crime, and should not have to suffer for it.





APPENDIX A

HOME PROJECT DATA COLLECTION IN IMAGE







NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

TERWIJL JIJ OPGESLOTEN ZAT

Een empirische studie naar de kenmerken,
sociale omgeving en het welzijn van partners
van gedetineerden in Nederland

INLEIDING

De zwaarste straf die in Nederland kan worden opgelegd is gevangenisstraf. Met deze sanctie wordt onder andere beoogd delicten te bestraffen en toekomstige delicten te voorkomen. Gevangenisstraf heeft echter ook onbedoelde gevolgen, niet alleen voor de gedetineerden maar ook voor de mensen om hen heen. Partners van gedetineerden kunnen op allerlei manieren te maken krijgen met de consequenties van detentie. Er wordt ook wel gezegd dat zij meegestraft worden. Zij worden namelijk niet alleen gescheiden van hun partner, maar zijn ook plotseling verantwoordelijk voor het draaien van het huishouden en gezin. Detentie kan op die manier zorgen voor stress, eenzaamheid en gezondheidsproblemen. Anderzijds kan detentie ook positieve veranderingen teweegbrengen, bijvoorbeeld wanneer gedetineerden verslaafd of agressief naar hun partner zijn. Door een gebrek aan systematische studies is het tot op heden echter onduidelijk hoeveel partners van gedetineerden er zijn, wie zij zijn en welke gevolgen van detentie zij doormaken.

Inzicht in de gevolgen van detentie voor partners van gedetineerden is nodig om vier redenen. Ten eerste betreft het een groep die niet schuldig is aan het delict dat de gedetineerde heeft gepleegd, maar hier toch mogelijk voor wordt gestraft. Ten tweede zijn er grote maatschappelijke consequenties. De naar schatting 10,000 partners van gedetineerden per jaar in Nederland kunnen voor grote financiële kosten zorgen op het gebied van gezondheidszorg, uitkering en verminderde arbeid participatie. Ten derde wordt een grote rol toegeschreven aan partners van gedetineerden voor de re-integratie van gedetineerden na hun vrijlating. Negatieve gevolgen van detentie voor de levens van partners van gedetineerden kunnen echter de beschermende rol die zij zouden moeten hebben tegen recidive in gevaar brengen. Tot slot zijn er veel kinderen aanwezig in de huishoudens van gedetineerden en hun partners en is het waarschijnlijk dat zij niet alleen geconfronteerd worden met de detentie van hun vader maar ook met de problemen die hun moeder ervaart nu dat zij er alleen voor staat.

In dit proefschrift is getracht inzicht te krijgen in de kenmerken van partners van gedetineerden en worden de consequenties van detentie die zij ervaren voor hun subjectief welzijn bestudeerd. Gegeven het feit dat de meeste criminelen mannen zijn, richt dit proefschrift zich op vrouwelijke partners van mannelijke gedetineerden. Het eerste doel van dit proefschrift is een gedetailleerd profiel te beschrijven van een populatie partners van gedetineerden in Nederland. Op basis van eerder onderzoek kan worden verwacht dat de sociale omgeving van partners van gedetineerden belangrijk is voor hun welzijn, maar dat hun sociale omgeving kan veranderen door de detentie. Het tweede doel van dit proefschrift is dan ook om de gevolgen van detentie

voor de sociale omgeving van partners van gedetineerden in kaart te brengen, in het bijzonder de negatieve reacties die partners van gedetineerden ervaren en de veranderingen in hun sociale contacten. Tot slot heeft deze dissertatie tot doel om de gevolgen van detentie voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden te beschrijven en te verklaren aan de hand van hun kenmerken en sociale omgeving.

ONDERZOEKSVRAGEN

De eerste onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift betreft de kenmerken van partners van gedetineerden (Hoofdstuk 2). Volgens de huidige theorievorming in de familie-sociologie kan verondersteld worden dat mensen vaak op hun partner lijken, in die zin dat ze bijvoorbeeld vaak dezelfde opleiding en geloofsovertuiging hebben, omdat partners elkaar daarop selecteren en door wederzijdse beïnvloeding. Hierdoor kan worden verwacht dat de kenmerken van gedetineerden en hun partners ook op elkaar lijken. Systematisch onderzoek naar de kenmerken van deze groep ontbreekt echter in Nederland en is zeer schaars in het buitenland. Deze dissertatie heeft daarom de demografische-, sociaal economische-, gedrags- en criminele kenmerken van een grote groep gedetineerden en hun partners vergeleken. Bovendien is onderzocht of gedetineerden en hun partners meer op elkaar lijken a) als zij samenwoonden voor detentie en b) als de niet-gedetineerde partner ook crimineel gedrag heeft vertoond. Op deze manier worden de kenmerken van een grote groep partners van gedetineerden in kaart gebracht en kunnen deze kenmerken bovendien in de volgende hoofdstukken worden gebruikt om te bepalen of de gevolgen van detentie voor partners van gedetineerden deels afhangen van hun kenmerken.

Vervolgens worden in dit proefschrift de gevolgen van detentie voor de sociale omgeving van partners van gedetineerden onderzocht in twee empirische hoofdstukken (Hoofdstuk 3 en 4). Uit sociologische en criminologische literatuur over stigma- en labelingtheorieën kan worden afgeleid dat partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties uit hun omgeving kunnen ervaren over de detentie en het delict dat de gedetineerde pleegde. Eerdere studies hebben echter niet duidelijk kunnen maken waarom sommige partners veel en andere weinig of geen negatieve reacties ervaren en welke factoren hieraan bijdragen. De tweede onderzoeksvraag van dit proefschrift betreft dan ook de negatieve reacties die partners van gedetineerden ervaren (Hoofdstuk 3). Deze dissertatie heeft onderzocht in hoeverre partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties ervaren (van hun familie, schoonfamilie, vrienden en burens) en of dit kan worden verklaard door kenmerken van het delict (bijvoorbeeld zwaarte van het delict) en de relatie (bijvoorbeeld wel/niet samenwonen voor

detentie) en negatieve persoonlijke omstandigheden van de partner (bijvoorbeeld slechte financiële situatie).

Een mogelijk gevolg van deze negatieve reacties, dat kan worden afgeleid uit stigmatheorie, is dat de sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden veranderen. Hoewel eerdere studies hebben beschreven dat de sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden afnemen door de detentie is nooit vastgesteld of dit kan worden verklaard door de negatieve reacties die zij ervaren. Bovendien zouden de contacten van partners van gedetineerden ook kunnen toenemen omdat de partner steun nodig heeft in deze moeilijke tijd. Mogelijk zorgt de ervaring van negatieve reacties, van bijvoorbeeld buren, juist voor een toename in contact met anderen, zoals de eigen familie. De derde onderzoeksvraag van deze dissertatie richt zich dan ook op de sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden (Hoofdstuk 4). Onderzocht is op welke manier de sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden veranderen door de detentie en in welke mate dit verklaard kan worden door de ervaring van negatieve reacties. Samen verschaffen deze hoofdstukken (Hoofdstuk 3 en 4) inzicht in de gevolgen van detentie voor de sociale omgeving van partners van gedetineerden en dienen zij ook als een opstap voor de volgende vraag van deze dissertatie.

De vierde onderzoeksvraag richt zich op de gevolgen van detentie voor het subjectief welzijn van partners van gedetineerden en op de manier waarop hun kenmerken en veranderingen in hun sociale omgeving hieraan bijdragen (Hoofdstuk 5). Hoewel kan worden verwacht dat detentie gevolgen heeft voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden zijn systematische onderzoeken op dit gebied schaars, en in Nederland niet bestaand. De grootste bron van kennis zijn diepgaande onderzoeken die op basis van interviews met kleine groepen partners van gedetineerden hebben beschreven dat detentie grote gevolgen kan hebben voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden. Doordat de focus van veel van deze studies op de negatieve gevolgen van detentie ligt, is niet duidelijk of detentie het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden ook positief kan beïnvloeden en welke factoren hieraan bijdragen. Dit proefschrift heeft daarom “stressfactoren” en “beschermende factoren” afgeleid een familie stress theorie genaamd het scheiding-stress-aanpassing perspectief. Dit hoofdstuk paste dit perspectief, dat ontwikkeld is om de gevolgen van scheiden voor welzijn te verklaren, toe op partners van gedetineerden en onderzocht of deze “stressfactoren” en “beschermende factoren” negatieve dan wel positieve gevolgen hebben voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden. Deze factoren zijn een verslechtering van de financiële situatie, de ervaring van negatieve reactie en het verliezen van contact met vrienden (stressfactoren) en een verbetering van de financiële situatie, toename in contact met familie en meer rust in huis (beschermende factoren).

HET PRISON PROJECT

Het Prison Project is een grootschalige longitudinale dataverzameling in Nederland die de bedoelde en onbedoelde gevolgen van detentie voor gedetineerden, hun partners en hun kinderen onderzoekt. In 2010-2011 zijn alle mannelijke gedetineerden, tussen de 18 en 65 jaar, geboren in Nederland, die in Nederland in voorlopige hechtenis werden geplaatst binnen enkele weken benaderd voor dit onderzoek en 1,904 gedetineerden hebben meegedaan aan de studie. Ongeveer de helft van hen gaf aan een partner te hebben waarmee zij ten minste drie maanden een relatie hadden. De gedetineerden hebben meegewerkt aan een interview en zijn gevraagd een vragenlijst in te vullen over henzelf en hun partner. Bovendien hebben de onderzoekers om toestemming en contactgegevens gevraagd om hun partner te benaderen. Van de 542 partners van gedetineerden die benaderd konden worden hebben de onderzoekers er 299 kunnen bereiken. Als onderzoekscoördinator heb ik deze partners van gedetineerden telefonisch, per post en per email gevraagd mee te doen aan het onderzoek, waarvoor zij een VVV-bon zouden ontvangen. Zes maanden na de start van de detentie hebben 155 vrouwelijke partners van gedetineerden meegedaan en twaalf maanden na de start van de detentie hebben 119 van deze partners meegedaan aan het tweede deel van de studie. De kenmerken van de deelnemende partners zijn vergeleken met de niet-deelnemende partners op basis van de gegevens verstrekt door de gedetineerden. Deelnemende partners zijn iets ouder, vaker getrouwd/samenwonend en minder vaak schoolgaand. Ook hebben zij vaker een Nederlandse etnische achtergrond en gebruiken zij iets minder vaak drugs. De verschillen tussen de groepen in andere gebieden (opleiding, werk, problematisch alcohol- en drugsgebruik, crimineel gedrag, gearresteerd of gedetineerd zijn) zijn verwaarloosbaar.

Beide keren hebben deelnemende partners van gedetineerden een vragenlijst ingevuld over een groot aantal onderwerpen, zoals hun etniciteit, religie, opleiding, werk, inkomen, persoonlijke kenmerken, hobby's, crimineel gedrag en hun relatie voor en tijdens detentie. Ook is hen gevraagd naar de gevolgen van detentie voor hun sociale omgeving, financiële situatie, welzijn, relatie, thuissituatie, alcohol- en drugsgebruik, lichamelijke- en psychische gezondheid en opvoeding van hun kinderen. Omdat de studie plaatsvond zes en twaalf maanden na de start van detentie, onafhankelijk van de detentieduur, konden partners van gedetineerden deelnemen aan de studie als de gedetineerde op dat moment nog vast of alweer vrij was. Ook konden zij meedoen als de relatie inmiddels beëindigd was. Dergelijke gedetailleerde data zijn uniek, zowel in Nederland en het buitenland.

DE KENMERKEN VAN PARTNERS VAN GEDETINEERDEN

In Hoofdstuk 2 zijn de demografische-, sociaal economische-, gedrags- en criminele kenmerken van gedetineerden en hun partners vergeleken. Dit hoofdstuk is gebaseerd op gegevens die gedetineerden van het Prison Project kort na hun aankomst in een Huis van Bewaring hebben ingevuld over henzelf en hun partners. Met behulp van logistische regressie modellen zijn odds ratio's berekend. Om rekening te houden met mogelijke selectie-effecten is gecontroleerd voor een uitgebreide lijst aan kenmerken van de gedetineerden en hun partners, zoals leeftijd, samenwonen, gezondheid en dagelijkse bezigheden.

Dit hoofdstuk levert empirische ondersteuning voor de verwachting dat gedetineerden en hun partners op elkaar lijken. Resultaten tonen partnergelijkenis aan met betrekking tot zowel demografische-, sociaal economische-, gedrags- als criminele kenmerken. Deze gelijkenis is het grootst op het gebied van drugsgebruik en religie. Gedetineerden die drugs gebruiken hebben bijvoorbeeld meer kans om een partner te hebben die ook drugs gebruikt dan een partner die geen drugs gebruikt. Ook zijn er gelijkenissen gevonden op het gebied van opleiding, drugsverslaving en gearresteerd zijn. Deze bevindingen impliceren dat partnergelijkenissen die in de algemene bevolking zijn gevonden ook van toepassing zijn op gedetineerden en hun partners.

Aanvullende analyses laten zien dat, in tegenstelling tot wat verwacht werd, partnergelijkenis meestal niet groter is als gedetineerden samenwoonden met hun partner dan wanneer zij niet samenwoonden. Het feit dat gedetineerden relatief jong zijn en daarom mogelijk nog niet lang samenwonen zou hiervoor een verklaring kunnen zijn. Daarnaast is in dit hoofdstuk bekeken of gedetineerden meer op hun partner lijken als deze partner crimineel gedrag heeft vertoond dan wanneer zij een niet-criminele partner hebben. Onze resultaten suggereren dat partnergelijkenis inderdaad groter is onder criminele stellen voor een groot aantal kenmerken, zoals werkeloos zijn, drugsgebruik, gearresteerd zijn en gedetineerd zijn. Dit duidt erop dat wanneer gedetineerden "omhoog" trouwen in crimineel gedrag door het vinden van een niet-criminele partner (een logisch gevolg van het feit dat er meer mannelijke dan vrouwelijke criminelen zijn), dit ook resulteert in "omhoog" trouwen in sociaal-economische kenmerken.

DE ERVARING VAN NEGATIEVE REACTIES DOOR PARTNERS VAN GEDETINEERDEN

In Hoofdstuk 3 is onderzocht in welke mate partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties ervaren naar aanleiding van de detentie en hoe dit kan worden verklaard. Dit hoofdstuk is gebaseerd op gegevens verkregen van 119 partners van gedetineerden, zes en twaalf maanden na de start van de detentie.

De resultaten uit dit hoofdstuk tonen aan dat de meeste partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties ervaren over de detentie en het delict dat de gedetineerde heeft gepleegd. Zes en twaalf maanden na de start van de detentie ervaren partners van gedetineerden het vaakst negatieve reacties van respectievelijk hun burens en hun eigen familie en het minst vaak van vrienden en schoonfamilie. Deze bevindingen komen niet overeen met onze verwachtingen. Mogelijk ervaren partners van gedetineerden minder negatieve reacties van hun schoonfamilie dan verwacht omdat de schoonfamilie, zijnde de familie van de gedetineerde, minder negatief is over de detentie omdat zij "in hetzelfde schuitje" zitten en dus minder stigmatiseren. Dat de familie meer negatieve reacties geeft dan verwacht wijst er mogelijk op dat families van gedetineerden hun negatieve gevoelens over de gedetineerde en de detentie uiten omdat zij zouden willen dat de partner de relatie verbreekt, om haar zo te beschermen van toekomstig leed.

Aanvullende analyses in dit hoofdstuk laten zien dat de ervaring van negatieve reacties door partners van gedetineerden samenhangt met kenmerken van het delict en negatieve persoonlijke omstandigheden. Partners van gedetineerden ervaren bijvoorbeeld, zoals verondersteld wordt in stigmatheorie, meer negatieve reacties als de gedetineerde eerder een gevangenisstraf heeft uitgezeten. De bevinding dat partners van gedetineerden meer negatieve reacties ervaren als zij een uitkering krijgen of schulden hebben is in lijn met de verwachting dat mensen meer negatieve reacties ervaren als er een tweede (of derde) stigma aanwezig is, in dit geval een slechte financiële situatie waar de detentie bovenop komt. In tegenstelling tot onze verwachting impliceren onze resultaten dat partners van gedetineerden meer negatieve reacties ervaren als de gedetineerde een delict uit de minst zware categorie heeft gepleegd in vergelijking met zwaardere delicten. Een verklaring hiervoor zou kunnen zijn dat wanneer gedetineerden een zwaar delict hebben gepleegd en waarschijnlijk lange tijd in de gevangenis zullen moeten blijven, medelijden voor zijn partner de overhand krijgt bij anderen boven de negatieve gevoelens die zij hebben over het delict en de detentie.

Eerder onderzoek vond dat partners van gedetineerden meer negatieve reacties ervaren als zij samenwoonden voor de detentie of wanneer zij hun relatie met de

gedetineerde niet beëindigen. De bevindingen van dit hoofdstuk impliceren dat de ervaring van negatieve reacties van partners van gedetineerden niet afhangt van deze relatie kenmerken (samenwonen voor detentie, relatie niet beëindigen). De huidige studie richtte zich echter alleen op de ervaring van negatieve reacties van anderen die weten over de detentie. Samenwonen, en de relatie met de gedetineerde in stand houden, verhoogd de kans dat anderen over de detentie te weten komen en dit zou eerdere resultaten kunnen verklaren.

DE SOCIALE CONTACTEN VAN PARTNERS VAN GEDETINEERDEN

Hoofdstuk 4 richt zich op de sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden en onderzocht of de negatieve reacties die zij ervaren tot gevolg hebben dat hun sociale contacten veranderen. Dit hoofdstuk is gebaseerd op gegevens die zes en twaalf maanden na de start van de detentie zijn verkregen van 119 partners van gedetineerden.

De analyses laten zien dat de sociale contacten van de meeste partners van gedetineerden twaalf maanden na het begin van de detentie zijn veranderd. Terwijl sommige partners van gedetineerden gemiddeld een afname in hun sociale contacten rapporteren, geven anderen juist een gemiddeld toename in hun sociale contacten aan. Deze veranderingen zijn mede afhankelijk van de netwerkgroep; terwijl het contact met de eigen familie het vaakst toeneemt, neemt het contact met schoonfamilie, vrienden en burens het vaakst af.

Daarnaast is in dit hoofdstuk bekeken hoe de veranderingen in de sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden, twaalf maanden na de start van de detentie, verklaard kunnen worden door de negatieve reacties die zij zes maanden na de start van de detentie ervaarden. Om zicht te krijgen op de relatie tussen ervaren negatieve reacties en sociale contacten is gecontroleerd voor een brede reeks aan kenmerken die hieraan gerelateerd zijn, zoals leeftijd, de aanwezigheid van kinderen, en het delict dat gepleegd is. De analyses laten zien dat sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden inderdaad zijn gerelateerd aan de ervaring van negatieve reacties. Wanneer partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties ervaren van hun vrienden hebben zij zes maanden later minder contact met hun vrienden. We vonden dit ook voor de andere netwerkgroepen (familie, schoonfamilie en burens). Dit effect is echter wel het kleinst voor familie, wat duidt op de stabiliteit van familie relaties. In tegenstelling tot wat verwacht werd is de afname in contact door negatieve reacties niet groter voor burens en schoonfamilie dan vrienden en familie. Mogelijk zijn partners van gedetineerden hechter met hun burens en schoonfamilie dan werd verwacht. Dit zou te maken kunnen hebben met eerdere bevindingen dat criminele

activiteiten vaak geconcentreerd zijn in families en bepaalde buurten. Aanvullende analyses laten zien dat er ook kruisrelaties zijn. Wanneer partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties ervaren van hun familie, neemt hun contact met hun vrienden toe en andersom. Dit duidt op het belang van contact met vrienden en familie in moeilijke tijden.

HET WELZIJN VAN PARTNERS VAN GEDETINEERDEN

Hoofdstuk 5 richt zich op de gevolgen van detentie voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden en onderzoekt wat de invloed is van een aantal stressfactoren en beschermende factoren, die als gevolg van de detentie zijn ontstaan, op hun welzijn over de tijd. Dit is onderzocht met behulp van multivariate regressie analyses, waarin ook gecontroleerd werd voor de detentieduur, of de gedetineerde vrij was op het moment van het onderzoek en of de partner nog een relatie had met de gedetineerde.

De resultaten tonen aan dat partners van gedetineerden gemiddeld een afname in hun welzijn (subjectief welzijn en tevredenheid met het leven) rapporteren, zowel zes als twaalf maanden na de start van de detentie. Eén van de door ons onderzochte stressfactoren bleek het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden negatief te beïnvloeden. Namelijk, als de financiële situatie van partners van gedetineerden is verslechterd sinds het begin van de detentie, dan neemt haar welzijn af. Voor te stellen valt dat een verslechterde financiële situatie bijvoorbeeld de stress van detentie kan vergroten doordat extra problemen op het gebied van huisvesting en kinderopvang ontstaan, waardoor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden op een negatieve manier wordt beïnvloed. Daarnaast blijkt dat twee beschermende factoren een positief effect hebben op het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden. Als partners meer rust in huis ervaren of hun financiële situatie verbeterd is sinds de start van de detentie, dan neemt hun welzijn toe. Indien de gedetineerde verslaafd of gewelddadig is valt voor te stellen dat zijn afwezigheid de rust in huis vergroot en daardoor het welzijn van zijn partner bevordert.

Eerder onderzoek liet zien dat de sociale omgeving belangrijk is voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden. Omdat dit kwalitatieve studies betrof waren deze studies echter niet in staat om empirisch na te gaan of deze relatie blijft bestaan als gecontroleerd wordt voor andere omstandigheden, zoals de financiële situatie. In hoofdstuk 5 werden deze factoren voor het eerst gelijktijdig onderzocht. Onze analyses impliceren dat factoren met betrekking tot de sociale omgeving (de stressfactoren "ervaring van negatieve reacties" en "afname in contact met vrienden"

en beschermende factor “toename in contact met eigen familie”) niet lijken te zorgen voor een verandering van het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden wanneer rekening wordt gehouden met de financiële- en thuissituatie van partners van gedetineerden. De resultaten van deze dissertatie duiden er op dat het belang van financiële zekerheid en rust in huis dermate belangrijk is voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden dat de ervaring van negatieve reacties en verandering van sociale contacten geen directe invloed meer hebben op hun welzijn. Voor te stellen valt dat familie, schoonfamilie, vrienden en burens weldegelijk belangrijk zijn voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden omdat zij steun en sociaal economische hulpbronnen bieden, maar de resultaten van deze dissertatie impliceren dat de negatieve reacties die zij geven en de mate van contact die zij hebben met partners van gedetineerden het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden niet beïnvloeden.

CONCLUSIE

De bevindingen van deze dissertatie zijn als volgt samen te vatten:

- a) De demografische-, sociaal economische- en gedragskenmerken van gedetineerden en hun partners lijken op elkaar. Dat is in nog grotere mate het geval als beiden crimineel gedrag vertonen.
- b) Gevangenisstraf heeft niet alleen consequenties voor de gedetineerden; gevangenisstraf beïnvloedt de levens van partners van gedetineerden. Deze consequenties kunnen negatief en ongewenst zijn, bijvoorbeeld wanneer partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties ervaren, sociale contacten verliezen en hun welzijn afneemt. Voor sommige partners van gedetineerden heeft de gevangenisstraf echter ook positieve gevolgen, zoals een toename van hun welzijn.
- c) Partners van gedetineerden ervaren vaak negatieve reacties over de detentie. Dat is in nog grotere mate het geval als zij een uitkering ontvangen of schulden hebben.
- d) Als partners van gedetineerden negatieve reacties ervaren, nemen hun sociale contacten af.
- e) Het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden wordt beïnvloed door veranderingen in hun financiële- en thuissituatie. Terwijl een verbetering van hun financiële- en thuissituatie een positief effect heeft op hun welzijn, neemt hun welzijn af indien hun financiële situatie is verslechterd.

- f) Gevangenisstraf heeft op deze manier meer gevolgen voor sommige partners van gedetineerden dan anderen; partners van gedetineerden die, bijvoorbeeld, een uitkering ontvangen of schulden hebben ervaren meer negatieve reacties, verliezen meer sociale contacten en ervaren een grotere afname in hun welzijn.

BELEIDSAANBEVELINGEN

Uit de literatuurstudie blijkt dat er zeer weinig bekend is over het aantal gedetineerden dat een partner en/of kinderen heeft en wie zij zijn. Terwijl gedetineerden bij binnenkomst in een Huis van Bewaring vragen gesteld worden over vele onderwerpen, wordt er nauwelijks informatie verzameld over hun relatie, familie en kinderen. We moedigen (overheids)onderzoekers daarom aan om meer informatie te verzamelen over de familie situatie van gevangenen, om drie redenen. Ten eerste kan deze informatie helpen correctioneel beleid effectiever te maken, wanneer bijvoorbeeld de partner bij afspraken met de Reclassering wordt betrokken. Ten tweede kan deze informatie gebruikt worden om de schadelijke uitkomsten van detentiebeleid te beperken, bijvoorbeeld door bezoektijden in te plannen op basis van wensen en mogelijkheden van familieleden in plaats van alleen institutionele en praktische overwegingen. Ten derde kan informatie over partners van gedetineerden gebruikt worden om te bepalen in welke mate zij gebruik maken van beschikbare faciliteiten, zoals uitkeringen of steun van Gevangenzorg Nederland, om zo te waarborgen dat de hulpbronnen beschikbaar zijn voor de families die ze nodig hebben. Deze hulpbronnen zijn mogelijk niet alleen belangrijk voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden, zoals deze studie heeft aangetoond, maar kunnen ook steun bieden aan kinderen van gedetineerden en het risico op intergenerationele criminaliteit verkleinen. Ook vergroten dergelijke hulpbronnen de kans dat familieleden de gevangene kunnen opvangen na zijn vrijlating, iets dat belangrijk is om ex-gedetineerden op het rechte pad te houden. De kosten van dergelijke faciliteiten kunnen gecompenseerd worden door een afname van kosten op het gebied van recidive, gezondheidszorg en verminderde arbeid participatie.

Dit proefschrift heeft aangetoond dat partners van gedetineerden vanwege de detentie vaak negatieve reacties ervaren en dat daardoor hun sociale contacten kunnen afnemen. Gegeven het feit dat sociale contacten belangrijk zijn in moeilijke tijden, onder andere door de sociaal economische hulpbronnen die zij kunnen verschaffen, raad ik beleidsmakers aan om maatregelen te treffen die bewustzijn over de stigmatisering van partners van gedetineerden verhogen. Dit doel zou ook kunnen worden bereikt via de media, bijvoorbeeld met een televisieserie zoals "Prisoner's

wives" van de BBC, die de gevolgen van gevangenisstraf en stigma voor partners van gedetineerden toont.

Deze studie heeft ook laten zien dat het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden kan verslechteren na de start van de detentie. Hun welzijn wordt met name beïnvloed door hun financiële- en thuissituatie. Wanneer de financiële situatie van partners van gedetineerden verslechtert, neemt hun welzijn af en vice versa. Ik raad beleidsmakers daarom aan om de financiële situatie van partners van gedetineerden prioriteit te geven. Partners van gedetineerden zouden op zijn minst bekend moeten zijn met hun rechten met betrekking tot uitkeringen, bijstand, toeslagen en het persoonsgebonden budget. Daarnaast zouden partners van gedetineerden een persoonlijke coach aangewezen kunnen worden, die hen kan helpen inkomsten aan te trekken. (Een dergelijke coach zou bovendien partners van gedetineerden kunnen helpen met velerlei stressvolle problemen die de onderzoekers tegen kwamen, zoals in contact komen met de gedetineerde, gevangenis en andere instanties.) Wanneer we de financiële situatie van partners van gedetineerden kunnen verbeteren, of in ieder geval de negatieve gevolgen van detentie voor hun financiële situatie kunnen verminderen, bevorderen we wellicht direct hun welzijn.

Deze studie heeft laten zien dat partners van gedetineerden op vele manieren kunnen worden geschaad door de detentie. Gegeven deze schadelijke gevolgen van detentie, verdienen alternatieven voor gevangenisstraf de aandacht van politici en justitiële medewerkers. Hierdoor zouden bovendien de hoge kosten, die met gevangenisstraf zijn geassocieerd, dalen. Een concreet voorbeeld is het minder vaak opleggen van voorlopige hechtenis. Gegeven het feit dat vele gedetineerden na een paar weken voorarrest alweer naar huis mogen, en de grote negatieve gevolgen die een dergelijke korte detentie desalniettemin kan hebben voor hun partners, zou men zich moeten afvragen of andere oplossingen, zoals de enkelband, niet even effectief voor de rechtsgang zouden zijn en veel minder schadelijk voor partners van gedetineerden.

SUGGESTIES VOOR VERVOLGONDERZOEK

Dit proefschrift bouwt voort op bestaand onderzoek binnen het terrein van gevolgen van detentie door nieuwe onderzoeksvragen te behandelen en bestaande onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden met behulp van een nieuwe methode. Dit proefschrift kent echter ook een aantal beperkingen en biedt aanknopingspunten voor vervolgonderzoek.

Het design van deze studie is vernieuwend en grootschalig. Toch kunnen we niet om het feit heen dat de studie niet experimenteel van aard is. Idealiter zouden we de gevolgen van detentie onderzoeken door aan criminelen die net veroordeeld zijn willekeurig wel of geen detentie te geven, om vervolgens alle veroordeelden en hun partners te volgen over de tijd. Omdat dit onmogelijk is, heeft de huidige studie de gevolgen van detentie onderzocht door bijvoorbeeld partners van gedetineerden te vragen of zij negatieve reacties *over de detentie* ervaren. Op andere gebieden kunnen we echter niet met zekerheid vaststellen dat de beschreven veranderingen na de start van de detentie zijn veroorzaakt door de detentie. De rust in huis kan bijvoorbeeld ook worden beïnvloed door een geboorte of een sterfgeval. Toekomstige onderzoekers zouden dan ook moeten trachten de gevolgen van detentie te onderzoeken door partners van gedetineerden en partners van mannen die zijn veroordeeld tot een voorwaardelijke gevangenisstraf tegelijkertijd te volgen.

De data die deze studie heeft geanalyseerd heeft ook enkele beperkingen. Ten eerste konden alleen (vrouwelijke) partners van (mannelijke) gedetineerden van het Prison Project meedoen. Selectiecriteria, zoals dat alleen Nederlandse gedetineerden tussen de 18 en 65 jaar werden benaderd voor dit onderzoek, hebben mogelijk de resultaten beïnvloed. Ook heeft maar een deel van de totale populatie van partners meegedaan aan het onderzoek. Op basis van gegevens die de gedetineerden hebben ingevuld kon worden vastgesteld dat deelnemende partners van gedetineerden iets verschilden van niet-deelnemers. Zij waren bijvoorbeeld iets ouder, vaker samenwonend/getrouwd, vaker Nederlands en gebruikten iets minder vaak drugs. Resultaten van de huidige studie moeten dan ook voorzichtig worden geïnterpreteerd en toekomstige onderzoekers zullen moeten aantonen in hoeverre de bevindingen van dit proefschrift kunnen worden gegeneraliseerd naar de bredere populatie van Nederlandse partners van gedetineerden. Ten tweede hebben de metingen zes en twaalf maanden na de start van de detentie plaatsgevonden, ongeacht of de gedetineerde op dat moment nog vast zat. We hebben hiervoor kunnen controleren, maar omdat de vraagstellingen steeds betrekking hadden op de gehele onderzoeksperiode kan niet worden vastgesteld of de gevolgen van detentie die partners van gedetineerden ondervonden anders waren in de periode dat de gedetineerde nog vast zit dan wanneer hij weer vrij was. Vervolgonderzoek dat zich richt op de gevolgen van detentie voor partners van gedetineerden tijdens en na de detentie is nodig. Ten derde hebben de manieren waarop bepaalde mechanismes gemeten zijn de resultaten mogelijk beïnvloed. Zo zijn de gevolgen van detentie voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerde gemeten door te vragen in welke mate zij een verandering ervaren hebben sinds het begin van de detentie, maar is niet bekend hoe goed of slecht het met hen ging voor de detentie. Bovendien

heeft dit proefschrift stigmatheorie gebruikt om verwachtingen op te stellen over de gevolgen van detentie voor partners van gedetineerden, maar is stigma zelf niet gemeten. Vervolgonderzoek zou zich dan ook niet alleen op de ervaring van negatieve reacties en sociale contacten van partners van gedetineerden moeten richten, maar ook op (mechanismes gerelateerd aan) stigma. Tot slot zijn de Prison Project data afkomstig van de gedetineerden en hun partners en kunnen sociale wenselijkheid en geheugenverlies een rol hebben gespeeld. Een suggestie voor vervolgonderzoek is om partners van gedetineerden in persoon te interviewen met behulp van een gestructureerd, computer geassisteerd, persoonlijk interview. Bovendien is in Hoofdstuk 2 de gedetineerden gevraagd naar hun eigen kenmerken en die van hun partners. Dit heeft mogelijk geleid tot verhoogde gelijkheid, door de neiging die mensen hebben om te denken dat anderen op hen zelf lijken.

Deze studie heeft aangetoond dat een focus op de negatieve gevolgen van de detentie voor het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden te beperkt is. Bovendien moeten toekomstige studies zich niet alleen bezighouden met de financiële gevolgen van detentie en hun effect op welzijn, maar duiden de resultaten van deze studie er op dat de thuissituatie, in het bijzonder de rust in huis, een belangrijke factor is. Deze studie heeft ook aangetoond dat de factoren die zijn onderzocht met betrekking tot de sociale omgeving van partners van gedetineerden (negatieve reacties en verandering van sociale contacten), geen direct effect op het welzijn van partners van gedetineerden lijken te hebben. Vervolgonderzoek zou zich daarom moeten richten op andere "sociale omgeving factoren" die welzijn zouden kunnen beïnvloeden, zoals de sociaal economische hulpbronnen (geld, goederen, oppas) en steun die anderen bieden.

Tot slot wil ik aandringen op vervolgonderzoek om onze kennis te vergroten over de manieren waarop detentie de levens van de mensen om de gedetineerde heen beïnvloed, in het bijzonder hun partners. Zij zijn tenslotte niet degenen die de misdaad begaan hebben en zouden er daarom niet voor moeten worden meegestraft.





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CURRICULUM VITAE

Susanne van 't Hoff-de Goede was born in The Hague, The Netherlands, on November 5th 1985 and grew up in Zoetermeer. After a (propedeuse) year in Psychology at Utrecht University, she obtained her Bachelor's degree in Criminology at Leiden University (2008). Hereafter she enrolled in the Master "Security Policy and Criminal Justice" and was simultaneously granted a position in the Talent Program of the Law Faculty at Leiden University. Upon graduation (2010), she started working as a research assistant, and later research coordinator, for the Prison Project at Leiden University. In 2011, she started as a PhD candidate at the Interuniversity Center for Social Science Theory and Methodology (ICS) at Utrecht University. As part of her PhD project she played an active role in the coordination of the Prison Project – a longitudinal study among nearly 2,000 prisoners and their partners. In addition, she followed PhD courses on statistics, writing and teaching at Groningen University and Utrecht University and visited the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford. During her PhD she furthermore supervised master and- bachelor students in Sociology in writing their theses and taught courses on Life Course Criminology. She is currently employed as a researcher at the Centre of Expertise Cyber Security at The Hague University of Applied Sciences.





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A red brick wall with a window and a blue metal fence in the foreground. The window has a white lattice pattern. The fence is made of vertical blue bars. The background is slightly blurred.

Imprisonment spells are expected to influence not only the lives of prisoners, but also those of their partners. The aim of this dissertation is to gain more insight into the lives of prisoners' partners. Using data from the Prison Project, the current study outlines a detailed profile of a population of female partners of male Dutch prisoners by studying their demographic, socio-economic, behavioural and criminal characteristics. This dissertation examines the consequences of imprisonment for the social surroundings of partners of prisoners, using a longitudinal quantitative design. In particular, the current study investigates to what extent partners of prisoners experience negative reactions about the imprisonment and changes in their social contacts during the first year after the start of the imprisonment. This dissertation identifies several factors that are important for how imprisonment affects the development of the wellbeing of partners of prisoners, and the implications of these findings are discussed.

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