Families – Inside Prison and Out: Young people's experiences of having a family member in prison

Kirsty Evonne Deacon

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School of Social and Political Sciences
College of Social Sciences
University of Glasgow

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Abstract

Despite the increased focus on families of prisoners within research, policy and practice, there has been a lack of recognition of the distinct experiences of young people affected by familial imprisonment. More specifically, there has also been a failure to consider experiences of sibling imprisonment. This thesis addresses both of these gaps in knowledge. It draws on qualitative data from two groups of participants: the first were young people from KIN, a project which creatively explores experiences of familial imprisonment; the second were a group resident within a Young Offenders Institution (YOI). Both were interviewed about their experiences of a family member's imprisonment, though their contrasting current situations created differences within the research process which are reflected upon in a specific 'methodology as finding' chapter.

In respect of the substantive topic of familial imprisonment, I challenge the dominant narrative within academic literature and policy of a family member's imprisonment only being a disruptive force (one that creates distance) in relationships. Instead, narratives of closeness also emerged. These were mainly from the experiences of those within the YOI. The inclusion of this group of participants, along with an exploration of their inter / intra-prison relationships, represents a novel contribution to familial imprisonment literature. While the existing literature tends to assume an over-simplified binary between 'prisoners' family member' and 'prisoner', this thesis recognises that these terms are not exclusive; it is possible to hold both of these identities simultaneously.

As well as questioning the assumption of the disruptiveness of imprisonment, where it does occur this thesis also challenges the idea that imprisonment is the only, or even the main, disruptive force within the lives of the young people it affects. While partly reinforcing and contributing to literature which says this disruption occurs and needs to be dealt with, this thesis also argues for the need to resituate this experience within the wider set of disruptions experienced by some young people in their lives. I explore the range of issues a young person may be dealing with in their day-to-day lives and the various disadvantages they can experience. Therefore, this challenges the idea that prison is the only place in which this group's problems can be both located and resolved.

Table of Contents

Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgement

Firstly, and most importantly, I would like to thank all the young people who took part in this research. Without them and their willingness to share their experiences with me this research and thesis would not exist. Thanks also go to the organisations (Vox Liminis, Families Outside, Barnardo's and the Scottish Prison Service), and staff within them (especially Alison, Graeme, Rosie and Alana), that enabled me to meet these young people, spend time with them and ultimately interview them as part of this project. Thanks should also go to all the other organisations and individuals who gave me their time even though it did not ultimately result in the recruitment of participants. In this bracket, particularly Pete from Positive Prisons? Positive Futures…, whose guidance and suggestions were key, even though it did not result in me speaking to any young people through his organisation directly.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed name: Kirsty Evonne Deacon

Signature: _____

Definitions/Abbreviations

HMP – Her Majesty's Prison

YOI – Young Offenders Institution

SPS – Scottish Prison Service

1 Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Overview

The research upon which this thesis is based aims to explore young people's experiences of having a family member in prison. Specifically, it will focus on what family means to the group of young people who took part in this research, and will look at how family was done before, during and after the period of the imprisonment. As is discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, family can mean a variety of different things to people and although I set out to explore family members' imprisonment as widely as possible, in effect the thesis mainly discusses that of a parent or sibling, although uncles, aunts and grandparents were also mentioned by the young people. There is a growing body of literature focusing on the families of prisoners, and increasingly, where this is concerned with children or young people, it contains their own voices rather than being told through their parents or carers. This thesis adds to this body of work, and specifically focuses on young people as a sub-set of children more generally.

There is no single fixed definition of what or who a 'young person' is, neither in academic literature, nor from the range of organisations who work with this group. For example, the United Nations (no date), for statistical purposes, defines "youth" as people aged between 15 and 24. Within this category they distinguish between teenagers, aged 13 to 19, and then young adults, aged 20 to 24, on the grounds that "the sociological, psychological and health problems they face may differ". The World Health Organisation (2011) defines adolescents as those aged 10-19 and young people as those aged 10-24 years of age.

The young people I spoke to for this research were aged between 16 and 25 years old. This choice of age range was a pragmatic one in that the first group that I worked with as part of the KIN project were aged 16 to 25. KIN is an arts collective, formed as a joint project between third sector organisations Families Outside and Vox Liminis, for young people who were experiencing or had experienced the imprisonment of a family member. A more in-depth introduction to the project can be found in Chapter 3. The second group of participants were within a Young Offenders Institution (YOI) so aged between 16

and 21 years of age. Therefore, there was no strict definition in place prior to beginning the research of what age participants must be and I did not include or exclude participants based on this. While some participants spoke about current experiences of their family member's imprisonment, they also reflected back on when they were younger teenagers, secondary school-age children, and some when they were much younger. Consequently, while the participants were young people, and much of the focus of the thesis is specifically on their experiences when they were part of this age group, it is not exclusively so where further reflections outwith this specific age range were felt relevant. Given that I go on to explore the ideas of children and childhood as socially constructed concepts it would be incongruent to ignore certain experiences as they were told to me simply because they fell outside of a set biological age range to 'qualify' as young people's experiences.

This research employed the use of participant observation and interviews with the group of young people who were part of KIN, while interviews were carried out with those within the YOI. As I will go on to explain, the choices of these groups were pragmatic and recruiting a group who were in prison themselves was not a decision which was taken at the outset but instead came out of the circumstances of the research as it was being carried out. That said, their inclusion, for the first time as far as I am aware within familial imprisonment literature, has enabled a wider exploration of this experience, including that of inter- and intra-prison relationships, where both the young person and their family member were serving sentences concurrently.

1.2 Contribution of the Thesis

This thesis aims to contribute to a growing body of knowledge around familial imprisonment, and particularly to research including the voices of participants themselves. It does so throughout the thesis in a number of ways. Firstly, it begins to challenge and widen the often implicit definition of families of prisoners as female partners and younger children. It does so firstly by arguing that there should be a focus on young people as a specific subgroup of children more generally. Where we are talking about young people here, I argue for the extension of the often-used upper age boundary of eighteen for this group.

Discussions around this raising of the upper age limit are beginning to take place around young people within the criminal justice system themselves and should be similar for those in contact with the criminal justice system through having a family member in prison. Secondly, I go on to argue that as well as young people experiencing parental imprisonment we also need to recognise and include those with a sibling in prison.

Where the prison, or the criminal justice system more widely, focuses on prisoners' families in relation to preventing re-offending or with regards to desistance theory this can see prisoners' families constructed as resources or assets, or positioned in the role of 'pro-social bonds'. This thesis cautions against this dominant focus within familial imprisonment policy and practice. While this construction is not unhelpful in that it is able to raise the profile of these issues within government or the criminal justice system, and I acknowledge that many young people would be supportive of their family member stopping offending, I argue that this focus can lead to an exclusion of certain people or experiences from the literature.

Through its closer engagement with experiences of family more generally than tends to be the case with much of the existing familial imprisonment literature, this thesis challenges this literature's central focus on the prison rather than on the family. When we focus on family more widely than just how it is experienced or done while a member is in prison, we can highlight the importance of context for understanding these young people's experiences. For example, it allows us to see a family member's imprisonment as just one of a number of issues with which these young people must contend, and that it is therefore not always the only, or even the main, disrupting factor in their lives. It also illuminates the range of family experiences, allowing there to be a greater understanding of how a member's absence may be experienced where families may already be living apart or members taking on different roles than those which their position in the family may lead you to assume. This focus on family more widely also allows the thesis to contribute to the literature through its ability to recognise the family as a living organism which changes and adapts naturally over time, as well as in response to internal and external factors, of which a member's imprisonment is one. This therefore introduces the idea of familial imprisonment as an experience which can cause new change within a family unit in and of

itself, but one which can also speed up or slow down changes which would be and are occurring anyway. This allows the thesis to challenge some of the assumptions made about families, prison, and the relationship between these two institutions.

Where we think about the academic area this research is situated within, this thesis, and its framing, raises the question of why this type of research is almost exclusively based within the criminological discipline or within sociology of the prison, rather than within sociology of the family or of childhood. This disciplinary framing implicitly suggests a focus primarily on the prison or prisoners rather than on families or the experiences of the children and young people within them.

Through its participants, this thesis contributes the unique perspectives of young people with a family member in prison who are also in prison themselves; a group who are not, as far as I am aware, represented within the existing body of familial imprisonment literature. This emphasises the range of different familial imprisonment experiences. It also allows the thesis to challenge the binary construct of prisoners being inside the prison and family members being outside, instead recognising that young people, and anyone, can hold both of these identities simultaneously. It is possible to be a prisoner *and* a family member of a prisoner.

The inclusion of this specific group of participants also enables the thesis to contribute to prisons research more generally by challenging the idea of non-porous prison boundaries. Family members are not only outside the prison walls, able only to cross through them into the prison temporarily for visits, before returning again to the outside world. Instead, and particularly given the growing prison population and the concentration of specific geographical areas from which this population tends to be drawn, family relationships can move across the prison boundary intact and continue to be carried on entirely within the prison. While they will be altered and impacted on by the environment, the prison walls are not always the physical barrier they are assumed to represent between the prisoner inside and the family member outside. The prison is no longer just a “domestic satellite” (Comfort, 2008: 99) and families are not only

living “in the shadow of prison” (Codd, 2008, Title) but instead can live wholly within the prison itself.

Finally, this thesis contributes methodologically to the field of familial imprisonment research by arguing that it is not enough to explore these issues qualitatively, but that this must also be done interpretively. We cannot simply ask young people what happened as a result of having a family member in prison, but instead must also explore how they have experienced and made sense of these things. As my participant Amie said at the beginning of her interview, “…like, how does it impact is very different to, kind of, what I’ve been asked before.”

1.3 Aims of the Study

Fundamentally, the research is exploratory in nature. It sought to look at what family meant to young people who have or have had a family member in prison, and to forefront the family within this question rather than the prison. Given this, the following research question and sub-questions formed the basis of this study:

How do young people experience the imprisonment of a family member?

- What does family mean to this group of young people?
- How does this group of young people experience family – before, during and after their family member is in prison?
- How do these young people deal with the imprisonment of a family member?

By setting up the research in this way it allowed a centring of the family, rather than the prison, within the research. It also allowed a more nuanced exploration of the experiences of familial imprisonment, and of family life more generally, for this group of young people.

1.4 Outline of Thesis Arguments

In this chapter (Chapter 1), I briefly outline the research upon which this thesis is based, its aims, the structure of the thesis and the key arguments I will go on

to make. I have also outlined above the original contributions this research makes to the field.

Chapter 2 goes on to explore the concepts of childhood, young people and family, situating the subsequent discussions of young people's experiences of familial imprisonment within these contexts. I then provide a critical overview of the relevant literature within the field of familial imprisonment research, commenting on how and why it has evolved over time and highlighting the gaps within it which this thesis goes on to address. These are: the lack of a focus on young people as a specific group, almost no focus on sibling imprisonment, and the exclusion of the experiences by young people of intra- and inter-prison relationships where they and their family member are concurrently serving prison sentences in either the same or different penal institutions.

In Chapter 3, I describe and discuss the methods which were used within this research. I explain the reasons for making these methodological choices and the potential implications which this then had on the data collection and analysis upon which this thesis is based. I chart my progress through the research process, how this impacted on the decisions I made and how these then influenced the final thesis which was produced.

In Chapters 4 to 7, I present and discuss the findings which emerged from this research. The first of these findings chapters is based on methodology as finding, while the others focus on the substantive topics of family and familial imprisonment.

As I go on to argue, methodological decisions are rarely discussed in any detail within academic publications, and neither are the implications of these decisions, yet these are significant issues. The importance of acknowledging the 'messiness' of research and the impact these decisions can have was behind my including a methodology as findings chapter. Therefore, within Chapter 4 I explore the different relationships I had with the two groups of participants who took part in this research: those who were part of KIN and those who were resident in 'Glenview' Young Offenders Institution (YOI). The impact of these differing relationships, along with the spatial and temporal aspects of interviews, are explored and I emphasise the importance of these contextual

aspects on the data that came from these interviews and on which this thesis is based. The spatial, temporal and relational lenses used here, along with the recognition of the importance of context, and often its omission from literature within the familial imprisonment field, are aspects which are drawn on throughout the thesis.

Spatially, I consider practical aspects of carrying out interviews within a prison environment, but also about how the location of participants within a YOI can impact on the young people's narration of their experiences of having a family member in prison, as well as aspects of their own imprisonment influencing these narratives. For the young people who are part of KIN, the space they are occupying, as part of an arts collective specifically looking at familial imprisonment, was also relevant when considering the data from their interviews. Temporally, the distance in time each participant was from the event I am asking them about (some of the young people's family members were still in prison, some had been released, and for the latter group this could be a recent release or more historical) was important. The intrinsic link between time and space means that for those in Glenview the space they were occupying may also have tied in to these more temporal aspects of talking about their experiences. As well as the interpersonal aspects of every interview having a bearing on the data which comes from it, the specific differences between my relationships with each group as a whole were also important. I spent a lengthy period as part of KIN, while there was no opportunity to build a similar type of sustained relationship with the young men from the YOI. Recognising this is necessary for the reader to place the subsequent chapters in context.

As in all pieces of qualitative research, particularly those conducted within a prison environment, the concept of power is one that runs across many of the methodological reflections within this chapter. I explore the lengths to which I went to attempt to mitigate this power imbalance, but also reflect that this balance of power can lie with a range of participants within the research process, moving and changing at different points. In some cases, the power lay with me as the researcher, who chose the topic, the group of participants and the questions to ask. At other times, the balance of power was in favour of the gatekeeper, who can control access to spaces and populations, and often it was with the prison, both in respect of those held within its institutions and myself,

temporarily within while conducting interviews. This chapter illustrates levels and forms of reflexivity which are continued throughout the thesis and is intended to provide a more in-depth consideration and background for the data which the thesis goes on to consider than may usually be provided, or is even possible to provide given the medium academic research is often published in.

Chapter 5 is the first chapter to discuss the findings around the substantive topic of familial imprisonment. It considers the two-part question "Who are prisoners' families and what are they for?" In answering these questions, I challenge the often implicit purpose of family within policy and practice, and the research which can stem from it – desistance and preventing re-offending – as well as the dominant construction of family, in this case of a (female) partner and (young) children. Within this chapter, I outline the arguments why young people should be treated as a specific subset of children in this context. This is done through considering the liminal position that they occupy, producing a lack of provision to allow this group to maintain their family relationships, as well as a lack of understanding of their need for support where they are often viewed as *risky* rather than *at risk*. I will also explore the differing impact of a family member's imprisonment on young people due to the period of transition they are already going through, along with their growing level of understanding, impacting on feelings of stigma, the need for secrecy and a growing anger at their family member's 'choice' to continue behaving in a way that sees them being sent to prison. Practical differences in maintaining contact for young people are highlighted through the increasing time they spend away from the family home, it is a time of them gaining independence. This highlights that while they are asked to alter their lives to fit the routine of prison, and can face judgement where they do not, the prison service's construction of family, with a focus on younger children, does not seem then to accommodate young people in the same way that the young people are expected to accommodate the prison in their lives.

There is a lack of focus on the experience of sibling imprisonment within literature and policy and practice and this can come from how we construct the term 'child'. It is a term which can be both relational and biological. You can therefore be a child due to being under the age of eighteen, be a child in relation to a parent or other adult caregiver regardless of what age you are, or

you can fit both of these criteria simultaneously. Within familial imprisonment literature however, and within policy and practice in this area, there tends to be a focus only on those who meet both of these conditions, i.e. those under the age of eighteen with a parent in prison rather than those under the eighteen with a family member in prison. Within the prison environment, this can see siblings excluded from 'children's' visits, or a failure to cater for them being able to maintain their sibling relationship in a way that took place prior to the imprisonment. I argue that while siblings have a different relationship to that of a parent and child, young people may actually confide more in a sibling at this time in their life, have a greater reliance on them and a closer relationship, highlighting the potentially deep impact of this loss. The dearth of sibling imprisonment research within the literature not only renders this group and their unique experiences invisible but also raises the issue of the need for a wider definition of who a parent may be. Where a sibling may also perform functions of the parental role, for any number of reasons, the loss of a sibling to a period of imprisonment can be felt as elements of both sibling and parental imprisonment by young people.

In exploring what prisoners' families are for, Chapter 5 highlights a focus on desistance or reducing reoffending and a construction of families as resources or assets in this process. The result of this can be that young people are responsibilised and are not seen in their own right or have their own needs fully recognised and provided for. I will argue that treatment in this way can compound the exclusion of certain groups of young people, in this case excluding the voices and experiences of young people with a family member in prison who are also in prison themselves. This framing can mean we can fail to consider wider structural issues such as poverty and inequality inherent within these young people's experiences. Where prisons encourage family relationships and support the rebuilding or maintenance of these, but they then break down on release, this can cause further harm to the young person. This is something which is often not considered with a focus solely on the relationship building within the prison rather than its maintenance on release.

In Chapter 6 I go on to explore the young people's experiences of family more generally, not simply due to a member being in prison. This allows me to go on to argue that families are living organisms, dynamic and constantly changing and

adapting over time, both naturally and in response to internal and external factors acting upon them. The family is therefore not simply a single entity, rigid and unchanging, and neither is it wholly good or wholly bad – whatever these subjective terms may mean. While imprisonment can be one of the factors which impacts on families, it is not the only one within these young people's lives, and nor should it be taken in isolation. Young people and their families do not exist in a vacuum, either pre, during or post their family member's imprisonment, and this chapter will explore the factors that were relevant to the family experiences of the young people I spoke to. I will build on the importance of context that is discussed within Chapters 3 and 4 around interviews, with here the context of the young person's family being key for where we go on to look specifically at their experiences of familial imprisonment.

This chapter firstly looks at the different losses or absences which have occurred in these young people's lives – due to parents' divorce or separation, their employment or a period of imprisonment. These absences may have been permanent, temporary or could be considered using the concept of ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999), where someone may be physically present but psychologically absent, or the opposite. I also explore the context of these absences by considering how it felt for the young people to experience the loss of a family member to imprisonment as a "disappearance", where they were not told of the reason behind the absence, as well as the potential differences in a one-off long period away compared to repeated, although usually shorter, absences.

Throughout this chapter, I draw on themes of space, time and relational aspects, something which appeared in previous chapters and carries on through Chapter 7. Spatial aspects arise where family is now carried out in a variety of different places. For example, in each parent's home where they are separated, with extended family members where care arrangements are now in place, or within the prison visit room. Temporal aspects arise where there are potentially different experiences of a parent's single long-term sentence compared to repeated shorter periods of imprisonment. Both these spatial and temporal aspects then tie in to the relational changes which I go on to explore; where siblings become more like parents, where who is seen by the young person as family changes (perhaps due to the introduction of extended family care), and the differences and impacts of when someone is seen as a child within families.

Further relational changes for the young people are outlined where there are elements of a role reversal with their parents ('parentification' (Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark, 1973)), or a move towards a more horizontal relationship (parent as peer). These changes see the young people take on practical tasks within the family such as caring for younger siblings or the parent themselves, as well as more emotional elements, such as worrying about or taking on a more psychologically caring role in respect of the parent. Considering the idea of families as naturally changing organisms, with the relationships of which they consist also continually developing and changing, aspects of parentification and the parent becoming more of a peer are in fact natural processes and ones that will, and should, happen to almost everyone as they grow up. Within this chapter I argue that the issue is instead around when and how these processes take place and the inequalities inherent in this, and I caution against automatically and unnecessarily pathologising some of these behaviours within certain families.

By looking at "families" first and foremost, rather than "prisoners' families", this allows an exploration of these young people's experiences, centralised in the context that the imprisonment of a parent or sibling can alter the temporality and dynamics of being a child or young person within a family, but that other factors in the family and life generally are also doing this. These changes highlight inequalities, where some young people can find themselves growing up, or being viewed as more grown up, more quickly than others. They can also find their family experiences judged or labelled in certain ways due to the Western middle class norm that has been established for what a child or family is and does.

While some of the familial imprisonment literature does acknowledge that pre-existing family relationships will have an impact on the subsequent experience of a family member's imprisonment, it rarely goes into this in the depth and detail that I do in this thesis. The importance of this context is key for being able to more fully consider the experiences of a family member's imprisonment for young people, and to move the emphasis from experiences of familial *imprisonment* to *familial* imprisonment.

Chapter 7 develops and builds upon the discussion and arguments which are advanced in the previous two chapters. Where Chapter 6 considered experiences of familial imprisonment, it did so while placing the experiences of family more generally in the foreground. Here, it is the experiences of familial imprisonment itself which are foregrounded. I decided to include both of these chapters, which do contain overlapping elements, due to the realisation as I was carrying out the research that not to do so would mean failing to recognise the importance of the young people's wider lives, beyond their experiences of familial imprisonment. My critique of some of the existing literature is around its failure to provide this richer context to these experiences, and my inclusion of these two separate, though definitely intertwined, chapters is an attempt to address this issue in my own work.

This chapter continues to draw on spatial, temporal and affective-relational themes, but does so here through the specific lens of distance. It does this by exploring where and how a period of imprisonment can introduce or increase the distance and disconnect between a young person and their family member, or conversely, where it can reduce distance, resulting in a synchronisation or "closer" relationship between the two. While the experiences of the group of young people who were resident within Glenview are included throughout the thesis, the idea of inter- or intra-prison relationships, and the young people's experiences of these, are introduced and explored within this chapter. The inclusion of this group, and of these experiences, allows me to highlight unique aspects of the familial imprisonment experience which tend not to be reflected in the current body of literature. By considering these intra-prison relationships, this allows a broadening out of the more dominant narrative within this literature. Yes, prison can separate families, but it can also bring *some* young people together with their family members. It also allows us to see that the interaction between the family and the prison is not a one-way exchange: the prison does impact on the family but the family can also impact on the prison. While I would point out that these narratives tended to come from the Glenview interviews it was not universal across them. They must also be read in context, given meaning from the pre-imprisonment family experiences the young people spoke of. By not considering these experiences of familial imprisonment however, I would argue that we are narrowing our view of this experience.

This chapter explores the spatial aspects of familial imprisonment, firstly by building on previous discussions about the young people's experiences due to their being physically separated from their family member. It then goes on to challenge this dominant narrative of separation and disruption by looking at how a period of imprisonment is able to also bring some of the young people spatially closer to their family member. In respect of the first aspect, it moves beyond looking at how the loss of a family member can be experienced and how it can change the make-up and dynamics of a young person's family unit to explore how young people try to maintain these relationships. A separation, or introduction of spatial distance into a relationship, due to a period of imprisonment can change the way young people have to communicate with their family member to sustain the relationship. This is something I argue is compounded by the digital age we now live in, meaning that letters, and even telephone calls, are no longer the main methods of how we choose to keep in touch. Where we think of spatial separation we must also consider how this can take place in both online and offline spaces. The proliferation of digital technology, both generally, and specifically in respect of communication, means that a family member's imprisonment can remove them from both the physical and cyberspace domains within which family today can be done and displayed.

The prison visits which now facilitate face-to-face contact between the young person and their family member will bring them physically closer together. Where we draw on the idea of intimacy in relation to this experience however, it allows us to see that the spatial lay-out and facilities within the room can introduce an emotional distance through the discouraging and lack of opportunity to have and feel a level of intimacy within the space.

For siblings who are serving a sentence within the same institution and are therefore brought spatially closer together, this can have positive and negative aspects to it. This chapter therefore challenges the 'close is good, distance is bad' binary by highlighting how prison can change these sibling relationships. This comes from their need to "back each other up" while within the same prison space, the increased need to do this within a prison environment compared to outside and the differences in consequences where this behaviour takes place inside compared to outside of a prison.

Chapter 7 then goes on to consider ideas of distance and closeness in a temporal sense. Previous explorations of temporality were in respect of the potentially differing experiences by young people of a family member's long-term imprisonment compared to if they had served a series of shorter sentences, or of changes within family units and those within them over time. Here, however, this chapter explores time in the sense of how it can introduce distance into a relationship by producing a disjoint or desynchrony arising from where prison can seemingly stretch out time, making it appear to pass more slowly for those inside its walls compared to those outside. Further desynchrony can arise where the young person's life runs to a different schedule and rhythm compared to their family member's. This contributes to the argument I make in Chapter 5 that we should consider young people specifically rather than simply as part of the group of children more generally, as their lives are less likely to fit into the rigid timetable in place around prison calls and visits compared to younger children.

A family member's imprisonment can also, however, result in a closer relationship with the young person in a temporal sense. Within this research there is evidence of aspects of temporal synchronicity with the young people's lives, either where the young person and their family member are serving sentences simultaneously, though not necessarily within the same prison, or where the young person has altered their routine to fit with that of their imprisoned relative. Following on from these discussions, I highlight the incongruity in seeing synchronicity and de-synchronicity in binary positive/negative terms and argue that this is too simplistic.

Finally, this chapter explores the impact of a family member's imprisonment on relational and emotional changes for the young people; again, with elements of distance *and* closeness being introduced into the relationship through the imprisonment. These were often intrinsically linked to the spatial and temporal aspects and, again, the importance of contextualising them is key to considering their meaning for the young people. The dominant narrative within familial imprisonment literature is of imprisonment creating an emotional distance within families. This chapter contributes to this by considering how this experience can come from the physical distance which has been introduced between the young person and their family member, as well as the time they

have spent apart due to this. I also argue that it can occur due to a function of the reduced intimacy in their relationships – where they felt unable to talk freely in letters, calls or visits. This could be down to the perceived surveillance of their communication or due to their own self-censoring, so as not to upset their family members with talk of the "outside world".

The inclusion of participants who are serving a prison sentence themselves, however, also allows the chapter to challenge this dominant narrative by including the experiences by some of the young people of an increasing emotional closeness occurring through imprisonment. Where this comes from siblings being placed together in the same YOI this closeness can be seen through their care for each other, something which is now manifesting itself through feeling increasingly protective towards the sibling compared to when they were outside. As I noted in the spatial section above, the prison changes the way the sibling relationship is carried out, and here, the way that caring is enacted within the relationship. It is now a function of the greater threat and lower availability of those you can trust within a prison, and therefore ideas of closeness cannot always simplistically be linked to elements of positivity.

Where the closeness is expressed by a young person who is within prison themselves, I outline how this could come from them seeing more of their family member while they are in prison, or having a greater level of communication with them through calls or letters where face-to-face contact was not possible. Given the importance of context in this thesis, this should be considered relative to levels of pre-imprisonment contact, which for some was almost non-existent. Again, here, I argue against automatically conflating proximity with positivity. While the young person may see or communicate more often with their family member, when we look deeper there can be a level of unnaturalness to these communications. As is discussed in Chapter 5 when looking at what prisoners' families are for, this growing emotional closeness, which is encouraged and cultivated while someone is in prison, can also present a risk of further harm for the young person where this relationship then breaks down on their family member's release. I also argue here that quantity of communication or contact should not be equated with quality. Longer or more frequent visits which do not

allow for a level of intimacy to be realised within them do not always result in the achievement of greater closeness within these relationships.

Finally, the concluding chapter of this thesis goes on to summarise and synthesise the arguments made throughout the chapters preceding it. It also re-outlines the original contributions of the thesis, as has been done above, and goes on to detail the implications which the research has on theory, future research and on policy and practice within the field of familial imprisonment.

Having laid out this overview of the thesis, the following chapter now goes on to explore the concepts of childhood, young people and family, concepts within which the subsequent discussions of young people's experiences of familial imprisonment are situated. It then provides a critical overview of literature within the field of familial imprisonment research.

2 Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature: Families, Young People and Familial Imprisonment

2.1 Introduction

As was discussed in the introduction in the previous chapter, this thesis looks at young people's experiences of having a family member in prison. There is no single agreed upon definition of young people and therefore this term and concept will be outlined first in this chapter. I will explore the changing ideas of childhood and youth, the reasons behind these changes, the inequalities inherent within these life stage experiences, and what all of this may mean for when we begin to explore young people's experiences of familial imprisonment. The importance of context runs throughout this thesis, and its impact on this chapter is through the need to consider the institution of family as much as the institution of the prison when looking at these young people's experiences. To this end, this chapter contains a discussion of family, its construction today and, again, what this may mean for the subsequent exploration of young people's experiences of having a family member in prison.

The chapter then goes on to outline the history of research into the experiences of families of prisoners, chronicling its progress since first appearing in the 1960s and providing a critique and commentary on its evolution. There is limited literature on young people's experiences specifically, so there will be a focus on research looking at the experience of 'children', but with a wider focus where relevant. Again, although the thesis is exploring the experience of a 'family member's' imprisonment, the main focus of literature in this field is on parental imprisonment so this will be the basis of any literature which is discussed, while also highlighting gaps around, particularly for this thesis, sibling imprisonment. This section considers the disciplines within which this research has tended to be based, how this has changed over time, and also looks at the motivation for carrying out this research by considering why there has been an increased focus on families of prisoners, particularly over the last two decades.

2.2 Children and Young People / Childhood and Youth

As this thesis specifically considers *young people*'s experiences of having a family member in prison, and in some cases their experiences as the *child* of someone in prison, it is important to explore what these terms mean. Childhood and adolescence can be thought of as biological or developmental life stages, which occur for everyone and are bound by particular ages; early childhood (0-4 years), middle childhood (5-9 years) and adolescence (10-19 years) (UNICEF, 2011). By viewing these life stages solely through theories of socialisation or developmental psychology however, the ideas of children and childhood can be constructed as natural rather than social phenomena. However, childhood is a social and cultural construct (James and Prout, 2015), contained within another social construct, i.e. 'the family', again something which has had, and continues to have, different meanings across space and time, as will be discussed below.

Despite this element of social construction however, it is accepted that there are different life stages of 'childhood' and 'youth', separate from adulthood, and that those falling into these categories should be recognised and treated differently (United Nations, 1985; United Nations, 1989). So, firstly, we can consider the more biological aspects of childhood and when this stage moves into adolescence or youth; in other words, when children become young people (although the terms 'youth' and 'young people' are not synonymous or interchangeable). The World Health Organisation (2011) defines adolescents as those aged 10-19 and young people as those aged 10-24 years of age. The United Nations (no date), for statistical purposes, defines 'youth' as people aged between 15 and 24. Within this category, however, they distinguish between teenagers, aged 13 to 19, and then young adults, aged 20 to 24, on the grounds that "the sociological, psychological and health problems they face may differ". Organisations that work with young people also have definitions of who this includes. For example, Young Scot (no date) is the "national youth information and citizenship charity" in Scotland and they define their client group as aged 11 to 26. The Year of the Young People 2018 involved a group of young leaders in Scotland and these were young people aged 8 to 24 (Young Scot, 2018).

Continuing to consider more biological or psychological arguments around these life stages, there is an increasing focus on adolescence and how this period extends beyond the previously thought of cut-off age where the adolescent moves into adulthood. These arguments are widespread, but also specifically affect discussions in respect of youth justice or young offenders and the impact of their maturation on both sentencing and where they then go on to serve their sentences (Justice Committee, 2016; The Howard League/T2A, 2015). Primarily, these arguments are based on scientific research which has shown that adolescent brain development continues into the early twenties, with frontal lobe function increasing over this time and into the late twenties. These areas regulate decision-making and impulse control, key elements within offending behaviour (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2015).

The idea of being a 'child' is one which is not only biological and based on the age of an individual (Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines anyone under the age of 18 as a child) but is also relational; commonly referring to a child's connections to family and specifically to a parent/caregiver. The two roles (child and parent) are inter-dependent, and parenthood, as with childhood, can be viewed as both a biological and a social status. For the former, it can be seen as the outcome of the biological process of reproduction, but for the latter it can be said to convey "certain rights, responsibilities, obligations and associated expectations regarding the care and nurture of children" (Alwin, 2004: 142). This focus on care and nurture can be linked to current Western ideas of childhood which place an emphasis on children's vulnerability and innocence (James et al., 1998). Here, it is important to note that the cultural context of this, and much, familial imprisonment research, is located in the global north.

This idea of innocence and vulnerability linked to aspects of the understanding and defining of 'childhood' and 'youth', and the transition between them, raises questions around the degree to which both are classed experiences. While within the developmental life stages of childhood there is a distinction between early and middle childhood and then adolescence, there can also be a distinction, more sociologically, between different stages of childhood; between the earlier stage of innocence and a later stage of growing responsibility. This can be seen

explicitly in the criminal justice system through the age at which you are deemed "criminally responsible" for your actions and behaviour. Within the United Kingdom children aged eight in Scotland (though this is rising to twelve to match the current age of criminal prosecution) and ten in England and Wales and Northern Ireland are deemed as being criminally responsible, meaning that (under certain circumstances) they can be tried in an adult court.

In addition to this explicit legal recognition of responsibility, children can also see themselves being moved into being bracketed under the much more stigmatising term of 'youth' in other ways. Here, instead of being viewed as innocent and in need *of* protection, there is a move towards them being seen as risky and society being seen as needing protection *from* them. These terms tend to be applied to children and young people in some communities more than others, or at least the behaviour is identified and problematized more in certain areas than others (see McAra and McVie, 2005; Murray, 2015).

One feature of childhood in the UK which demarcates it as a separate phase of life is school attendance, which is compulsory up to the age of 16. This construction of children through their attendance at school can also lead to some groups coming to be seen as 'youth' rather than children earlier than others, when they leave the school system prematurely. Looking at the two groups of participants involved in this research, this difference is evident when looking at the educational trajectories of the two groups. Those within the Young Offenders Institution often spoke of leaving school early, or where they did attend it was sporadically or was outside of mainstream educational provision.

Children and young people may be viewed, and may view themselves, differently depending on where they live or the environment they are growing up in. Growing up happens at different rates and means different things in different places, and this can be a racial or classed experience (e.g. Burton et al., 1996; Bynner, 2005 Johnson and Mollburn, 2009). Considering these more socially constructed experiences of childhood or of being a young person, Sawyer et al.'s (2018) assertion around adolescence now lasting from age 10-24 is not solely based on biological factors such as brain development. It also takes account of

social aspects such as the fact that milestones like partnering, becoming parents and achieving economic independence are being reached later in life, with the result that the "semi-dependency" which characterises adolescence has become a more prolonged experience. They note that these milestones are now less likely to be met at the age they could have been for previous generations, as economic conditions reduce opportunities for young people to move out the family home and to gain employment. Many young people are also spending longer in education, requiring, to different degrees, the continuing support of their parents (Chisholm and Hurrelmann, 1995). Of course, these experiences of spending longer in education, under the 'care' of a parent or other caregiver, or the option to stay at home longer, are not universal experiences.

Following on from these societal changes has come the idea of 'extended transitions' for young people (Roberts, 1997; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997) and terms such as 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2000) have been used to describe a specific life stage from 18-25. These terms are now being used to talk about and differentiate the experiences of adolescence from full adulthood. While Arnett's (*ibid.*) concept of emerging adulthood does reference elements of differentiation by culture and class, he does not really engage with the structural inequalities underpinning this. Bynner (2001) engages with the ideas of both stratification and exclusion impacting upon the idea of extended transitions, features which are much more prominent within British society (compared to the American society from which Arnett (2000) and his work comes). Particularly for my research, the impact of class is highly pertinent. Bynner's (2005) examination of age-30 cohort comparisons across three British longitudinal studies starting in 1946, 1958 and 1970 showed that those spending a longer time in education were concentrated in the most advantaged groups in society. He also found that over the cohorts there was a growing rather than a narrowing of the gap between the most and least advantaged in society. Thus, while a separate life stage of emerging adulthood or extended transitions may be something that is being experienced by some in society, the most disadvantaged continue to have more traditional accelerated routes to adulthood.

This underlying inequality for young people in society generally, as well as specifically relating to having a family member in prison, will be explored in more depth in Chapter 6. It is introduced here, however, as a reminder that young people and the experience of 'childhood' and 'youth' is neither homogenous nor equal between different cultures and societies, but neither is it experienced equally within these cultures and societies.

2.3 Family

As with the idea of childhood and youth, the idea of family is also not something which is static. Rather, it has changed significantly, particularly over the last half century. Family can be, as well as mean, different things to different people and, as with childhood and youth, can be experienced differently. While family structures and relationships have never been static, the twentieth century saw both an increased rate of change and different reasons behind these changes (Pryor and Trinder, 2004). Family structures have seen significant shifts from around the mid-1970s onwards, however the changes and the trajectories of these changes have not been constant. For example, divorce rates in England and Wales increased from 4.1 per 1000 married population in 1969 to 13 per 1000 in 1997 (Allan and Crow, 2001). This peak divorce rate, however, has generally fallen since this time and by 2016 was at a figure of 8.9 per 1000 married people (Office of National Statistics, 2016a)[1]. This fall in divorce rate may partly be explained by the number of couples now cohabiting rather than marrying; they are the fastest growing family type in the UK, almost doubling from 1.5 million families (from a total of 16.6 million) in 1996 to 3.3 million (from a total of 19 million) in 2017. Over this same period the number of lone parent families increased by 15.6%, however this figure has begun to fall in more recent years, decreasing from 3 million in 2015 to 2.8 million in 2017 (Office of National Statistics, 2017). The married or civil partner couple remains the most common type of family within the UK today.

These figures show that families come in different shapes and sizes. The nuclear family, which is often viewed as the 'gold standard' by government and a focus

[1] These figures all refer to opposite sex couples.

for their policies, is not necessarily the norm for a lot of families within the UK today. Family sociologist David Morgan (2011) notes that when people use the word "family" they are often referring to relationships between parents and children, rather than anything wider. This is also true within familial imprisonment literature, and within policy and practice, where 'prisoners' families' are referred to but, in reality, this generally means opposite sex partners and their children. Not everyone in prison is part of this type of family however, with the results of the latest Scottish Prison Service Prisoner Survey (Carnie et al., 2018) showing that a third of respondents did not report having children (though of course it must be noted firstly that not all prisoners complete this survey, and that these are self-reported figures and there are reasons prisoners may not wish to disclose their parental status). Williams et al.'s study (2012), based in England and Wales, found that 61% of prisoners said they were single on their entrance to prison, with only 24% declaring that they were living with a partner and 8% saying they were married. Of their respondents, 54% said they had children under the age of 18 at the time they entered custody. People may also increasingly be choosing to define who they see as their family more widely (see "families of choice" (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan, 2001) – which was a concept originally used to explore homosexual relationships but has been widened out from this in more recent work).

The restrictive focus of who counts as family members can then result in exclusion, and can see certain prisoners, as well as people outside of prison, forgotten both by the prisons themselves and in wider criminal justice policy and practice. So, where some sociologists (e.g. Farrell et al., 2012) have argued that the changing nature of family is not reflected in research and policies more generally, this is also true when looking at policy and literature specifically around families of prisoners.

The discussions of family above, are very much located in the idea that there is "a" family and it is defined by those individuals which comprise it – either through ideas of blood relations, legal ties (e.g. adoption) or from residing in the same household. Morgan's (1996; 1999; 2011) work around family practices, however, is an attempt to move away from this idea of the family as a single

entity and instead recognise the many different ways in which family could be interpreted or enacted – with a focus on family as something which is 'done' rather than something which people 'are'. This idea of the 'doing' of family features in Jardine's (2018) work looking at the lives and experiences of families recruited at a prison visitor centre. However, she counsels against "privileging family displays that fit most comfortably within a white middle-class framework, and ensure that the voices of all families affected by imprisonment are heard in the growing conversations about their needs" (p.114), ensuring that the question of class, and race, is also one which must be considered when we are looking at the experiences of families of those in prison.

As with childhood and youth, the family is not simply a physical entity, made up of the people who constitute it, whether that is through marriage, other relationship, biological connections or otherwise. It is also a social institution and on top of this is, as Erera (2002: 2) points out, an "ideological construct laden with symbolism and with a history and politics of its own". Part of this ideological construction can be seen through the focus of government policy on the family as a site of intervention and their idealising of this institution, often in its nuclear form (e.g. Cameron, 2014). Where there is now a recognition of families being done differently (e.g. with same sex parents or including children who are adopted or step-families) to recognise these families as being done *differently* we still need to first have a norm to compare them to, generally the traditional nuclear family.

2.4 Familial Imprisonment

2.4.1 The Scottish Prison Estate

While three of the young people spoke of their family member's imprisonment being within the English prison estate and one had a family member within a prison abroad, the majority experienced the imprisonment of a family member within the Scottish prison estate. Therefore, to provide some context to the discussions in the data chapters which follow, I will briefly outline the set-up of the prison estate within Scotland.

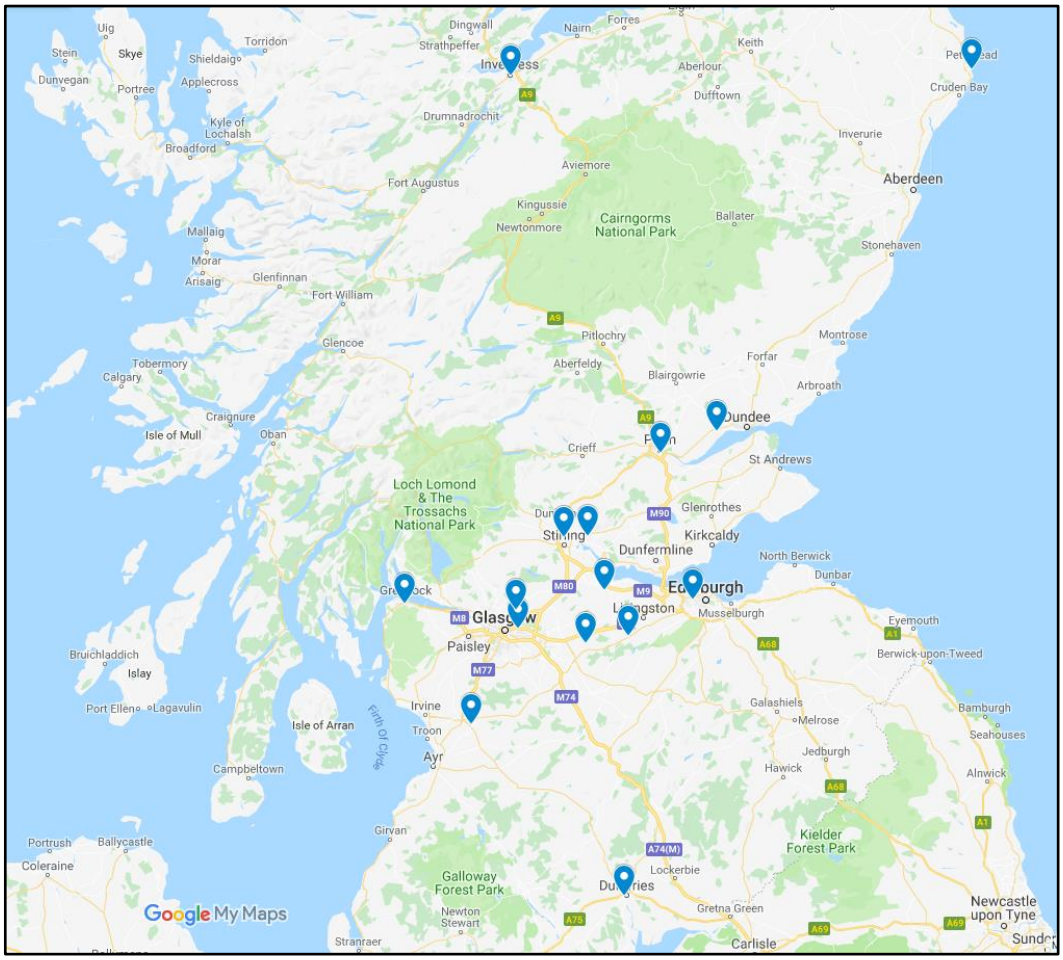

Figure 1: Map showing prison locations within Scotland

There are 15 prisons within Scotland, including one open prison and one Young Offenders Institution (YOI). Female prisoners were previously mainly held in HMP Cornton Vale in Central Scotland. Work is currently underway to provide a new national female prison on this site along with five smaller community-based units around the country. Until this work is complete female prisoners are currently being held in HMPs Grampian, Greenock, Edinburgh and HMP YOI Polmont. All young offenders aged between 16 and 21 are currently held within one YOI which is within Central Scotland. The male prison estate is comprised of a number of prisons, however these can hold prisoners at different stages in their sentence and dependent on the length of sentence. HMPs Barlinnie and Greenock house what is known as the 'top end' which is for life sentence prisoners who are approaching their release date. HMP Dumfries has a facility for long-term protection offenders who have to be separated from the mainstream prison population and HMP Glenochil is the major site within Scotland for holding sex offenders and those with an Order of Lifelong Restriction. HMP Shotts is specifically for long-term adult offenders (long-term is over four years) while the

other prisons hold a range of remand, short and long-term prisoners. Therefore, depending on the type of sentence and type of offence, this can dictate the location of the prison in which an individual is placed.

While the majority of Scotland's population is located in what is known as the central belt, where a number of the prisons are located, there can still be issues around travel and access due to their location. For example, HMPs Shotts and Glenochil are both located in Central Scotland. However, the former is almost 1.5 miles from the nearest train station with no bus service and the latter is a mile from the nearest bus stop. This means that without access to private transport travel to these prisons can be awkward and expensive, particularly where children or young people are involved.

In respect of the number of visits each prisoner is allowed this varies depending on whether they have been sentenced or are on remand. Sentenced prisoners are eligible for one visit each week of at least 30 minutes, while remand prisoners can have up to five visits of at least 30 minutes per week. The number of visitors allowed at each visit is at the discretion of the Governor so can vary between prisons but, from the participants I spoke to, the limit seemed to be around three adult visitors per visit. Children's visits are special visits, available on top of the statutory visit allowance, in which the prisoner can move around and interact with their children, whereas in the standard visits physical contact is only allowed at the beginning and end of the visit. The number of these visits allowed by each prisoner is dependent on the prison so can vary across the estate. Children's visits are also not available in all prisons in Scotland, though they do take place in most.

Other than visits, it is possible to communicate with people held in these prisons through letters or telephone calls. Telephone calls must come from the person in prison, and will usually take place during a period known as recreation, which is a 45-minute period within a weekday evening or during the day at weekends, as people are usually locked in their cell during the evening period. While each prison has different times during which telephones can be accessed, the young people I spoke to within the YOI and those who were outside of prison, spoke mainly about being able to make or receive calls respectively during these specific recreation periods. Telephones are situated on the landings of the

accommodation halls therefore reducing the potential privacy on these calls. Some prisons within England and Wales do have in-cell telephones but there is no prison in Scotland which has this facility. The cost of calls made from a prison telephone is significantly higher than normal landline or mobile charges, particularly now where many 'free' calls are included within mobile telephone packages. As an example, a ten-minute call to a mobile phone would cost £1.30, resulting in a weekly cost of £9.10 if calls were made each day. Average prison wages are only £5-12 a week, with no guarantee that the family is able to supplement this amount (Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice, 2018).

2.4.2 History of Familial Imprisonment Research

Familial imprisonment research first became a focus of significant academic enquiry in the 1960s. This decade saw the most extensive and systematic study of prisoners' families by Pauline Morris (1965) and research on this scale has not been repeated since. Her focus was on female partners of male prisoners in England and Wales and involved 588 partner participants. While the research did not specifically look at children's experiences of their fathers' imprisonment, nor did it contain their voices, it did contain elements of their experience which have been echoed in further research which has taken place since.

Firstly, "Children (management of absence of)" was noted to be the second largest problem (behind money) for the wives who were interviewed (34.1%) and was described mainly in respect of managing the children while their husband was away. Problem behaviours, which feature in later psychological studies around the impact of parental imprisonment, such as "truanting, enuresis, refusal to eat (or incessant eating), sleeping badly, fretting, clinging and general behaviour problems" (p. 91) were noted here as generally not being linked to the father's imprisonment by the wives who were speaking about them. In fact, Morris (*ibid.*) notes that one of the most striking findings of the research was that the wives did not see the children's problems from the point of view of the child, or even recognise that there may be problems for the child through the experience of the imprisonment of their father. Instead, she states the children's problems were "seen simply in terms of their nuisance value to the mother" (p. 91). This highlights the potential benefits of speaking to children and young people directly, where the views and experiences they narrate

personally are not always the same as those narrated on their behalf by their parents.

Children's experiences of the imprisonment of a father were also included where mothers spoke of other elements of the experience for their children which are repeated in subsequent research: elements of secrecy where children were not aware of their father's location; visiting experiences, where most took their children some of the time when they visited their partners; feelings where the children "miss their father a great deal, and talk about him a lot" (p. 114); and economic and financial difficulties (though not always solely due to the imprisonment) which impacted on finances within the home as well as child care arrangements where mothers had to work.

In respect of the framing of the research and the implications of its findings, Morris (*ibid.*) noted the importance of the family in the rehabilitation process and how "the experience of imprisonment does not occur in isolation for a man with a family" (p. 9). She also went on to note that "the relationships existing in the family, and the effect of the man's imprisonment on them, are likely to be important factors in the success or otherwise of his prison training (Fenton, 1958) and his rehabilitation on discharge (Zemans and Cavan, 1958)" (Morris, 1965: 18-19). This focus on the role of families within rehabilitation was echoed in other work during this decade (e.g. Glaser, 1964). In much the same way as the children's problems were not seen in their own right but as a nuisance to the mothers, the importance of families was recognised mainly through their role in supporting the rehabilitation of the men in prison.

A key aspect of Morris' (1965) study, which will be picked up on and commented upon throughout this thesis, is her recognition of the importance of context to these experiences. She recognises the differences of the impacts of criminality compared to incarceration for families, that the imprisonment may not represent a crisis for all families, and also that families can face a range of difficulties unrelated to and distinct from their experiences of a family member's imprisonment. Where the research in this area went on to focus on groups of children recruited from more clinical settings, who were already exhibiting problem behaviours, there was less of a focus on this wider context

and instead a narrower focus on the imprisonment and the stated related outcomes.

Familial imprisonment research in the 1980s was often from a psychological or clinical viewpoint (e.g. Lowenstein, 1986; Fritsch and Burkehead, 1981) focusing on the behaviours of children experiencing parental imprisonment and ways to address the harms caused to them by this experience. They also mainly focused on the experiences of the families of male prisoners only. This body of literature saw a move away from Morris' (1965) more nuanced and contextual approach to looking at the topic. Instead, it began to position the experience as wholly traumatic, constructing the penal system as what Comfort (2008: 9) in her research with partners of prisoners went on to describe as a "monolithically negative force in the lives of inmates and their families". While there are numerous negative impacts on children experiencing parental imprisonment which are outlined below, the failure to recognise the context of their families and to place the research in a more sociological frame is something which I believe is an issue and which my own research addresses.

Shaw's (1987) work at this time was the first systematic piece of research specifically on children of prisoners. It did not feature the voices of children directly, with the data instead coming from interviews with imprisoned fathers and their partners, as well as written correspondence from women unrelated to the men who were interviewed who had also experienced a partner's imprisonment. It was small scale in that it was based in a single geographical location within England, however was based on 448 men who spoke of having 588 children who either lived with their partners or elsewhere at the time of the research. Where full families were able to be interviewed, i.e. the male prisoner and his wife or cohabitee, this amounted to 22 families, accounting for 60 children. All the men were serving a period of imprisonment of less than six months. As with the Morris (1965) study, and with studies which came later, negative effects of the imprisonment were exhibited by the children such as poor physical and mental health, behavioural problems (including delinquency), truancy and lowered school performance. Again, as with Morris' (*ibid.*) study, it was acknowledged that for some families the absence allowed the family a form of respite, but, again, this was not interrogated in any detail. Shaw (1987) also

drew comparisons between the focus on children of divorce, and in particular how contact with the non-custodial parent was framed in respect of the right of the child rather than the right of the parent, whereas children with a parent in prison were not afforded this right. This is still the case in prisons in England and Wales where visits are linked to the Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme, and are consequently seen as a privilege for the prisoner rather than the right of the child, which is how they are viewed in Scotland (McCarthy and Adams, 2017).

The 1980s and 1990s saw growing prison populations across the world, particularly in the United States of America which began to usher in the era of mass incarceration (Garland, 2001). Imprisonment rates rose from 138 per 100,000 in 1980 to 470 in 2000, a rise of 240% (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). The prison populations in the United Kingdom jurisdictions also increased during this time, though on a smaller scale. The prison population grew by almost 53% in England and Wales over the period 1980-2000 and by 21% in Scotland over the same period (Ministry of Justice/Scottish Government, 2018). From the early 1990s onwards there was also a growth in respect of research around families of prisoners as their numbers were also increasing. Initially, these studies tended to have a focus on legal rights or policy issues (Shaw, 1992; Gabel and Johnson, 1995). Gabel and Johnston's (1995) volume *Children of Incarcerated Parents* contained 16 contributions to the topic but none were particularly sociological, instead coming from the areas of law (6), psychology (2) and social work (5).

The 2000s saw further growth in familial imprisonment research, provoked in the UK by a Social Exclusion Unit (2002) report linking the role of families, again, to the rehabilitation process. It also saw the research begin to draw on more sociological aspects by looking at ideas of social capital and collateral consequences for these families (e.g. Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999). Key works during this period include Comfort's (2008) exploration of female experiences of their male partners' imprisonment through in-depth and immersive fieldwork at San Quentin prison in the US, as well as Codd's (2008) work around the same time in the UK. These studies both specifically explored partners' experiences.

Even where children were present within these relationships, they were not the focus of the research.

In respect of children's experiences of a family member's imprisonment in this period, the often-quoted quantitative work around intergenerational risk of offending (Murray and Farrington, 2005) was published. This was based on longitudinal research within the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development. It looked at the impact of a father's imprisonment on the subsequent delinquent or offending behaviour of (male) children, and is one of the few longitudinal studies with a representative sample. They concluded that parental imprisonment can predict antisocial behaviour and mental health problems for children into adulthood, even after controlling for other risk factors such as parental criminality, childhood risk factors and parent-child separation. This is not a causal relationship however, and figures and conclusions have repeatedly been taken from it, out of context, such that there is an implied (but false) inevitability around this relationship.

Other quantitative studies during this period listed a variety of problems which children can experience, either directly or indirectly through other family changes, during a parent's imprisonment. These include externalizing behavioural changes (e.g. aggressive behaviour and delinquency) (Farrington et al., 2001; Aaron and Dallaire, 2010; Wildeman, 2010; Geller et al., 2012), impact on education (Murray and Farrington, 2005; Miller and Barnes, 2015; Hagan and Foster, 2012), economic effects (Phillips et al., 2006), physical and mental health problems (Foster and Hagan, 2013; Miller et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013; Murray and Farrington, 2008), substance use (Roettger et al., 2011) and social exclusion/inequality (Foster and Hagan, 2007; Wakefield and Wildeman, 2013). None of these, however, are the result of large-scale statistically rigorous research and there are no causal links made between the problems experienced by the child and the imprisonment of the parent specifically.

Murray et al.'s (2012) systematic review and meta-analysis of parental imprisonment studies in fact concluded that the most rigorous of the 40 studies they included showed parental incarceration was associated with a higher risk for children's antisocial behaviour but not for mental health problems, drug use or poor educational performance. As Johnson and Waldfogel (2004) point out

however, it should not be assumed that a parent's imprisonment has no negative impact for children. Rather, it should be borne in mind that other factors can already have placed this group at risk of negative outcomes well before a parent goes to prison. In fact, Wildeman and Turney's (2014) work concluded that, specifically in respect of maternal imprisonment, the poor behavioural outcomes seen for children were driven by disadvantages preceding the imprisonment rather than the imprisonment itself. Going back to Morris' (1965) study and her contextualising of the families she spoke to, other factors such as poverty, deprivation, mental health or substance use of parents may already have had an impact on children's behaviour and mental health prior to, and separate from, any impact from their family member's imprisonment. Johnson and Easterling (2012) also argue that methodological and conceptual issues mean that the parental imprisonment studies which have taken place cannot distinguish between the impact of the imprisonment and that of other adversities within the children's lives. Where there is not a distinction drawn between the gender of the imprisoned parent, different lengths of sentence, location of the prison (e.g. local or national) and at which point in the child's life the imprisonment took place, this also makes the results of these studies difficult to interpret.

Qualitative research cannot deal with all of these issues; there is still often an aggregation of children experiencing paternal and maternal imprisonment, groups across age ranges and with no explicit recognition of different sentence lengths or prison locations. Where children and young people are talking about their experiences of familial imprisonment however, these could be said to be much more closely linked to their understanding and making sense of this event and process than studies attempting to measure and correlate outcomes with experiences. Qualitative research has shown children experiencing similar outcomes to those evidenced in the quantitative studies above, such as externalizing behavioural changes (Bockneck et al., 2009), detrimental effects on educational performance (Yau and Chung, 2014), social withdrawal and hyperactivity (King, 2002), mental health and emotional problems (Jones and Wainaina-Wozna, 2013), and economic strain (Arditti et al., 2003; Christian et al., 2006). What should be borne in mind in interpreting these studies however, is where these participants are recruited from and the potential impact of these contexts on the narratives which then come from them. Often recruitment takes

place within prison visit rooms or from organisations who work with young people experiencing a family member's imprisonment. Therefore, they are drawn from a section of the population who are likely to have had, and continue to have, good relationships with the family member who is in prison, given the continued contact. The fact they have come forward for support also indicates that they are more likely to come from a group who have found the situation difficult or traumatic. This is not to take away from these experiences but simply to point out that, where we use these recruitment methods, we may not be capturing the full range of experiences. My own research does not claim to do this, and it does not claim to be representative, but it does begin to introduce new voices and experiences into this discussion through its unique recruitment of young people from within a prison setting themselves.

Recent years have seen an almost exponential rise in the number of studies around familial imprisonment. Condry and Scharff Smith (2018) note that in their recent search for literature related to prisoners' families, including parental incarceration and children of imprisoned parents, that there were more than 260 new publications between 2012 and September 2016. This was compared to 3 articles in the 1980s, 40 in the 1990s and 144 in the 2000s (Johnson and Easterling, 2012) – though these numbers relate specifically to literature on the effects of parental incarceration only. While only a small number of participants in my research spoke about maternal imprisonment, this is an area on which there has been a particular focus in recent years (Booth, 2018; Baldwin and Epstein, 2017; Minson, 2018). Recent publications have also begun to move away from solely considering parental imprisonment from a clinical point of view and looking for policy and practice implications to deal with, or 'treat' these issues. Instead there has been more of a focus on exploring this topic more deeply through more theoretical, legal and sociological lenses (see particularly Condry and Scharff Smith's (2018) recently published edited collection "Prisons, Punishment and the Family").

2.4.3 Children and Young People's Voices

Where often research with partners of prisoners has been of a more qualitative nature, including the voices of these partners directly, that which looks at children and young people's experiences has a history of being more

quantitative, looking instead at measuring the harm caused and working on linking this to the parent's imprisonment. More recently, research in this area has moved towards including children and young people's voices directly, speaking about their own experiences of, mainly, parental imprisonment. These have generally been small-scale pieces of research and both academic and grey literature are included here.

Studies have taken place with a focus on visiting (Flynn, 2014; Foster, 2016), the role of schools (Morgan et al., 2014), practice learning for the provision of children and families' services (Gill and Deegan, 2013), using an ambiguous loss framework (Bockneck et al., 2009), around re-entry (Johnson and Easterling, 2015a; Yocum and Nath, 2011) as well as looking at the experience more generally (Loureiro, 2010; Yau and Chung, 2014; Glover, 2009). These studies have also included interviews with parents and caregivers (Flynn, 2014; Yau and Chung, 2014; Morgan et al., 2014; Loureiro, 2010; Glover, 2009; Gill and Deegan, 2013) and practitioners (Morgan et al., 2014, Gill and Deegan, 2013) as well as the children and young people themselves. Mostly, participants were drawn from across the 'child' age range, from 3 to 18, although a few studies included young people aged 19-21 (e.g. McCulloch and Morrison, 2002) and a Danish study included young people up to the age of 27 (Oldrup, 2018).

In respect of studies focusing solely on young people (or 'youth', 'teenagers' or 'adolescents' as they are variously termed in the literature), there are fewer of these. Notable examples include Flynn (2014) who looked specifically at prison visits; Johnson and Easterling (2015a) who explored youth perspectives on parental re-entry; Johnson (2012) whose research involved adolescents mapping their service needs in relation to a family member's imprisonment; Johnson and Easterling (2015b) who looked at adolescents' coping strategies and McCulloch and Morrison (2002) and Brown et al. (2001) who looked at teenagers' experiences of having a family member in prison more generally. These studies mainly focused on parental imprisonment but occasionally the imprisonment of other family members (e.g. siblings) was discussed. The research shows there are specific differences in the teenage or young person's experience of familial imprisonment. They are likely to experience the imprisonment of a family member differently to younger children. For example, older children are less likely to visit their family member (McCulloch and Morrison, 2002) and are more

likely to be left to fend for themselves (Healy et al., 2000). There is also a greater expectation that they will care for their younger siblings (Cunningham and Baker, 2003). In respect of research with young people specifically, Johnson and Easterling (2015a) also note that they purposely chose to recruit adolescent participants as older youths had "capacities for introspection and hypothetical thinking" which were "expected to enhance their participation in a study that has a prominent focus on future expectations" (p. 63).

As mentioned, where young people, or adolescents, are included amongst research participants, these are generally within the 'children' age range and therefore are rarely aged over eighteen (see previous exceptions above). In light of some of the broader arguments discussed above – around extending the age range which is covered by adolescence, and the introduction of concepts such as "emerging adulthood" and "extended transitions" – I argue that we should not simply stop considering participants for research into young people's experiences when they reach the age of eighteen, as research in this area has tended to do.

2.4.4*Familial I*mprisonment or Familial *Imprisonment*

One criticism which could be made across this body of familial imprisonment literature is that families often only become visible through their family member who is in prison or through the prison itself; for example, when they enter a prison to visit or when they are seen as a source of support or resource in someone's release and resettlement. As Condry and Scharff Smith (2018) make clear in their recent edited collection dedicated to the experiences of families of prisoners, the lives of these families are worthy of being studied in their own right. Codd's (2008) work also addresses this criticism through use of certain language and labels. Where we talk of 'prisoners' families' we foreground the prisoner rather than the family, placing them in the "possessive position" (*ibid.* p. 5), whereas where we say 'a young person with a family member in prison' we can centre the young person in the relationship. The focus on the prison rather than the family as the central institution in this type of research is a further critique which could be levelled at some of this literature. Where the underlying motivation for the research is based on reducing reoffending or desistance this can implicitly result in this emphasis.

Where there is an emphasis on the prison or the imprisonment element of the experience rather than that of family, the result of this can be that there is no explicit reflection on the role that pre-imprisonment family relationships (and their wider social contexts) can play in young people's experiences of a family member's imprisonment. Where these relationships and contexts are taken into account, the pre-imprisonment relationships are often reduced to whether the child lived with the parent prior to their imprisonment, which can be a simplistic measure of relationship quality. Where Hagan and Dinovitzer (1999) discuss this in relation to their examination of the collateral consequences for children with a parent in prison, they instead recognise that "much of the variation in the nature of the parental contribution may have to do with the form and quality of family relationships rather than with the legal and residential nature of the relationship" (p. 124). Where imprisonment may be seen as a source of relief for some families, this "underlines the importance of knowing the prior relationship between an offender and his family that predates imprisonment" (p. 125).

Wakefield and Wildeman (2013) devote a whole chapter of their book looking at children experiencing paternal imprisonment to "Before and After Imprisonment". Their research is based on quantitative and qualitative data, with the latter comprising of interviews with eight primary caregivers and fourteen children over a three-year period. From these interviews they argue that paternal characteristics rather than simply paternal involvement may be more important when considering the effect of paternal imprisonment on children (their work looked solely at fathers in prison). This suggests it was the quality rather than the quantity of the involvement which was key. This arose from examples within their research where children who had little contact with their father spoke of his imprisonment as being harmful, while others, whose fathers were married to their mothers, lived in the family home and were therefore regularly present in the child's life, spoke of seemingly beneficial aspects of the imprisonment. This was generally due to the levels of abusive behaviour experienced in the home pre-imprisonment. While they noted that these latter examples may not be representative of the 'average' child's experience of paternal imprisonment, they do underline that high levels of

paternal involvement do not always equate to a high quality of involvement or that which is beneficial to a child.

Lanskey et al.'s (2015, 2016) research places the family and the context of the relationships at its centre. Their longitudinal mixed-methods research with families where children have experienced paternal imprisonment looks at contextual factors in relation to children's wellbeing (Lanskey et al., 2015). They also utilise an interactional perspective to explore how interactions prior to the imprisonment impacted on the relationship in prison, and at how interactions in prison then impact on the relationship after release (Lanskey et al., 2016). Context is also key for Saunders' (2017) work looking at children's decision-making around contact while a parent is in prison. She highlights narratives of relationships improving while a parent is in prison due to the "opportunity to reconnect" where a parent is "in a known place and accessible for regular contact" (p. 66) or where drug or alcohol issues are able to be addressed. These experiences are specifically linked to family context, something which my own research goes on to explore through discussions in Chapters 6 and 7.

The literature also rarely includes a consideration of experiences which do not fit the dominant narrative of the singularly negative impact of prison on families generally, and children and young people more specifically. This may be related to the difficulties of recruiting participants for this type of research, resulting in an over-representation of those who access support services or who attend visits at prisons. This group is therefore more likely to not only be maintaining a relationship with their family member but to have had a strong or positive relationship with them prior to the imprisonment to encourage this wish to maintain contact. Or it may reflect the motivation behind the research; to ensure that the support and help these children need is available (and it is needed). However, this is not a universal experience, and the loss of context as provided by Morris (1965) and Comfort (2008) is a loss to the field generally.

2.4.5 Sibling Imprisonment

While there is now a growing body of literature on children's experiences of the imprisonment of a parent, with some specifically focusing on young people,

there is almost nothing considering their experiences of the imprisonment of other family members. Where this is considered, including in respect of sibling imprisonment, this has tended to be within wider pieces of research rather than work focusing exclusively on these relationships (e.g. Brown et al., 2001; DeBell, 2003). In respect of research with adult family members of prisoners, the majority also only considers sibling imprisonment as part of wider familial imprisonment experiences (e.g. Condry, 2007).

There has been some limited quantitative work in this field. Similar to the research on parental imprisonment, some studies have looked at the link between a sibling's imprisonment and the future risk of a child's delinquent behaviour (Farrington et al., 1996; Farrington et al., 2001). Based on data from the same study as that which showed links between a father's imprisonment and their son's future risk of delinquency or imprisonment (the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Behaviour), as well as from the Pittsburgh Youth study, these papers look at links between a boy's delinquent behaviour (only boys are sampled in these studies) and wider family members' arrest or convictions. They show that an arrested father is the strongest predictor of delinquency, with an arrested brother also being independently important in predicting court delinquency and arrests, while an arrested sister was important in predicting arrests. They also show that same sex family relationships (e.g. father/son, mother/daughter, brother/brother, sister/sister) were stronger predictors than opposite sex, and older siblings were stronger predictors than younger. As with the literature which looks at parental imprisonment quantitatively these pieces of work do not establish causation or explain why offending may run in families. Nor does it illuminate the experiences of these children of having a family member in prison beyond showing the levels of this inter-familial behaviour.

Another statistical study examined the potential effect of the incarceration of household members, including siblings, specifically on children and young people's academic outcomes (Nichols and Loper, 2012). Though there were a number of limitations to the study it concluded that sibling incarceration was unrelated to the academic outcomes measured (failure to graduate high school and extended school absence). It did, however, highlight the behaviour of teachers in relation to rating hypothetical school children as less competent

where they believe a parent's absence was due to imprisonment (Dallaire et al., 2010), noting that this stereotype may be more generalised to those with a sibling in prison, particularly where that sibling had been at the same school. This suggests that while no explicit link may have been found in respect of a sibling's imprisonment and the specific academic outcomes considered, that qualitative research in this area may allow a more in-depth exploration of this experience.

In respect of qualitative work, Meek's (2008; Meek et al., 2010) work is one exception to the neglect of this experience, where, tellingly, a decade ago she highlighted the impact a sibling's imprisonment could have on children and young people and the need for further research in this area; a recommendation that has been unheeded. Her research was small-scale (8 participants) but highlighted the closeness of sibling relationships (in this case with older brothers), the roles these older brothers played in their younger siblings' lives and the ensuing emotional impact on siblings of their imprisonment. Some of the adverse consequences present in the parental imprisonment literature were also reflected here in respect of sibling imprisonment, though with a note that there is little specific provision of support for this group, something which is unlikely to have changed in the subsequent decade.

The importance of sibling relationships within fostering and adoptive families has been receiving an increased focus recently within Scotland (Stand Up For Siblings, a collaboration between a number of child welfare, children's rights and legal organisations and academics within Scotland was launched last year). I am neither equating nor comparing the separation of siblings due to imprisonment with their separation during a fostering or adoption process. Rather, I mention it here to highlight the increasing focus on the importance of this specific family relationship in other areas, compared to the lack of focus within familial imprisonment research.

2.4.6 Temporal Aspects of (Familial) Imprisonment

The temporal aspect of imprisonment is a key theme within prisons research generally. It is also one which is beginning to be explored within familial

imprisonment literature, and is a theme which is explored in more detail within this thesis in Section 7.3. Research around prisoners' experiences has shown a differing experience of time, and in particular its seeming to slow down or stop whilst in prison (Cohen and Taylor, 1972; Medlicott, 1999; Jewkes, 2005). Within familial imprisonment literature time has been explored in respect of the idea of the waiting experienced by families – "[w]aiting for the visit; waiting for the court date; waiting for release; waiting for the letter; waiting for the phone call; waiting for things to go back to normal; waiting for things to get better (Foster, 2016: 2). It has also been explored in relation to the differing experiences of time for the family member who is serving the prison sentence (as outlined above) and for those who are outside of the prison environment (e.g. Kotova, 2018). This differing experience, and its impact on both prisoners and their family members, is the focus of the temporal explorations contained within Chapter 7.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter began by exploring the ideas of childhood, youth and family as socially constructed concepts as an important context when considering both the familial imprisonment literature which followed, as well as the discussions of my own data which take place in subsequent chapters. When and how someone moves from being seen as an innocent or at risk child to a responsible and risky youth can impact on how they experience, or are seen in respect of, a family member's imprisonment. This is also an inherently unequal experience.

The familial imprisonment literature itself lacks a focus on young people's experiences specifically and on sibling imprisonment; gaps which this thesis seeks to address. This body of literature fails to consider at all the experiences of young people who are themselves in a prison and instead constructs a binary split where a young person can be a prisoner *or* a family member of a prisoner, but not both. This thesis deals with these simultaneous experiences in Chapter 7. This thesis also questions the focus of much of this body of literature, which tends to centre the prison rather than the family, and does not always fully take into account the young people's lives prior to the imprisonment as a salient factor affecting their experiences. The importance of this context is reflected in this thesis by its structure, where Chapter 6 looks at family experiences more

widely before Chapter 7 then goes on to consider young people's experiences of familial imprisonment specifically.

Before the substantive data chapters which go on to address these identified gaps however, I will firstly outline the methods used in this research in Chapter 3, followed by an in-depth and critical consideration of the consequences and impact of some of these methodological decisions in Chapter 4.

3 Chapter 3 – Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methods used to produce and analyse the data on which this thesis is based. It will begin by outlining the research question and sub-questions along with the theoretical underpinnings of the overall research design. An overview of the research design and methods used will follow, along with a timeline showing how the design evolved over the period of the project, the reasons for this and the results and impact of these changes on the research. There were two separate groups of participants in this research, a group of young people who formed part of an arts collective, KIN, and a group of young people recruited from a Young Offenders Institution (YOI). The methods used and process of carrying out the research with each group of participants varied and this will be outlined below before the potential consequences of this are explored in greater detail in Chapter 4. Finally, there is an introduction to all my participants.

This chapter does not contain reflections on this research process to any great degree as these are contained instead in the chapter to follow.

3.2 Research Aims and Theoretical Underpinnings

3.2.1 Research Questions

The research timeline below shows how my research design has evolved and how its focus shifted during the research journey. The preceding chapter highlighted one of the gaps within the body of familial imprisonment literature: a lack of focus on young people's experiences, as opposed to partner/spouse or children as an overall group. In respect of how children and young people's experiences of familial imprisonment are explored, there has previously been a focus on more quantitative research, and while this is changing, the qualitative work can often be more descriptive than analytical. The research questions here aimed to allow an open exploration of the experience of having a family member in prison. This was intended to include a wider range of experience than has been explored in much of the existing literature in this field, where the dominant

focus is on parental imprisonment. The preceding chapter also highlighted the lack of focus on the imprisonment of siblings, or other family members. While my aim was to understand and explore 'family' more widely pragmatic recruitment has resulted in a focus on parental and sibling imprisonment.

The sub-questions come from a desire to explore the family experience of these young people, what this means to them and how it is experienced. Again, the aim was to try and move away from the individualised and sometimes prison-focused nature of the literature.

Consequently, my research question and sub-questions are outlined below:

How do young people experience the imprisonment of a family member?

- What does family mean to this group of young people?
- How does this group of young people experience family – before, during and after their family member is in prison?
- How do these young people deal with the imprisonment of a family member?

Through exploring and trying to answer these questions this research aims to contribute to knowledge on the subjective experiences of young people with a family member in prison. Through the groups of participants who were involved in this research it also aims to widen our understanding of who counts as families of prisoners and, in doing so, suggest potential areas to be explored in future research.

3.3 Theoretical Underpinnings

The design, methods and overall aims shifted during the process of carrying out this PhD, but the underlying epistemological and ontological positions upon which the research is based have not. These positions outline my view of the nature of the social world (ontology) and my consequent view of and approach to knowledge (epistemology).

This research is rooted in a post-positivist or interpretivist school of thought, where there is an emphasis on the *understanding* of human behaviour rather

than an *explanation* of it (Bryman, 2012). This is contrary to the approach of much of the work around children's experiences of parental imprisonment which have instead come from a more positivist, often psychological, standpoint. By employing this approach this research instead aims to move beyond the often pathologising element of research in this area. It also allows a recognition of the multiple realities of participants' experiences of having a family member in prison.

While I reject the positivist viewpoint that there is a singular social reality and that there are facts about it out there that a researcher can come to know, I do not reject the idea that there is a 'reality' out there for these young people which "exist[s] independently of being perceived, or independently of our theories about them" (Phillips, 1987: 205). In order to combine this ontological realism with the epistemological constructivist viewpoint necessary to recognise the existence of multiple subjective realities, this research draws on the critical realist approach associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1989; 2008).

3.3.1.1 Critical Realism

Critical realism underpins this study in the following ways. Firstly, it recognises that the experience of having a family member in prison is in some way socially constructed; multiple realities can exist and there is no single 'truth' out there to be discovered by the researcher during this type of research (Maxwell, 2005). It acknowledges that we understand the world through our social interactions, the meaning-making coming from these interactions and the understandings we develop through our own experiences and from our own position in the world. For example, some young people may not see a family member's imprisonment as significant within their lives but their interactions with teachers or others may result in a sense of stigma borne from these peoples' attitudes towards them. The research design therefore required to be able to explore these discourses and the meaning-making taking place by the young people, while also recognising that behind this there was a tangible 'reality' for them of this experience. Adopting a solely constructivist viewpoint would, to some extent, deny the material structures and impacts of these young people's experiences and also the opportunity, if necessary, to address them.

3.3.1.2 Interactionism

Interactionism developed from the Chicago School of sociologists in the early 20th century. It is a micro-level perspective which focuses on relationships among individuals in a society. It is based on the understanding that social processes come from human interactions and that individuals make meaning in their lives through these interactions rather than simply being acted upon by external forces (Blumer, 1969). This approach is consistent with critical realism due to the latter's recognition of the importance of context in the process of understanding a phenomenon (Sayer, 1992).

Drawing on an interactionist standpoint, as well as that of critical realism, means that to fully understand young people's experiences of having a family member in prison, it is necessary to listen to young people with this experience as they relate and interpret it. This leads on to the use of interviews as a research method, something which is discussed further below.

Goffman's (1959) concept of symbolic interactionism highlights the interview as performance, both by the interviewer and the interviewee. Through this interactive performance meaning is produced, which therefore shapes the meaning of familial imprisonment which is constructed. This is recognised as a limitation to this research, where the knowledge that is co-constructed during this encounter is necessarily dependent on the interview performance underpinning it. The encounter will never be entirely value-free or objective, and nor is it intended to be.

Where interactionism plays a part in the interview itself it will also have played a part in constructing the experiences of familial imprisonment which the young people have gone on to narrate within these interviews. How the young people have made sense of the experiences on which they are reflecting will often depend on how the social interactions to which they have been subject shaped these experiences. For example, they may have been shaped by the reactions and behaviour of parents, friends, teachers or others they have made disclosures to. For those in the YOI, their interactions with prison staff and those they are imprisoned alongside may also have been important.

3.4 Background to the Research Proposal

The original research proposal for this PhD was drafted in collaboration with Vox Liminis, a third sector organisation which was a joint partner, along with Families Outside, in establishing and obtaining funding for the project on which part of this thesis is now based. Vox Liminis is an arts organisation which works with a range of people involved in the criminal justice system, and aims to equip them with the creative tools to express themselves and their experiences with the outcome of engaging in creative conversations and shaping a more just society. Families Outside is a national charity based in Scotland that supports the families of people involved in the criminal justice system.

KIN was designed for up to ten young people aged 14 to 24 who had experienced the imprisonment of a family member. The aim of the project was for the group to "develop tools for communication and peer-support with young people with first-hand experience of familial imprisonment" and to do this in "creative ways (for example through the use of music or art)" (Families Outside / Vox Liminis, 2015). The intention was for these arts "products" to "build understanding, networks and support for other young people in similar situations to themselves" and that the young people would be able to "shape and adapt each stage as it develops" (*ibid.*). Due to this latter point around the role of the young people in shaping the project, the initial research proposal included questions about the extent to which the KIN project facilitated and modelled the co-production of young people's and criminal justice services. It also aimed to consider what could be learned from this project about evolving models of the asset-based co-production of young people's and criminal justice services. This was alongside the research questions outlined above, focusing on the young people's experiences of having a family member in prison, which are now the sole focus of this piece of research. The full set of research questions set out in the initial research proposal are outlined below:

- To what extent does the KIN project facilitate and model the co-production of young people's and criminal justice services and to what extent do young people feel their voices are being heard or silenced in the public debate and conversation regarding issues of imprisonment?

What can be learned from this project about evolving models of asset-based co-production of young people's and criminal justice services?

- How has the imprisonment of a family member affected the life of the young person and what does 'family' now mean for young people affected by imprisonment? What is the lived experience of family, when a family member is in prison?

- How do young people deal with the effects of familial imprisonment, what role has KIN played in this process and other than through the KIN project, does the young person feel that support has been available to deal with the impact of familial imprisonment in their life? What hinders their ability to manage the experience of familial imprisonment?

The shift in focus and research questions is discussed further in Section 3.6 within this chapter.

At the time of submission of the PhD research proposal, and at the point of actually beginning the PhD, KIN was funded for an 18-month period. This covered a 6-month recruitment phase running from April 2015 and the work with the group itself beginning in October 2015 and running through to September 2016. The funding bid was based on running 3 weekend residential sessions and 4 separate one-day sessions over this 12-month period.

3.5 Initial Research Design

3.5.1 Qualitative Methods

A qualitative research design follows from the epistemological standpoint adopted and contrasts with the quantitative (psychological or clinical based) research on children's experiences of familial imprisonment (e.g. Sack et al., 1976; Fritsch and Burkehead, 1981; Murray and Farrington, 2005; Bockneck et al., 2009). As discussed in Chapter 2, these studies have generally focused on the impact of a parent's imprisonment mainly in psychological terms, such as in respect of the impact on behaviour, mental health, antisocial behaviour and risk

of future offending; phenomena that tend to be recorded and analysed in a numerical and quantifiable way. In this research, I wished instead to consider the experiences of the young people who had a parent or sibling in prison in a less pathologising way, fore-fronting their individual experiences and interpretations of them, rather than reducing these experiences to a set of statistics. In fact, Knudsen (2016) specifically cautions against the pathologising of children of prisoners and the risks this can lead to of then trying to implement a one-size-fits-all approach to intervene with this group. Qualitative research instead allows an in-depth focus on the individual experiences of participants, and for them, and their experiences, to be placed at its centre.

Given the original focus of the research proposal, which included the KIN project as well as the young people involved in it, my initial research design set out an ethnographic approach. Participant observation would be carried out at KIN's day and weekend residential sessions of the group along with semi-structured interviews with the young people, staff and artists who were involved in KIN.

The choice of an ethnographic approach reflected the opportunity to become embedded in a community. It afforded the chance to be a part of that community and gain an insight into how the group worked in relation to process and practice, and what light this could shed on both familial imprisonment and co-production. This approach was also consistent with the emancipatory/participatory principles of research where participants are seen as experts in their own situations; they had the experience of what it was like to have a family member in prison. To really allow the research to put these voices at its centre, it was important to be a part of the group, working together with them on the different art-forms, sharing parts of myself and my experiences (though not of familial imprisonment), as they would be sharing theirs with me.

The participant observation was intended to take place at the day and weekend residential sessions of KIN and also to include spending one day a week in the Vox Liminis offices. This element of the initial research design was mainly focused on aspects of the project such as how sessions were organised, how the group participated and communicated with each other and how decisions were taken by the group. Elements contained within the Participant Observation Pro Forma are outlined below:

- Session Design
    - Location of sessions
    - Structure of session
- Participation
    - How people take part and interact
    - How does the session facilitator interact/"lead" the session
- Discussion/Communication during the session
    - Decision making processes
    - Communication of ideas
    - Atmosphere within sessions

This was very much part of the 'co-production' element of the original research questions, with the intention at this point being to explore the artistic and co-productive methods within a project such as this, as well as their impacts on the sharing of the experience of familial imprisonment by the young people. It was also hoped that this would shed new light on experiences of familial imprisonment themselves.

3.6 Changing Research Design

While research plans and design may change and evolve during most research studies, these changes are not always discussed, and neither are the reasons behind them. They are going to be outlined and discussed here to highlight the process that occurred, the decisions that were taken, and why. This will show the potential messiness of research of this kind, but also show that gaps in knowledge are not always identified prior to the research taking place, with research questions then designed to fill the gap. Instead, new questions can be discovered during the research process, sometimes generating a need to reconsider the research design and the original questions.

My decision to make the exploration of young people's experiences of having a family member in prison the focus of my PhD was, in one sense, a pragmatic one. I applied to an open call for a funding scholarship with What Works

Scotland[2] during the second year of a part-time Masters qualification. My motivation for applying to this funding stream was due to the organisation's close links with policy and practice organisations, including local and national government, rather than being a solely academic organisation. My interest in the links between criminal justice and the arts had led me to begin collaborating with Vox Liminis during my Masters. The opportunity to continue this working relationship led me to submit a research proposal based on working with KIN.

As KIN began at the same time as my PhD and was funded at that stage only for a year, my fieldwork began almost immediately after I began the PhD. As a result of this, and in contrast to the 'normal' order of PhD research, I could not carry out a review of the literature in any depth prior to beginning the fieldwork. However, as I became more familiar with the literature in this field, and observed the lack of representation of young people's experiences within it, I became more and more determined to interview more young people than the eight who were part of KIN. This was one influencing factor in the changing research design.

Another factor was the relationship with my partner organisation, which became more difficult and strained over the initial 12-month period spent with KIN. While there are obvious benefits to partnership working, some of which are covered within this chapter, it can also present challenges. There is not the space within this chapter to fully explore these challenges, and what is discussed comes solely from my viewpoint as the researcher, not from the perspective of the partner organisation, but some issues are highlighted here to provide some context to the changing research design.

One of the challenges of working in partnership with anyone is that partnership means different things to different people and different organisations. In hindsight, this is something which should have been discussed and clarified before entering into this working relationship but it was not something which I had thought about at the time. For example, my understanding of partnership

[2] What Works Scotland was a collaborative initiative which researched how local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform (http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/). The initiative was funded from 2014-2019 (ESRC Grant Reference: ES/M003922/1).

was perhaps a more instrumental one where I would work closely along *with* the organisation but not so much as *part* of that organisation as Vox Liminis expected due to their understanding of what they felt would be partnership working. These tensions resulted in my feeling as if I was being pulled into the organisation and a closer working relationship and level of control than I had anticipated while, at the same time, Vox Liminis may have experienced a distancing which they may not have expected from the relationship.

As an academic, working in partnership can also introduce the challenge of working to different timescales or funding deadlines. For example, KIN had a limited funding period when I began working with Vox Liminis of 18 months. As a result of this, and perhaps combined with my lack of pre-existing knowledge and understanding of more practice-related elements, this also resulted in challenges in trying to establish and carry out a close working relationship of this nature.

As a result of the above issues, I moved away from focusing specifically on KIN and including elements of its practice as well as the experience of a family member's imprisonment for the young people who were part of this project. Instead, I refocused my research solely on the latter topic.

Following the decision to alter the research design and questions, I made attempts to recruit additional young people through several routes. This included numerous attempts to seek participants through third sector organisations which were all unsuccessful. I considered trying to recruit through prison visitor centres, though ultimately decided against this for a number of reasons. These included the fact that a number of recent familial imprisonment research projects had recruited in this way (see Chapter 4 for my discussion of the problem of over-studied groups), the low numbers of teenagers visiting prisons, and pragmatic decisions around the time this would take and the stage of the PhD timetable at this point. I made a short video clip outlining the research and its purpose and shared this on social media through Facebook and Twitter. This garnered some interest but did not develop into any interviews.

A suggestion from a contact within 'Positive Prisons? Positive Futures…'[3] resulted in a meeting with the Head of Offender Outcomes within a Young Offenders Institution. Following this, an application was made to recruit participants through this Institution, who as well as having experienced the imprisonment of a family member were also currently serving a sentence themselves.

As far as I am aware, young people in prison themselves are a group that has never been included as participants within familial imprisonment research, with scholarly and policy attention instead exclusively focused on family members on the 'outside'. This is a surprising gap in research since quantitative research has shown high levels of parental imprisonment experiences of those within the youth estate in Scotland (46%) (Robinson, 2018), and the consistent finding of research that young people who have experienced the imprisonment of a father have a much higher probability of going on to offend themselves (Murray and Farrington, 2005).

The inclusion of this second cohort has greatly impacted on the range of themes arising from this research and the direction this thesis has taken.

3.6.1 Semi-structured In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were always part of the original research design, but as I revised the aim of the research to focus solely on the participants' experiences of having a family member in prison, interviews came to take on a more important role in forming the main data on which my analysis would be based. The underlying reasons for this choice of research method, however, remained consistent despite my changing research focus. Seidman (2013: 9) notes: "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience". This is consistent with my overall approach to this research based on a critical realist approach, while also drawing on elements of interactionism.

[3] 'Positive Prisons? Positive Futures…' is a third sector organisation in Scotland whose work is informed and led by people with experience of the justice system. Their aim is the appreciation of people with convictions as citizens and they campaign in this regard.

The choice of semi-structured interviews as my main research method brings in elements of interactionism, where the interview is seen as a way in which the interviewer and the interviewee are able to construct narratives and "generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences" (Silverman, 2001: 87). It is accepted that "research cannot provide the mirror reflection of the social world that positivists strive for, but it may provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds" (Miller and Glassner, 2004: 126).

As I have noted above, in interviews, as in all social interaction, meanings are constructed rather than simply communicated (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014). Holstein and Gubrium (1995) point out that knowledge and meanings are constructed during the interview process rather than simply existing in an interviewee's head ready to be extracted by the interviewer. Paget (1983) referred to the in-depth interview as a "search procedure" (p. 78) where both the participant and the interviewer work together to uncover aspects of the interviewee's experience in which the researcher is interested.

Semi-structured interviews therefore allow a greater freedom for the interviewee to take the interview where they feel is most important compared to more structured forms of enquiry. They are also more consistent with the wish to place the young people at the centre of this research. Within semi-structured interviews it is possible to construct the interviewee in the role of expert by allowing them to lead where the interviews go rather than being led by an entirely pre-determined interview schedule. Though I acknowledge that this 'leading' is done within boundaries, where the wider themes to be covered are still chosen by the interviewer.

Conversely, however, these interviews also allow the interviewer an element of control compared to entirely unstructured interviews, allowing a focusing of the conversation on issues that are relevant to their research and the questions it poses and wishes to explore (Brinkmann, 2018). As I reflect later in the thesis, in response to the data, particularly from the interviews with the young people in the YOI, an initial focus in the interviews on experiences of family more widely (rather than just when a member is in prison) may have been helpful.

Instead, the interviews tended to focus more on the imprisonment and its impact specifically, for example, around aspects of communication with the imprisoned family member, experiences at school of social support, and stigma, rather than the context of the family more widely (see Appendix C for a sample interview guide).

This interview guide was created following attendance at some of the KIN sessions and following some background reading of the familial imprisonment literature. Reflecting on its strengths and weaknesses, the ability to create this guide having spent time with those who had lived experience of familial imprisonment was beneficial. However, as the research continued and evolved it became clear that the members of the KIN group spoke to a specific subset of familial imprisonment experiences, as is captured in much of the literature. It is representative of young people who mainly had good relationships with their family member prior to the imprisonment and who continued to remain in contact during this period. Therefore, the basing of the interview guide (particularly with the young people from the YOI) on the results of these interactions could also be said to be a weakness in some respect. A further weakness could be seen by some through its preparation after only a limited reading of the literature, although given the basis of the analysis within a grounded theory approach, this was essential and could conversely be viewed by others as a strength where pre-determined priorities or focuses did not dominate. Overall, where there were some inherent strengths or weaknesses in the guide, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed these to be mitigated to some extent as the research progressed.

While it could be argued that qualitative interviews generally, and semi-structured interviews in particular, place the participant and their importance at its centre, there are still limitations and elements of a power imbalance in this method which must be acknowledged. In respect of the power relations in interview situations, these can be mediated by the interviewer, both through their behaviour and through practical concerns of location and atmosphere for the interview itself. Despite this, there can still be an underlying power imbalance. The researcher chooses the topic, initiates the interview, poses the questions, follows up on answers and (usually) ends the interview. There is a predominantly one-way dialogue, with the interviewer asking the majority, if

not all, of the questions and the interview does not happen as an event for its own sake but instead is a means to an end of the interviewer gathering data. The interviewer also tends to have a monopoly on the interpretation of the data even if some feedback or sense-checking takes place (Brinkmann, 2018).

Further limitations of interviews, and something which is touched on in other areas of the thesis (see particularly Chapter 4) is the interviewing of people while or because they occupy a particular subject position. For example, the KIN young people took part both as a young person with a family member in prison and as a member of a group exploring this of which I was also a part. There is therefore likely to be an assumption made around my priorities and aims which make, for example, the wider exploration of family or of themes away from the dominant narrative of familial imprisonment more difficult. For those young people who were in a prison themselves, their location and previous experience of being 'interviewed', in whatever form, may again have instilled preconceived ideas of what I required or wished to hear. The construction of an interview as a social situation and performance also introduces limitations into this method as, regardless of the interviewees' ideas of what I may want to hear, the young people could also choose to construct their narratives in specific ways given our interaction (see Chapter 4 for further reflection on this).

Despite these limitations however, the semi-structured interview as a method is still preferable, and more suited to answering the types of research question posed in this study, than a structured interview or survey.

3.6.2 Participant Observation

While observational methods were not used in the manner I had originally envisaged at the start of the research process, they were still used. While they provided some data in and of themselves, they mostly provided material which was drawn on or followed-up on in the interviews with the KIN members. Due to this I will not go into a great deal of detail in respect of the use of this method, but will touch on some of the advantages or limitations which are relevant here.

Firstly, it is important to note that participant observation is more than the observation implied in the title and instead involves the observation of behaviour as well as what is said in conversations between individuals, between

these individuals and the researcher and questions specifically asked by the researcher themselves (Bryman, 2016). There are also different levels of participant/observer and in this case, for a significant period, I played a full part in KIN and all the activities which this involved, though not, of course, from the viewpoint of being a young person with the experience of familial imprisonment but in my own role within the group as a researcher (see below for a full outline of KIN participants in Section 3.9.4).

One advantage of this research method is the ability to build a relationship with participants through the time spent with them which is not possible through interviews alone. A further advantage, which I was able to draw on in the interviews which followed, was aspects of what Bryman (2016) termed "learning the native language" (p. 493). While Bryman spoke of this in respect of learning the slang or words that were used in particular ways in a setting, here I take it also to mean how people choose to talk about experiences (for example the difference between some young people talking about their family member "getting the jail" while others spoke of them "going away"). The unstructured nature of the interactions within a participant observation setting are also more likely to lead to the uncovering of unexpected issues which may be missed where, even though semi-structured interviews are used, they are still based on an interview guide created by the interviewer.

This method does also have its limitations. There is always the possibility that a researcher's attendance within a group changes that group and the interactions of those within it. While I was with KIN from the start of the project, and had a role within the group as the researcher, there is obviously the possibility that had I not been part of the group, the conversations which took place and which I observed would have changed. My role of bringing academic research to the group, particularly during the discussion outlined in Section 3.9.5 below, will necessarily have had an impact on discussions and some of the artistic products which followed from it.

Given the use of recording information from participant observation through fieldnotes rather than audio recording, as tends to happen in interviews, this can also add limitations where it is not possible to capture all the detail within interactions or conversations with participants. Given that this method mainly

formed the basis for my interview preparation however, this was less of a concern within this research as partial notes could act as interview prompts and allow the young people to expand on these aspects if they wished and felt them relevant.

3.7 Grounded Theory

In respect of data analysis, this research design draws on a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1968). I have not followed the exact procedure outlined in this method and instead mean that a continual and iterative process of thematic analysis was undertaken of the interview and observation data obtained during the research, and that this was inductive rather than deductive following a full review of the literature. In line with the interactionist and social constructionist position outlined above, a more constructivist approach to grounded theory was taken, rooted in pragmatism and assuming that data and theories are not simply out there to be discovered by the researcher, but are instead constructed during the interactions between the researcher and their participants, as well as the analyses following these interactions (Charmaz, 2009; Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). A more informed grounded theory approach was also taken, as argued for by Thornberg (2012), where a literature review was not delayed until after the analytical process was completed but was instead engaged in alongside carrying out observations and interviews, and the analysis of the data from these. This has been said to deal with some of the concerns that have been raised around grounded theory from the delay of a full literature review (Charmaz et al., 2018).

The fact that I had completed a thematic analysis of the data gathered while part of KIN, prior to beginning my interviews within the YOI, did frame how I began looking at the data from this second group of interviews. Elements of this procedure are explored in more detail in Chapter 4, with reflections on how the order interviews are carried out -- where different groups of participants are involved in a research project -- can impact on the data gathering and analysis processes and their outcomes.

In line with the inductive, iterative analytical approach, I thematically analysed the interview transcripts as I progressed through my fieldwork and previous

interviews were continually returned to as this process progressed. Therefore, as new themes began to emerge from the YOI-based interviews I returned to the KIN interviews and recommenced the iterative approach to the thematic analysis.

3.8 Who is the Researcher?

Due to the fact that my main research method was interviews and as Riessman (1993: 11) notes, if "[t]he story is being told to particular people; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener", it follows that it is necessary here that I outline my own positionality, so that readers are able to consider the data coming from these interviews in this context.

I am in my mid-thirties, which is at least ten years older than all of the participants I interviewed, and, in some cases, almost twenty. I have not experienced the imprisonment of a family member, nor have I experienced a period of imprisonment myself.

In respect of my positionality in relation to my participants, this differs by group. Five of the eight young people participating in KIN were young women, while all ten of the young people recruited from the YOI were young men. This need not have been the case as young women are also held in separate accommodation at this YOI, but their numbers were so small I was able to recruit only male participants from this setting. In respect of class, this is not something I asked participants to specify, and indeed this is a far less clear-cut classification than it may have been for previous generations. This is not something which is able to be explored further here due to space restrictions but see Dorling (2014) for relevant discussions. If we consider education level as a proxy, three of the participants in KIN were currently enrolled in an undergraduate university course, one had applied at the time of their interview and one had completed undergraduate education and was currently enrolled in a postgraduate course. Most of the group from the YOI spoke of leaving school in their early teens and having limited education. That said, however, it seems appropriate to make it clear that regardless of education, the split between young people in KIN and young people in the YOI was not a simple middle/working class differential.

While we often provide in-depth backgrounds or vignettes for research participants, we do not always do the same for ourselves as researchers, particularly beyond basic comments such as the above on age, gender and class (or along with race depending on relevance for the research). Given the importance of the researcher within the methods I have used, and the importance of context and relational aspects both methodologically and throughout the substantive aspects of my thesis, I will go on to provide more information here. As this research focuses on experiences of family, it seems important to lay out my own experiences of this: I grew up in a household with both of my parents and younger brother, although my parents separated when I was in my early twenties. My previous work experience gave me some insight into the experience of familial imprisonment for some of the children and young people I have come across in this capacity. I have worked for firms of defence solicitors, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration within youth justice and as an administrator and as a criminal intelligence analyst with the Police Service of Scotland (formerly Strathclyde Police) within the Family Protection Unit, Counter Terrorism Intelligence Section and Major Investigation Team. These roles have also trained me to think and write in a far more detached way, where you as the writer are often written *out* rather than *in* to reports I have produced, which is very different to this thesis.

3.9 Research Process

As the initial research design included elements of participant observation, which was not possible with the second group who were based within a prison, the methods used for each group were slightly different. The practicalities of carrying out these methods were also slightly different given the physical location of the participants at the time of the interviews. At this point I think it is important to say that I do not want to, and nor will I, treat these groups as opposing entities whose experiences of a family member's imprisonment and of life always differ and will be compared. There are differences between the groups, however, which impacted on the research methods used and the data which came from them necessitating some comparison (the results of which are explored in more detail in Chapter 4). Where the groups are differentiated in further chapters this is, again, due to different processes involved with the two

groups or to provide context to their experiences. The decision to treat the groups in this way is discussed in greater detail towards the end of this chapter.

3.9.1 Ethics

For the work with KIN, a staged ethical approval was received from the College of Social Sciences Ethics Board at the University of Glasgow. Initial approval was sought and received to carry out participant observation and at a later stage was sought, and again received, to carry out interviews with the young people. For the work carried out with the group of young people in the YOI, ethical approval to carry out interviews was received from both the College of Social Sciences Ethics Board at the University of Glasgow and the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) Research Access and Ethics Committee.

There were different sets of practical ethical considerations which arose with each group. With KIN, this included the need for a continual awareness during the lengthy period spent with the group that there was the potential for the young people to forget that I was a researcher and taking notes at sessions which may eventually appear in my research. Reminding them of my role during sessions, either through talking about this or even my behaviour, was one way to address this. As the research design evolved, this became less of a concern as the fieldnotes and participant observation began to take on less importance than the data from interviews. In respect of this however, there was also the potential that after spending a significant period of time with a group then this relationship could influence their agreement to be interviewed and how they participated in interviews. This, again, is something which I was conscious of, and attempted to address during conversations with the young people prior to arranging an interview.

Where the research took place in the YOI, this included a consideration of the provision of informed consent by the young people in the context of them being within a YOI and therefore having the ‘power’ to say no to being interviewed. This was considered particularly in the context of them being asked about potential participation by a youth worker, with whom it was assumed they would have some kind of relationship. Though this may be different to being asked by a member of SPS staff (youth work is provided by a third sector organisation), it

was still a necessary consideration. I dealt with this by ensuring I explained the concept of informed consent with each participant prior to the interview beginning, but also by recognising that the participants have a level of autonomy and are able to exercise this despite a potential power imbalance introduced through gatekeepers. This means accepting their autonomy and agency rather than automatically assuming that their position within a prison means they are unable to decide for themselves whether, or why, to be part of research.

3.9.2 Recruitment

Gatekeepers were involved in the recruitment of both groups of young people. I recruited the young people who were part of KIN through their involvement with this project. The recruiting of the young people to be part of KIN itself had already taken six months, prior to my involvement with them. This illustrates some of the difficulties of recruiting young people from what has been termed a 'hidden population' (e.g. Morgan et al., 2013; Wray, 2015) due to their lack of official identification or inclusion in official statistics. KIN is a joint project between Vox Liminis and Families Outside, both organisations which work in the area of criminal justice. Vox Liminis' Director and Manager both have qualifications and/or prior experience of youth work and community development so this is not an area with which they were unfamiliar. There was also a project worker employed two days a week during the recruitment phase of KIN. Despite this, the full six-month period was required to recruit the initial seven young people who attended at the first residential session.

Recruitment of the second group of young people took place through a youth worker within the YOI. I met with the youth worker to explain the purposes and criteria for recruitment to the research and provided her with copies of the relevant Information Sheet (Appendix A) and Consent Form (Appendix B) to be passed on to anyone she identified as being interested in taking part in the research prior to myself coming in and carrying out the interviews. I outlined the purpose of the research as looking at young people's experiences of having a family member in prison and stated that this did not need to be a current experience. On reflection, I should have clarified that while their parent or sibling did not need to currently be serving a period of imprisonment, the research was aiming to find out what it was like for young people to experience

this, so the parent or sibling should have been in prison during their teenage years or early 20s. The result of this was that one participant, while currently qualifying as a young person, was only able to speak about their experience of the imprisonment of their parent while they were very young. Due to the relevance of some of his comments to discussions which appear in this thesis, the reflections of other participants on their earlier experiences and a wish to place the experiences, as told, by the participants at the centre of the research, as well as recognising the importance of their contributions, this participant's data is included in the thesis and the analysis on which it is based.

A benefit of recruiting participants through gatekeepers is, as in both cases above, that there was some reassurance, for myself as the researcher, and for participants, that there was someone who could provide support for the young people following their participation in the research if it was required. There can also be issues with gatekeeper recruitment however, and these are explored in Chapter 4.

3.9.3 Anonymity/Confidentiality

A position was taken on the initial ethics application to use pseudonyms for all the research participants, perhaps a default position for this kind of research where a sensitive subject is being discussed. Discussions took place during the KIN sessions, however, around the importance for this group of young people of challenging the stigma attached to having a family member in prison and the importance of owning your own story and experience rather than being ashamed of it. During the period I worked with KIN, the group also released a film which was available on YouTube with members being shown and the group members' names appearing in the credits. The group's names also featured on other KIN artistic products, with some members also appearing in print media and in radio interviews as well as at the public launch of the products. Due to this, the time spent with these young people, and the involvement of Vox Liminis in conversations with them around the potential consequences of identification as part of their involvement in KIN, a decision was taken to allow the young people to choose whether to use their own name or a pseudonym in my research. An amendment to my initial ethics application was applied for in respect of this and was approved. Further discussion and reflection on this decision, and the

contrast with the decisions made around pseudonym use for the group of young people within the YOI (who were not given the option to use their own name), is contained within Chapter 4.

A pseudonym was also created for the Young Offenders Institution (Glenview) from within which the second group of young people were recruited. Due to the size of Scotland there is only one YOI and anyone working within this area in Scotland, or familiar with their prison system, will be able to identify this location, with or without a pseudonym. In anticipation of the thesis, or work coming from it, being read by those outwith Scotland, or unfamiliar with their prison estate, however, it has been given a pseudonym. This became more important when I made the decision to identify which group the young person was part of when including any quotes from them, as including the 'name' of the YOI seemed less impersonal than simply including YOI after the participant's name.

A limited offer of anonymity and confidentiality was explained to the young people in both groups prior to their consent being obtained. Tolich (2014) defined two different kinds of confidentiality, internal and external, and argued that both must be accounted for by the researcher. He spoke of external confidentiality being the "traditional confidentiality where the researcher acknowledges they know what the person said but promises not to identify them in the final report" (p.101). This would involve the use of pseudonyms or the removal of identifying features from their stories. He also outlines the aspects of internal confidentiality however, "the ability for research subjects involved in the study to identify each other in the final publication of the research" (p. 101). This could apply to my research where the young people in KIN may have been able to identify each other, as could those who had worked with them on the project, whether a pseudonym was used or not. Similarly, for those in the YOI, their stories and experiences may still have been recognisable to those who worked with them in the prison.

A limited offer of confidentiality was also given in line with standard promises of confidentiality in respect of disclosures which gave me concern for either their own or another's safety. It was agreed that I would disclose this either to staff at Vox Liminis for those in KIN or to my contact in youth work at the YOI in the

first instance, if appropriate, and preferably with the young person's agreement or joint negotiation, following the interview. This was not needed and did not occur in any of the interviews which were carried out.

3.9.4 Participant Observation

This method only took place with the young people from KIN. Information Sheets[4] and Consent Forms[5] were discussed with the group at one of the sessions with an opportunity to ask questions at that time. An emphasis was placed on ensuring that participants knew that they could withdraw their consent at any time. These consent forms referred only to the participant observation element of the research.

Over a 16-month period from October 2015 to February 2017, which became the first phase of KIN and culminated in a launch event for their art products held in January 2017, the group met over two evening sessions, six day-long sessions and five weekend residential sessions. Of these, four one-day and five weekend residential sessions were covered under my ethical approval to carry out participant observation. While the majority of time was spent working on the art-form(s) for that session, there were also other activities held over the weekend residential sessions including walks, quizzes and watching films as well as the whole group eating their meals together. I took a full participatory role in the sessions, producing art along with the young people as well as taking part in the general routine (eating and taking breaks together) and any other activities which were taking place.

As well as the young people, KIN was also made up of a project leader, who was employed by Vox Liminis, the KIN project manager from Vox Liminis, a support worker for one of the young people and a variety of artists who worked with the group during this period including a writer, performance artist, illustrator, film maker, interactive theatre workers, a sound recordist, photographer and visual artist.

[4] Copy of Participant Observation Information Sheet can be made available on request.

[5] Copy of Participation Observation Consent Form can be made available on request.

Due to the initial 18-month funding limit period of the KIN project, I began working with the project at almost exactly the same time as I began the PhD, with the first meeting of the group taking place on 3rd October 2015, less than a month after formally beginning the doctoral programme. The initial ethics application was written in the first two months of my PhD and ethical approval was granted in early January 2016, with the first weekend residential session taking place from the 15th to 17th of January 2016. At this point, I had already attended two day-long sessions and two evening session meetings during which I simply participated in the activities along with the rest of the group, getting to know them but not collecting data. I also had the opportunity to introduce myself to the group and explain what my research involved. I spoke about in what capacity I would be working with KIN and attending sessions, and about how I would like to involve the members of the group in my research in the future, for example through carrying out interviews with them.

Fieldnotes were taken at all of the KIN sessions for which ethical approval had been granted to carry out participant observation. What have been termed jotted or scratch notes were taken during these sessions involving noting themes, key words or phrases on a note-taking app on my mobile phone (Loftland and Loftland, 1995). I decided to use this initial method of note-taking as there would be no breaks during the day sessions which would afford the opportunity to take written notes and this was also true during the weekend residential sessions, where the only opportunity to write-up more extensive notes would be prior to going to bed around 10:30/11pm. To take longer written notes during the sessions would have been distracting and intrusive and the use of a mobile phone was not unusual as other members of KIN were also using their phones during these sessions. This collection of shorter notes were then turned into full fieldnotes at the end of the day during the weekend residential sessions, or on my return home after the day sessions, based on the contemporaneous shorter notes taken on my mobile phone. Some detail may have been lost due to using this method of note taking, however I felt it to be the best and least intrusive method. Due to the nature of the sessions where the group were not always working together and in one space, I recognise that my field notes will not cover everything but are limited to those activities and interactions for which I was present.

As the research design began to evolve, and re-orient towards a focus more directly on considering the experience of having a family member in prison, rather than a focus on the practice of KIN itself, so did the focus of the participant observation and ultimately the use of the data from this method. I took fieldnotes throughout my attendance at the KIN sessions, however these moved away from thoughts and reflections around ideas of process and practice and instead became observations around what sorts of experiences of familial imprisonment were shared and constructed within KIN. These came from discussions the group had with the artists prior to beginning any work so that there was a context to the art, as well as less formal 'chats' the young people had with each other or with me during the time I spent with them.

These observations were not of the young people's 'everyday lives' in respect of their experiences of familial imprisonment (for example at home with their family, with their friends, or visiting at a prison) but instead were of what it is like to be part of a project that creates art around this experience. Some of the young people involved in KIN no longer had a family member in prison, so even my observations at the KIN sessions were not of someone who is currently living with this experience, although it could be argued, with support from existing research (Foster, 2017), that the impact and effects of familial imprisonment do not cease when the sentence ends and the family member is released. Even in respect of the conversations and discussions with the artists or during the work being carried out during KIN sessions, these were not casual and spontaneous outpourings on diverse topics but generally arose from being asked about the experience of familial imprisonment, capturing the forming of a narrative around this experience. In this way, they were similar to the interviews which I carried out later with the young people.

The notes and reflections from this participant observation ultimately became not a principal source of data in their own right but rather the basis of preparation for my in-depth interviews with the KIN young people. They were also a basis for seeking out particular literature from the field of familial imprisonment research which seemed relevant to the experiences which they were recounting. This process of seeking out relevant literature based on topics raised by the young people during KIN sessions formed the basis for a discussion

with the young people at a residential session which, in turn, became a data source in itself, as is outlined below.

3.9.5 Discussion of Literature

Again, this form of data applies only to the young people from KIN. As part of my participant observation and something which forms a data strand in itself, I presented some of the relevant academic literature and it was subsequently discussed by the group. Due to my position as a researcher and with my knowledge of the academic literature being one area of my specific expertise that I brought to the group, this discussion was something which was negotiated as part of my being a member of the group. It did not take place solely to allow me to 'gather' data (although data from this discussion does feature within this thesis). Instead, it was to allow the young people to engage in some of the familial imprisonment discussions which were already taking place, enabling them in some way to respond to and feed into these, and for me to begin to integrate my research and experience with that of KIN and its practice.

This discussion happened prior to the artistic work taking place over the rest of the weekend, which at this point involved creating a set of audio experiences. I was given an hour slot to present and discuss some of the themes and topics which were coming from what the young people had discussed in previous sessions, along with elements of the academic literature which linked in to these topics. I introduced the concepts of 'ambiguous loss' and 'boundary ambiguity theory', role reversal and power changes in relationships, 'secondary prisonisation' and stigmatisation. I firstly explained what the young people had said previously which linked in to this academic literature, gave a short summary of the concepts and terms, and then allowed the group to respond with their own thoughts and reflections around these concepts. These responses included discussions of what they felt about these concepts, whether they resonated with their own experiences as well as noting differences and how they would interpret them. This discussion formed a data source in itself and provided data on which future interviews might expand.

3.9.6 Interviews

I carried out semi-structured interviews with seven of the eight young people who were consistently involved with KIN over its first 12-18 months. These took place between 13 and 16 months after KIN had begun. While the same themed questions around familial imprisonment were asked of both groups (see Appendix C for the Interview Guide), the format of the interview itself did differ.

With KIN, the interview plan, which was discussed with the young people prior to arranging the interview, included the option for them to tell stories in whatever way they felt illustrated the most important aspects of their experience of having a family member in prison. I had also chosen a selection of images based on themes which had arisen from discussions during KIN which could be used to initiate discussions. These images were chosen based on searches on a free image website (www.freeimages.com) for key words which came from discussions during the KIN sessions (e.g. school, communication, family, visiting, secrecy/masks, identity). None of the young people used this image-based method to tell their story and instead simply spoke about their experience and allowed me to ask questions around certain aspects as they went through.

My decision to include this arts-based option for the interviews was driven partly by the fact that KIN was a project which explored the young people's experiences through the use of different art forms, and also because Vox Liminis is an organisation which uses the creative arts to encourage more creative conversations. On reflection, while the young people had chosen to be part of a project through which they engaged in a variety of art forms, in which I also took a full part with them, I think they saw the interviews and my research as separate to this and instead were happy to take part in a 'standard' interview. Again, where creative or arts-based methods have been used, or advocated, in research on difficult or sensitive topics, while this was in theory the case here, my prior, and lengthy relationship with the young people, as well as their decision to participate in a project, KIN, which specifically explored this experience may have made this less relevant in this case. The interviews also contained a section on the young people's experiences of, and thoughts around, the KIN project itself. While I was no longer going to be using this data in my

thesis it was useful for my partner organisation, and I used it while writing their organisational report based on this research.

Both groups of participants were given a copy of the Information Sheet (see Appendix A for sample version) and Consent Form (see Appendix B for sample version) prior to the interview. I went over these with the young people before the interview and at this point an opportunity to ask questions was provided. The consent forms were signed prior to the interview taking place but consent was also confirmed at the end of the interview where the young people were then aware of what they had spoken about and what information they were actually consenting to being used.

The young people in KIN were given a choice of where the interview could take place. One chose the university at which I am a student and with which they were familiar; one came to another university at which I was able to book a room and was closer to where they stayed; one chose a room within the university at which they study; I interviewed one at the offices of Vox Liminis; two within a space we had attended for one of the KIN sessions; and one within a space at the organisation they were receiving support and accommodation from.

The interviews with the young men in the YOI took place in a private space within the youth work area of the prison. While the room itself and its layout, with a table and chairs, was not markedly different from the rooms in which the KIN interviews took place, they were restricted to taking place within this room, or at least on prison premises. There were also restrictions around the participants having to be brought to the interview by a prison officer at allotted times, and taken away, again at allotted times which fitted into the prison regime of routes (the transporting of prisoners from area to area for lunch, dinner, etc.). This had some impact on timings of interviews, particularly in one case where had the interview taken place outside of this regime it could have continued, but instead was ended prematurely as the prison officer had to take the individual away at a certain time. While it may have been possible to try and rearrange a further interview with this participant, when working with a prison to recruit participants there is a power imbalance, particularly as a PhD researcher, where there can be a pressure felt to ‘fit in’ with the prison regime

in order to continue to have access. There is a more detailed reflection on some of these elements contained in the following chapter.

The average length of the interviews varied between the groups, being around 1-2 hours for those in KIN and 30-60 minutes for those carried out in the YOI. I carried out short follow-up interviews of around 5-10 minutes with two participants in the YOI to clarify points upon which I had not elaborated in their first interview. These took place in the same location and took place on a date I had returned to to carry out further interviews and these participants were also available and happy to speak to me again. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

3.9.7 Data Analysis

Each interview (and the literature discussion) was fully transcribed verbatim using the dialect of the participant to try and ensure it retained the personality and content of the spoken word as much as possible. For the Scottish participants, this verbatim transcription has resulted in phrases such as “do you know what I mean” and “like” which are used frequently either at the end of, or throughout sentences. These words or phrases could be seen as ‘verbal tics’ in the Scottish language. In some cases, they could be read as a pause when someone was thinking or an indication of nerves but should not automatically be viewed in this way. Instead they are often just used in everyday conversational dialect in certain areas of Scotland.

To allow the reader to have an understanding of the context in which some of the comments were made, descriptions such as “laughs / laughing” were included in brackets at the appropriate point in the text. Where a participant has trailed off, not completing their thought and then switching subject the punctuation “-,” was used to show this within the interview transcripts. This has also been used within quotes showing conversational exchanges within the thesis where either myself or the young person has trailed off or commented over the other to show where this has occurred.

The interviews, and literature discussion, were transcribed as soon after they took place as was practically possible. This allowed me to transcribe with the physical interview or discussion experience still fresh in my memory. A manual

coding of the data was then carried out drawing on the use of a grounded theory approach as outlined above. I decided to use manual coding rather than NVivo as the small numbers allowed this to be a practical possibility and I felt it enabled me to stay closer to the data than when I had coded using this software previously. I firstly read the interview transcript without making notes before reading it again with 'emergent' themes (Charmaz, 2006) in mind. Initially the interviews were coded in respect of themes which had arisen during discussions at previous KIN sessions (as these were the first group of interviews I carried out) as well as those which came from the data within the interviews themselves. I then read the interviews again in more detail, adding notes around sections which I had highlighted based on identified over-arching themes (e.g. loss/absence, communication, siblings, young person specific, time, space, distance/closeness). These notes contained elaborations, thoughts or questions around the themes and broke them down into sub-themes where this was relevant.

As I carried out further interviews the coding became a continual iterative process where, as new themes were identified, the previous interviews were re-read and re-coded, with this process continuing until all the interviews had been completed. While this analytical process was not truly objective, as none is able to be, with themes from the reading I had done or discussions which had taken place during KIN likely to have influenced which themes I was more attuned to, the theory which has come from this research has been driven by the data and this method of analysis has allowed this process to take place.

On completion of the interviews with the young people in KIN a research report was produced for Vox Liminis. This was sent to the organisation as well as all the young people who had taken part in the research. I also attended at a session where three of the young people who had participated in the interviews, one further young person who had subsequently joined KIN, and two members of staff from Vox Liminis were present. I gave an overview of the key findings of my research so far and offered the participants the chance to respond to these findings. This feedback offered an opportunity to sense-check my findings from this initial phase of the research. This process did not take place with the young people from the YOI.

3.9.8 Art Forms

Over the 16-month period of the first phase of the project, KIN worked with a variety of artists. As well as producing individual pieces of writing across the sessions the group also produced three final products: a film “First Words”; a range of audio pieces known as the “Golden Thread”; and a visual hard copy ‘zine titled “The Thing”. These products are now publicly available, launched at an event in January 2017.

It is important to note that the purpose of these art forms was separate to my PhD research. This is in comparison to researchers who employ creative methods themselves in order to elicit data specifically in response to their own research questions or particular interests. The art forms produced by KIN, while coming from an exploration of familial imprisonment, the focus of my own research, were designed to begin conversations around the topic, to be created collectively and then provoke thought and consideration from others rather than to ‘talk’ directly about individual experiences.

This creative process brought with it benefits and challenges for my own PhD research process. On the one hand, these creative processes allowed the young people to explore their experiences in ways which a straightforward interview or discussion of a topic do not. The opportunity to explore a topic in more abstract ways can allow a deeper level of reflection and expression, particularly for people who are naturally more creative and less verbal in their expression. On the other hand, however, this abstract way of thinking does not suit everyone, with one participant in KIN specifically mentioning this. As a researcher, it was also difficult for me to conceptualise how I could use the ‘data’ within some of the art forms, which were oblique at times, compared to what I could say using more direct interview data. Ultimately, I made the decision not to include the art forms as data in and of themselves, though I did ask the young people about them in their interviews. This split between my interviews with the young people and their creative work with KIN is perhaps less problematic than it may have been as the young people seemed to view these as different processes despite my involvement with them in KIN.

3.10 Introduction to the Young People

This section introduces the 18 young people who were part of my research, 17 of whom were interviewed. In line with the aim of my research to explore the experiences of the young people and to forefront them as individuals, something which was reinforced as the research unfolded, it provides a little background information about who they are as people. This is taken from conversations I had with them, as well as an outline of which of their family members have experienced imprisonment. In other sections of this thesis, I may refer to other elements of their family life which become significant, but it is important to note that this is based on the disclosures the young people made and will never provide a full and rounded picture of either the young people or their experiences.

The introductions are listed in alphabetical order as the intention was not to differentiate between the groups, and instead to see them all as young people with the experience of a family member's imprisonment. This differentiation or bringing together of the participants and their experiences is something I have struggled with during the analysis and writing up of this research. While my original intention had been to see the group as one, the differences in their experiences, and in their situations when being interviewed meant that at some points a distinction had to be made to explore themes arising from the data adequately. The result of this is that, following completion of my draft findings chapters, I took the decision to distinguish between which group the young person was part of when including quotes from them. This decision was taken after balancing the wish not to treat the group who were inside a prison differently from those who were not, with the potential for losing key contextual information if it were not included. The importance of context runs throughout my thesis and therefore to fail to provide this aspect to the reader in respect of this seemed incongruous.

Due to the nature of this research and difficulties in recruitment there was no targeted recruitment to ensure a split of male and female participants, or of experiences of imprisonment across a range of family members. Instead pragmatic recruitment has involved a split of 5 female and 13 male participants, aged between 16 and 25 who had, amongst them, experienced the imprisonment

of a father, step-father, mother or brother (primarily) but also, peripherally, uncles, aunts and grandparents.

Amie

Amie is 22 years old and training to be a primary school teacher. She loves Harry Potter and faeries. She's learning to speak Gaelic and has completed a wilderness survival course. She's planning on writing a book one day. Her brother went to prison when she was 13. He was released when she was 19 but was sentenced again when she was in her early twenties and says that nothing much about the experience of being the family member of someone in prison has changed in that time.

Chris

Chris is 20 years old and is a big fan of Call of Duty. He has been involved in organising football tournaments and is working as an ambassador at a Year of the Young People event in 2018. He has studied joinery and just needs to complete his apprenticeship to gain his qualification. His brother, Craig, has been in and out of prison since Craig was in his late teens.

Darren

Darren is 20 years old. His dad is currently serving a prison sentence.

Declan

Declan is 17 years old. He's sociable and has a group of friends that he goes about with. When he's not with them he's usually in his room playing on the computer. His brother, father and mother have all served prison sentences; his parents when he was younger and his brother while Declan was in his teens.

Dylan

Dylan is 25 years old and is studying art and design. He works part time while studying and is also involved in lots of his own projects like organising club nights and design work. His dad was in and out of prison for most of Dylan's childhood and teenage years.

Grant

Grant is 20 years old and does bricklaying. He has two years of his apprenticeship still to go until he is qualified. His step-dad went to prison when Grant was in his early teens and is serving another sentence at the moment.

Jay

Jay is 21 years old and is a big music fan who listens to anything. He used to be more into dance music but now lists Ed Sheeran as one of his favourites. He's been to lots of music festivals both in the UK and in Europe. His dad was in prison when he was younger and his grandad is currently serving a sentence.

John

John is 20 years old and has been working on a project training stray dogs so that they can be rehomed. Although he has worked with dogs he is more of a cat person, with ragdolls a particular favourite breed. His brother, James, has been in and out of prison a few times during James' late teens.

Kev

Kev is 21 years old and works for the council. He plays guitar and sings and has played at open mic nights, charity events and even at a wedding. He recently passed his driving test and now has his own car. His dad was in prison for four years when he was a teenager but was released five years ago and is now working with young people to stop them going down the path he did.

Liam

Liam is 18 years old and studied horticulture at college. He is about to become an uncle for the second time and is looking forward to helping out with his new niece or nephew. His dad was in and out of prison throughout Liam's life and his brother served a couple of sentences while Liam was in his teens.

Lily

Lily is 18 years old and waiting to find out which course she has got into at university. She wants to study psychology. She works part-time and volunteers at a school. She sings and plays the piano. Her dad was in prison from when she was six to sixteen and he passed away a year after he was released.

Michael

Michael is 20 years old and is going to become a father this year. One of the standout Christmas presents he remembers getting when he was younger was a golf set. His mum went to prison for four years when he was four.

Morven

Morven is 20 years old and studied geography and politics at university. She plays chess and used to play football when she was younger. She is waiting to find out if she has an apprenticeship she applied for. Her brother went to prison when she was 12. He served a few short sentences up until she was 17.

Natalia

Natalia is 21 years old and is studying history at university. She loves to travel and has visited 5 continents on her travels so far. She used to cycle when she was younger and may one day cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats. Her dad went to prison when she was 16 and he is currently still serving his sentence.

Riley

Riley is 16 years old and has musical knowledge that will rival Sam's. Her dad is still in prison serving a long-term sentence.

Ryan

Ryan is 17 years old and a big movie fan. His favourite film is Need for Speed. His dad has been in and out of prison throughout his life and is inside at the moment.

Sam

Sam is 20 years old and is going to be moving in to a new flat soon. He loves music and playing computer games. He keeps bags of memory items of things he's done in life. His mum and dad both served prison sentences when he was younger.

Scott

Scott is 17 years old. He used to play for a football academy team until he broke both his ankles and was told he could no longer play at that level. He still follows the football team from where he grew up and also went to games of the local team when he moved to a new area. His brother has been in and out of prison since Scott was around 8 and is currently serving a prison sentence.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the methods used to generate the data on which this thesis is based, as well as an introduction to the young people whose stories and experiences are drawn on throughout the following chapters. The next chapter reflects on the use of these methods and considers in greater detail the implications of the decisions made during the research. This includes aspects of working with a partner organisation; recruitment and over-researching of certain populations; the impact of situational or temporal location on narrative; and the different methods and experiences of interviewing the two groups of participants.

4 Chapter 4 – Reflections on Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and reflects on the methods and methodology which form the basis of this PhD. I decided to include these in a chapter separate from the philosophical and practical elements of the research methods (see Chapter 3), due to the often complex nature of discussions of actually *doing* research. These are often overlooked within theses or academic articles. The messiness of social research (Naveed et al., 2017) tends to be written out and there is no in-depth exploration of the potential impact of the methods used, and decisions made, on the research itself through the data which they produce. The decision to place these discussions and reflections in a separate, more substantial, chapter is an effort to address this common omission.

The chapter will firstly consider the differences between the two groups of participants, from KIN and Glenview Young Offenders Institution (YOI). It will consider elements such as the relationship between the researcher and the participants; the location where the interviews took place; the impact of both the KIN young people and myself being part of KIN (a project specifically looking at the experience of having a family member in prison); and the elements of power in play around who can choose to be named or to use a pseudonym within research. It will then go on to explore the impact of location on narrative. It will consider the physical or situational location of the participants and their location in time, i.e. their temporal distance from the event which they are discussing. Finally, the chapter will explore aspects of recruitment and over-research within certain groups in reference to both KIN and the young people within Glenview YOI.

4.2 KIN vs Glenview YOI

As was outlined in Chapter 3, two distinct groups of participants took part in this research. The first were a group of eight young people aged 16 to 25 who were part of KIN, an arts collective exploring the experience of familial imprisonment using creative methods. Over the 22-month period that I was part of KIN, the sessions were attended by nine young people (though not every member of the

group attended each one and one member attended only one session and is not included in this research). The second were a group of ten young people aged 17 to 21 who, as well as experiencing the imprisonment of a family member, were currently serving a sentence themselves within a YOI. This thesis was not, and is not, designed to be a comparative study and does not treat the two groups of participants and their experiences in this way. There are, however, differences between the groups and between my forms of engagement with them, which must be explored due to the potential impacts these differences may have had on the interviews and data coming from them.

4.2.1 Insider/Outsider

My relationships with these two groups of participants were very different. With the young people who were part of KIN, I spent at least 12 months as part of the group prior to carrying out interviews. I would see the young people around once a month for a full day or weekend. On weekend residential sessions we would spend the whole day together and I took a full part in all activities along with them. With the young people in Glenview, I met them as I was walking into the interview room. As I reflected on in Chapter 3, these different opportunities to build a relationship raised different issues around informed consent and also had an impact on the interviews as events in themselves, as well as on the data which eventually came from them.

While carrying out the research I considered and reflected upon my insider/outsider positionality. Earlier in the research process these reflections came from a more ethnographic angle given my initial research design. Even when the study changed to focus more on interviews as a method however, positionality was still a salient consideration. In respect of my time with KIN, I began by considering myself as an outsider as I do not, and have never had, a family member in prison. As I began to carry out the interviews however, I reflected back on this. After spending at least 12 months as part of KIN prior to carrying out the interviews, I was, in some aspects, an insider; part of the KIN community. This duality of status is consistent with Couture et al.'s (2012) positioning of insider/outsider status as something which is fluid rather than a fixed binary position, assumed at the outset and retained at all points in the research process.

At various times during the research with KIN participants, and depending on who I was interviewing, I had elements of an insider status. For example, where I shared with one interviewee gender and an understanding of being a “daddy’s girl”; while I shared with another a similar educational experience where both of us knew what it was like to carry out research or undertake a postgraduate qualification; or simply where we were both part of KIN. Sometimes, however, I moved back to being an outsider: where I had not shared the experience of having a family member in prison; where I was not a ‘young person’; where my gender did not allow me an insider status. This fluid movement between statuses changed the dynamics of each of the interviews as we shared and diverged on characteristics individually.

With the Glenview participants, my status rarely moved from that of ‘outsider’, where my age, gender, life experiences and non-detention all tended to place me apart from these young people. A researcher’s insider status was noted by Dwyer and Buckle (2009) as being able to ease information sharing, where it prompted a greater willingness or ability of the participant to share information. Conversely, they also noted it had the ability to hinder information sharing, where a level of understanding by the researcher was assumed and consequently further explanation was not provided by participants. In both these cases however, the simple dynamics of a relationship can also play a part. As discussed in Chapter 3, qualitative research is necessarily based on relationships and, as in all of life, people get on with or understand some better than others. Therefore, the ease of information sharing is not solely dependent on the insider/outsider status, and that status is not static.

One specific element of my ‘insider’ status which impacted on all of the KIN interviews and the data which came from them, was my being part of the KIN community. This meant that there was some connection between myself and my interviewees which I would otherwise not have had, for example if interviews had been the only method of research. Had I recruited participants ‘cold’, without having built up relationships for over a year, I may have been able to meet with the participants, chat with them and explain my research, but I would not have spent weekends away, sharing meals, accommodation, working and socialising together. Reflecting back on the building of this KIN community, I

realise that the richness contained within my interviews and the data in this thesis could not have come without the year of KIN before them.

The interviews with the young people from KIN were all between an hour and two and a quarter hours long. A practical advantage of having this kind of connection with the young people in KIN was that this time contained little 'rapport building' at the beginning or 'winding down' at the end of the interview (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Almost all of the interviews were spent talking in-depth about their very personal experiences. While there was time spent 'catching up' prior to the interview beginning and 'rounding off' at the end, the purpose of these was neither to prepare for more emotional aspects nor to recover from them.

The fact I had had the opportunity to build relationships with this group of young people also resulted in them offering different, and arguably richer, information than had I interviewed them without this background. This is borne out through comments made by one participant who had been interviewed before on the same subject by another PhD researcher, with whom she had not had the opportunity of spending an extended period of time prior to being spoken to. She noted that the relational aspect of the interview, the stories themselves, and the way she told them were different due to the time I had spent with her as part of KIN:

> **Natalia**: So, yeah, so, sorry this isn't my first interview (laughs).
> **Kirsty**: It's fine, it's a very hot topic! I think, I have a feeling, yeah, it's a shame, 'cause there is that thing of you kind of feel like you're asking the same people the same questions.
> **Natalia**: But the thing is, no, but it's different though, 'cause I feel like, 'cause I've known you.
> **Kirsty**: Yeah.
> **Natalia**: It's, like, I feel like I can, I am telling you more just naturally because I know you, whereas this other woman I didn't really know her so I didn't really speak that much…

This insider/outsider status can also potentially have an impact throughout the research process, including at the dissemination stage. Where the researcher has

a continuing association with participants, and will be returning to them with any reports that have been written, there can be an awareness of how much, or how little, each participant features in the report. While it is natural, and to be expected, that each interview is different and will contain different levels of information which is ultimately used, particularly depending on the dominant themes arising within the research, this aspect of research dissemination is something which should be, but is often not considered. Where I had an established and continuing connection with participants, I was much more aware of what it may mean for them to have given up their time and opened up to me but then fail to see themselves in any final reports or research dissemination. This is obviously something which can be managed, but may not be considered within insider/outsider research discussions. The fact I had a continuing relationship with these participants also heightened my awareness as to how I was representing them, and potentially their families, and their stories within my research. For example, I struggled with how to write about other issues within their family lives, such as a parent's substance or alcohol misuse. This was not the substantive topic which they may have felt the research was about but increasingly became important to the related themes which were arising from the interviews. It appeared to be a much more sensitive topic for some of the young people than their family member's imprisonment, and how to portray these experiences, which are also socially stigmatised, in any dissemination documents was influenced by my relationship with the participants in KIN particularly.

4.2.2 Being Part of KIN

As well as my being part of KIN allowing the building of a relationship with participants, the young people's being part of KIN may also have impacted on the stories told within the interviews. KIN was a group where those involved explored a family member's imprisonment using creative methods. While the exploration of this experience perhaps took place in more abstract ways in KIN than during my interviews, there is the possibility that narratives were formed during KIN which the participants would not have created, or told in that way, had they been interviewed prior to their joining. While literature exists which considers elements of collective action (see Jasper, 1997; Johnston et al., 1994),

as well as the formation of a collective identity (see Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Valocchi, 2009), there is little that reflects on the potential impact these experiences may have had on subsequent interviews with participants of these groups.

The young people in KIN had spent a lengthy period considering familial imprisonment in various ways prior to being interviewed. They had chosen to be part of KIN, a project specifically set up to consider and share these experiences. As such, this self-selecting sample is perhaps less likely to comprise of those who felt that their family member's imprisonment had *not* affected them, leading to certain kinds of narratives being more likely to come from this set of interviews. One participant in particular, Kev, reflected at one of the KIN sessions that he had not spoken about how he felt when his dad was in prison when he was younger, he would just say he was fine when asked and did not think it was that bad at the time (when he was in it) but does now when he looks back on it. This offers the possibility that the narrative he would have told at the time of living this experience is different to its framing in the interview now. This location in time in respect of interviewing is explored further below, but is noted here with reference to the particular impact of being part of KIN, which focused specifically on familial imprisonment, on the framing of the young people's narratives when subsequently interviewed.

Having spent at least 12 months as part of KIN prior to being interviewed, the young people had been involved in thinking about their own, and others', experiences over this period of time. KIN was described by the young people themselves as an arts "collective", and as such the art forms they created reflect this collective experience, rather than simply being an amalgamation of a group of individual stories. There may, again, be the potential that the telling of these individual stories in the interviews was influenced by the growing collective experience, priorities and focus that formed over the duration of KIN.

Another potential influence comes from my own role within the group. As outlined in Chapter 3, I led a literature discussion at one of the sessions where I reflected areas of academic and research interest to the group. While I built this literature discussion around themes coming from the young people themselves during previous KIN sessions, and it was made clear to the young people prior to

their interviews that they did not need to speak specifically about topics which had been discussed during KIN, including at this session, this does not mean that these topics did not change their narratives. It is also impossible to know whether these would have been topics they chose to talk about regardless of this discussion.

4.2.3 Being in a Young Offenders Institution (YOI)

While the physical location of participants within a YOI may have an impact on the narratives they tell, as is explored further below, it can also impact on the process of carrying out the interviews themselves, and the data analysis process. Access to participants within a prison setting will always be controlled by a gatekeeper. Ethical approval must be sought and granted by the Scottish Prison Service Research Access and Ethics Committee. Access must also be granted by the specific prison in which you wish to carry out the research. Once this is in place a further level of gatekeeping may come from a specific member of staff, or department, through which you recruit the participants. While it was a different process, it is not the case that there was no element of gatekeeping within KIN, and only in the YOI. For KIN, the ethics application only required ethical approval by the University but the application and its supporting documents were discussed with, and approved by, Vox Liminis prior to their submission. They required to permit me to join KIN in the first place and wished to speak to all of the young people about what an interview with me would involve and their right to decline to take part prior to me doing the same. Therefore, aspects of gatekeeping were present for both groups but simply manifested themselves in different ways and processes.

Access to Glenview YOI took place through a youth worker who was employed by a third sector organisation, though based in the prison, rather than being a direct employee of the Scottish Prison Service. This potentially had an impact both from the point of view of recruitment of participants as well as the atmosphere of the interviews, which also took place in the youth work area of the prison. As Bosworth (1999) noted in her research within women's prisons, where the recruitment often took place in education spaces, this was one of the more "relaxed" areas in the prison. While she recruited her own participants in these spaces, stating that the atmosphere provided her with "ideal moments for

me to participate in group discussions and try to interest them in me and my research" (p.87), the less 'prison-like' location of youth work within the YOI and participants' associations with the space, compared to, for example, a visits area, office for meeting with a solicitor or location on the wing, may also have changed the dynamic of my interviews.

For all the participants to have been known to the gatekeeper, and therefore to be part of the research, they must have been attendees at youth work sessions and engaged in this way. There is therefore always some element of selection bias when participants are 'chosen' to take part rather than self-selecting to participate themselves. While in some cases this could rule out those not seen as 'good' participants or, in this case 'good' prisoners (James, 2013), going through youth workers rather than prison officers may be one way of at least mitigating this. For example, one participant in the research had been involved in a fight and had been kept in his cell at the time I had expected to interview him but still took part later that same day rather than being prevented from doing so. The youth worker's own selection bias may have played a part through having 'better' relationships with some prisoners rather than others, something again down to personality and the inherent nature of people and relationships. Therefore where a gatekeeper, a person with their own individual disposition, is involved this will always be an element which must be reflected upon when considering participants and their recruitment.

In addition to the gatekeeping issue, the fact that you are within a prison and must obey certain rules and processes adds further layers of access and formality issues which must be navigated. One impact of this, alongside the power dynamics of working with the prison service, is that while the young people from KIN were all interviewed on separate days, often with at least weeks, if not months between them (due to their schedules and availability), the young people within Glenview were mainly interviewed on a single day (4 young people) or consecutive half days (2 each day). I took the decision to carry out multiple interviews in one day as this opportunity was offered to me by the youth worker and I wanted to cause the least disruption to staff. While I may have been able to do one or two interviews a day over a period of months, as a PhD researcher, particularly one who had had a long protracted recruitment

phase to her research, I found myself wishing to be accommodating and just take what was offered in the first instance.

Further elements specific to interviewing within a prison also affected these arrangements. On the first day, instead of carrying out the three interviews which I had planned I ended up carrying out four. The first participant, who had been kept in his cell due to being involved in a fight the previous day, was replaced with another participant, but later that day the original interviewee was allowed out of his cell and then came to speak to me. Although I could have said no to this, I decided to agree as I did not know if I would have the opportunity to carry out an interview with him on a future date if I did not do so at this time. I also did not want to say no to someone who was coming forward in this way as I was concerned that if I did so they would see this as a rejection, after volunteering to be part of the research, for whatever reason, and being willing to share a potentially difficult experience with me. Though this line of thinking is based on my own worries rather than any indication that the participants were so keen to take part they would have cared about not being able to do so. As I was still within the prison and many people who have never carried out a series of interviews in one day can see it as 'just another interview' I was also worried they would not understand my reasoning for not carrying it out at this time.

The consequence of these decisions however, was that while the interviews with KIN participants were able to be transcribed and an initial analysis take place *between* interviews, this was not the case with the interviews which took place in Glenview. In this instance four interviews had taken place before any real consideration of the information coming from them or the way they were carried out, could occur. Although there were short intervals between each of the interviews on a single day, this was not long enough for any real reflection to take place, or a more detailed consideration of the information coming from them or of the practical experience of carrying out these interviews. Particularly as my analysis draws on a grounded theory approach, the carrying out of multiple interviews in one day made this problematic at times. There was little or no opportunity to identify emerging themes between interviews, or to take on board learning picked up on through the reading of the transcripts in the same way with the interviews from Glenview as there was with the interviews from

KIN. As outlined in Chapter 3, I did not rigidly follow a grounded theory process for data analysis and instead drew on elements of it, but the practicalities of research within a prison may not always be conducive to this approach.

Further practical reflections around my participants being within a YOI involved their perception of my role within the interview and the prison. While I made it clear that I did not work for the Scottish Prison Service and was an independent researcher for the University of Glasgow, at times during the interviews I still felt like I was just another part of the system, another professional that this person had to tell their life story to, because that's what people want to hear. My links to the youth worker, being met by her in the morning and sitting within their office rather than with the prison officers outside, at least had the advantage of participants perhaps seeing me more allied with this department, provided by a third sector organisation, than the prison service itself.

4.2.4 Power/Agency – Use of Pseudonyms

The issue of power within research was addressed in Chapter 3 regarding the consideration of the methods used. Further to the aspects outlined around the use of semi-structured interviews in an attempt to address the potential power imbalance between researcher and participant, an imbalance of power can also be seen not only in respect of this researcher/participant relationship but also between groups of participants themselves.

One particularly strong illustration of this in my own research was when I was reflecting on the use of pseudonyms for my participants. As Guenther (2009: 412) states: "The act of naming is an act of power". In my initial ethics application to carry out interviews with members of KIN, I had stated that I would use pseudonyms for all participants, something which I acknowledge now was a default decision and one to which I gave little thought at the time. In fact, the British Sociological Association (BSA) official ethical guidelines seem to take this assumption of anonymity as a default position within their Statement of Ethical Practice (BSA, 2017):

> "Research participants should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality and should be able to reject the use of data gathering devices such as tape recorders and video cameras. Anonymity

> can also be compromised by the use of photographs and, particularly, online platforms and social media (including platforms such as Facebook – see Ethics Guidelines and Collated Resources for Digital Research)."

This position may therefore lead researchers to assume that anonymity, and therefore the use of pseudonyms in particular, is an ethical pre-requisite rather than an (informed) choice which could be offered to participants. The purpose of ethical guidelines being in place to address the potential harm to research participants also means that these statements can provide an assumed link between anonymization of participants and their protection from harm, although the rationale for this assumption is rarely made explicit (Moore, 2012).

It is also a discussion, along with the choice of pseudonyms themselves, which is rarely reflected upon in academic writing (see Lahman et al., 2015; Guenther, 2009; Nespor, 2000 for exceptions). As I spent time working with KIN it became clear that the young people wished to challenge the shame and stigma attached to being the family member of someone in prison. To do this they wanted to take control of their own story and, for some, using their own names in the work was one way of doing this. As part of KIN, participants had created a film, set of audio pieces and visual zine and the young people either featured visually or their names were listed in these products. Some of the young people had also appeared in the media or at conferences or events as part of their involvement with KIN. Therefore, by linking my participants to KIN I was already, in some way, identifying them, and they had chosen to be identified in relation to this experience in other ways. The young people had also discussed as part of their involvement in KIN generally, rather than my research specifically, the potential implications of deciding to be identifiable in the work of the group, and therefore relatedly within my own research. For these reasons, I felt comfortable applying for an amendment to my ethical approval to use the participants' own names, where they wished to do so. As Giordano et al. (2007) point out, if we assume that participants can make informed choices regarding whether to consent to take part in the research, then why do we then assume that they would be unable to make an informed decision to waive their right to confidentiality?

For the young people in Glenview however, I decided not to offer them this same choice, although some, when asked about choosing a pseudonym, said they wouldn't care if their own name was used. Participants in Tilley and Gormley's (2007) research were also within in a prison and also stated that they did not care if their own names were used. In their research, as in my own, ultimately the participants were given pseudonyms, something which the authors also reflected on.

I made the decision not to give those within Glenview a choice on whether to use their own name or a pseudonym for a number of reasons. Firstly, there was already limited anonymity for participants as Scotland only has one national facility for young offenders. Confidentiality for these young people was therefore more important due to this. Although only first names are used in this report, there was the possibility of a more unusual name and the potential for media reporting of certain offences which meant that these young people could be more identifiable. Some of the young people within Glenview were also critical of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) and some of their procedures in their interviews, and I was aware that the small sample size and the fact they were still within an SPS institution could make them more vulnerable if identified. Therefore, I wanted to provide them with as much confidentiality as I could. More importantly, however, was the fact that I was unable to have the same length and depth of discussion with the young people in Glenview as those within KIN had had around potential implications of decisions about being identified. I would also not have the same ongoing connection to those in Glenview as I did with those in KIN. The result of this was that should those from Glenview wish to change their mind regarding their decision it would be much more difficult for them to contact me than it would be for those in KIN (where Vox Liminis had my contact details, as did the young people in KIN themselves [and more importantly free and easy access to means of communication] and I was still part of a Facebook group for the project, giving them a number of ways in which they could contact me).

This differentiation between the two groups, however, is something that I did reflect on. There is a potential unfairness and inequality in allowing one group of young people to openly own their own experiences and make their own decisions about using their name, owning their stories, while not allowing the other group

to do the same. This seemed particularly pertinent when this second group already had limited autonomy and, in some ways, have had their stories co-opted through the need to be repeatedly told due to their contact with the criminal justice and prison system.

Even when I did use pseudonyms for the young people in KIN who wished to remain anonymous I noticed a differentiation compared to the young people recruited from Glenview. When choosing names for the members of KIN I struggled, trying to find names that reflected their personalities and fitted with the people I had come to know. When I began choosing names for those recruited from Glenview however, this was much easier. I didn't really know them at all, had had a quick chat around about the interview and spent about an hour with them in total. So, when it came to choosing names I realised that the first names which came into my head were the ones I was happy to use, rather than spending long periods of time thinking about, and researching, names as I had done with KIN. On becoming aware of this I did stop, and instead took more time, trying to find a name that, I at least, thought fitted with the person from Glenview that I had met.

In the small amount of literature where choices of pseudonym, either by researcher or participant, is explored, there are reflections on what judgements may be made by the reader about these identities and the subsequent impact this may have on the related data which they then go on to read. Often the example is given of changing names to anglicised versions, Jurgen or Juan to John, or using pseudonyms which do not reflect a participant's ethnicity (Hurst, 2008). This research is mainly from the United States where there are perhaps issues around research with Hispanic populations which make these discussions more relevant than in a British, or Scottish, context. While for the most part this was not relevant in my research, class connotations of certain names, or even religious links, particularly in areas of the west of Scotland, may be pertinent and should be considered. The meaning and connotations from surnames can be even greater, making the use of full, first and surname, pseudonyms even more complex and fraught with potential misrepresentations or assumptions around participants and their ethnic or cultural identities. This is particularly true of research making claims to place participants and their experiences at its centre.

Within European-based literature in this area there has been a recognition of different approaches to anonymity and pseudonym use between the oral history tradition and other forms of qualitative research. Ní Laoire's (2007) exploration of the question in her article titled "To name or not to name" draws on arguments from both sides, questioning whether oral history's focus on a more distant past than some other forms of qualitative research means it is treated differently regarding the use of participants' own names. She also recognises the need for time to ensure an understanding by participants of potential consequences where there is a choice not to use a pseudonym. This is something I discussed above in respect of my own research and the two different groups involved, and the power and requirement for balance inherent in this process.

For clarity, I am not arguing against the use of pseudonyms within research and recognise that the promise of confidentiality can be empowering to some, allowing them to feel safe to tell a story they may otherwise not have done. There is also the potential that where real names are used the result of this is that the researcher will censor the data more than they would have otherwise done so in an effort to protect their participants, whether this is a necessary or a paternalistic response (Guenther, 2009). I am, however, arguing that the agency of participants should be recognised, particularly where they come from groups who are often marginalised in society and are already disempowered, by allowing, and trusting, them to make an informed choice on this subject.

4.3 Impact of Location in Space and Time on Narrative

4.3.1 Situational Impact on Narrative

While elements of situational impact were explored above, this section specifically considers what it may mean for participants to be located within a prison when they are talking about experiences of imprisonment, although in this case not their own but that of a family member. The location of an interview within a prison not only situates the participant within the institution that they are often going to be talking about, but their own experiences within this institution may also affect how they tell their stories. For example, those who have taken part in programmes within the prison may be asked to tell and re-tell their story of imprisonment, therefore from a personal perspective,

focusing on their own lives and behaviour and often with a redemptive script, rather than with a focus on someone else's imprisonment.

One aspect of the potential impact of this on my own interviews is that where we would begin by talking about a family member's imprisonment and the young person's experiences of this, it would often quickly move on to their own experiences of whatever topic we had been discussing. For example, with one participant, Chris, he would begin by answering the question relating to the familial imprisonment I had asked about, but would quickly move this on to speaking about his own offence. From being asked about keeping in touch with his dad when his dad was in prison, he almost immediately moved on to talking about phoning his siblings when he has been in prison himself and the expense of calls; and from talking about visiting his dad and looking after his younger siblings while his mum was at the canteen, he went on to talk for longer about the costs of his own canteen now that he is in prison and the costs of that to him. This, of course, may be specific to Chris, (he was the one participant who spoke a lot about the importance of the programmes he had completed in prison and how these had helped him).

Even where there is no direct switching by the young person from their family member's imprisonment to their own imprisonment, the young person's own time spent in a prison may shape the narratives they now tell. For example, when speaking to Darren about what it was like to miss a call from his dad knowing he can't just call him back, he said the following:

> **Darren**: Naw, it's, he can phone you the next night, know what I mean, see if you don't answer him wan night then-,
> **Kirsty**: He'll just phone-,
> **Darren**: Aye, the next, dunno, I've phoned him a few times and I've no been able to get a haud of him in here and it's wan hing I can say is I've never ever moaned at him for no answering the phone or that, 'cause you cannae expect somebody to answer the phone 24/7. If your life fully revolves around a phone then I, I hink that's, like, you dae get people like that, but, their life is their phone, it's, no the case, know what I mean,. People need to put it doon sometimes, mibbe cannae answer it, you've

> just gotta deal wae it and wait to the mora and if you don't then you're gonna be angry aw the time.
>
> **Kirsty**: Yeah.
>
> **Darren**: Know what I mean.
>
> **Kirsty**: I wonder, like, what does, what does it feel like not being able to get hold of someone, 'cause obviously, like, if I have ma mobile I can phone someone right back or get a message or text them, how does it feel-,
>
> **Darren**: It is annoying.
>
> **Kirsty**: Like, not to be able to do that, like, if you miss a call or someone doesn't answer?
>
> **Darren**: It's annoying, it is annoying, but you, if you're annoyed aboot it that night, know what I mean, as soon as you get a haud of them the next morning and then they're like that, aw, I, I just didnae hear it or something and you're like that, right, nae bother, you're no, I don't know, it is annoying, but at the time-,
>
> **Kirsty**: Yeah. Yeah.
>
> **Darren**: 'Cause it's, like, if you're trying to play a video or something and it's no playing, it does your nut in.

Darren begins by saying it's basically fine when you miss a call and that his dad would call him the next night. Instead of thinking about it from his point of view as a family member outside however, and as I'd intended the question, he goes on to answer from the point of view of his dad as the person in prison, the role he now occupies.

Chris' story was, in some respects, the one that is often expected from someone within prison. It offered aspects of what are termed 'redemption scripts' (Maruna, 2001). He was aware of the impact of his offence, he felt remorse, he had learned from his mistakes and had changed while he was in prison. Other participants also gave me their own versions of this script:

> Obviously in the jail's completely different, but, obviously when you're ootside everybody hinks it's, like, a bad place to be but it's no kinda hing it's a good, a bad hing and a good hing to be in […] Obviously when you're in you can get obviously, like, you kin no build a new life kinda hing but

> obviously, like, they can, obviously they teach you whit to dae, try and get you into, like, the, you can get a job when you go back ootside and aw that. So it's, aye, it's a good hing and a bad hing. (Declan)

> "So it's, like, it is weird, it is a life cycle, when you look at it, it is, you just go round and round and round in circles, but, there is times where you think, I need to change. It's, like, I've got to, I've got a baby on the way so, like, I've gotta try, I've gotta change, properly." (Scott)

Even when my questions were not related to this, it felt that this was a story some participants felt they 'needed' to tell me.

Similarly, when I was trying to get some idea of who the participants in Glenview were as people rather than 'just' a prisoner or the family member of someone who had been in prison, when asking them about this they emphasised their 'good' character much more than the young people in KIN.

> "…a kind person" (Chris)

> "…I'm nice anyway, I'm a good person" (Jay)

> "…I'd say I'm a nice young man" (Scott)

This may have been down to how I asked the questions and my differing relationship with the two groups. Or it may have been due to assumptions by the Glenview group of what I thought of them as people due to them being within a YOI, a position that was constantly reinforced by our location. They may have seen the interview as a way of challenging this. As I outlined in the previous chapter, my position as a female PhD student, fairly quietly spoken, may also have led the participants to assume certain things about me and my judgements; for example, that I had not been in trouble and been involved with the criminal justice system as they had. I have not experienced the imprisonment of a family member and this would have been clear to the participants through the questions I asked. The dominant narrative in society about those in a YOI may be that these young people are 'bad' and need to change. With no relationship between myself and the participants, it is perhaps not surprising that they would assume that this too would be my view of them and their situation, which is why

they have chosen specifically to challenge this, or to comply with what they feel is the necessary narrative, of them changing.

As outlined in Chapter 3, my interactionist standpoint is reflected in my view of these interviews as interactions between two people where both are constructing their identity. Thus, the narrative coming from the interview at that time is through these interactions. For myself, as the researcher, this often involved constructing myself in this role, as a 'good' researcher, someone who was professional, who knew what they were doing, someone to be trusted with the information that the participant was giving them. For the participant in prison this may have involved constructing themselves as a 'good' person, someone who has gone into prison and changed, been rehabilitated as they 'should' have been. This master identity of 'prisoner', emphasised by the location of the interview within a prison, can therefore impact on the interview itself and the data coming from it, sometimes regardless of the focus of the interview and its questions.

4.3.2 Temporal Impact on Narrative

Rubin and Rubin (1995), when discussing qualitative interviewing, note that "what we hear depends on when we ask the question and to whom" (p. 38). They go on to use the example of how an interview when someone's mother has just died is likely to be very different to one conducted with the same person a year later. In a similar way, the temporal distance of my participants from the instance of familial imprisonment they are recalling will also impact on how they recall and speak about that experience.

One participant in particular illustrated how the stories that are told, and the emotions that are spoken of, can change depending on the situation. When Amie joined KIN, her brother had been out of prison for a few years after serving a single long-term sentence. During the project however, he returned to prison. At one of the sessions where we were working on pieces of writing, she spoke of no longer identifying with one of the pieces she had written earlier in the project, prior to her brother receiving his second sentence. When I asked about this during her interview she said the following:

Kirsty: ‘Cause you, kind of, used the writing that you’d done before but then you were saying, like, you don’t really feel like that relates to it now.

Amie: Oh well, it was this one, it was, erm, yeah, I mean all of this, like, I feel like I relate to but then, like, this is talking about, like, transformation and stuff and I definitely felt like that so much before, ‘cause I felt like he had been out and I had, like, kind of, like, dealt with it and was now talking about it. And I do definitely feel like that to an extent but now that, obviously this new, like, he’s back in and it’s all happened again, I don’t feel like, ‘Oh, I’m just absolutely fine about it,’ do you know. So, I don’t relate so much to that any more, you know.

Kirsty: ‘Cause, it’s, kind of-,

Amie: It’s more raw, isn’t it?

Where a family member’s imprisonment is not a single incident within a young person’s life and is instead something which has occurred repeatedly, this, again, can impact on narratives in interviews. For example, reflecting back on what it was like when the family member first went to prison or when they first visited them can become clouded by the many other visits since or sentences they have received. None of the young people taking part in this research had recently experienced the imprisonment of a family member for the first time. All were at a point where they were in a place to reflect back, although for some it was still ongoing. This opportunity to reflect can change how things are now seen by the young person and narrated within the interview. For example, Kev talks about the “deep and meaningful” conversations he had with his dad through their letter writing. He also noted, however, that this was not something he saw at the time but only recognised in retrospect:

> “So, it’s, I, but, aye, at the time, aye, definitely was mair open and heartfelt but I didnae see it at the time, you know…”

While the young people were all at a point to reflect back they were not all at the same stage in this process. For some their family member had been released, while some were still in prison. For those who had been released, some were ‘doing well’, e.g. dealt with substance misuse issues and were no

longer offending, whereas others were not. Some of the young people had close relationships with their family member while others did not, and had never had. There were also incidences of the family member having served one long sentence compared to serving a series of shorter sentences over the young person's life. The result of these differences meant that some were speaking of something they were currently living while others were reflecting back, bringing in potential elements of reflective bias or changed narratives, where the situation can be seen differently depending on the result of that experience and the time since it was being lived.

Ross and Wing's (2018) research on memory has shown that, where there was a more positive outcome to an intervention, the participant's memories of it are also more positive, indicating the importance of recognising multiple facets of experiences; someone's distance from the event and its outcome. While this is more quantitative, psychological based research, the premise is the same here; that events with more positive outcomes may be remembered and spoken of differently than those whose resolutions are less so.

In respect of the young people in KIN particularly, but with the potential to apply to those in Glenview, perhaps in different ways, the concept of the "social contagion paradigm" (Roediger et al., 2001) in memory studies may also be relevant. It outlines the potential for social interactions to influence individual memory of events. Harris et al.'s (2017) work applying this paradigm to autobiographical memory concluded that almost all their participants recalled details from the scripted memory of the partner, with whom they had shared a narration of their experience, rather than simply their own initial individual recall. Further, they note that "social interactions can lead people to shape their memories in certain ways: to recall some details and forget others, or to emphasise particular aspects of their memory" (p. 325). Fivush (2004) outlines ideas of self-silencing where people self-censor during conversational recall. Harris et al. (2010) found this occurred in their own research, where participants changed previously made statements to those more in line with the group they had been conversing with. While my own research is not a clinical or psychological study, nor one particularly focused on memory, these concepts are valuable when considering how participants recount events where they have been involved in the discussion of them with others, particularly over a long

period and where they may be in respect of shared situations, prior to interviews taking place. This is not to question accuracy of recall, something that is not necessarily a focus of this research, but simply to provide context for the data coming from the interviews and upon which this thesis is based.

Where an event has been particularly traumatic this can also cause a repression of certain memories. For example, when I was asking Sam what he remembered about what it was like at home before his dad "disappeared" he responded:

> **Sam:** Well, I remember some, like, most of the things I remember probably weren't the happiest things to remember.
> **Kirsty:** Okay.
> **Sam:** Like, I don't know, like, because, like, now I don't really talk to my parents and they're both, like, obviously separated, I think I've just, kind of, phased out memories a lot.
> **Kirsty:** Okay.
> **Sam:** I just, kind of, like, push myself to forget most of them because that's obviously the way I was brought up.

The length of time someone has 'lived with' something occurring in their life may also alter how they subsequently speak about it. Hulley et al. (2016) found that long-term prisoners can adapt over time to cope with the demands of their lengthy sentences and periods of confinement. Their research builds on previous work which found that improved coping techniques were part of how prisoners adapted to prison life generally (Sykes, 1958; Crewe, 2009). Leigey and Ryder (2015: 736) also spoke of prisoners becoming "accustomed" to being apart from their family and that they developed "strategies to cope" with other limiting aspects of prison life, such as the lack of privacy. I would suggest that this may be similar for family members of prisoners. Lanskey et al. (2015) spoke of participants in their study who had adapted to their situation, who were "upset at first but got used to it" (p.490), indicating that depending on when they were interviewed their telling of their experiences and the emotions related to them may change. Whether this adaptation occurs over a longer period of time, either for those who have been sentenced to one long-term sentence or who serve a series of short-term sentences over a longer period of time, or whether this occurs even over short-term sentences, these coping strategies and becoming

accustomed to the situation may also affect how families then speak about it. For the young people who took part in this research, and for whom the experience of a family member's imprisonment was not new, they may have already formed coping strategies or grown used to visiting and the restrictions placed on them through their arms-length interactions with the prison system. Their narratives around this therefore may have changed over time and this should be borne in mind when reading about the data and its analysis in the following chapters. For example, when I asked Morven about differences between visiting in a Young Offenders Institution and an adult prison she commented on the differences in the attitudes of the people visiting who were now "used to it":

> "…people just seemed, like, less afraid in there, so, like, the atmosphere, I suppose [a YOI]'s kind of full of, like, first time offenders so, like, the families were just a bit, like, 'What's going on?' like, everyone felt the same. Whereas by the time we got to [the Adult Prison] everyone's kinda more used to it. And I think that kinda helped the atmosphere just seeing all the people being more comfortable."

Scott also spoke about the differences in his reaction to his brother's sentences:

> **Kirsty:** Yeah. So has, yeah, has it felt different for the different sentences that he's got, like, compared to that first shock maybe and then-,
> **Scott:** Yeah, yeah, there was, like, the first time it was like woah, shock and then the second time it's just, like, it's not that bad and then the third time, you're just, like, get on with it, you know what I mean, it's the third time he's in jail, you've just gotta get on with it-,
> **Kirsty:** Yeah.
> **Scott:** And then it's, like, the, most of the time you just get on with it and if you don't speak to him for, like, a week, the time passes and by the time you know it they're out.

The physical location of participants within a prison can have an impact on both the practicalities of interviewing and the data from the interviews, but it may

also impact on temporal aspects of interviewing. For example, where a young person is currently within a prison and may have been in a prison visit recently, this may impact on the narrative that they tell about their experience of visits as a family member when they were younger. For example, Darren, when talking about visiting his dad when he was younger, also links this to his recent experiences as the visitee, as well as being the visitor to his dad more recently:

> "'Cause when I go up now I can remember it when I see it again, know, and you can remember, like, the room you're in and stuff […] Just, like, bits like that, but that's, I don't really know, I cannae, I can, cause I've been there, like, no long ago as well. Like, you can remember it, it's, just the same as every time, once you get into a routine you cannae really forget the routine."

This not only has the potential to influence how people remember previous events but also to trigger specific memories due to them recently experiencing this, although from the other side, as a prisoner rather than their family member.

As I made clear in Chapter 3, interviews are not used here as a method to gather 'the truth'. They are instead interactions where the interviewer and interviewee construct a representation of the experience at that point in time. The point in time therefore must be acknowledged with a reflection on the temporal distance from that which is being spoken about, its frequency in that person's life and the outcome or current position of the individual in their journey.

4.4 An Over-researched Population?

The term 'over-researched' is one which is often applied to certain populations or communities, but for which there has been little critical exploration of what exactly the term means or what its implications may be for either researchers or research participants (see exceptions: Clark [2008] for the former and Sukareih and Tannock [2012] for the latter). Koen et al.'s (2017: 2) work looking at over-researched communities within HIV-related research attempted to "investigate the relevance and meaning of the term 'over-researched community' as an ethical construct". While some of their conclusions may have been specific to

the subject or geographical location, others may be taken more generally. They concluded that over-research was an “umbrella concern” (p. 7) which covered a range of ethical issues rather than a specific definable issue in its own right. The most common direct link to over-research, however, was exploitation, specifically related to vulnerable populations. Linked to this were concerns that these over-researched communities often got nothing in return for their participation and instead, the researcher was always the only one to benefit from the interaction.

Both of my groups of participants could, although in different ways, meet elements of being over-researched communities or populations. There is a growing interest in Scotland in young people who have offended, spanning a range of issues, both in respect of their specific interactions with the criminal justice system, and also around wider issues such as mental health, bereavement and trauma. Those within a prison can easily fall into the “easy prey” (Cleary et al., 2016: 380) or bored, captive audience category when considering recruitment of participants for research projects. This ease of access to these young people while they are currently incarcerated compared to speaking to them after their release, as well as the high level of interest in them as a group at the moment, has resulted in a greater number of requests to carry out research within the YOI environment. With only one national YOI in Scotland, this results in all research requests being made to access this one location and community. Where gatekeepers are involved and participants ‘chosen’ for researchers this can result in the same “good research subjects” (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2012: 504) taking part in each project they are eligible for. From this research, I was aware of two of the ten participants from Glenview having previously taken part in research, although not specifically in respect of a family member’s imprisonment.

There is also a growing interest in families of prisoners, both in research and within the wider policy and practice context, which has seen a number of PhD theses, as well as Masters and Undergraduate dissertations, examining this topic, although framed differently, at the same time as I have been carrying out this piece of research. Two members of KIN (from the 7 interviewees) had taken part in familial imprisonment research prior to being interviewed for my PhD. Others

also went on to take part in projects looking at parental imprisonment following their involvement in the research for this thesis.

This raises the question of why the same people are recruited across research projects. One possible reason for this multiple recruitment is a combination of a growing interest in, generally, parental imprisonment, along with the difficulty of recruiting participants in this area. There are few organisations in Scotland which specifically work with this section of the population and those who do tend to work with younger children rather than teens or young people (e.g. Circle, Families Outside). Stigma can prevent people from disclosing this experience, so even where organisations may be working with young people who have a family member in prison they are not always aware of this. Recruiting participants in familial imprisonment research is often done through visitor centres (e.g. Jardine, 2017; Foster, 2017), however, as older children are less likely to attend visits (Casey-Acevedo and Bakken, 2002; McCulloch and Morrison, 2002) this is not necessarily a useful route of recruitment for the age range of participants targeted by this PhD.

While issues of over-research can impact on the individuals and the communities they come from (Sukarieh and Tannock, 2012) it also has implications for the research in which they take part. Considering the KIN participants, where they were interviewed for different research projects around the same subject area, this raises the issue of the same voices being heard and the same stories being told multiple times. There is generally no recognition that participants may be the same across research projects, something which is obviously attributable to the anonymization process leaving no way of cross-checking your participants with those in other research work. The fact these participants had been involved in other research was disclosed by the participants themselves, and I was aware of what these projects were likely to be due to my knowledge of other academics and researchers working in a similar subject area to myself within Scotland. For those who had taken part in other research projects within the prison, there may also be assumptions made by participants about what a researcher wants to hear. Where they have been involved in other research, specifically looking at their own experiences within prison, this may lead to a narrative focused more around this. This was borne out in some of my interviews where participants would often bring the conversation back to their own

experiences of imprisonment rather than as a family member of someone in prison (though, as explained earlier, there may be other contributory factors in relation to this).

I have therefore reflected a great deal on my decision to recruit from a YOI, with reference to these concerns about over-researching certain groups. During recruitment and the carrying out of the interviews, I was very aware that I may simply be yet another researcher coming into the prison asking this group to 'tell their story'. Even so, I do feel that the voices of young people who have experienced familial imprisonment, but are also currently, or have previously been, within prison themselves, are missing from the literature in this area and, as can be seen in the following chapters, have provided a unique insight compared to previous research. In particular, I worried that by avoiding speaking to those within a YOI, and worrying that they are over-researched or may feel obliged to speak to you, that I would be taking away the agency of these young people, acting in an overly paternalistic way. This lack of autonomy and removal of control is something which occurs in so many other ways through their engagement with the criminal justice system, and specifically the prison system, and as researchers, we can become complicit in this. It is important to remember, however, that my thesis is looking at experiences of young people *as family members*, not as people involved in the penal system, and those who are currently resident within a prison should not be excluded from taking part, or seen as, explicitly or implicitly, ineligible to take part in this kind of research.

With regards to the young people in KIN, I have already explored earlier in this chapter the potential differences between my own research and others they may have been part of; covering the time spent with them and the different research design involving participant observation as well as interviews. This is something that, in some ways, has been afforded to this piece of work due to it being a PhD and the length of time that was able to be dedicated to carrying out the work. I am also aware, however, that one of the strong messages coming from KIN is that having a family member in prison does not "define" these young people, and yet it was all they were continually asked about by different researchers wishing to 'access' this 'hard to reach' group. Again, though, to deny their agency and ability to decide for themselves whether they wished to take part is

contrary to the underlying ethos of this research, which aims to place the young people at its centre and recognise their expertise.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter reflects on the use of the methods outlined in the previous chapter and the implications of the methodological decisions made during this research. While aspects of research methodology are increasingly being made clearer within academic publications, this chapter's aim was to forefront these and devote more space to these discussions than may usually be possible, constructing the research methodology as finding in and of itself.

Within this thesis context is key, both in relation to the methods used and the data coming from them. There are spatial, temporal and relational aspects of the interview process and subsequent data analysis. The physical location of the interview, the temporal distance of the participants from that which they are discussing and the importance of relational aspects of the interview, where group membership, insider/outsider status and length of relationship are all significant, all shaped the interviews themselves and the data then coming from them. These themes of spatial, temporal and relational aspects are picked up on again later in the thesis where I use them to consider and frame the young people's experiences of familial imprisonment in Chapter 7. The importance of context is also carried on throughout the thesis and is reflected in the structure itself, where young people's experiences of family generally are explored (see Chapter 6) rather than there solely being a focus on family when a member is in prison.

The concept of power is also one which runs across many of these methodological reflections. There is the power of the researcher to choose a topic or group of participants to focus on within the interview, and within the analysis and dissemination, process. There is the power of gatekeepers to allow, or restrict, access to certain populations and to certain individuals within these populations. There is the power of the prison, both inherently in respect of those within the institution and over researchers in respect of access and procedures once inside. These imbalances of power are not static and as a researcher you must be aware of them and reflexive towards them continually

throughout the whole research process; from design to dissemination. This need for reflexivity is something which I carry on throughout the thesis in the presentation of my findings and is not and should not be solely contained within methodologically oriented chapters.

The methods chosen and methodological decisions made have affected the themes which arose from the data which will now be presented in the following chapters. This chapter has therefore provided a more in-depth consideration and background for the data which the thesis goes on to consider more substantively. Its intention was to make visible some of the decisions and tensions which are often removed from academic writing on methods and methodology and to more clearly situate the data which follows for the reader.

Before going on to explore the data and the themes arising from it in more detail, and following on from the lengthy discussion in this chapter around how interview narratives can be structured and shaped, it is important to highlight that despite this there is still validity to the findings outlined in the following chapters. It is necessary to acknowledge the potential impact of the physical location, temporal distance and previous experiences of the young people on the narratives they then formed in their interviews. This does not mean, however, that these experiences are not valid, and that any conclusions drawn and recommendations made from them are also not justifiable. The experiences the young people spoke of were true to them, the feelings they spoke of were how they felt, regardless of whether their understanding of these things may have changed over time or due to other experiences. Therefore, regardless of academic discussions of how these narratives may have been constructed the issues raised should be addressed.

The following chapter is structured around the two-part question, “Who are prisoners’ families and what are they for?” It explores this question by firstly considering young people as a specific group, including a discussion of the meaning and construction of this term. It also looks at experiences of sibling imprisonment. It considers the unique as well as the similar aspects of these experiences when compared to those of partners or children as an overall group, the family groups most often covered in familial imprisonment literature. By asking what are prisoners’ families for, the chapter will raise the issue of inter-

or intra-prison family relationships for young people who are serving a sentence at the same time as their family member (an experience explored in more depth in Chapter 7). It will do so in the context of an emphasis on desistance-based approaches within policy and practice which has the potential to exclude these young people and their experiences of family from the dominant narrative and focus.

5 Chapter 5 - Who are Prisoners' Families and What Are They For?

5.1 Introduction

The first part of this question, and of the chapter, considers the question: "Who are prisoners' families?" Documents such as the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) Family Strategy (2017) or Lord Farmer's Review (2017) into the importance of prisoners' family ties contain rhetoric around family such as "individuals have many ways of defining what constitutes family" (SPS, 2017: 5) and "Wherever family relationships are mentioned it should be assumed that other significant and supportive relationships are also inferred" (Farmer, 2017: 16). The reality, however, can be that the focus is instead often simply on partners and younger children. The young people I spoke to often felt forgotten or ignored, either due to their age (being older teens) or because, despite being a child by virtue of their age, they were the sibling of someone in prison and not the child of an imprisoned family member.

This chapter will therefore consider this question by looking specifically at the experiences of young people and of sibling imprisonment, both areas which it has been shown in Chapter 2 constitute gaps within the literature. I will also reflect on the experience of a family member's imprisonment where both the family member and the young person themself are serving prison sentences. This idea of intergenerational imprisonment is explored within quantitative research in respect of the potential for an increased risk of children's future offending (e.g. Murray and Farrington, 2005) but is not reflected within the qualitative literature on the experience of familial imprisonment itself.

The second half of the question forming this chapter's title, "What are prisoners' families for?", is intrinsically linked to the first. Why we see families of prisoners as important and what the underlying basis is for encouraging relationships and contact between someone in prison and their family members can influence who we then see as prisoners' families. Recognition of the impact of parental imprisonment, along with the importance of family ties in the

desistance process, or in the reduction of reoffending, has led to an increase in both research and policy interest in the families of those who are in prison. Recent publications by the Scottish Prison Service of their Family Strategy (2017), and by the UK Government of the Farmer Review (2017), have highlighted prisoners' families, and their importance. This has occurred, however, without a wider consideration of *why* families are regarded as important and what this means for them and the research being carried out around familial imprisonment. This chapter will look at this question by considering the basis of key policies around families of prisoners in desistance theory or the need to reduce reoffending, and the groups who can potentially be excluded from being seen as families of prisoners as a result.

5.2 Who are Prisoners' Families?

5.2.1 Young People

While estimates place the number of children experiencing parental imprisonment at around 27,000 a year in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2012) and 200,000 in England and Wales (Williams et al., 2012), estimates of the proportion of such children who are teenagers come from the United States and put the figure at between 15 and 40% (Hairston, 2007; Mumola, 2000). As was outlined in Chapter 2, young people are seen as a specific group, with adolescence or youth a distinct life stage both in biological and developmental terms. They are also recognised as such by bodies including the United Nations and World Health Organisation due to their specific needs and requirements. Where I speak about young people within this thesis, my participants were aged 16 to 25, however they reflect on experiences when they were younger and I would define young people in my own research as being aged between 10-25 years old (though this would not be a strict age limit outside which there would be no relevance).

As was also discussed in Chapter 2, there increasingly appears to be a change in how young people are viewed within the criminal justice system, particularly in the Scottish context, but that this is in contrast to how young people with family members in prison seem to be treated. There is a recognition that young

offenders require to be treated differently from adults, and for this category to be extended beyond the current upper age limit of twenty-one (in the United Kingdom). There is also a changing philosophy which recognises this group as in need of compassion and nurture whereas, from the experiences of some of the young people I have spoken to, this does not seem to be reflected in their treatment by, and recognition from, the criminal justice system and beyond. Instead, they appear to be seen as irrelevant; not a partner, who can provide emotional, or perhaps more importantly, practical support, but not a young dependent child either. The result can be that they find themselves missing from policy and practice, invisible, and not receiving the same support or understanding as younger children and being excluded from the same opportunities to connect and maintain relationships with their family member in prison.

One example, which can perhaps illustrate the differences, and movement, between these two ways of viewing young people connected with the criminal justice system is the treatment of Chris' brother, Craig, when he returned to the Young Offenders Institution (YOI), having previously been resident there, but now as a visitor for Chris.

> **Chris:** Plus every time when he comes up, he's got one of they mad tags on his leg so I get, I get strip searched because of him aw the time.
> **[…]**
> **Chris:** They, they obviously think he's up to something, know what I mean, when he comes in-,
> **Kirsty:** He must be, yeah, 'cause he's still got that.
> **Chris:** Because of him being in and oot aye. But I dinnae take anything so that's the only thing that annoys me, you know what I mean, because see when ma gran and aw that comes in, ma ma and that they dinnae search me then, and ma wee brother comes in, bang, it's search.
> **Kirsty:** Just him-,
> **Chris:** Search him, aye.
> **Kirsty:** Ah, so it's got to be him, yeah. So he's not, yeah, that fact he's not being allowed to forget that-,
> **Chris:** Nut.
> **Kirsty:** He was in here and he's still-,

> **Chris:** Aye, so they, they dae it wae him when he comes in but they search him and that tae so it's-,

While I can't say what Craig's experience was while within the YOI, the policy and rhetoric around young offenders suggests he could, or at least should, have been treated in a compassionate and caring way as someone within the care of the prison. When he returned as a visiting family member however, though still as a child (aged 17), from Chris' relating of what happened he was seen much more as a risk to the prison rather than a family member who required support in maintaining and nurturing a sibling relationship. This story suggests that Craig's previous contact with the criminal justice system had an impact on how he was viewed as a family member of Chris. This element of family, and how it impacts on how certain family members may be viewed, is explored further in Section 5.3 below.

In relation to the arguments I go on to develop in this chapter, I focus on some of the developmental elements of being a young person rather than a child, as well as social aspects and expectations. I will outline how the young people I spoke to illustrated their unique position within the more general category of children, while also being aware that they do share some similarities with this overall group. These similarities and differences can be in respect of emotional and relational elements of the experience as well as more practical, pragmatic aspects of being a young person specifically with a family member in prison. The role of a child within a family, and childhood generally, has changed, and is changing, over time and place. However, it can also be experienced differently by those even within the same temporal and spatial location. These aspects will be drawn on, and reflected upon, throughout the chapter.

5.2.1.1 Occupying a Liminal Space

Firstly, there is the idea that young people occupy a liminal space; no longer a child but not yet an adult. KIN member Natalia recognised some of the properties of this liminal space through her acknowledgement that she shared the feelings of younger children when a family member is taken away, but also being aware that she was treated differently as she was an older teenager at the time.

Speaking about a BBC documentary "Prison, My Parents & Me" (2016) that she had watched recently, she said:

> "I noticed on that it was all young kids, which it kind of illustrates my point, it's all young kids but yet I was watching it and I was getting really emotional because those young kids are voicing exactly what I was thinking, even though they're like five. It's the same emotion but you don't get that support when you're older."

Going on to explain her own experience of a family member's imprisonment when she was an older teenager she said:

> "So, that was when I was, I'd just turned 17, which I also think is, I don't know if this is the right way to put it but it's, kind of, an annoying age for that to happen. Which I know is, obviously there's no right age for it to happen but I feel like when you're a kid you, everyone's like, 'Aw, she's just a kid and she's lost her dad, and, you know, he's gone away and blah, blah, blah and her dad's going to miss out on all this stuff.' And then I feel like when you're around the late teens people kind of assume that, 'Oh she doesn't need any help because she's, like, 17,' and actually I think you need just as much help when you're older and that kind of hurt me quite a lot because I was like, I know I'm, like, 17 but also I, like, I'm a daddy's girl, like, I miss my dad and stuff and people didn't really give you, give me that support I don't think."

This construction of young people, as compared to younger children, not needing support, or not receiving the same understanding or sympathy, could be linked in to the discussions and views of young people in society more generally which were outlined in Chapter 2. This can see a move from being seen as a child who is *at risk* and needs to be protected, to one of a young person who is *risky* and that society needs to be protected from. This dichotomy could also be said to be reflected in the focus of research in respect of children and young people and parental imprisonment. Some research focuses on the 'risk' of a parent's imprisonment leading to an increased likelihood of the child's own antisocial or offending behaviour, and potential future imprisonment themselves (e.g.

Farrington et al., 2001; Aaron and Dallaire, 2010; Wildeman, 2010; Geller et al., 2012). Others, however, focus on what the child or young person may be more at risk *from*, for example, mental health issues, stigma or bullying (e.g. Foster and Hagan, 2013; Murray and Farrington, 2008; Boswell and Wedge, 2002; Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008; Dallaire et al., 2010). While young people may also need protected from suffering the behavioural problems or path to future offending or imprisonment, as children become older these behaviours often tend to position them more as *a* risk than *at* risk.

Research has shown that teenagers are less likely to visit a prison than younger children (Flynn, 2014) and when Natalia talked about visiting a prison as a teenager it provided a further example of the liminal space that young people occupy. She spoke of how she would go on a Saturday, a time when there were a lot of children there as, like her, they were at school during the week, but that sitting next to the play area, provided for the 'children' who visit, meant there was so much noise she could not hear her dad. She wanted to have a conversation with him, as an adult would, not be next to a play area she wouldn't, or in fact couldn't, use, despite being the child of someone in prison:

> "…on a Saturday it's, not only is it so busy but you've got so many kids, like, running around screaming […] And we got sat right next to the kids play area, and it was a Saturday and I was like, 'Are you actually kidding me, I can't even hear you.' It was so, and they just put, I go and ask, like, 'Oh please, like, I haven't seen my dad in ages, can you just swap us with?' and they're, like, 'Oh, you must be trying to hide something,' like it's just all of a sudden, like, an attack and you're like, 'No, I'm just a human that hasn't seen her dad in forever,' but, yeah."

This emphasises the relational aspect to the category of 'child', as was discussed in Chapter 2. It is not something which stops when you reach an arbitrary age, whether that be 16, the age you can get married (and which you are able to attend a prison visit unaccompanied), 18, an age often used in policy as reaching adulthood, or 26, the age until which care-experienced young people can now be assessed as requiring aftercare support (Scottish Government, no date). You never stop being someone's child. In chapter 6, I provide a more in-depth

exploration of what it means to be a child within a family and how this can be different depending on the family and its context.

5.2.1.2 Transitions

The teenage years, or going to high school, may be a time when families feel like the 'child' is old enough to be told the truth, if previously there have been lies or secrecy around the reasons for a family member's absence. This experience has been evident in previous research, where older children in the family have been told the truth about their parent's whereabouts while younger children have been thought too young to understand and are given alternative versions of events (e.g. Shaw, 1987).

Some of my participants spoke of incrementally being told more and more as they got older:

> "…I think that, I don't know, the whole experience was like a kinda progression, I mean, it's the same with life I suppose but it was, like, you knew nothing and then you knew a wee bit and then a wee bit mair and a wee bit mair and then, like, the day comes where you, like, earn your stripes and you finally find out the whole story as to what happened ae." (Kev, KIN)

Dylan, however, specifically spoke of his mum revealing that his dad's absences were due to serving periods of imprisonment when he went to high school, and the result of this disclosure at this time:

> "But, yeah, and then when I went into, just before I went into high school, then my mum told me then that my dad was in prison. So it was, kind of, like, at that time obviously it felt like a big thing but it had been going on the whole time, but it felt like at that point there was, like, a big change […] with my family I think it was, kind of, like, I understand why they told me what they told me and it's totally fine but I think it was, like, going into high school and then being exposed to this huge crowd of people and finding out that my whole family had basically been

> lying to me all this time. So that support network felt a bit broken in a way". (Dylan, KIN)

As well as this period being one of a transition to high school, it is also a time of transition into adolescence, the onset of puberty, moving towards adulthood; a time which can be difficult even without the disclosure of, or dealing with, a family member's imprisonment:

> "Aye, and especially, like, you know, likesay, at they teenage years, you know what I mean, it's like, you're going haywire as it is, ae, so, it's like, dinnae wanna deal with this, you know, the schoolyard talk and things like that, it was horrible." (Kev, KIN)

> **Morven:** I was getting in trouble for misbehaving even though I was sitting doing my work and I was just, like, well if you're going to give me into trouble, like, I'm going to give you a bloody good reason. I will make your life hell if you're making my life hell (laughing). And then that didn't help the situation at all but (laughing), but I think that's, like, quite normal for, like, an angry, like, teenager to think that.
> **Kirsty:** Yeah, you're an angry teenager as well you're not a rational thinking-,
> **Morven:** Plus you've got all the teenage things going on, like-,
> **Kirsty:** Yeah.
> **Morven:** Horrible world of puberty hits and you're just confused with that anyway never mind having all that and it's, like, so, all that could've been solved with, 'Are you okay?'

Looking at these transitions to high school can also illuminate some of the unequal experiences of youth or adolescence. While Kev and Dylan talk about the difficulties of these disclosures being made as you are going into high school and beginning to deal with puberty, around half of the young people I spoke to from the group within Glenview YOI spoke of having left, either completely or at least mainstream, school in their early teens. So, this transition was not one into a higher level of education but in fact out of education, and perhaps away from a marker that signifies a young person as still being a child.

5.2.1.3 Growing Understanding

The growing self-understanding of young people compared to their younger child selves, involving a loss of innocence, can also impact on what it is like to have a family member in prison. KIN member Morven's reflections on visiting her brother as a 12-year-old were that it was nice to visit when kids were there, though her language shows that this was a group she did not include herself within, because there was a "light-heartedness". She wished she "had that childhood innocence going in" but that, instead, "having somebody in prison kind of takes your childhood innocence away."

As young people begin to understand what someone being in prison or having committed a crime means, both in and of itself and in the context of wider society and their views, this can change how young people relate to their family member, and their loss from the family. In Van Parys et al.'s (2015) work looking at young people's experiences of having a parent with depression they note that in respect of this, adolescence was a time when the young people would not only begin to consider themselves more but that there was also "more room for the expression of negative feelings toward the parents." (p.534). This idea is reflected by Dylan when he spoke of how he felt after repeated periods of his dad's imprisonment during his life:

> "I think when I was younger I would, kind of, I would, like, miss him when he was gone because I didn't know what was going on and whatever and, like, I would want to see him obviously a lot more, but then when I was older I did, it got to the point where it started to make me a bit angry and I was, like, 'Why does he keep doing these things?' and, yeah, so it was just, I think it was just different when I was older."

It can also potentially affect the stigma felt as the family member of someone in prison, whether enacted stigma, where discriminating behaviour actually occurs, or felt stigma, where it is instead expected and feared. Partly, this may be because a younger child who has not been made aware of the reason for a family member's absence cannot have a fear of the stigma which can come from this reason (i.e. imprisonment). Research has shown that pre-school children have an awareness of how it is unfair to exclude someone due to their race or gender

(Theimer et al., 2001) and by age 10 most children (92%) are aware of what it means to discriminate and were shown to be able to identify this in respect of ethnicity (Verkuyten et al., 1997). With regards to the stigma and discrimination related to a family member's imprisonment, it is likely that certainly with older children, i.e. young people, there is a growing awareness and understanding of imprisonment, what this means and society's norms and values around it. Dylan reflected that when he was younger, and was not aware of where his father was (he speaks of him simply "disappearing"), that those he was at school with, in the early years of primary school, would also have been too young to be aware of what may have been going on.

There are assumptions, and in fact research, around the normalising of prison and imprisonment in certain communities (Nagin, 1998; Hirschfield and Piquero, 2010), however the participants in this research did not always bear this out. While they spoke of the fact that they knew others who had family members in prison, or that in the area they came from they and others they knew had subsequently spent time in prison, they had still been told, or felt the need, to keep their own family member's imprisonment a secret when they were younger:

> "But then, see, if I used to shout it and that, like, out in public and that you'd get telt, like, shush and that, know, 'cause it's embarrassing obviously […] You need to try and keep it a secret." (Darren, Glenview)

> "I didnae tell anybody. I didnae, like, like telling anybody or that, do you know what I mean." (Grant, Glenview)

> "I kept it, I kept it, like, a secret, you keep aw that stuff to yoursell, don't wanna tell anybody, like, obviously your ma's been in jail, your da's been in jail, they'd be, like, aw, that's just a fucking toe-rag, wae his family. So obviously you keep aw that kinda stuff to yoursell, or, like, obviously if somebody asks you you're gonna say, you're gonna say but if you don't ask me you're no gonna get, you're no gonna know." (Declan, Glenview)

5.2.1.4 Practical Differences

More practical aspects of what can be missed where young people are not perceived as a specific group in their own right relate to communicating and maintaining a connection with someone while they are in prison. This theme is explored in more detail in relation to spatial and temporal aspects of distance in relationships when someone is in prison in Chapter 7. Here, it is outlined to highlight elements of difference between young people and younger children or adult partners.

To provide some context to these discussions around communication it is important to note that communicating by telephone with a family member in prison is done very differently than telephone communication within families outside the prison environment. For many families today, phone calls may not be the main form of communication at all. For the first time the number of voice calls made using mobile telephones is falling, indicating the rise of other forms of communication (Ofcom, 2018). As outlined in Chapter 2, telephone calls from a prison tend to be made during restricted 45-minute periods in the evening during the week and during the day at the weekend. This, of course, requires that people are always able to leave their cells during these periods which may not be the case depending on what has happened in the prison that day. Further restrictions on the number and length of calls which can be made are around costs, which are outlined fully in Chapter 2.

The result of these restrictions can be that young people have to make a choice of staying in their home to wait for a call which may come through at any point during a 45-minute window in the evening, or even not at all, or missing the chance to speak to their family member. One of the pains of imprisonment for those within prison can be their loss of autonomy and control over their time but this can also be felt by relatives of prisoners whose time and movement can similarly be restricted in this way.

The feeling of missing a call when it comes from someone in prison is perhaps difficult to understand in our age of constant communication. For most people outside prison if you miss a call you can simply call that person back, leave a message, text them if you are not able to make a call at that moment, or even

get hold of them on one of the many other social media platforms that are available. With a prison phone call, however, you can't simply call back, and you don't know when that person may be able to call you again. Natalia reflected on what it was like to miss that call in the context of being able to speak to her dad whenever she wanted once he became a Category D prisoner (similar to open prisons in the Scottish estate) and was allowed a mobile telephone:

> "The fact that I can speak to him and call him whenever I want is, like, I can't even explain to you how big of a deal that is, because it was so, when you, when you, when you have someone in prison and they then call you from the prison, and you miss that phone call, I can't explain to you how it feels. You literally feel like, it's just, yeah, it's a really hard feeling to explain because you're, like, that's, not only has he queued up for that phone, he's then had to pay to call and it's so expensive to call a mobile, but obviously that's the only thing he could do with me because I was away at boarding school, and I'd missed that call […] Yeah, so, I'm constantly, like, finding a signal, like, but, yeah, it was, it's just the most horrible feeling."

As a young person, it is likely they will be spending less time within the family home than younger children, have more demands on their free time and be spending more time with peers than family, all of which impact on the ability of someone in prison to maintain a relationship through telephone calls or visits. As older teenagers, who may be going off to college or university, the telephone call (or perhaps more likely the text or WhatsApp message) rather than the visit, or even if family members are not in prison, face-to-face contact, may be the way that they would be most likely to communicate with their family member. This age group is different from younger children in that they may be at the point where they are moving away from the family home and the way they would keep in touch and remain as a family will be different from when they were younger. This opportunity to communicate by telephone rather than by visits mean that for this age group this could be the more natural way that they would 'be' a family and maintain these relationships.

The restricted times phone calls can be made by someone in closed conditions means that they tend to take place early in the evening, a time young people

can often be out, necessitating a telephone call to their mobile telephone rather than a landline. Where this occurs, it can result in an increased cost to the person in prison and a consequent reduction in the time spent on these calls. This experience has been explored specifically in relation to mothers in prison and the subsequent choices and compromises they had to make (Booth, 2018). The alternative can be that calls continue to be made to a landline and the young person simply misses the call:

> "So, aye, you're barely ever in, know what I mean, unless it's late at night. (Darren, Glenview)

> "…talking about the, what was it, aye, like the phone calls, that becoming a barrier for your outside life, you know, 'cause you're having to then adjust your plans that maybe you've got with your pals and things like that. I was daein that constantly, you know what I mean, to try and catch these phone calls […] If he'd missed us he would say to my mum and, like, I had a mobile at the time with going through secondary school ae, so she would phone me and say, 'Listen your da's on the phone, he's gonna try and phone again at some point' […] I had to, like, run down from where I was with my pals and things like that, ae, and, like, run down the road to try and catch this other phone call. So, it did put a bit of a barrier up, ae […] I would, like, try and kinda prioritise phone calls with my faither, which was kinda making me lose oot on times […] At the time it kinda, it stopped us from kinda venturing very far, you know what I mean […] I'm sure where there was a stage where I was, like, booking my da and saying, like, 'You cannae phone me at this time on this certain day 'cause I'm daein things,' you know what I mean […] and that made you feel pretty guilty…" (Kev, KIN)

Even where calls are made to a mobile, older teenagers, who have more active social lives, can struggle to find times when calls can be guaranteed to be made and received at a convenient time:

> "…we started off by trying it every Sunday morning. So, at some time on Sunday morning. So from, like, 8am to, like, midday I'd be, like, like holding my phone, watching it, like, trying to see if he'd ring. So, we

> started off trying to do that but obviously that'll only go so far, like it's difficult. So, we did try that […] It's difficult, and obviously, like, I'd just turned 18 as well so I was, like, going out and stuff on Saturday nights." (Natalia, KIN)

While some of the young people would either make themselves available on their mobile telephone, or alter their routine to accommodate calls to a landline, as Kev talks about above, not everyone was willing to do this:

> "…when I went hame early that's when I'd talk to him but if I wisnae in early I wouldnae talk to him […] I'm no gonna go oot ma way to sit and talk to him, like, 'Oh I'll be in for aboot quarter tae, quarter tae eight for you tae phone me.' I'll, if I'm in at that time that's when, that's when you talk to me" (Declan, Glenview)

Declan also chose socialising with his friends over visiting his brother:

> "Naw, I never, I never went and visit him once because I didn't, 'cause I knew obviously, a teenager, obviously I was oot aw the time. So I wisnae, saying, I wisnae taking, obviously, I always wanted to go oot, didnae want to have to come up and see somebody in the jail […] Aye, it's, obviously, obviously I was oot aw the time so I didnae want to come up, and obviously, that's, like, three hours of your time away, an hour and a half here and an hour and a half back, that's, whit, three hours of your day away […] dinnae want to come up to a jail to visit your brother, and everybody else is oot"

He spoke of not having a particularly close relationship with his brother however, and young people who did have closer relationships, whether with a parent, sibling, or other family member, may find this choice more difficult to make.

Where the young people did try and continue to live a 'normal' teenage life this led, in some cases, to judgement:

> "Yeah, but then when you reach, like, I probably shouldn't, but, like, fourteen you do start to kinda go out and spend more amounts of time late at night in a park, like, kinda, and then just hanging about with people and, like, staying over at their houses, going to parties and things like that. And it was, like, I didn't feel like I should have to put that on hold, because my brother made one, or three, bad decisions, but, it's, like, but then people were kinda, like, kinda a bit judgey, they were, like, 'Well you should devote more time to him.' I'm, like, 'But I'm still a teenager. I'm still trying to have this whole teenage experience and not, not be held back by somebody being in prison.' I'm, like, 'I'm still just a normal person.'" (Morven, KIN)

Family is typically envisaged and constructed as a (female) partner and (younger) child in policy and practice. The National Performance Framework for Prison Visitors' Centres (2017) in Scotland lists the provision of "a designated space for children's play with toys and books" (p. 8) as essential but that "books/reading materials are provided for adults and young people" and "play areas are inviting, safe and offer an exciting range of toys and activities appropriate for children of different ages" (p. 9) only as desirable. Liam, Glenview, spoke of not having received bonding visits with his father due to his age, but that his younger siblings had had these:

> **Liam**: You had bonding visits, they're called bonding visits, I was too, I was too, I was too old to get bonding visits.
> **Kirsty**: Right, okay.
> **Liam**: But the younger ones did […] they got bonding visits.
> **Kirsty**: Oh right, okay. How old, how old were they at the time?
> **Liam**: My youngest one [sibling] was two and the other one was three mibbe, four.

This example was not current and was a reflection of what had happened when he was younger, however bonding visits tend to take place during what would be the school day so are at least implicitly, if not explicitly, for children under the age of five. This seems to suggest that after the age of five children no longer need to 'bond' with their parent. While children's visits are available for children who are under the age of 18, the times of these visits may not always

be practical given a young person's school routine. For example, they can be at times some high school students may struggle to attend if they live further away from the prison and their family do not have access to private transport (e.g. visits are at 5pm in HMP Barlinnie). This is even without taking account of potential after-school activities the young person may be involved in and may have to explain an absence from in order to visit a parent. Some are also first thing on Saturday mornings (e.g. 9.30am at HMP Kilmarnock), a time regular sporting activities or training may take place. Children's visits are also specifically aimed at allowing bonding between a parent (step-parent or kinship carer) and a child, therefore excluding siblings. For younger prisoners, their siblings are more likely to be under the age of eighteen so, in theory, would be able to qualify for these visits through being a child in terms of age, but not relationally in connection with the person they would be visiting.

5.2.2 Sibling Imprisonment

As with a focus on young people specifically, sibling imprisonment is also something which is generally missing from both the academic literature and policy and practice discussion in the area of familial imprisonment. Where we look at 'children's' experiences of a family member's imprisonment, it is perhaps young people who are most likely to have siblings who are of the age to be sentenced to a period of imprisonment compared to younger children. Five of the young people I spoke to during this research experienced sibling imprisonment, either when they were located outside of the prison or when they themselves were also within prison, either in the same or a different institution from their sibling. In this research, all the siblings who were serving a period of imprisonment were male, so although I talk of sibling imprisonment this is solely around having a brother in prison. This section will look at sibling imprisonment from the point of view only of young people who are not within the prison system themselves. Inter- and intra-prison sibling relationships are explored in Chapter 7.

As pointed out in the literature review in Chapter 2, and above, sibling imprisonment constitutes a gap in familial imprisonment research. There is a limited amount of quantitative research looking at the impact of a family member's offending on an individual's future offending which has taken into

account siblings (Farrington et al., 1996). While some qualitative familial imprisonment research does include participants who have had a sibling in prison, for example Condry's (2007) work includes one case in a group of thirty-two research participants and Foster's (2017) two from twenty-seven interviews, research which focuses exclusively on this is rare (see Meek, 2008). The self-selecting of participants and difficulties in recruitment, as outlined in Chapter 4, may go some way to explaining the restricted focus on certain family relationships above others.

5.2.2.1 Prison Visits

The Scottish Prison Service's recently launched Family Strategy (2017) states that "individuals have many ways of defining what constitutes family and what being part of a family means to them" (p. 5). The experiences of young people I have spoken to, however, suggested that this more open-ended notion of family was not something they saw reflected in practice or their own experiences of visiting in prison, particularly around sibling imprisonment. It should be noted that some of these young people were reflecting back on visiting, so processes may have changed in some prisons over the last few years that are not reflected in the data that I have.

Morven spoke at length about young people who are visiting a sibling within a prison. She remembers being "really angry" that because she was a sister and not a daughter she wasn't allowed to have special family visits, even though she was still a child at this time (aged 14).

> "They didn't, not that I was aware of when I was there, except, well, I went to [prison] and they were, like, 'Oh, how old are you?' I was, like, 'Right, I'm 14,' and they were, like, 'Oh that's perfect. So are you visiting your dad?' and I was, like, 'No, I'm visiting my brother,' and they were, like, 'Never mind, we can't help you.'"

Morven also spoke about how the opportunities during a visit to interact with her brother as she would have done at home were limited, and she felt there was a focus on younger children:

> "And specially, like, when it's siblings as well because, like, you know, like, you kinda just want to, like, mess about with them for a bit […] Yeah, we're used to, like, pretending to, like, beat each other up and, like, throwing each other over our shoulders and things like that, or, like, we used to, like, jump off bunkbeds and things like that together on to mattresses on the floor and it's, like, all of a sudden that was just, like, taken away. It's, like, you're not allowed to mess about in here and it's, like, like they didn't really have, like they had, when I went in it hadn't been done up at that point, like, they just had, like, a kinda play area for young kids, not, and it was, like, for the dads to go with them, not somewhere, like, a brother and a sister could just go and mess about […] even if they just had somewhere you could go sit on a sofa and, like, put your feet up together and just, like, mess about like you used to do […] It's, like, they don't really consider brothers and sisters being affected by it."

Noting Morven's observation about how even just having a sofa to sit on with her brother could have improved the visiting for her, this is something which is provided in visits within secure accommodation (a specific form of residential accommodation discussed below). This is something which Liam spoke about when I had asked him about the differences between visits there and in the YOI:

> "And there's, like, a nice wee family room, got sofas and everything like that. And there, you get to go sit in there, there's nae staff or cameras or anything in there, that's a private room for you to see your family."

Secure accommodation is a form of residential care for children under the age of 18. The reason that someone is placed in secure accommodation can be due to concerns that they are a risk to themselves or to others, and this can include being due to their offending behaviour. Where a secure placement is the result of a sentence in a criminal court, when the young person reaches the age of eighteen they will be moved to a Young Offender's Institution to complete the rest of their sentence, although this move can happen earlier, with one of my participants speaking of being moved when aged sixteen. As with examples earlier in this chapter, this is an example of an arbitrary numerical age where someone moves from being a child, in a secure, but less institutional form of

accommodation run by social work, to a young person, within a YOI, a form of custody managed by the prison service. At this time, as well as the location changing, the regime they are subject to changes, as do the facilities available to allow them to maintain, or rebuild, relationships with family members. Again, this perhaps illustrates elements of inequality for young people within society. While some are able to enjoy extended transitions, being able to be a 'child', or at least be supported by parents in some way, for longer, these young people can be moved into the prison system, albeit a YOI rather than a full adult prison, as soon as they turn 16.

The construction of family as consisting solely of a partner and younger children, can affect not only what it is like for those visiting within the visit itself and the eligibility for 'special' visits, as above, but also the timing of visits. Particularly in Young Offenders Institutions, where the young people within the prison (up to age 21) may have similarly aged siblings to themselves, visiting arrangements which do not fit well with school hours, combined with the distance people may need to travel to more centralised locations for young adults in custody, can also impact on the opportunities to maintain this specific family relationship.

5.2.2.2 Siblings vs Parents

The loss of a sibling to imprisonment is different compared to the loss of a parent. Siblings can provide a different kind of support and play a different role in a young person's life, which cannot be simplistically equated with a parent while they are absent. Sibling relationships may also be one of the longest lasting bonds within someone's life – present throughout your life unlike parents, future partners or your own children. As I noted above, when we are looking at young people specifically, the teenage years may also be a time where a young person spends less time with their parents and begins to find their own identity, spending more time with friends, but it may also be a time they begin to spend more time with their siblings. Their brother or sister is actually a friend, someone they go out with, share things with and generally have a closer relationship with than their parents at this time. For example, when Morven spoke about how it felt when her brother was not there to support her when her grandad passed away, that she couldn't "have [her] support network" she said,

“you know, at that time it’s, like, you’re a teenager, you don’t chat to your parents.”

Sibling imprisonment therefore, could potentially have a large impact on a young person’s life, and they could feel the physical loss more acutely, or at least differently, to when they were younger.

Chris, Liam and Scott all spoke about how difficult it was for them to go from seeing their brothers every day to once a week, and even then for a very restricted length of time.

> "I was lost when [my brother] was in here a wee bit ‘cause, know what I mean, I used to just go oot wae him every day, you know what I mean, I used to muck aboot wae [my brother] aw the time. And you only notice that’s the, the true pal you have is your family kinda a wee bit.” (Chris, Glenview)
>
> I don’t, I dinnae even know how to explain it, it was just, seeing him once a week, going from seeing him every day to seeing him once a week it was quite a big difference for me. I felt quite, like, lost, I didnae ken what to dae with myself, didnae ken what to dae wae the spare time or anything like that, but, just, had to get by and wait for him to get oot…” (Liam, Glenview)
>
> “‘Cause you only get forty-five minutes each visit so you’re only seeing them for an hour and a half and then you’re going home, but where usually you’d be with them all day.” (Scott, Glenview)

These quotes not only highlight potential differences in young people’s relationships with parents and siblings at this time in their life, but also begin to introduce the importance of context when considering a family member’s imprisonment, in this case levels and types of contact pre-imprisonment. This is a theme which runs throughout this thesis and will be picked up on again within the following chapters.

Where siblings are not just family but also part of the same social group, this could be associated with co-offending, or at least being involved in similar

behaviour. As referenced above, some quantitative research has made links between siblings' offending behaviour (Farrington et al., 1996), though this is limited. Seven of the participants in this research who were currently within a YOI themselves had also experienced the imprisonment of a sibling, or step-sibling, at some point in their lives. Of this group, one spoke of being in the same social group, though their periods of imprisonment were not for the same type of offence, and another spoke of being involved in similar offending to his older brother, though they had not offended together. The role siblings play in supporting someone when they are released from prison, and the hope that they will support them in their journey towards stopping reoffending, may be one reason they are not as much of a focus in research, and more importantly prison policy and practice. This may be particularly true where siblings are perceived as offending together, and as co-offenders, rather than potential supports for a life away from this behaviour (though Weaver's (2016) work draws attention to the importance of friendship groups as much in the desistance process as in their offending behaviour). The impact of what families are seen as being for, and who is then included as families of prisoners, is explored more in Section 5.3 below, as I look at this particularly in the context of the lack of intra- or inter-prison family relationships appearing in familial imprisonment literature.

Considering the impact of a sibling's imprisonment on wider family relationships, the loss of one sibling from a larger group can not only change the relationship of the young person to their missing sibling, but also change the dynamics and relationship between those who remain at home. So, even where a young person is not left alone by a sister or brother's imprisonment, their relationships with remaining siblings do not remain unchanged. For example, Morven spoke of how she had to start taking care of her other brother, who is autistic, by herself after her older brother was sentenced and that this, along with other things, left her feeling "really lost because I was, like, I don't know how to do all this stuff by myself 'cause I've never had to." Where we are considering the impact of a family member's imprisonment on a young person this should not simply be in respect of their relationship with this family member only, but consider the family and all the connections from which it is constructed, more widely.

5.2.2.3 Siblings as Parents

As well as fulfilling their own designated family role of sibling, young people can also take on a more parental role within the family, particularly where there is an age gap between younger and older siblings. This taking on of a parental role can occur due to a range of reasons, not just a parent's imprisonment, and there are more detailed discussions around this in Chapter 6. This is mentioned here, however, to highlight that where we fail to recognise wider family relationships, in this case siblings, as well as missing the importance of these relationships in their own right, we can end up with a narrow focus on parental imprisonment, focusing on biological parents only rather than anyone in a kin structure who plays a parental role (e.g. the "psychological parent" as defined by Goldstein et al. (1979)). These young people and their experiences would therefore be overlooked, both in the academic literature and in policy and practice.

Morven and Liam both spoke about their older brothers fulfilling, in some way, a parental role in their lives.

> "…he'd always, like, make sure I was, like, ready if, like, my mum had to go to work quickly he'd just be, like, 'Oh, right I'll make the dinner. Like, I'll watch out for her, I'll walk her to school,' and things like that, you know. And, like, first day of primary he stayed back to, like, walk me to school with my mum and things like that so he was always just there and it was, like, looking after me and things like that. So it's, was like a father figure 'cause he did everything that, like, my dad would have done if, you know, he didn't have to work horrible shifts." (Morven, KIN)

> "So to me my brother, my brother is like my dad." (Liam, Glenview)

When their brothers went to prison they therefore indirectly experienced some element of parental as well as sibling imprisonment.

5.3 What are Prisoners' Families For, and For Whom?

Moving on to look at the question of what are prisoners' families for, and for whom, raises the question of who prisoners' families are not, and why some, and their experiences, are invisible within both literature and policy and practice. In order to understand why, in this case, young people, sibling relationships and inter/intra-prison relationships tend to have been omitted when thinking about familial imprisonment we have to look at the policy in this area. In doing so we are then able to understand why the gaps that were discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter are there. This section of the thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive policy review but instead, elements of policy documents are drawn on to explain and illustrate the points made around the exclusion of certain groups when we think about families of prisoners and who exactly we mean in reality when we use this term.

Much of this section looks at the construction of families of prisoners by looking at prison and wider policy (e.g. the SPS Family Strategy and the Farmer Review) which is based around the ideas of encouraging desistance, or the reduction of reoffending. It then explores this in respect of the consequences which can arise where young people, siblings, or those who are also serving a prison sentence themselves are then not seen as groups who can support this behaviour.

Intergenerational, or interfamilial offending is something which is acknowledged and features within criminological literature, however this tends to be done in a quantitative way (e.g. Murray and Farrington, 2005; Farrington et al., 1996; Farrington et al., 2001). There is little familial imprisonment research documenting this in a more qualitative way (see Da Cunha, 2008 for exception) and nor does it tend to be a focus of policy and practice.

Of the ten young people I spoke to as part of this research who were currently within a Young Offenders Institution (YOI), six had had a family member serving a period of imprisonment at the same time as they were serving their own sentence. Three were serving their sentence at the same time as their male parent (father or step-father) was serving a period of imprisonment within another prison and five had served a sentence along with their brother or step-

brother; four in the same YOI and one whose older brother was within an adult prison.

These young people spoke of a variety of different experiences: of reconnecting with family members they had lost contact with; to "closer" relationships; to simultaneous imprisonment with a sibling being "stressful"; or to knowing they were step-brothers but to having had little contact previously. None of these, however, are currently reflected in research on familial imprisonment, which instead tends to focus on prisoners' family members who are outside of the prison walls.

The experiences of inter- and intra-prison family relationships, and specifically their impact on elements of distance or closeness within these relationships, are examined in more detail in Chapter 7. The intention here is simply to highlight that these families of prisoners exist and to reflect on how their absence from literature or policy, as with that of siblings above, may reflect and provide context for the latter question in this chapter's title of "what are prisoners' families for?"

While there is a human rights basis for recognising families of prisoners within policy and legal procedures, and this is sometimes referenced within policy documents, often the underlying basis is actually one of desistance or preventing reoffending. While families can play an (important) role in this, and are often supportive of their family member's journey towards stopping reoffending, constructing them solely in this way can lead to an exclusion of some and a focus on others. A narrow co-opting of desistance theory and thinking by a prison system can also result in the terms "desistance" and "reducing re-offending" being seen as synonymous. In fact, the former is a process which belongs to the individual undergoing it, although others may have an interest in it, while the latter tends to be the aim of the system itself. Where the focus is on reoffending rates the system's needs are placed at the centre rather than those of family members, or even of the prisoners themselves.

Articles 3, 9 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Article 8 of the Human Rights Act (1998) all apply to children of

prisoners. They can be relevant both at the point of the parent's sentencing and later in the process have an impact on the child's rights to maintain a relationship with their parent while they are in prison. These rights focus on children and parents explicitly, though some are worded more generally to include "family" life so could be applied to wider family relationships such as siblings.

A discussion between two KIN members, Morven and Amie, at one of the group's residential sessions shows how they felt about their role, and that of other agencies, including the prison, in respect of services provided during their brothers' sentences as well as afterwards following release. Amie spoke about how she felt her family had been expected to provide support for her brother after his release and that there had been no other help for him, or them. She put this in the context of feeling that since they were seen as a "supportive" family they had been expected to provide this support, rather than it being provided by, for example, social work (who provide what would be probationary services in England and Wales). Morven also commented on the expectation on family in her interview stating, "…because he had family on the outside nobody supported him, they were, like, well your mum and dad are there and it's, like, but they're not professionals…".

Their differentiation in how families may be viewed, and the resulting differences in how they may be treated, ties in with Jardine's (2018) work which cautions against constructing families solely as resources. She points out that while initiatives around family contact are, of course, welcome that there is a lack of recognition of how much families themselves contribute to their success through their own efforts and provision of material and emotional resources. With little support themselves, and in a context of "austerity, cuts in services and widening inequalities" (p. 128) she cautions against the positioning of families of prisoners as supports, both during their family member's sentence and as resources to aid their resettlement following its completion.

This instrumentalising language can be seen in key policy documents with a focus on families of prisoners, as can a differentiation between the "supportive" families, such as Amie spoke of above who qualify as the "pro-social bonds"

within desistance theory (Maruna, 2001) and those who instead pose a 'risk' to this process. For example, the recent Farmer Review (2017), whose title itself centres the prisoner and their offending behaviour ("The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime") explicitly states: "A theme of the academic research which I also heard in my evidence gathering, was [the families] should not be 'instrumentalised' or 'used' in order to serve the aims of the criminal justice system…" (p.17). It goes on, however, to use the word 'resource' or 'asset' in relation to families of prisoners a number of times. In the Review's foreword, families of prisoners are also described as "allies in the rehabilitation cause" (p. 4).

There also appears to be implicit judgements on which families are the 'right' families for whom contact should be encouraged and supported:

> "Indeed, the nature of an offence may mean contact with family members is inappropriate and not beneficial to either a prisoner or his relative. Family members may be the victims of his criminal activity or strong influences provoking offending behaviour." (p. 16)
>
> "…positive family relationships are associated with reduced risk of reoffending" (p.18)
>
> "Contact with family members may be detrimental to prisoners (for example if their families reinforce criminal activity)" (p.22)

There are obviously reasons why family contact may not always be appropriate, or in a child's best interests, where, for example, the offending may have been against a family member or there may be child protection concerns. There is, however, a difference between preventing contact for these reasons and discouraging it due to concerns around the family member's potentially negative impact on someone's offending, where that person wishes to maintain and continue that relationship.

The Review does recognise family as wider than simply the nuclear family and that it can cover both extended family members and non-blood relations who provide support such as friends, but its focus on reoffending and 'positive' family relationships will still potentially exclude those which take place wholly within prison and which are explored later in this thesis.

The focus on the family as a resource or an asset to be sustained or encouraged while someone is serving a prison sentence can also impact on young people after their family member's release. Liam spoke of how he had been visiting his dad while he was in prison but when his dad was released the relationship broke down:

> "He came oot and disappeared again. So it was just like we were a rebound for when he was in prison and then when he got oot he just disappeared again…"

Scharff Smith (2014) noted that one of the prison officers he spoke to as part of his research used the term "yoyo" parents (p. 191) to describe behaviour similar to that which Liam is talking about above. This is where parents gain some control over otherwise chaotic lifestyles while they are in prison, or where the fact they have little to do in prison sees them take more of an interest in their child's life than previously. On release however, they can revert back to previous behaviours leaving children disappointed. Though the staff noted only a few of the prisoners displayed this behaviour it is still salient to consider the potential harm that could result from this experience for children and young people.

Comfort (2008) also spoke of her participants' experiences and the contrast between the "rosy outlook" (p. 169) which they had described while their partner was still incarcerated, compared to the reality following their release. These disparities between hopes for release and the reality, as seen in Liam's comments above, have been echoed by young people within other familial imprisonment research (e.g. Brown et al., 2001; Johnson and Easterling, 2015a; Saunders, 2017). For one of the participants within Saunders' (2017) research, the prison represented the possibility for them to reconnect with their parent

who would be in a specific place and accessible for regular contact, but what happens on release when this is no longer the case?

Where someone is within prison, contact with family members can become more important where they have more time and less demands to fill it with. They may have less access to drugs or alcohol, be away from friends and associates, and instead have a singular focus on family, including their children. The prison's wish to encourage these relationships during a period of imprisonment can also place a focus on building these relationships up. On release, however, there can be the reintroduction of demands on the family member's time or issues which they have not had to deal with while they were in prison. This, taken along with the removal of the support provided by the prison to enable prisoners to maintain these relationships, can result in them breaking down. This breakdown, of something which was encouraged and built up in prison, can then compound the potential harm of the family member's imprisonment for young people if it occurs on someone's release.

These Government, and prison specific, policies and reviews I have discussed will draw on academic research. They contain statistics on reduced reoffending rates for those individuals released from prison with active family relationships, as well as potential issues for families, and children specifically, of people in prison. This highlights the intertwined nature of policy and research: research focuses on family as certain kinds of partners and children; policy documents are written drawing on this research; further research flows from the increased interest in the area generated by these new policies. This is how the voices of others – like those experiencing sibling imprisonment, or whose child or grandparent is in prison – can come to be excluded. The focus on desistance, reducing reoffending, and a focus on 'positive' relationships and 'pro-social' bonds can see those who are in prison along with their family member also excluded. Armstrong et al. (2017) recognise how researchers can "produce the fields they study" (p. 21), and how this can then link into policy underlines the need for a level of reflexivity within research, as argued for in the previous chapter.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored who qualifies as being seen as 'families of prisoners', whether in research or policy and practice, and how the underlying purpose of the family in these areas can influence this construction. This has not in any way covered all potential family relationships and is not a comprehensive examination and full widening of this definition of what family is or can be to people in prison. It has, however, begun to do this through the focus on young people as a specific group, distinct from children more generally, on sibling imprisonment and drawing attention to the existence of families of prisoners where the young person and the family member are both in prison at the same time (something which is covered in greater detail in Chapter 7).

The chapter underlines the need to recognise young people as a specific subset of children. They may feel similar aspects of the experiences of a family member's imprisonment to younger children, but their occupying of the liminal space between childhood and adulthood also gives them particular experiences. They cannot always take advantage of bonding or children's visits and the provisions within them, but equally do not have 'adult' relationships with their parents. This period of their lives is a transition, towards adulthood, into high school, towards a greater level of understanding of the situation and their family member's perceived choice to behave as they do, and these transitions can all compound their experiences. Finally, practical differences arise in how young people live their lives compared to younger children, which can impact on the maintenance of a relationship with someone in prison.

This chapter also raises questions of who we see as children, whether from an age or relational basis, and questions the differences in the ways we are beginning to view young people in the criminal justice system themselves compared to those who instead have family members in the system. Already potentially labelled by their association with their imprisoned family member these young people can then become invisible, both within the visit room, where family now physically has to take place, and in the research which drives the policies which can shape their experiences.

Similarly, with sibling imprisonment, this is largely absent from academic literature, and policy and practice. The loss of these voices renders this group invisible, without a recognition of their unique experiences, and provision for them within, for example, prison visits. It also raises the issue of the need for a wider definition of who a 'parent' may be. This role is not solely fulfilled by those within the biological position of father or mother, or even a step-parent, but can also be fulfilled by a sibling. The loss of a sibling to a period of imprisonment can therefore be felt by a young person as both elements of parental and sibling imprisonment.

Looking at what families are for within the criminal justice system often sees them constructed in policies as resources or assets. The needs of the prison, or wider criminal justice system, are placed at the centre and the family are outside of this, to be drawn in or on when needed. While desistance theory includes elements of both the individual and the social (McNeill, 2012), its more narrow use within the prison system can result in a focus solely on the individual and a level of responsibilisation both on the person in prison to change, and more widely on their family members to support and ensure the success of this change. Young people can find themselves excluded where they are not the 'right' or 'pro-social' family member whose relationship should be encouraged. Specifically, it excludes the idea of relationships where both the family member and the young people are in prison (something which is considered further in Chapter 7). The prison system can also co-opt desistance theory into being synonymous with their need to reduce re-offending, not only removing families from the centre of familial imprisonment discussions but essentially removing the prisoner from the centre of their own process and replacing their individual needs with those of the wider prison or criminal justice system.

This chapter has begun to broaden the range of people we might include when we say 'families of prisoners', rather than the typical focus on partners, and children as one 0-18 age group. It has also examined the question of why we are looking at them, potentially allowing familial imprisonment to be framed and discussed in a different way. The next chapter moves on to looking at the idea of 'family' more generally and how this group of young people have experienced it. It will consider the impact of a family member's imprisonment for these young

people, but will not do so in isolation, as may more often be the case. It will instead explore the variety of experiences of family, and the impact on these of a range of issues and absences, including those relating to imprisonment, but also relating to a parent's substance and alcohol use, single parent families, changing working practices and extended family care arrangements. It will also discuss the idea of changing relationships between young people and their family members, including that of parentification (role reversal) and parent as peer (a horizontal rather than a vertical relation). The chapter will consider the changing nature of families, as well as how the role of a child can be constructed within a family context, and the inequalities inherent in some of the assumptions we make about what a family is and does, and how this can impact on young people's experiences of a family member's imprisonment.

6 Chapter 6 - Young People's Experiences of Family

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the idea of who the families of prisoners can be, focussing on including young people as a specific group, and sibling as well as parental imprisonment. It also highlighted the occurrence of intra- or inter-prison family relationships, where both the young person and their family member are in prison at the same time. This chapter will move on to the experiences of family from the perspectives of the young people who participated in this research. Who people see and recognise as their family is dependent on the individual, and what and who are officially recognised as forming a family group have also changed over time. Within this research, family is taken as whomever the young person talked about in this way. Where I talked about a 'family member's' imprisonment, often it was only parents or siblings that the young people spoke about, particularly in any detail, although grandparents, aunts and uncles were also mentioned by some.

This chapter will explore how the young people experience family in the wider sense, rather than simply when a family member is in prison. How important a distinction this is to make began to emerge strongly as I was carrying out the interviews. It became clear that looking at family for the young people when a member was in prison should not be done in isolation, and instead must be done in the context of their experiences of family prior to the imprisonment, as well as during it, and following their family member's release. This chapter provides the space to do this. While it does cover experiences of familial imprisonment, as it is both impossible and artificial to separate these from the experiences of family more generally, this chapter foregrounds the family while Chapter 7 goes on to foreground the familial imprisonment.

Family is explored here in the context of considering the different reasons a family member may not be present within the family home, the range of reasons a child may find themselves being cared for by extended family members, or why they may have to take on a more parental role within the family. This could include a family member's imprisonment but was not limited to it. I will also explore how imprisonment, and other factors, can result in a more horizontal

relationship between a child and their parent, rather than a vertical hierarchy, whether that be parent over child or the reverse, with the child caring or feeling responsible for the parent.

These discussions will be framed by an appreciation of the changing nature of families over time, both generally as an overall concept, as outlined in Chapter 2, but also over an individual family's timeline. This idea of fluidity within the family structure generally, over time and place, is something which is reflected in the young people's families. Silva and Smart's (1999) work conceptualising family as "a context of fluid and changeable relationships" (p. 6), in the context of the diversification of who and what families are, can be extended into viewing family as fluid and changeable within itself; a living organism which changes and adapts constantly over time. This occurs regardless of a member's imprisonment, though this can alter elements of its temporality and how the relationships within its structure change. This, along with why it is necessary to construct the family in this way when thinking about familial imprisonment, is something which is elaborated on in the sections below.

6.2 Loss / Absence

There can be a number of reasons for the loss or absence of either a parent or a sibling from a child or young person's life: for example, bereavement, divorce, hospitalisation, military service, mental health or substance misuse. These can be permanent losses, temporary absences or what has been termed an ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999), where the person may be physically present but psychologically absent or the reverse, physically absent but psychologically still present and part of the family.

There has been some work where the loss or absence of a family member due to imprisonment has been compared and contrasted with other non-penal absences (e.g. Moerk, 1973; Murray and Farrington, 2005; Rodriguez and Margolin, 2015). One aspect which has been noted as being different has been the stigma attached to a family member's imprisonment and how this can prevent children from being able to openly grieve for their loss and receive a level of sympathy and understanding, which is not always possible where the reason for the loss

has a level of stigma attached to it (Schoenbauer, 1986; La Vigne et al., 2008). A number of articles on parental imprisonment have noted the stigma and discrimination occasioned as a result of a parent's imprisonment (Murray, 2007; Boswell and Wedge, 2002; Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008; Beck and Jones, 2008; Dallaire et al., 2010) and my own participants spoke both of experiences of stigma and of the fear of it, but these were not the only experiences of loss which they spoke about which were associated with stigma.

For the young people I spoke to the use of drugs or alcoholism appeared to carry with them as much, if not in some cases more, stigma than the family member's imprisonment.

> **Kev:** […] I did, I looked up to him a lot when I was young, like, ae, and even when he was at his worst, when he was in jail and I knew he was on heroin and things like that, that actually hit me harder than the prison did, the fact that I'd found oot he was on drugs, 'cause I could handle my dad being a prisoner, well I thought I could anyway.
> **Kirsty:** Okay. Yeah.
> **Kev:** The thought of him being a junkie [heroin user] was totally, that's how I had to hide a lot of his past fae like my friends and family and things like that, well not my family but my friends, my peers, you know.

In interviews there was a hesitancy from some of the young people when they were talking about a parent's drug addiction or misuse of alcohol which was not there around aspects of their imprisonment and was present even where the parent they were speaking about was not the one who had been in prison. Of course, this could be explained by the fact that, for the young people in KIN, they had been discussing their experiences of a family member's imprisonment in the group, and in my presence, for at least a year prior to their interview. Yet both groups were perhaps more prepared to talk about a family member's imprisonment, the explicit focus of the research, rather than other issues within their families. It seemed that these subjects were more reluctantly disclosed and quickly moved on from and, as the researcher interviewing and writing about them, I felt there was a higher level of awkwardness and anticipated judgement linked to them.

Moving on from this, this section will explore the young people's experiences of loss and absence from their family unit both due to a member's imprisonment and for other reasons. Where a family member went on to be imprisoned following an absence due to other factors, this is highlighted to provide some context for the reader on the subsequent imprisonment experience.

6.2.1 Absence Through Work

Where Morven's older brother taking on a more parental role for her due to their father's absence through his work was discussed in Chapter 5 to show what can be missed where we fail to consider sibling imprisonment, here it serves to underline the role work can play in changing family relationships. Often this has been discussed in relation to the rise of working mothers and the subsequent impact this has had on family life (e.g. Hochschild and Machung, 2012) but this can also apply to fathers' experiences of having to balance work and family. Morven spoke about how her dad would work 12-hour shifts which meant that he was not always there to do things such as make her dinner or take her to school. Instead, her older brother took on this role.

> "And, like, first day of primary he stayed back to, like, walk me to school with my mum and things like that so he was always just there and it was, like, looking after me and things like that. So it's, was like a father figure 'cause he did everything that, like, my dad would have done if, you know, he didn't have to work horrible shifts."

In Morven's case she did not go on to lose her father to imprisonment, she lost her brother, and indirectly some of the parental role which he was playing. Lily did lose her father to a period of imprisonment, but prior to this he was already spending large amounts of time away from the family home due to his job, which had already changed their relationship:

> "… I don't feel like I ever really had a strong bond with my dad. Because he was always away for work anyway […] for me I didn't feel like, I feel like I was closer to mum than dad you could say […] so that, that bit,

> yeah, the actual, like, removing of his presence in my everyday life wasn't the hardest part…"

The economy is one potential external factor acting on families. In this case, this played out through the need for Morven and Lily's fathers to work shifts or to work away from home. The current lack of employment opportunities in some areas will also have seen a rise in people having to work further away from their family home (Ozkul, 2014; Office of National Statistics, 2016b), causing absences even in what could be seen as nuclear families due to economic needs.

When I asked Lily about her relationship with other family members after her dad's imprisonment, she spoke about the fact that she had then had to move and was living with extended family (an aunt) rather than her mother, who stayed where Lily had grown up for work.

> "So, like, say with my mum, it's 'cause we came over here and she hasn't, she, like, wasn't, like, physically watching us growing up any more. So, like, me and her started drifting apart as well but that's just due to like distance and stuff like that."

So, Lily lost her mother from aspects of her life, not as a direct consequence of the imposition of a period of imprisonment, but due to decisions made following her father's imprisonment.

6.2.2 Divorce/Separation

Whereas Morven and Lily's fathers were both living with them, although with absences due to their jobs, some of the other young people's parents were, and had been when they were younger, living separately from them. While Kev and Darren spoke of their parents separating but still having contact with their dad, though they did not live with them, for others this was not the case. For Chris, Jay and Liam there was some contact with their fathers, though it does not seem as regular as, for example, Kev who spoke of spending weekends at his dad's house, and for some was very limited and sporadic. Ryan spoke of there being periods of years where he was not in contact with his father. From this group,

Kev, Darren, Ryan and Liam's fathers also went on to serve a period or periods of imprisonment.

Jay spoke of how his dad would come and take his younger sister for the weekend but he did not have this contact. At the time his dad left the family home Jay was around eleven while his sister was one.

> **Kirsty**: Did you still see him quite a bit after he moved out or not so much?
> **Jay**: Nah, I didn't used to see him. Used to see him once every, every few months or something, you know what I mean.
> **Kirsty**: Right.
> **Jay**: I would only see him if he'd come down, once, obviously after he moved out, well, he didn't move, me sister was born before he moved out, and he moved out when me sister was young. Me sister must have been about one, if that, and I only ever used to see him when he'd come to pick me, like, sister up, take her for the weekend, you know what I mean.
> **Kirsty**: Yeah.
> **Jay**: So he'd come down and pick me little sister up, take her for the weekend, and that's the only time I'd see him, when he's picking her up. And usually I won't even be in anyway, but I'd see him then, I'd say, what's happening and that, that's it. I wouldn't pure sit with him or nothing, know what I mean, you pick me sister up, fuck back off.

This reflects similar ideas around who are seen as children and what their needs are, as was explored in the previous chapter around prison visits and the idea of children's visits or bonding visits specifically. While, as outlined in Chapter 2, child is a relational term, children of different ages can often be seen in different ways in respect of their needs for care, nurture and contact with family members. This idea of the innocence of younger children who are in need of a level of care and nurture compared to older children who move away from this, is reflected in the UK by our particularly low levels of the age of criminal responsibility (8, moving to 12 in Scotland and 10 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland). Where young people, as in Jay's account, are beginning to

come into contact with the criminal justice system, this can cement this shift in how they are viewed. While I cannot know the reasons behind the decisions made by Jay's father around contact, here it does seem there was a recognition of the needs of the younger child compared to those of Jay.

As was also outlined in Chapter 2, the make-up of families in the UK has changed significantly over the last few decades. In Scotland, of all married couples with dependent children[6], 8% were step-families, with this rising to 29% for co-habiting couple families with dependent children (Scotland Census, 2014). Liam talked about the consequences of the fact that his dad went on to have children with a new partner being that his dad began to spend more time with this new family than with him:

> **Liam**: …then I got back home when I was maybe eleven and never really had a relationship with him since that, sorta broke away.
> **Kirsty**: Right, okay. Why do you think, was that just-,
> **Liam**: I hink it's 'cause mibbe, like, I hadnae been wae him 24/7 and I wisnae seeing him every day so mibbe it was a wee bit, like, he felt there was distance and then, I've got other half brothers and sisters-,
> **Kirsty**: Right.
> **Liam**: But he then started talking to them and he never spoke to us and then, it was just, he was, he was pulled in between the two, two sides but-,
> **Kirsty**: Right, so has be got, kinda, two families, like, you and your-,
> **Liam**: Me and my mum's side and my step-brothers and sisters' mum's side, so-,

So, while his dad's imprisonment may have played a part in the changing nature of Liam's relationship with him, it was not the only factor.

[6] A dependent child is a person in a household aged 0 - 15 (whether or not in a family) or a person aged 16 - 18 who is a full-time student and in a family with parent(s).

Some of the young people also spoke of the fact that while their parents were together, their father also had their own house, so did not always live with them.

> "Well I was, my dad's still together with my mum but he has a different house…" (John, Glenview)

> "Sometimes he wis, sometimes he wisnae. He had his ain hoose so-," (Grant, Glenview)

Grant talking about his father at times living separately to the rest of the family was in response to me asking what it was like when his dad first went in to prison, providing some context for this experience.

This raises the issue of space or place when thinking about families. Where children did not live with (in these cases) their father, there could be two spaces seen as home where family was carried out. The impact of a parent's imprisonment may also be experienced differently depending on how a parent's absence was felt within these spaces. For example, Kev lived with his mum so would not have visited his dad's house while he was in prison, so his dad's absence may not have been physically sensed day-to-day within this space. While not in respect of a parent's separation, KIN member Amie, who had been living with her brother prior to his first sentence but not his second, explained how this felt different in terms of the space he no longer occupied in the home:

> **Kirsty:** Do you think it's different now than when you were, kinda, younger, was your brother in the house with you the first time, you were living together-,
> **Amie:** Mmm hmm.
> **Kirsty:** Do you think it's been different because you've been away at uni or?
> **Amie:** Yeah, I mean I think it's been different because, do you know, as I said, the difference is the relationship, like, before it was, like, he was there all the time and then suddenly he just wasn't and, like, there was

> an empty room and, like, you know it was, everywhere was just a reminder of it, and it had never happened before, do you know.

While she noted that some of the difference was just down to the changes in the relationship which had occurred following her brother's first period of imprisonment, the fact there had been an "empty room" reminding her of the absence also played a part in this differing experience. Natalia also recognised the importance of space in these experiences, comparing her own experience of her dad's absence while she was away at university to her mum's, who was still staying in the family home:

> "I hadn't actually dealt with what had happened I'd just kind of, 'cause I, I literally didn't have the time, I like put it away, I had to do my A levels, then I had to go to university, then I had to, do you know what I mean, there's all these things going on. Whereas I think my mum, because she was at home, and obviously I wasn't at home either so I didn't feel that empty space because I wasn't there." (Natalia, KIN)

These ideas are consistent with findings by Lanskey et al. (2015) who explored elements of spatial perspectives within familial imprisonment experiences. They concluded that familiar spaces could be altered for children where their father was physically absent from the home, the empty space they left behind a permanent reminder of this absence and their separation from them.

6.2.3 Ambiguous Loss

The experiences outlined above represent physical losses of someone from the child or young person's family life, whether permanent or temporary. Boss' (1999) concept of 'ambiguous loss', and the related concept of 'boundary ambiguity', allows us to consider where someone may be physically present but psychologically absent, or the reverse, within the young person's family unit. Boss (1977) related the concept of boundary ambiguity to the field of family stress theory, where it can result from the ambiguous loss of a member from the family unit. Where members can perceive an individual as physically absent but psychologically present in the family, or vice versa, it can result in a lack of clarity for those within the family system of its boundaries, who is within them,

who is outside, and what each member's role within the system involves (Boss and Greenberg, 1984). Boundary ambiguity has been used as a framework to explore loss where a family member is missing in action, has Alzheimer's or is hospitalised (e.g. Boss, 1977; Mu et al., 1997; Kaplan and Boss, 1999). It has also been applied theoretically to the loss of a family member through imprisonment (Arditti, 2005; Bockneck et al., 2009).

In respect of loss through a family member's imprisonment, both aspects of ambiguous loss above may be relevant and experienced. This could be where the family member is in prison so is no longer physically present in the young person's day-to-day life but is still psychologically part of the family. It could also be where the family member may physically be present within the family unit, perhaps after their release, but there is an element of psychological absence. The latter circumstance may be due to the fact that the person who has been released has 'changed' while they have been in prison; that the 'child' they have returned to is no longer a child and they are struggling to relate; or just that the term of imprisonment has had an impact on them. As Morven stated in her interview, "prison changes a person".

As outlined in Chapter 3, the concept of ambiguous loss was one which was discussed with the young people in KIN at one of their residential meetings and Amie and Kev both spoke of how this resonated with them during this discussion:

> "[…] even when they're physically back, I mean, especially with my brother and stuff, I still struggle to, like, you know, emotionally connect with him because of everything that's happened and stuff and it's like, yeah, he's physically there but, like, psychologically, yeah, quite absent, yeah […] I definitely think it's, I mean, harder to explain the psychological absence than it is the physical one. 'Cause everyone can kind of relate to physical, I mean, you get it, they're physically not there, but it's really hard to explain, like, not being able to be emotionally close to someone that you once were." (Amie)

> "I mean for me personally it was, like, I was then psychologically no there, like, in my dad's eyes, because I didnae know how tae speak to him

> because he was away for a length of time […] it's, like, when they are released and they come back it's, like, hink of, like, two timelines, but all of a sudden, like, this one's been halted so, when he gets released you're kinda further on. So, especially, like, at the age I experienced it, it was like fae maybe, like, eleven year old tae sixteen, seventeen, roughly and through that time you know, ken, you start growing up so then when he comes oot you're automatically, like, right camping trips and hings like that and you're going, wait a minute, because you're almost an adult noo, you know what I mean, and it's really strange to kinda try to relate, and that kinda adds to the point, you're like, what do we dae noo? You know what I mean, like, do we dae adult stuff or do we dae kiddies stuff? It's really confusing, you know." (Kev)

Elements of ambiguous loss felt by the young people were not solely linked to a family member's imprisonment. Where addiction can remove a family member psychologically from the family unit, or change them from the person the young person knew before, this could also be said to be experienced as elements of an ambiguous loss (Boss, 2006). For example, when Liam spoke about his mother's use of Valium he said:

> "She wasnae a hands on mum, she was just there, just a prop in the middle of the living room…"

She didn't play the expected role of a mother in his life, and here in his description of her as a "prop" it suggests that while she may have physically been there, psychologically she was not present in Liam's life, or at least not while she was taking Valium.

6.2.4 "Disappearance"

Where a family member's absence is due to imprisonment but the child is not told the reason for the loss, this could perhaps be said to be more similar to a non-penal absence. However, where the child is not given a reason for the absence this can prevent them from processing the loss or receiving support if needed (e.g. Parke and Clarke-Stewart, 2001). Two of the young people used the

language of a "disappearance" when speaking about their parent's imprisonment:

> "…basically when, when I was younger, like, my dad just would, sort of, like, intermittently appear and, sort of, **disappear**…" (Dylan, KIN)

> "…when my dad went away it was very hidden so, like, he **disappeared** for, like, a long time out of my life and I had no idea where he was, nobody spoke about him […] it was kind of more of an abandonment thing, like, my family just basically ignored it […] with my mum I was already at my sister's and she had **disappeared**. See I say disappeared, do you know what I mean, it's, it's mad, it's like, I never, like, for me, like, when people say, like, 'Oh, your mum was in prison,' I'm, like, 'No she wasn't. She just **disappeared**.' (Sam, KIN)

When Sam *did* find out where his parents were, he spoke about how he understood the reasons behind why he wasn't told but that he would have preferred to know the reason they were absent:

> "They just, I think, like, it was good intentions, they didn't want to upset us, they didn't want it to, like, to get in the way, like, school and stuff and like our friends and stuff but I think it would have been better for us to know than just to think that my mum had ran off and left us or my dad had ran off and left us."

Dylan also spoke about how, when he was told that his dad was in prison, this gave him the opportunity to keep in contact, in this instance through letters and calls. This knowledge of where someone is can allow the family member to continue to be a part of the young person's life. It can allow them to get to know them even while they are absent, and allow the parent to get to know their older child or teenager as they are changing from the child that they left when they went into prison.

Dylan also spoke about what it meant to be able to speak about his father to other family members and how this was a time when his father was still able to "exist" in his life:

> "I think when I was with my gran it was, like, I guess, spending time with her was almost, like, the only time which he did exist because the rest of the time I couldn't talk about it, like, with anyone else in my family. So, I guess, like, with her that was the only, sort of, space in which the topic wasn't taboo. Erm, and, yeah, it was just, he was just, like, it's just the fact there wasn't this conscious thing to not mention him basically, it was the only time that that wasn't there."

This need to speak about someone in order for them to "exist" parallels some of the bereavement literature which questioned the previous dominant narrative around moving through the grief process by detaching yourself from someone following their death. Instead it advocates for the need to be able to continue to talk about someone in order to process their loss and allow them to continue to be a part of your life in some way (Walter, 1996).

6.2.5 One-off vs Repeated Loss

The temporal aspects of loss or absence can be seen where these absences can be permanent and one-off or temporary and either one-off or repeated. For example, death or divorce can be permanent losses, though obviously in different ways, whereas a hospital stay may be temporary and one-off or repeated. In respect of imprisonment, this research includes young people whose family members have served both short and long-term sentences, and while there is not enough data here to generalise on potential differences or similarities related to the effects of the short and long-term imprisonment of family members on the young people, this distinction should be noted. While we recognise there are differences in experiences of family members where the person is serving a short, series of short or one-off long-term prison sentence (see Kotova [2018]; Condry [2007] for a focus on the latter) in the research exploring children's experiences, this distinction is often not made explicit in the research findings. Where this is not done, there is the potential to lose the

distinction between what it is like for families to deal with a one-off and potentially unexpected serious offence which devastates a family and its members, and what it is like for those serving a series of more minor short-term sentences, and these being just another thing to be dealt with in a life filled with other challenges. Foster (2017) and Jardine's (2018) work, also carried out in Scotland, highlight this, and recognise that imprisonment is not always a traumatic event for families but can be just another challenge to be met and coped with.

Pragmatically, a single, or even a number of, short sentences can allow the true reason for a family member's absence to remain hidden. This can impact on children or young people's experience of this absence in respect of elements of stigma or opportunity to maintain a relationship with the family member (as discussed by Dylan). A one-off, long sentence however, could allow for a more settled idea of the family to form, albeit one that is carried out within a prison, compared to the continually disrupted form generated from someone serving a number of shorter sentences. Due to the small number of participants spoken to here, and the framing of the interviews, these differences are not something that has been able to be explored in any detail with the data I have, but it is an important gap in the familial imprisonment knowledge where distinctions between these types of losses are often not explicitly considered.

This section shows that young people can experience the loss or absence of a member from their family unit for a variety of reasons. These absences *can* be preceded or followed by this family member's imprisonment or be directly caused by it. I emphasise this point here to underline just how important this family context is. Young people will experience their family member's imprisonment differently depending on the living and/or contact arrangements of the young person and their family member, either at the time they are sentenced or during the serving of their sentence. Though it should be stressed that solely considering the physical aspects of a shared space is too simplistic a proxy for the overall emotional closeness of family members which can impact on young people's experiences of familial imprisonment. More generally, it stresses the importance of context when considering familial imprisonment

overall, something which this chapter, and thesis, bring to the fore by looking at the wider experiences of family and what it can mean for young people.

6.3 Extended Family Care

There can be a variety of reasons that children are, and have been in the past, cared for outside of their family home. Today, where these arrangements are in respect of part-time care, this is often down to parents' working practices, where children can be cared for outside of school hours by extended family members or through after-school clubs or other professional care services. Again, as discussed in Section 6.2.1, economic factors, and the need to work full-time or longer hours, can be an external factor acting upon families and changing the relationships within them.

While childcare arrangements were not specifically covered within my interviews with the young people, six gave examples of being cared for, either as a part-time of full-time arrangement, by extended family members. For Dylan, this was a part-time caring arrangement where he would go to his aunt's or his gran's while his mum was working:

> "With my mum I think, like, I don't know, it kind of, I guess it kind of affected it just in the sense that she obviously had two children to raise on her own so I didn't actually spend a lot of time with her when I was younger and I, kind of, I formed really close relationships with my, like, with my two grandparents on either side and, like, two of my aunts as well, so, 'cause I grew up around their houses."

While his dad served a series of prison sentences throughout his life, it is not clear that his mum required to work these jobs solely because he was in prison and would not have required to do so due to other reasons for his dad's absence, physically or in respect of financial contributions, from the family.

As with Lily's experience, in Section 6.2.1 above, Sam's care by other family members was more of a full-time arrangement, though he stayed with a number of family members for various periods. At times this was due to his parents being

in prison, but was not exclusively so. Rather than extended family, for example, aunts, uncles and grandparents, Sam stayed with his older sisters, though this also included their own families (Sam's nieces and nephews).

> **Sam**: Well, I've lived with my sister lots of times. Erm, well, when I was, when I was young, I was six, my mum, my wee sister was in intensive care for nine months-,
> **Kirsty**: That's a long time.
> **Sam**: So I was staying with my sister.
> **Kirsty**: Right, okay.
> **Sam**: And then my mum went away so I was staying with my sister for just under a year, so like, I'd say another nine months. And then I moved back, moved in with my other sister for a while, moved in with my mum, when I was thirteen I was put to my dad's care, no I was put to my sister's care for nine, my, like, not the oldest sister, my other sister, [ ], I was put in her care for nine months, and then I was put into my dad's care for just over a year and then I was moved into my other, the same sister [ ]'s care for six months and then I became homeless. I've moved a lot of places.

As with Sam, imprisonment was not the only reason the young people found themselves living with extended family members. Glenview participant Jay spoke of staying with his gran and grandad and fellow Glenview interviewee Chris also spoke of living with his gran:

> "…I used, didn't live with me mum no more, I lived with me nan and grandad […] Used to see, see me grandad more when I was, like, when I turned, liked, fourteen, seeing him till, up until I was, like, sixteen […] 'cause I lived with him…" (Jay)

> **Kirsty**: Have you stayed, did you stay at your gran's for a while then before you were in here?
> **Chris**: I stayed with them obviously when I was younger, I stayed wae them tae, when I turned I hink it was fifteen, sixteen, I was goin to an approved school then-,

Kirsty: Right.

Chris: So, when I was goin there I obviously, I just went back to ma grandma's and that and obviously I had a bit of a, I used to fall oot wae ma mum and that aw the time, ma wee brother, [ ], I used to faw oot wae him aw the time…

While neither elaborated on the reason for this living arrangement, and at the time I was more focused on the experience of family linked to a family member's imprisonment so I did not ask for further details, it shows that imprisonment is not the only reason for alternative living arrangements outside what would be seen as the nuclear family home.

These living arrangements also highlight potential differences between families and households (Allan and Crow, 2001; Morgan, 2011), and, as with the previous section, highlight the importance of space. While the two can overlap, the changing structure of family, as outlined in Chapter 2, means that they are no longer synonymous; where family can be done, and perhaps with who, changes over time. Allan and Crow (2001) state that "Family obligations extend to wider kin, but they are most significant where family members live in the same household" (p.12). This raises the issue in familial imprisonment research of there being a focus on parents, which can then exclude children and young people whose caregiver, and the person they share a home with, is an extended family member, or even no blood relation at all. Morgan (2011) however, notes the distinction between family and household in respect of the fact that with the growth of divorce, separation and reconstituted families, family relationships are not just contained within one household but can instead be spread across a variety of locations, with family being done in different places at different times, and with different people within these.

Where I outlined the themes around what makes someone a child and related this to parent relationships earlier in this thesis, this provision of care can of course be provided by a much wider range of individuals, constructing the role of child in relation to their caregiver, not necessarily their biological parent. A restrictive definition of what or who family is will mean we lose sight of these experiences.

6.4 Parentification / Role Reversal

The term parentification was introduced by Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973) as "the subjective distortion of a relationship as if one's partner or even children were his parent" (p.151). Where this involves a parent and child, essentially there is a role reversal where children have taken on roles and responsibilities within the family which are deemed inappropriate given their age. This process can occur not only where the children have been asked to take on certain roles within the family, but also where they have sensed a need to carry out these roles and provide a support function without explicitly being asked to do so.

This is a concept which has been applied to children's experiences due to a number of circumstances within their family. It has been used within research with children whose parents have divorced (Weiss, 1979; Jurkovic et al., 2001; Mayseless et al., 2004), where there is alcohol misuse within the family (Burnett et al., 2006), mental illness (Van Parys et al., 2015), "workaholic" parents (Carroll and Robinson, 2000) and families where physical and sexual abuse has been present (Macfie et al., 1999; Burkett, 1991). This has generally been considered in a more clinical or therapeutic context, focusing on the 'treatment' of children in these situations, and is more quantitative in nature.

While parentification has been shown to result in negative outcomes for children, which can continue into adulthood (e.g. Schier et al., 2015), this is not universal and research has also shown that the process can have both harmful and beneficial effects (e.g. Hetherington, 1999). At the time, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1973: 151) pointed out: "parentification should not be unconditionally ascribed to the realm of 'pathology' or relational dysfunction" and "…to some degree every child must be parentified by his parents at certain times. Without this, he would not learn to identify with responsible roles for his future life". The temporality of parentification is also something which has been raised in the literature in respect of how temporary parentification can, at times, be normative (Burnett et al., 2006).

This emphasises the more natural elements of role reversal within parent/child relationships, part of the fluid nature of families as highlighted in this chapter's introduction. The balance of caring responsibilities between a parent and child begins as more weighted in favour of the latter when they are younger, and less so as they grow up and move towards adulthood themselves. As parents also get older, however, the balance of caring responsibilities in the relationship can shift, becoming more weighted towards provision of care *by* the child *for* the parent. The level at which this takes place and who provides this care (e.g. family members or professional services) can vary across cultures but the shift in balance will still occur. It is also expected that as children grow up they will be given greater responsibility and the opportunity to take on different roles within the family as they test out and begin to take on the identity of a young adult. This role reversal, or taking on of more parental responsibilities does not happen for everyone at the same time or at the same pace. Those children and young people who have family members with, for example, physical or mental health difficulties, substance or alcohol misuse issues or who are in prison can experience these changes unequally. Imprisonment, and these other issues, do not necessarily bring about distinctive changes in the family unit and its relationships but instead can alter the temporality of changes which can occur in families naturally.

The experience for adolescents compared to younger children has also been shown to differ. Weiss' (1979) work exploring growing up in single parent families found that for adolescents this could be something positive, around elements of fostering independence and maturity (if their earlier developmental needs had been met and they were still receiving some level of support from their parent). This builds on the arguments made in the previous chapter for young people to be considered as a specific group rather than subsumed into the category of children overall. It also highlights the need to consider elements of parentification or role reversal as just that, elements of an overall relationship rather than meaning a complete reversal of roles on every level between a parent and a child. For example, Morven's brother may have taken on parts of the parental role, walking her to school and making her dinner, but her father still performed other aspects of this role and her brother aspects of the sibling role. Natalia spoke of visiting her dad while she had glandular fever and how she

thought “that was really hard for my dad as well because it meant that, you know, like, he wanted to, like, look after me and do the, you know, but he couldn’t do that and yeah it was really sad” indicating that in this instance he wasn’t able to fulfil this part of his parental role. This does not mean, however, that he was not fulfilling other aspects of the role.

Where a psychological rather than a sociological view of this term is imposed, this can also result in uncritical assumptions that parentification produces ‘excessive’ dependence on a child by a parent, and about how this is to be measured and in relation to which baseline. The idea of children, who and when someone is a child, what childhood is and how it should be experienced, and at which point it is appropriate to take on ‘parental’ or ‘adult’ tasks is also not really explored. Age or developmental stages are taken as a given whereas, as one of my participants, Scott, pointed out, children grow up at different speeds in different areas. Taken along with the elements discussed above this can turn parentification into a classed concept, where we compare children’s experiences with a white middle class construction of the role of children within a family and too easily pathologise those who do not have this starting point.

This kind of thinking can also construct children as passive actors in the family rather than active participants in a family unit where each member contributes, though perhaps in different ways and to different levels. Solberg’s (2015) work considers Norwegian children’s involvement in the construction of their own childhood, negotiating with their parents what it means to be a child within their own family through their contribution of labour to the household and its management. She recognised that while there was a power differential in the parent/child relationship this did not mean that the children would passively adapt to what their parents said and did. Instead there were “interactions” and “exchanges” in which both played a part. Through speaking to both children and their parents, she illustrated the different roles and responsibilities the children took on within their homes and how the “social age” which parents viewed their children as having varied across families in comparison to the children’s “biological age” which was the same. As children took on more responsibility, successfully, this then had a subsequent impact on how the parents viewed their child’s age and dependency.

The caring which takes place within families is also reciprocal between members rather than one which is always one way: provided *by* the adults *to* the children in the unit. There is a danger in pathologising elements of this caring role when we consider elements of parentification in children of imprisoned parents where we view children as *only* dependent and in need of care rather than there being a level of reciprocity (Brannen et al., 2000; Eldén, 2016).

6.4.1 Practical Parentification

Where parentification or role reversal appears in literature it has been said to involve expressive or emotional elements (e.g. giving advice or providing comfort, support or reassurance) and/or the provision of more instrumental or practical aspects (e.g. cooking, cleaning, looking after younger siblings) of the parental role within the family by the child (Jurkovic, 1997; Jurkovic et al., 1991). Considering some of the more practical aspects of the role reversal and taking on what are deemed parental responsibilities, some of the young people within my research were already performing these roles, regardless of any imprisonment. As touched on in Chapter 4, and above, prior to his imprisonment, Morven's brother had taken on a more parental role for her through their dad's absence due to his work. For Liam, his brother was also a father figure as his dad was absent from his life, partly due to serving periods of imprisonment, but not solely because of this.

In respect of where this taking on of responsibility is due to imprisonment, this is an area which builds on the arguments made in Chapter 5 for why young people need to be viewed separately from children overall as they can often end up taking on more caring responsibilities due to their age (Baldwin and Epstein, 2017). Within single parent families generally, however, it is also often the older children who may be expected, and/or want, to help out with younger siblings. This was the case for Chris who was one of eight children and whose mum was a single parent.

> "…then there's times that I'd need to help ma mum oot and that, just, know what I mean, wae the bairns, and I'd help her bath the bairns, get

> the bairns' jammies oan, put them into their bed and stuff like that and I just felt that was stuff that I needed to help her wae, you know what I mean, because, aye, she, she chose to have bairns but she never chose to dae it hersell, so, that's the way I kinda looked at it, you know what I mean." (Chris, Glenview)

In relation to a child's role in larger or single parent families, Minuchin (1974) noted that children taking on adult responsibilities can be "a natural arrangement in large families, in single-parent families, or in families in which both parents work" (p. 97). He reflects on the harm that can come from these arrangements but also that it can work well in some situations, with the children developing a growing competence and autonomy at this early age. While today in Scotland there may be fewer families with large numbers of children, the number of single parent families will have increased, therefore meaning provision of care for younger siblings can be expected and not unusual within these families.

Mazza (2002) speaks about parentification specifically in relation to paternal imprisonment. To demonstrate this, he uses the example of children in a visit room having to use the vending machine or heat the food in the microwave as only visitors have access to cash and can use the vending machines and cafes in the room. Although the children's ages are not mentioned, this example does not seem to be something which for many children they would not do anyway, and the responsibility for doing so would not be something that they found unusual.

Mazza (2002) also references elements of parentification around the changes in communication between a child and their imprisoned father, where fathers become dependent on their children to accept their calls, to choose to speak to them or answer their letters. In my own research, this theme around communication first arose from a brainstorming of ideas while working in the KIN project with the Dotted Q (a company creating live immersive theatre productions). During the discussions, Dylan mentioned that sometimes it can feel as if the parent in prison needs you more than you need them, particularly in relation to keeping in touch through letters, or through visits.

Where letters or phone calls are exchanged with someone in prison, the child has the power to choose to ignore these forms of communication. Whereas in family relationships carried on outside the prison environment communication can be face-to-face and the power will be assumed to lie more with the parent. This is another area, however, where young people may have specific experiences. Where an argument is made that while a parent is in prison the child has a level of control over whether to see them, take their calls or answer their letters, as teenagers I would argue that these years are a time these power and control balances within relationships are already being tested. As Scott pointed out, the speed at which children in certain areas grow up may also mean that these renegotiations happen at a younger age for some than others. The image of a teenager as someone who seldom talks to their parents, slams their bedroom door, refusing to engage, and rarely replies to calls or texts unless absolutely necessary may be a stereotype in some cases but is one that suggests, regardless of their parent's location, that control over communication is not always with them.

6.4.2 Emotional Parentification

The more emotional aspects of a role reversal, where the child performs a parental role by providing support or reassurance to either the imprisoned or remaining parent, were also seen in the young people I spoke to, both due to familial imprisonment and other factors. The idea of 'stepping up' or becoming the 'man of the house' may traditionally be thought of where boys lose their father in the home, perhaps providing support and care for their mother, or being asked to by an absent father (see Shaw, 1987), but it is not restricted to this gendered generalisation. This is perhaps unsurprising given the gendered cultural expectations on women and girls to provide care and support within families, something reflected in the research on prisoners' families specifically (e.g. Christian, 2005; Comfort, 2008; Jardine, 2018).

On being told by her father that his trial was not going well, Natalia stated that she "…almost kind of took that, like, 'Right, okay, I'm going to have to fill my

dad's boots,' not in a bad way but just in, like, a, right, I almost prepared myself…"

When asked about what she missed most, or the one feeling when her brother went away, Morven said, "I just kind of remember feeling that I had to, kind of, hold the family together."

Thinking about the more traditional idea of parents worrying more about their children when they are younger than the child would worry about their parent, Loureiro's (2010) work has shown that for children with a parent in prison the worry and fear for their safety has contributed to the development of psychological problems for these children. As well as the young people I spoke to acknowledging this worry, one participant also spoke of this extending to not wanting to "burden" them with things, instead trying to deal with everything himself to shelter the parent:

> "…going back to the relationship it did limit the relationship a lot, because you feel you cannae confide in them 'cause you dinnae wanna burden them with anything, you know. So, you, I don't know, that might stem to the growing up too quick and things like that, trying to deal with everything on your tod, and look after your mum…" (Kev, KIN)

Kev recounted one specific incident around having problems at school but not feeling that these should be shared with the imprisoned parent. One aspect of being a parent could be said to be the opportunity to 'help' your child, keep them safe and deal with any problems, but the child's need to not burden them can prevent this aspect of a parent/child relationship from developing.

Dylan did not feel like he had necessarily taken on a parental role in relation to his dad but he did feel there had been a shift of power around the traditional provision of support and need for approval:

> "I kind of felt, like, when my dad got out of prison properly and I actually started to form a relationship with him was when I was, like, 16, 17, so at that point I had already, kind of, grown up and formed the person that I

> was without him, whereas when he's coming out of prison he's then starting his life. So, I've always felt more like the, sort of, when you were talking about power, I've always felt I'm providing more support to him than I've ever gotten from him in that sense. So, I don't feel like I'm a parent but I don't feel like he has any, sort of, say over my life or any control aspect of it. Not that, I feel like he maybe seeks approval from me whereas I never seek approval from him in any way because I did it all before he was there, sort of thing. But I feel like he does, like, kind of seek approval from me on a lot of things." (Dylan, KIN)

Imprisonment was not, however, the only factor that caused the young people to worry about their parents. When Sam returned to his mother's care after she was released from prison, he spoke of taking on a practical caring role for his younger siblings, as well as for his mum, but also for his concern for her:

> "…I remember there being times where, erm, me and my brother, erm, staying at my mum's house and my mum used to go to the pub and leave me and my brother in, and obviously my little sister was ill, so, like, we'd have to look after her. So it's, like, we had to do the washing and we had to do, obviously hang the school clothes up and cook the dinners and, having to learn that from a young age. Like, having to bring my mum a cup of tea on a Saturday afternoon 'cause she was hungover, erm, like, having to, like, make sure she takes her tablets so, like, she doesn't go wonky during the week. Erm, I think it got to the point where I was just, kind of, I wanted to look after everybody else instead of myself, so, I kind of, I think I let myself go downhill because I wanted to look after everybody else." (Sam, KIN)

His mum's use of alcohol, rather than her imprisonment, although of course these two could be interlinked, was the reason that Sam found himself taking on a more parental role within the family rather than being the 'child'.

6.4.3 Re-Reversal of Roles

While research has explored this idea of role reversal while a parent is in prison, less has been concerned with this on the parent's release. Where there have been elements of role reversal it can be difficult for the child who has taken on 'parental' responsibilities to then return to simply being the child in the relationship:

> "…on my dad's release, when he came oot, it was, like, this role reversal, and it's noo suddenly trying to reverse itself again. So, like, noo, like, my da's back out, right, I can kinda rest easy noo, but it was so uneasy and awkward because I'm like that, right, what do I dae noo? You know what I mean, 'cause you've kinda fell into that persona, trying to help everybody and trying to make sure everybody's alright and noo you're just, like, everything's blew oot the water again ae. Which is pretty strange, weird, I don't know how to describe it." (Kev, KIN)

By only focusing on the role reversal as a one-off event, we fail to recognise the potential effects of this then returning back to its original form, a process which may be repeated where there are multiple sentences over a young person's lifetime. Where we know that the result of multiple family transitions acts cumulatively in respect of negative outcomes for children (Pryor and Trinder, 2004) we must also consider the result of continuous, and sudden, role reversals instead of the perhaps more gradual one-way process that would be expected as a child moves towards young adulthood.

The interplay between temporal and relational aspects of family life for young people are brought out through these discussions around parentification and tie in to the conceptualisation of family as a dynamic and constantly evolving entity. Within all families there is an expectation that over time children will take on more responsibility, with the relationship moving from a care arrangement biased in favour of the younger children to a point where it will later unequally have moved to be more in favour of older parents needing care. When and how this happens however can depend on external factors acting upon the family, of which imprisonment is one.

6.5 Parent as a Peer

While the section above on parentification illustrates vertical shifts in parent/child relationships, the young people's experiences of family also illustrated shifts to more horizontal relationships. Again, this can seem to stem from a parent's imprisonment or be due to other reasons, particularly where a parent may have spent a significant amount of time out of their child's life, resulting in a more "linear" relationship (as described by Dylan). Glenwick and Mowrey (1986) wrote of the "parent becomes peer" subtype of single parent family following a divorce. While this article is now over 30 years old and is based on how these families could be 'treated' in a clinical sense, the underlying premise and elements of the experience for the children in the families are relevant here. In this type of parent-child relationship the parent becomes more of a friend or confidante than assuming the more traditional authoritarian role. This change may be down to the parent requiring someone to fulfil this role where a partner, or other adult, is not available to do so. It may also occur naturally, although at different ages within different families, where the parent sees their child as older, socially, than they perhaps are biologically due to their behaviour or the extra responsibilities they may have taken on within the family (see Solberg, 2015).

Parents assuming a friend-like role within a child's life have also been seen in the case of step-parents who use the term "friend" to describe the relationship they have or hope for with step-children (Marsiglio, 1992; Church, 1999). Blyaert et al. (2016) categorise these friend relationships as "close but informal" relationships (p.124) although some of their participants also spoke of "being *a* father" (emphasis added) to their step-children, distinct from being *their* father, indicating that they would take on aspects of the parental role, particularly when their partner (the biological parent) was not present. Within these examples, unlike some of the young people's experiences below, there were other biological parents there who they felt were providing the explicit parental role, and therefore this was not something that they could, or should, be providing in their step-children's lives.

Where these changes occur in families due to a member's imprisonment, this can be as a result of the limited and restricted time the parent and child can spend together. Kev touched on this by giving an example of a time his father chose to perhaps act more as a friend than a parent. This took place during the period of time where his dad was within an open prison, so returning home for one week every month.

> "I confided in my da with that on the open visit and I says to him about this, this teacher and he was and he says, 'I dinnae like him either then,' you know, I think he was just trying to keep me happy, like, ae, 'cause he didn't want to tell me off on his only week with me."

Of course, this is not restricted to parent/child relationships where a parent is absent solely due to a period of imprisonment. It can also occur where parents are together but where one is seen as more of a disciplinarian and the other more of a 'friend'. Particularly where parents are separated and, usually, the father only sees the children at weekends this can result in him wanting the time to go well so making taking on a more authoritarian parental role more difficult, or less appealing. This echoes some of the young people's experiences of visits where, because of the short time they were able to spend together as a family each week, parents wanted them to go well. Amie commented that she was never allowed to argue with her brother during this time which was "so unnatural".

While Dylan spoke above about there being a power shift within his relationship with his dad, indicating elements of parent-child role reversal, when we were talking about who he saw as his family he spoke of it being more "linear", indicating elements of a "parent as peer" father-son relationship.

> "Yeah, I mean, like, I think it's really weird actually, just when you said that I was, kind of, like, I was, like, I wouldn't include my dad in the idea of my family and I was like, 'Oh,' but not in, like, a negative way I just think that he's so removed from everything else and all the other relationships I've had when I was younger in my family that I just see him as something totally different. So, yeah, my family would be, I guess, the

> people that, who raised me and my friends as well, so, but yeah it's funny, I think I just see him as something totally different, it's just like a linear relationship that I have with him almost."

Ryan had limited contact with his dad until he was sent to a Young Offender's Institution (YOI) and his dad got back in touch with him. His dad then also ended up being sentenced to a period of imprisonment himself. When I asked Ryan what it was like being back in touch with his dad he responded, by saying it was "Just somebody to talk to" and when I asked him after that if his dad felt like he was his dad he said "He's mair of a pal." From the way Ryan spoke it did not seem that his dad had really been a large part of his life, certainly not responsible for caring for him, or having what may be seen as a more typical parental role, so this may have contributed to the fact that he saw him more as a "pal" than a parent.

Michael also spoke about his mum being his "best pal". She was sentenced to a period of four years imprisonment when he was a young child of around four. His dad was also sentenced at the same time and as a result Michael spent this time in foster care. When he was returned to his mother's care on her release he was aged around eight. From then he went into a residential placement aged eleven and straight from there to a YOI when he turned sixteen. When I asked him about visiting his mum in prison when he was younger, which he did every week, he said it was "Just the best day. I used to just look forward to that, that's the only thing I had to look forward to was going to go and see my mum every day, that was it." He later went on to say how great it was to be with her afterwards and that she was, and is, his "best pal". Before she went to prison his mum had drug addiction issues so was unable to care for him, but he spoke of how she changed when she was released and her guilt at leaving him meant that she would then do anything for him, perhaps contributing to the move from parent to pal:

> **Michael**: […] and my mum felt so bad fur what she done wae me she just didnae gie me into trouble, never, and she says to me I'll never leave you ever again and I'll stick up fur you fur anything you ever dae, even if you're in the wrong. So, I would run hame straight away and I'd be, like,

> mum I've just done this, I've just done that and she'd be like, all good, all good, get the clothes and that aff straight away, she'd get the clothes aff and she'd get me into ma bed and she'd argue straight to the point wae the polis, 'He's been in his bed aw fucking day, man, he's no been oot his bed,' and then I was just goin oot the very next day and daein the exact same thing again and getting away wae it again, 'cause she was sticking up fur me.
>
> **Kirsty**: Yeah, and you think that's because-,
>
> **Michael**: It's how I've ended up here, mm hmm, 'cause I was allowed to dae whatever I wanted.

> "I'd wait till ma dad was goin to work and I'd go into ma maw and I'd be, like, 'I'm no goin tae school the day', and ma maw'd be, like, 'It's awright, come doon the toon wae me', and then ma da would, she'd, like, 'You need to get your clothes and that on', and she had aw my school clothes ready fur ma dad coming back fae work and, like, she used to have it aw planned oot so I could patch school whenever I wanted and go wae her. She's ma best pal man, she let me dae whatever I wanted." (Michael)

While Michael was still technically a child at this point, he was still at school and under the age of 16, some of the young people spoke about their dad being more like their pal, but this was when they were older teenagers:

> "…ma da's mair like ma pal, he does exactly the same hings. We get up to the exact same, he cannae tell me no to dae something because he's already done it kinda hing, know what I mean." (Darren, Glenview)

As with childhood, parenthood can be viewed as both a biological and social status. For the former it can be seen as the outcome of the biological process of reproduction, but for the latter it can be said to convey "certain rights, responsibilities, obligations and associated expectations regarding the care and nurture of children" (Alwin, 2004). Part of these "obligations" may be to provide a disciplinarian role within the child's life, which is less apparent in the examples above. Reflecting back on the discussions in Chapter 5 around how and

why young people can be distinct from children more generally, this may be a point where, as a child enters their teens there begins to be a challenge to this authoritarian role. This is something which some of the young people I spoke to reflected upon:

> "I'd get away with more than me brother, me brother doesn't get away with nothing. Me dad always, like, my dad'll never say nothing to me no more, he can't, he knows he can't, you know what I mean, I'm old enough now, and he, from the age of, like, sixteen, seventeen, he's never been able to say nothing to me, like, I've never let him. I remember one time, the last time he must've said something, I can't remember what I'd done, he shouted at me and I just said, he obviously didn't live with me at the time init, and me ma's rang him, like, you're gonna have to tell him and that. He's gone on the phone to me, he's started trying to shout at me. I said, 'Listen', I said, 'You can't tell me nothing', I said, like, 'Don't speak to me and that', I just buttoned him, said 'Don't speak to me', and just didn't speak to him for ages, do you know what I mean. I just didn't speak to him for months and months and then he must have realised, fuck, I can't shout otherwise I won't even ever see him again." (Jay, Glenview)

This challenging of authority and change within a parent's role is an element of growing up and will be present in all parent/child relationships. How and when this challenge occurs, and perhaps 'should' occur, however, can be impacted on by a family member's imprisonment, therefore it may not cause the change but instead alters its temporality.

The teenage years, and the later teens specifically, may also be a time where a parent naturally becomes more like a peer for a young person. Darren spoke of spending time with a group which was made up of people his own age and older, and that his dad was part of that same social group:

> "See, see noo but, everybody knows 'cause see ma pal, like, I've got pals that are twenty-eight, thirty and that, like, when I go roond to the pub and that, and then, obviously stuff that I'm in here fur, they aw dae, like, the same hings so we're aw pals and then they all know ma da 'cause

> then, ma da was like one of their older ones, the way they're ma older one." (Darren, Glenview)

As with some elements of the role reversal between child and parent, within all parent and child relationships at some point children begin to have more in common with their parents, whether this is through having children themselves, following them down a similar employment path or joining their social group and all that that involves, as Darren spoke about above. Considering families and how they change as the children within them become young people and eventually adults, these changes will happen regardless of a family member's imprisonment, or other issues going on in family members' lives. How this changes and the speed at which these changes occur, however, can be impacted upon by a family member's imprisonment, but are not restricted to it. They can also be seen and judged differently depending on what we take as the basis of how these relationships *should* be constructed and when and how they *should* change across the life course.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates the dynamic and changing nature of families and our understanding of them. Families should be seen as living organisms, constantly changing and adapting over time, both naturally and in response to internal and external factors acting upon them. A family member's imprisonment can be one of these factors, but it should not be taken in isolation when exploring the experiences by families of this imprisonment. The young people I spoke to, and the families they are part of, do not exist in a vacuum, either pre, during or post their family member's imprisonment. There can be many factors which impact on young people's family relationships and this chapter covers those which were relevant to the young people I spoke to. These included physical absences of family members due to work or parental divorce or separation, more psychological absences due to a family member's drug or alcohol use, as well as both physical and psychological absences stemming from a family member's imprisonment. These absences have impacted on and changed the young person's family unit overall, as well as having an impact on relational aspects within it. This includes changes in the hierarchy between a parent and a child,

reversing the vertical hierarchy, as well as seeing moves towards a more horizontal or linear relationship between the two. They have also resulted in an expansion of who can be seen as family, as extended or wider family members take on childcare roles, whether full or part-time, which are more usually associated with parents.

The experiences in this chapter are not always due to imprisonment, though this does not mean that the involvement of prison or imprisonment in them does not give them unique elements. For example, stigma in relation to a family member's absence due to imprisonment compared to divorce, or a difference in worrying or feeling responsible for a parent you can call or see freely compared to one to whom access is restricted and whose situation and location is unfamiliar and, in some respects, unknowable (e.g. Morven and Kev spoke about TV providing their only knowledge of what the prison their family member was in was like). It demonstrates, however, that these things can occur, and family be changed, because of a range of underlying factors. It also shows the importance of this context of family when going on to consider a family member's subsequent imprisonment.

By looking at families first and foremost, rather than prisoners' families, we can consider more fully and more widely the experience for young people of a family member's imprisonment than has been done in some of the existing familial imprisonment literature. While this literature does acknowledge that pre-existing family relationships and experiences will have an impact on the subsequent familial imprisonment, it rarely explores this in the detail and depth that I have chosen to do within this thesis. By acknowledging the importance of this context, and by not viewing the prison or the prisoner as the centralising focus, we can also begin to have these discussions within a wider inequalities framework.

The centring of the family allows us to recognise that the imprisonment of a parent or sibling can alter the temporality and dynamics of being a child or young person within a family, but that other factors in the family and life generally, are also doing this. The relationships between children and their parents, or between siblings, will evolve naturally as children grow up. They will

also change due to internal and external factors acting upon them as individuals and their family as a unit. These changes take place regardless of a family member serving a period of imprisonment. This imprisonment can be one of the external factors that alters families and family relationships, however it may also simply be speeding up or slowing down something which would already happen regardless.

This highlights inequalities, where some young people can find themselves growing up, or being viewed as more grown up, more quickly than others, or can find their family experiences judged or labelled in certain ways. Where children and young people are constructed as always being dependent, and age viewed in a biological rather than social way, this can impact on how prison is then organised around this particular construction of childhood and family. Their focus is on younger children, bonding visits and the opportunity to 'teach' a parent how to care for their children, rather than also providing for quality contact with older children or teenagers, for whom this care and their needs take a different form. Along with discussions on inequality and judgements on what is normal for families, we must consider the terms we use. For example, it can be useful to talk about concepts such as parentification but we must be critical in how the term is used, guarding against pathologising certain family units or the relationships within them.

Spatial aspects of how and where family is done have been introduced through the idea that young people do not always have just one family home and can spend time as a family in a number of different spaces, perhaps with different people in each one. This spatial aspect of living arrangements can be one aspect which provides context for how they then experience a family member's imprisonment (though it should not simplistically be equated with quality of relationship). Where there may already be disruption and difficulties for the young person and their family the imprisonment may not always be the catalyst or the cause of any upheaval. It may also help to explain narratives of prison 'improving' relationships or being beneficial in some way, something which is discussed further in Chapter 7. It also emphasises that all families are different, young people's experiences of family are different, and how young people deal with a family member's imprisonment is dependent on how their lives and

families are lived beforehand, as well as during a family member's sentence. This is in terms of both emotional (e.g. the closeness of the bond within the relationship) and practical (e.g. living arrangements) aspects.

This chapter also builds on the argument made in the preceding chapter, that young people should be seen as a separate and unique group rather than be subsumed into the general category of 'children'. How they specifically undergo elements of role reversal or the taking on of responsibilities within their family, along with the changing nature of a parent/child relationship during this period, regardless of a family member's imprisonment, means failing to consider them as a group in and of themselves risks a dilution or loss of understanding of their experiences.

Having looked at these young people's experiences of family, some in relation to a family member's imprisonment but not all, the next chapter will go on to focus specifically on their experiences of familial imprisonment. It will do this, again, by drawing on themes of space, time and affective-relations as this chapter has done. It will engage specifically with the idea of distance or closeness within the young people's relationships; either spatially, temporally or emotionally, though often these terms are interlinked. It is split into two separate parts, with the first looking at the spatial and temporal aspects, and the second those related to affective-relational issues. Through these different lenses it will explore aspects of communication and how relationships are obliged to be maintained while someone is in prison. This will be done where the young person is outside of the prison as well as where they are serving a sentence at the same time as their family member.

7 Chapter 7 - Young People's Experiences of Familial Imprisonment: Spatial, Temporal and Affective-Relational Dimensions of the Experience in Two Parts

7.1 Introduction

This chapter follows on from, and is closely linked to, the previous chapter. Chapter 6 foregrounded the experiences of family for the young people, providing a richer context to their overall lives while also touching on elements of their experiences of a family member's imprisonment during them. This chapter now goes on to foreground and explore their experiences of familial imprisonment specifically. It will do so by considering prison's ability to change family relationships from spatial, temporal and affective-relational dimensions. It will explore ideas of distance and closeness through these lenses, how prison can impact on this and what this can then mean for the young people involved. These changes will be looked at for families where both the young person and their family member have served a sentence of imprisonment at some point, or are serving them at the same time, as well as where only the family member has been in prison.

These aspects are explored in two parts. In part one, the chapter explores spatial aspects through considering how the imposition of a prison sentence has the ability to introduce physical distance into a family relationship where someone is removed from the family unit, or to decrease that distance where the young person themselves is also in prison. It also explores elements of spatial distance and closeness within the visiting process itself, as well as through the layout and design of the visit rooms and how this can impact on the subsequent experience of an emotional closeness, a term which is explored by drawing on ideas of intimacy. Related to the spatial aspects are temporal experiences where, again, there can be a distance or desynchrony introduced into families' routines or lives, or a synchronising effect. The latter experiences occur either naturally where the young person is within prison themselves or through an enforced synchronising of routines by the young person outside of prison to allow relationships to be maintained.

Interlinked to both the spatial and temporal aspects, and impacted on by both, are elements of emotional distance or closeness within the young people's family relationships, and these are explored in part two. I explore and interrogate how these can be experienced differently where the young person is inside or outside of prison, and, as with previous chapters, the importance of context is key to the understanding of these experiences. The concept of intimacy is further explored in this chapter in relation to these affective-relational aspects of relationships, particularly in respect of intra-prison sibling relationships and the narratives told by some of the young people currently in prison themselves around their own family relationships. These discussions are laid out in two separate sections due to the length of the chapter, but are kept together in this way as they are inherently interlinked and therefore the overall discussions and arguments should be read as one.

As with the previous chapter, just as it was important not to view the young person's experience of family solely in regards to their family member's imprisonment, but to look at the wider context within which this experience sits, so it is important here not to look at the idea of distance or closeness in relationships in a vacuum. The living arrangements of the young person and their family member prior to the imposition of a prison sentence must be taken into account, as must the emotional aspects of the relationships. Therefore, where someone becomes more distant, or closer, this must always be seen as relative to the starting point for each individual young person and their relationship.

Part 1 – Spatial and Temporal Dimensions

7.2 Spatial

As was covered in the previous chapter, some families are already spatially separated prior to any period of imprisonment being imposed. This separation can take different forms: the young person is living apart from the parent but still has regular contact, they are living apart and have little or no contact, or the young person is in residential or foster care (for reasons aside from the imprisonment). Prison can then exacerbate this distance by, for example, taking the family member further away from the local area where they, and the young person, were living, or by introducing other restrictions on the young person's

ability to see their family member. Where the young person is living with their relative prior to the imprisonment, prison can be the first, and often sudden, introduction of a physical separation from them. Prison can also, however, reduce the physical distance between family members where they find themselves serving their sentences within the same Young Offenders Institution (YOI), perhaps when previously they were not both living together within the family home.

7.2.1 Spatial Distance

7.2.1.1 Spatially Separated (by prison)

This is the most common experience within familial imprisonment literature. It describes the experience of families who were previously living together, or had close relationships, but for whom prison has created physical distance and separation between members, where one is within prison but the rest of the family are not. The physical separation, along with the rules and regulations that come with prison life, change how young people can communicate with their imprisoned family members.

For children and younger teenagers, the decision to keep in touch can be taken out of their hands. This can be because they have not been told where their family member is, but even when they do know they are in prison they are still reliant on others, particularly for visits (when aged under 16 visitors must attend with an adult). Control can also be taken out of their hands if, as was true for one participant, their family member is in prison overseas which reduces the ability to visit or receive phone calls. While this may account for only a small number of young people who have a family member in prison, it should be noted that not all will be able to use the communication methods provided, such as phone calls and visiting, in order to try and maintain a relationship during a sentence of imprisonment.

Elements of this changing communication have been covered elsewhere in the thesis: Section 5.2.1.4 explores the restrictions and provisions around telephone calls and visits specifically in respect of young people's experiences, Section 5.2.2.1 looks at sibling experiences of visiting and Section 7.3.1 below explores

the use of letters as a form of communication. Here though, I focus on the prison visit as an example of this.

Prison Visits

Visiting a family member in prison is a very specific way of spending time together as a family and sustaining a relationship through a sentence. It can also be a very different form of face-to-face contact than the kind which takes place outside of a prison. Moran (2013) described prison visit rooms as "liminal carceral spaces" where prison visitors cross a threshold and are temporarily absorbed into the prison and made subject to its rules and regulations before crossing over again, back into the outside world (Comfort, 2008; Foster, 2017). For young people, they can experience a double liminality within this space; they are not catered for as a young child nor as an adult and are simultaneously not a prisoner but not free either.

As noted above, not all of the young people I spoke to had visited their family members in prison but for those that had, it was generally something which came with elements of negativity around the practicalities of this: the waiting about; the "horrible" process of getting in; the fact their family member "couldn't stand up" and move about; the "awkward" set up of the table and chairs in the visit room; and the "unnatural" and "forced" conversations (Morven, Natalia, Kev, all KIN).

Morven spoke about the difficulties of interacting with your family member when you were only there for an hour so could not be your "normal family self". Instead she had to have the same "typical prison chat" about school or what she'd been up to each week, trying not to talk too much about "the outside world" that the person within prison was missing out on. These types of conversations, and the language or questions used when communicating with someone in prison is explored in more detail in Section 7.4.1 below in respect of the emotional distance it can introduce into relationships. It is conversely discussed, however, in Section 7.4.2.2 in respect of the experiences of young people who themselves have also served a period of imprisonment. Here these conversations can represent a shared language or understanding between the young person and their currently or previously imprisoned family member.

The lack of diverse conversation however, may explain Darren's response when I asked him whether visits were a big thing, being such a limited time to spend with someone:

> "Sometimes, no, hauf, hauf the time you forget, you run out of stuff tae say, know what I mean, it ends up being pure boring."

Sometimes arguments can be made that to improve the experience for families of prisoners there just needs to be more or longer visits, and while this is what some of my participants wanted, it can be an over simplistic view where we think only about quantity and not also the quality of contact. This is something which is reflected in Kotova's (2018) research with partners of long-term prisoners and also in Beckmeyer and Arditti's (2014) research on parent-child relationships, though from the parent's point of view. Their quantitative research shows that the frequency of visits was unrelated to the quality of the imprisoned parent-child relationship (the parents were all fathers) and instead a lack of closeness in the relationship was associated with the problems encountered during visits.

Morven also summed up the idea that prison visits to her brother were not the same as how she would have spent time with her family before:

> "I think if they did research before that maybe there would be more things in place for people, like, just to actually have *a family gathering* instead of *a prison visit*." (emphasis added)

This idea that prison visits are not how family was done outside of prison was reflected on by other participants.

Liam talked about visiting his dad when he was younger:

> "But it was a, mibbe, it was a different experience because obviously when you go and see somebody outside you're sitting in a hoose or anything like that but when I go up there you're getting searched before you go in, you're, everything's taken off you, your phone's in the locker, keys are in the lockers, everything like that. And then when you go upstairs you're no allowed to touch them, you're no, you just need to sit

> in front of them. So it was quite different for me. So I wanted to go and go over and gie him a cuddle but my mum said to me obviously I would've got chucked oot the visit if I did, so-,"

He also talked about visiting his brother and how this was different to how he would normally spend time with him. He spoke about the fact that if there were a lot of people in the house they would go and sit somewhere else, so in the back garden rather than the living room or go and play football or the computer or something together, just them. So, visiting in the visit room was totally different because there was always lots of other people there.

Chris also found visits different to spending time together with family members at home, though experienced the busyness of a visit room differently to Liam. He spoke about being in prison himself and being visited and actually saw the visit as providing an element of peace and quiet and time to spend "alone" with someone, even though the room would be full of other people.

Scott spoke about the difference between visiting and normal interactions with his brother outside of a prison, both in terms of the way they had to sit and interact as well as the fact that there is always someone there watching you:

> "You just have to sit, like, with your hands out and just, like, speak, you can't put your hands under the table, you can't put your hands in your pocket, you've gotta keep your hands on the table […] You've just gotta sit there like that and just speak to each other directly […] 'Cause you've got, you've got, like, five, five people watching you, five officers watching you, and they're knowing what you're saying and looking at you, and it's, like, it's just weird."

While we can consider the need to attend prison visits as a result of the spatial distance introduced into relationships through a period of imprisonment, we must also consider the specific spatial aspects of the places in which these visits take place. While children's visits are different, allowing the person in prison to get up, move around and interact with their visitors, this is not true of the standard visit, which represented most of the young people's experiences. Here,

movement is restricted and much of the visit is spent sitting on a seat fixed to the floor on the opposite site of a low table (to limit the chance of anything being passed beneath it) from your family member. The provisions and behaviour allowed within the visit room therefore constructs this contact as a risk to the prison, despite the family's construction as an asset in the desistance process. Even where the family member does have the freedom to get up and move about, the further restrictions imposed on the interaction by the space can still impact on the levels of intimacy achievable through their interactions.

Intimacy has been defined as being "concerned with everyday relationships and affective interactions" (Gabb, 2008: 2) and is one aspect of the family practices spoken about in Chapter 2 (Morgan, 2011). Morgan set out three different dimensions of intimacy – embodied, emotional and intimate knowledge – all of which can be affected by the restrictions on where and how these family practices can be carried out when someone is in prison. While ideas of intimacy within families were originally based around sexuality, and therefore focused on partners, while this can still be the case, it has also been extended out to apply to parent/child (Jamieson, 1998; Gabb, 2008) and sibling relationships (Edwards et al., 2006). It is therefore a relevant concept when exploring young people's relationships with their family members carried out within a prison setting. For example, Morven speaking in Chapter 5 about being unable to "mess about" with her brother as they did at home, Liam talking above about the lack of physical contact allowed with his dad in visits, and Natalia in Chapter 5 speaking about the difficulties of having a conversation with her dad in the midst of all the noise when children are playing at the visits. The idea of the quality of time in visits above is linked to the concept of intimacy through the quality of time spent together as a family (Gabb, 2008). Where intimacy is important in family life generally this means that it is also an important concept within the prison visit rooms that this family life is now having to be carried out within. The examples above indicate how the visit room can inhibit this achievement of intimacy between the young people and their family members and Oldrup (2018) questions whether it is even possible to feel levels of family-connectedness within a prison visit room. This is particularly interesting given that her study was based in Denmark, where the penal system is notably recognised as more humane than that within the UK.

Moran and Disney (2018) have also explored elements of intimacy within the visit room, using the idea of comfort as experienced through the layout and furniture within the space. Though their research mainly focused on partners, young people will also experience the chairs fixed to the floor on either side of the table. They are therefore faced with a choice: to sit more comfortably in the seat but be further away from their family member, or to sit on the edge of the seat and lean forward, decreasing the physical distance but potentially increasing the level of discomfort. Particularly where we focus on the ability to share a close family moment within the midst of a busy, and often noisy, visit room the necessity to lean in can be understood further (Moran and Disney, 2018). When this is combined with the constant feeling of being watched, as Scott spoke about above, this reduces the opportunity to have these close relationships and moments of shared intimacy within these spaces. Therefore, while visits may, in some ways, bring the young person and their family member together in the same room there can still be a physical and emotional distance between them, enforced by the layout of the room they are within.

7.2.1.2 Spatially Separated (within the prison estate)

Spatial separation can result where both family members are serving a sentence at the same time, though in different prisons. This can compound the levels of restrictions and difficulties in communicating and maintaining those relationships where only one member is in prison. Where Sykes (1958) noted in his pains of imprisonment thesis that those who were incarcerated experience deprivation of liberty (e.g. being cut off from family) as well as the deprivation of autonomy (e.g. a loss of control over when and how to contact these family members), these pains can be doubled up when both a young person and their parent or sibling is in prison. Where the family member is outside of the prison, they can at least retain some, although admittedly limited, control over these communications. Times can be arranged to make calls during recreation (though availability of the telephone will depend on whether these can actually take place) and visits can be arranged each week during a choice of, again limited, time slots. Where the calls or visits take place across the prison estate however, these are completely at the mercy of arrangements by staff.

For the young people I spoke to within the YOI, three had male parents (dads or step-dads) and one an older brother, who were within an adult prison while they were within the YOI. One of these young people would still have been classed as a child in respect of prison visits (i.e. under the age of 18).

It is possible to have inter-prison telephone calls which have to be arranged through staff and take place over office telephones at a specifically arranged time between the prisons, rather than through the telephones on the hall. While there were advantages to this arrangement (there was no cost for the prisoner associated with these calls) it removed the already severely restricted control from them over when calls can take place. There was no consensus among the young people on the number and regularity of these telephone calls that they were allowed. One young person spoke of the fact that they could call their family member once every two weeks:

> "…you get a phone call, well you can put in for one every two week but sometimes when you put in for one you don't get it […] You don't always, no, 'cause sometimes, like, they can, they can say, you've had it too much and that, know what I mean, you only get it, it's like once every fortnight. Sometimes, like, the way it works you don't get it for, like, every three week and that. So it's, it is quite, quite annoying 'cause it's only, like, every three week, know what I mean, and writing letters, it's no the same." (Darren)

Ryan was aware of the fact he could have inter-prison calls but had not yet had any. Grant was also aware of the possibility of these calls but was unsure if he would be able to have them with his step-dad as these were already due to take place with his step-dad's biological son, and he did not know if it was possible for someone in prison to use these types of call for two different relatives. Scott was also aware of, and had received these calls with his brother, but was unaware of any regularity with which they were allowed. He spoke of having had one call three months ago and had another arranged when I spoke to him. He talked about having to work out how often to ask to phone his brother as if he asked for too many people might get suspicious. He also said that he had not been made aware of these calls when he came into the YOI but instead said that

his mother had mentioned the possibility of him getting them and when he had asked staff they had then been arranged.

Only one of the participants had had inter-prison visits. One other was aware of them but had not had any, and though another may have been eligible for them he did not seem to know anything about them. Darren explained that you could get one 90-minute inter-prison visit every six months and that to be eligible for these you both needed to be serving longer than six months and have more than six months left on your sentence. Where one family member is in a YOI and one in an adult prison then the adult will always come to the YOI. His experience of these visits was not particularly positive. His dad had to be brought to the YOI three times before they were able to get the full hour-and-a-half they were allowed, and these three visits were the only ones he had had in 12 months. Again, the lack of control around visits generally is compounded where both the young person and their family member is in prison. It is important to consider this relative to contact prior to the imprisonment. Darren spoke of seeing his dad most days, and living close to him, when they were both out of prison. Even when his dad had previously been serving a sentence he would visit him twice a week so this was significantly less contact than he was used to having with his dad.

7.2.2 Spatial Closeness

As has been pointed out previously, there has been very little research which has explored where family relationships have been carried out entirely within the prison estate, either within the same prison or across different sites. The intergenerational nature of offending features in research which sees parental imprisonment as a risk factor for a child's future offending, but not in respect of whether this increased risk then results in both family members serving a sentence at the same time and what this means for life within the prison and the experience of family. Similarly, the focus on sibling imprisonment has seen an emphasis on the potential relation between one sibling's offending behaviour or imprisonment and another's, rather than the experience of both being imprisoned together.

An exception to this is da Cunha's (2008) research within a women's prison in Lisbon. She reflects on a national retail-drug trafficking policy and the policing of it, along with related judicial proceedings and sentencing which has resulted in a figure of between one-half and two-thirds of women in the prison also having family members inside. While previous research has highlighted the existence of family members' concurrent incarceration (e.g. Fleisher, 1995) none has gone on to look at this, or any potential implications of it, in any detail.

All prisoners who enter the prison system in Scotland are required to respond to a series of questions on what is known as the Core Screen of the Integrated Case Management System (SPS, 2007). Currently, none of these questions are about identifying presently incarcerated family members.

There are examples of both inter- and intra-prison family relationships for the young people who took part in this research. Looking at where these are within the same establishment, of the ten young people I spoke to who were currently within a YOI, two had previously served a sentence at the same time and in the same place as their brother and two were step-brothers who were both currently in the YOI but had not had a relationship previously, though they did know of each other.

The two sets of brothers who had had a relationship prior to their imprisonment did not share a cell and were housed in different wings of the prison. This was due, in one case, to one brother being sentenced and one being on remand so housed in separate wings, and in the other, one was under the age of eighteen so housed in a separate part of the YOI to those who were eighteen and over. It is unknown whether, were both brothers sentenced and over the age of eighteen, they would be permitted to share a cell, though Chris did intimate that he would like to:

> **Chris:** I, I says to him about getting a dub up [sharing a cell] wae him but obviously 'cause he was younger, know what I mean, he was seventeen, I was nineteen […]
>
> **Kirsty:** Would you have liked to have-,

> **Chris:** Aye, I would've preferred to be there, you know what I mean, so I could support him and he would be there for me and stuff like that, you know what I mean, so I knew he was alright.

Therefore, the main time they would have contact with each other would either be where both would attend the same visit (this was a special arrangement made by staff as remand and sentenced prisoners would usually have different visiting times) or where they would pass each other within the establishment:

> "So my work party is, like, right across from his so we would, I'd walk by him, 'Yeah, oh what's happening'…" (John)

Being within the same YOI, therefore physically close together, had both positive and negative effects for the young people I spoke to. Both the young people who had served a sentence at the same time as their brother, having also had a relationship prior to this, spoke of the need to, and the consequences that can potentially arise from, having to 'back your brother up'. John used the word "stressful" when asked what it was like when his brother was also in the YOI. This was due to the fact that there was the potential for losing his privileges and being removed from the open side of the prison should he have to 'back his brother up', something he felt obliged to do should he need to.

> "It's a bit, like, the first time he came in obviously my stomach dropped, but you just, every time he comes out, just drops basically." (John)

> "Because if he ends up fighting wae somebody, know what I mean, I, I said to him, 'I mean I'll have to back you up and that', and he's like, 'No, no because you're in the open side and that tae'. But it's still ma brother, you know what I mean." (Chris)

This behaviour may be similar to what would happen anywhere, where family back each other up, but the potential consequences are greater when this happens in prison, e.g. a move to solitary, loss of privileges, impact on their sentence length. Where one sibling is sentenced and one is on remand this may also place a differential in the consequences of this behaviour. The person who is sentenced, particularly for a longer term, may now be on the open side of the

prison and have the potential to lose this status and other privileges which they have earned up to this point in their sentence. Here, where loyalty outside of a prison may be seen as a (positive) feature of family relationships, within a prison it has the potential to be far less beneficial, or desired. John spoke of staff not wanting siblings to have a lot of contact due to the "fights" that could follow their need to back each other up.

While Chris spoke of the potential difficulties of having a sibling within the YOI with you he also spoke of being glad to see his brother when he returned (as he has a few times during the time Chris has been within the YOI):

> "...I was just, know what I mean, I was glad to see him, know what I mean, 'cause I'd just came in […] It was kinda like a homely feeling when I seen him, know what I mean, 'cause I know I've got somebody in here that I kin trust, you know what I mean. 'Cause there's no many people in here you can trust, know what I mean…"

> "I missed him when he was oot but when he was in here I didnae want him in here, you know what I mean, so it felt weird."

There are two elements from Chris' description here that I think are important. The first is the fact that elements of prison life could seem homely. Even without other family members being inside with them prisoners can construct improvised homes for themselves within the prison (Crewe et al., 2014) and use words such as house or its synonyms (e.g. gaff) to describe their cell as my participant Declan did. I would argue however, that this is different to sharing the prison space with a member of your family you either currently or previously have lived with outside of the prison. Where Comfort (2008: 99) spoke of prison as "Papa's house […] a domestic satellite" and Codd (2008: Title) spoke of families as being "in the shadow of prison", here certain family relationships are done entirely within the prison walls, not merely a satellite or within its shadow. It also shows that the relationship between prison and family is not simply one-way, prison impacting on families as is the dominant narrative, but instead is a two-way interaction where family can also change the prison, and prisoners'

experience of it. By looking at intra-prison relationships in more detail this may be one way to explore this further

The second element is that of the idea of trust, which is explored in greater detail in Section 7.4.2.2 below, where I consider aspects of emotional closeness through this concurrent serving of a sentence within the same establishment.

Practical elements of closeness can also come from the fact that, as Chris went on to speak about, he saw more of his brother when they were both within the YOI than since his brother had been released:

> "But noo, you know what I mean, now that he's gone I do miss him quite a lot, know what I mean, because I, he disnae obviously come up that much for visits and that 'cause he's always working quite a lot. But it's hard, 'cause he doesnae know his way up here properly either so it's a bit hard for him, know what I mean, he's only, I think he's seventeen, eighteen now."

The distance to a national YOI, as well as, as has been discussed in Chapter 5, the other draws on young people's time, can mean that they do not tend to come and visit as often as perhaps younger children or partners. Therefore, when two siblings are within a YOI, for some this is a time when they actually see more of each other, as perhaps they would when both are at home and part of the same social group.

Where relationships take place in a prison, and are between two people who are currently within the prison estate, or even those who have previously had this contact with the system, the prison and staff within it can then mediate and influence this relationship in a variety of ways. One way in which the prison can exert a level of control when both members are within an institution is by making the contact behaviour dependent, whether explicitly or implicitly. While contact between a parent in prison and their child (under 18) is now a right for the child rather than a privilege for the parent this does not seem to be the case where the parent and child are both within a prison (one of the young people in the YOI I spoke to met this criteria by being aged 17 and having a father in

prison). There is also no recognised right for siblings to have contact, whether one is outside or both are inside the prison. Where inter-prison family visits are mentioned within The Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions (SCOTLAND) Rules 2011, Section 63(8) states that a prisoner is entitled to receive a visit from a person who is a prisoner detained at another prison only in exceptional circumstances and where the Governors of the two prisons must give consent.

Two of the participants in this research illustrate how decisions around intra- and inter-prison contact can be, or is at least perceived to be, behaviour or attitude dependent:

> "So I see him [his brother] aw the time and I speak to him and that tae. So they're alright wae that, the staff, know what I mean, the staff know I'm awright, I'm quiet, I just get on wae ma sentence, so it's awright […] There's rules, aye, sometimes it's like that, some staff are like that but see some of the staff that I got on wae, they're like that, aye, well we'll get you doon to see your brother and that so it's awright…" (Chris)

This is in contrast to John:

> "So, the officers doing the hall, they werenae very happy about it but we still got down once a week, once every two weeks, which was awright" although he [his brother] then goes on later in the interview to say "So, again, they, they would take him doon to my hall and I'd speak to him, sitting in this wee office room, and then, I think that was, like, the only time that I got, like, to sit doon and have a chat wae him but, other than that it was just me and him and ma parents and that. […] And they try and make you not see him as much as they can, just because they know that you'll back each other up, more fights, all that."

When I asked Ryan about whether he was going to try and get a visit with his dad who is in another prison, and asked if you have to go through a process or everyone gets it, he replied:

Ryan: I hink so, because I've got hunners of reports for fighting and stuff like that anaw.
Kirsty: Ah right, so that's gonna, like, count against-,
Ryan: Aye."

In similar ways to those discussed in Chapter 5, the prison's decisions around what family is for or what may be 'good' relationships can see family mediated, and behaviour punished, in ways it would not be outside the prison walls.

It also raises the themes of control and safety; themes it could be argued are present within both the institutions of prison (e.g. see Crewe, 2009) and the family but for which the underlying rationale behind them differs. The young people within this research had control exerted over them by parents or caregivers, by prison staff/the wider prison regime and at times both. While arguments could be made for both forms of control having an underlying aspect of safety to them, that which is generated within and by the family will usually be influenced by bonds of love and affection which can mitigate some of the harsher aspects of control as felt by the young person. Where the control occurs in a prison, and despite the rhetoric around care and nurture, particularly within Young Offender Institutions, these types of familial affection bonds do not exist, and the greater pressure to maintain order and control can be magnified due to a number of reasons. For young people who are within a prison at the same time as a family member, the prison can replace the family as the sole institution exerting control in their lives. Where both are serving a sentence, whether in the same or different prisons, control is completely given over to the prison around how and when relationships can be carried out. The safety and security of the prison and the prioritisation of its regime is paramount, with no external forces such as work or school playing a role in how the relationship is or when and how it can be carried out. Where familial imprisonment literature fails to explore these inter- and intra-prison relationships in a more qualitative way, and where there is more of a focus on the imprisonment rather than the familial aspects of the experience, we can end up concentrating on the predictive forces of a family member's imprisonment without considering the effects and implications for the conduct of a family life for these individuals.

7.3 Temporal

Researchers looking at the experiences of prisoners serving sentences have spoken of the importance of time, how it passes or is 'done', and how it can seem to stand still for those in prison (Cohen and Taylor, 1972; Medlicott, 1999; Jewkes, 2005). This difference between absolute time, so a measurable, quantifiable unit, and relative time, experienced subjectively (Adam, 1990) can see time being seen and felt to pass differently for those in prison compared to their family members outside. This idea of time passing differently within a prison is therefore relevant not only for those in prison but also for their family members. For the young people I spoke to, this idea of time and temporality, as with the previous section around spatial aspects of the experience, could introduce both a distance or dissonance, where only one family member was in prison, or a closeness or synchronicity, where both were serving a sentence at the same time, or they were outside but forced into fitting with the prison routine to access calls or visits.

7.3.1 Changing Temporality of Communication

A family member's imprisonment can impact on elements of temporality through the enforced use of certain kinds of communication. Letter writing harks back to a previous time, where life itself was lived more slowly and letter writing, where conversations took place over periods of weeks or months rather than minutes or hours, was the main, or at least a more popular, method of communication.

Letter writing is rarely used as a method of communicating today, as was acknowledged by some of my participants:

> "…the only time I've ever wrote letters was going to [prison]" (Kev, KIN)

> "…what twelve-year-old wants to sit and write a letter, like?" (Morven, KIN)

This is unlikely to be just in respect of young people, with reports in the United States (Daily Mail, 2011) that the average US household received a personal letter just once every seven weeks. Within prisons however, the letter is one of the main forms of communication. The latest Scottish Prison Service Prisoner

Survey (Carnie et al., 2018) showed the most common forms of contact with family were by telephone (71%), letter (62%) and the visit (50%). This survey is not universal across the prison population and there may be an element of self-selection of who chooses to participate, but this does give an idea of the prevalence of letter writing as a mode of communication. The prison also provides each prisoner with the cost of postage to send one letter each week, along with the provision of the materials necessary to write and send this letter, whereas they fund no telephone calls (unlike in Ireland where a six-minute call is provided free of charge each day (O'Malley and Devaney, 2016)). This suggests that the letter is an important currency of communication within the prison, distinguishing it from wider society and how social relationships are carried out more generally. It also situates the prison temporally in another time, where letter writing was more common, prior to the invention of the internet and the array of apps and platforms used to communicate today.

For Kev and Morven, the experience of their family member's imprisonment was in the past and was for a period of months in Morven's case and around four years for Kev. For Scott however, his brother is still in prison and had served a series of sentences since Scott was around eight, almost half of his life. He spoke about how letter writing had become a "normal" way for him and his brother to communicate, even prior to Scott's own imprisonment:

> "It's been, it's been normal for me. See, like, 'cause he's been in jail since he was fifteen, he's only, he's twenty-four and he's had eight jail sentences since he was fifteen."

The type of communication which happens by letter is also markedly different to the way that we communicate today in the world of text and other messaging apps. Morven spoke about how it's:

> "…weird, 'cause you can't break down your conversation you just have to have this full one-sided conversation for them to write back to. Whereas you're used to just, like, texting, be like, 'Hi. How are you?' and then they'd be, like, 'Oh yeah, I'm good. How are you?' and take it from there, like, step by step, like a normal conversation instead of just a list of everything you've done this week, kinda feels a bit weird…"

Linking in to ideas of temporality, the focus on letter writing as a mode of communicating compared to calls or visits in prison, or text or other messages outside, stretches out the temporality of these conversations. Where Morven speaks of the back and forward instant nature of a text conversation, a “normal” conversation but in written form, which could be over in minutes, conversations by letter could instead be formed of back and forward, lengthier, communication over a period of days or weeks. This different way of communicating with, and relating to, family members is created by the prison environment acting on the relationship for the period someone is inside, before being likely to return to more standard forms of communication on release.

Kev told me he had kept all of his dad’s letters from prison, creating an archive of their communication, and relationship, during this period which he still had when I spoke to him, a number of years after his dad’s release. Calls and visits represent much less tangible forms of communication and cannot be as easily stored and revisited in this way. Comfort (2008) also spoke of her partner participants keeping scrapbooks or filing cabinets with both copies of the correspondence they received and copies of their own letters which they had sent. While for some this represented a practical need to keep track of what they had sent where there were delays in its receipt, the placing in a scrapbook suggests more emotional reasons for its retention in this way. The ability to hold the letter and re-read its contents, perhaps creating some kind of physical presence in the family member’s absence. This archiving and use of a collection of letters to represent an absent family member can also be seen through the retention of letters sent from soldiers, absent during military service, and which today have been collected and preserved for their historical relevance (e.g. Carroll, 2001). This contrasts with the temporal nature of text or WhatsApp messages which can be overwritten where there is a data limit for storage or are not even intended to be stored at all, for example with Snapchat messages.

7.3.2 Temporal Distance / Desynchrony[7]

Research with seafarers' families speaks of the concept of "desynchrony", where the routine and experience of time by those at sea is different from their families. They experience the passing of time differently and disconnects therefore result (Thomas and Bailey, 2009). This desynchrony is said to arise where the family member at sea has a temporal routine which differs from and excludes their family members, and compounds the impact of spatial distance between partners; where the seafarer's trajectory is "interrupted" or "temporally paused" (p. 619) while their partner's continues. In similar ways to those working at sea, those in prison have a highly routinized life, with meals, recreation and times for being up and out your cell, or not, controlled each day. Their partners and children however, have different routines comprising of work, school or regular social activities. Thomas and Bailey (*ibid.*) note the importance of communication in attempting to harmonize these routines and allow those who are absent to "keep time" with their families. The discussion around communication and maintaining relationships outlined above highlights the desynchrony in the young people and their family member's lives where they are living to different and incompatible schedules. The young people and their lives are unable to 'fit' with the rigid prison schedule for visits and telephone calls.

While repeated, though in this case regular and anticipated, absences of seafarers could be likened more to the situation of families where a member serves a series of shorter prison sentences, elements of desynchrony can be found in the experience of one of the young people in KIN that I spoke to whose family member served a single long (4 years) sentence.

Kev spoke about this different passing of time and the result of this following his dad's release:

> "…it's like they are, they're frozen in time and then they come oot and you're that much older because you've grew up quicker. So, it's like, then he's talking, you know, like, we need to go to the funfair and the cinema.

[7] Thank you to Dr Jason Warr who introduced me to this concept when I presented at the British Society of Criminology Conference in 2017.

> We went to the cinema a couple of times and I'm like, 'Going to the pictures with,' I'm going with my pals, do you know what I mean […] meeting my da and going to the cinema with him and then trying to get bevvy underage at the weekend. It's, like, totally different worlds, ae, it's crazy, you know."

While Kev's dad came out expecting the child he had left rather than the teenager Kev had become, this was not due to a complete lack of contact during the sentence. Kev regularly wrote to his dad, received telephone calls every couple of days from him and attended visits every 2-3 weeks. This links in to Kotova's (2018) research with the partners of long-term prisoners which highlights this different passing of time and the impact it can have on relationships when someone is released from prison. While those in prison can seem "frozen" in time, outside the prison time passed more quickly. The partners spoke of instances where those in prison would try to parent their children as if they were the same age as when they were sentenced, for example not understanding that they no longer wanted "dollies" but iPads. They also spoke of how, after release, the prisoner expected things to go back to how they were before but the partner left on the outside had changed, perhaps having a new job, new friends, new interests and having necessarily become more assertive and independent during their partner's absence.

The result of temporal dissonance can also be that a returning parent is faced with a teenager while never having been present while the child grew into this role. Where the child has stayed with other relatives with different rules and levels of responsibility, this can also cause tension when they return and the parent automatically tries to enforce their rules:

> "…with my dad, my dad was like, obviously trying to be this father figure. So he was like, you need to come in from school, you need to get your homework done, and I wasn't used to, like, like strictness, do you know what I mean. So I was just kind of, like, I don't know where this is coming from and in my head I was like, 'Why should I listen to you, like, you've not been in most of my life and now you're trying to tell me how to do, tell me how to run my life.' If I've made it this far doing my homework

> and brushing my hair and brushing my teeth without, I know how to do it." (Sam, KIN)

This links in to the discussions in Chapter 6 around what it means to be a parent, and can raise questions about where the legitimacy or the right to parent comes from. Trying to discipline a teenager or have a level of authority over them when you have been absent from their life previously can be difficult. It cannot be assumed that there is automatically a knowledge of how to parent a teenager when someone has not had the chance to do so previously or watched their child grow into this role. This temporal dissonance can therefore have an impact on relationships both during and after periods of imprisonment.

Another form of temporal dissonance or disconnect between lives carried out inside a prison and those outside of it can be seen in how technological advances have changed the speed of life generally (Giddens, 1990; Castells, 1996), and particularly impacted on communication methods. Life outside of prison is lived at an increasingly fast pace. We no longer wait a week to see the new episode of our favourite TV programme but instead binge watch the whole season in a weekend. We don't wait until we can go and buy a book we've been recommended but download and read it instantly. There is an expectation that we will be constantly available by, and answerable to, email for our work. With other forms of communication, we see the message has been sent, delivered and read and we expect an immediate response. This disconnect in technological means of communication is one issue, where young people are left sending letters and waiting on an analogue postal system, but the general pace of life and its ability to continue to change and increase even over short sentences, represents another temporal disconnect between young people and family members who are in prison.

We could argue for a new 'pain of imprisonment' for those within the prison in relation to "a new level of disconnection between prison and society" (Johnson, 2005: 257) due to the limited access of prisoners to modern technology. Reisdorf and Jewkes (2016) argue that the literature around digital divides (e.g. Van Dijk, 2005) and digital inequalities (e.g. Dimaggio et al., 2001) fails to consider those for whom the choice to be on- or offline is taken out of their hands. Prisoners

are denied access to online and social media, which further cuts them off from family members they are already physically separated from by preventing them from communicating in the ways the rest of society take for granted. This denial of access for prisoners also affects their family members. Along with other "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1958), I would argue that this digital exclusion is felt as a "familial pain" of imprisonment (Foster, 2017). Their inability to use these, now, everyday methods of digital communication comprises a new digital pain of imprisonment for them as well. Imprisonment compels both prisoners and their families to live anachronistic, analogue lives in a digital age, though in different ways and to different degrees. While those outside of prison may reflect nostalgically on the days before the proliferation of digital technology, with media articles written advising on how to digitally detox (e.g. Wells, 2016), those inside, without the luxury of this choice, are compelled to live a temporary analogue existence before being released out into a digital world that has moved on without them. Young people are also forced into this temporary analogue existence in relation to their imprisoned family member, while also taking part in the day-to-day digital world around them in other aspects of their life.

Where literature looks at the experiences or impacts of a family member's imprisonment it does so very much in the 'real', physical world, but today this is not the only space in which family takes place. Not only does the concept of 'pains of imprisonment' need to be updated to take account of this but so does the thinking around where family can take place. Prison now has the ability to separate families in cyberspace: it can remove certain members from being present, and able to take part in activities, in the online world. While the young people I spoke to did not talk a great deal about their use of digital technology to communicate with their family, I include this discussion here to highlight that we must have an awareness that the online world is also a sphere in which family is now 'done', and that where we are exploring the impact of a family member's imprisonment we must do so with cognisance to the proliferation of the use of digital technology in the age in which we now live.

7.3.3 Temporal Closeness /Synchronicity

In contrast to the dominant theme of prison changing and disrupting temporal aspects of relationships, my research highlights ways in which it can actually bring people temporally closer together, as well as spatially closer as was discussed in Section 7.2.2 above. There can be a synchronizing of routines, or a temporal closeness in relationships, where both family members are within a prison, whether it is the same establishment or not. This may not have been something which was present before, particularly for a young person and a parent who did not socialise together as siblings may have done. While not all prisons run to exactly the same routine or schedule, large parts of it are likely to be similar: lock down and opening up times, the set times to eat, to attend education or work placements and recreation times in the evenings or at weekends.

While inter-prison telephone calls are more restrictive in terms of frequency than those which can take place to someone outside of prison, in respect of the routines of those within prison there is a level of synchronicity and organisation which is otherwise not present. The calls must be arranged in advance and must be arranged when both are out of their cell on recreation, something which will generally be around the same time across institutions. Therefore, both the young person and their family member will be, temporally, at the same place in their prison routine, although not physically together.

This carrying out of family solely within the prison has also been noted as bringing about a level of synchronicity between the "prison temporality" and "the rhythms of the outside world" (da Cunha, 2008: 345). She reflects that within her research, prison no longer represents a time apart or a suspension of an individual's private life, with relationships from outside not being interrupted by a period of imprisonment and instead continuing on inside before moving back through the prison gate to be carried on again outside.

Where the young person and their family member are both in prison, they may also be experiencing time in a similar way: as something to be 'done'. Where this temporal closeness means both the young person and their family member

have a lot of time to fill and little to fill it with, family, and communication with them, can come to mean the same thing, something it may not have done outside of prison: someone who can be relied upon to fill the time. When Ryan was talking about communicating with his dad while both were in prison, he said he was "[j]ust somebody to talk to" and noted that there was "nothing else to dae" when you were in prison.

Aspects of temporal synchronicity are not only present in the routines of young people and their family members where both are within a prison. While both being under the control of a prison forces them into similar routines, family members outside can also choose to alter their routine to make them more synchronous with their family member. Though I would argue that this may not feel like a choice, where the alternative is likely to have a detrimental impact on the communication level and maintenance of the relationship. As discussed in Chapter 5, some young people altered their routine so they would be available to receive telephone calls and would be likely to have to spend their social time differently to their friends to attend prison visits at specific allocated dates and times. This introduces synchrony with the imprisoned family member but desynchrony to some extent with their peers who are not experiencing this. This links in with work on partners' experiences where they choose to return home early to be available for telephone calls or changed weekend routines to attend visits (Comfort, 2008). These changing behaviours show elements of 'secondary prisonization' (Comfort, 2008) where the prison is able to exert an arms-length control over the 'free' family member, as they have control over their imprisoned relative, reducing their level of autonomy as they have to be available at certain times for telephone calls or visits.

Part 2 – Affective-Relational Dimensions

7.4 Affective-Relational

Emotional distance or closeness can be affected by, or be the result of, elements of spatial or temporal changes but is looked at here in its own right. In particular, the second half of this section focuses on the narrative from some of the participants currently serving a sentence in a YOI around how prison has brought them "closer" to family (John, Chris and Ryan used this word

specifically). They are either speaking about where both they and their family member are in prison or speaking about their own experiences, as someone serving a prison sentence, in respect of their family outside. The dominant narrative within familial imprisonment literature is that prison disrupts families and has a negative effect on them, separating families and forcing them apart. While this is undeniably true in many cases, the narratives outlined above of prison bringing families together spatially or temporally, and here more emotionally, are also important. As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, this must be taken in the context of the nature of diverse family relationships prior to the imposition of a prison sentence but this diversity is rarely considered and deserves acknowledgement. It shows, when taken along with other aspects of this thesis, that the implicit equation of closer relationships as 'good' and distance in relationships as 'bad' is too simplistic. Relationships are complex, contextual and fluid and must be treated as such.

7.4.1 Emotional Distance

Within current familial imprisonment literature there is a lack of explicit discussion of how prison can change the way young people emotionally or relationally connect with their imprisoned family member. There are discussions of children and young people missing their family member but less in-depth discussion of what these absences mean for these more emotional aspects of their relationships and how they can be changed by the imprisonment. Where quantitative research can explore the impact of a family member's imprisonment on children or young people's behaviour, the benefit of qualitative methods, as used here, is the ability to highlight, and explore in more depth, some of these more emotional complexities and how they are interpreted and understood.

As noted above, the spatial and temporal distance introduced into the young people's family relationships by the prison can have an impact on relational or emotional distancing in these relationships. A confounding factor however, can be the choice not to tell the young person the reason for their family member's absence, or to decide that not having contact with this person is in the child's best interests. As discussed in Chapter 6 this can result in what Dylan spoke of as

a lack of an “emotional attachment” and a more “linear” relationship with his dad. For Sam, who was also not told where his parents were while they were in prison and did not have contact with them during their sentences, he spoke of there not being “that kind of bond anymore” with his mum and that he felt that he “didn’t know who she was” when he returned to live with her after her release.

Amie noted very early on in her interview, when I was speaking to her about the different ways we could carry out the interview and she could talk about her experience, that often there was more of a focus on pragmatic or practical elements of having a family member in prison rather than the more emotional impacts it could have:

> **Kirsty:** So, I, kind of, really just want to learn from you what it’s like, so, if it impacts on your day-to-day life, or when does it impact, when does it have an affect, are there, kind of, certain times or situations that you think, yeah, that’s when it comes and the rest of the time-,
> **[…]**
> **Amie:** I mean, what you’re saying, like, erm, how it impacts, I feel like that, I don’t know, I can probably just go from that, like, that does give a starting point.
> **Kirsty:** Okay. Yeah. That’s fine.
> **Amie:** But it is interesting because that, I feel, like, even that question, Kirsty, like, how does it impact is very different to, kind of, what I’ve been asked before. ‘Cause I’ve done loads of interviews for stuff to do with my brother and it’s just, like, ‘Okay, tell me what happened,’ and then I recount, like, the whole story. But, like, that actually is so different to being asked, like, how does this impact you, do you know […]

She also went on to talk more about how she felt there had been the introduction of a more emotional or relational distance between her and her brother following his release. This highlights the fact that distances created in relationships do not simply occur during the period of imprisonment themselves and then disappear; rather, they can continue after release. Amie spoke about her brother, comparing her relationship with him to those she had with extended

family members rather than the more immediate family her sibling represented to her:

> **Kirsty:** Yeah, do you think he was a different person when he came back out than the brother you'd had?
> **Amie:** Yeah, I mean it's hard because it was such a long time, do you know.
> **Kirsty:** Yeah, I guess he might have changed and you've changed growing up anyway.
> **Amie:** Yeah, yeah, erm, dunno, it's just a case of, like, you know, when you're growing up with someone and it's never like you have to think about what to say to your brother, but, I mean, when we're together it's like how most other people are with, like, extended family members, like, we very much feel, like, 'Okay, what am I going to say to you now,' like, and it kinda feels like I can't just relax with him and just say nothing, you know. Maybe we were, like, starting to get there, like, before he went back in but certainly when he came out it was just so awkward. Even just being in the same room I was, like, 'Oh my god, what am I going to say?' do you know. Erm, so, yeah, stuff like that, like that just, like, natural, like, sibling relationship that other people take for granted is really not something that we've been able to have for the past however many years. Erm, and that's how it's different, do you know, yeah.

Morven spoke about the relationship with her brother and, again, how it had changed after he returned home, here after serving a short sentence:

> "In a way it was different because prison changes a person, because he had to act like the hard man in jail, like, you can't be emotional because if you do someone'll pick on you. And I can imagine it's pretty horrible for them and, like, when they come out they have to learn how to break down all the barriers they've had to build up and, like, if they spent three months building up barriers the first time it's going to take longer to break them down."

Amie also noted that her brother, after serving a longer sentence, was not there emotionally anymore and that they couldn't really connect as they had done previously.

> **Kirsty:** […] I don't know, there was some stuff I think just about the thing that you said at the end of the KIN video, like, 'I regret being angry at you for so long. I regret feeling like I'd lost my brother and I regret not reaching out to you more,' like, erm, what, kind of, made you feel like you'd lost him? Like, when you talk about lost was it because he was away or was it an emotional thing or a physical gone or?
> **Amie:** Erm, no, kind of, like, an emotional thing, like, yeah. I mean, it's still the kind of thing that I struggle with now, that it's, like, it doesn't really matter if he's physically there or not, it's, like, emotionally he's really not, do you know, which is the difficult thing. […] So, yeah, I guess that's what I meant, do you know. It's sad that I feel like I've lost him, in a sense, and I think we have, like, in a sense…"

This also indicates potential differences, again, between how a one-off sentence and a series of sentences effects young people. While Amie's brother had only served two periods of imprisonment, she reflected on the fact that just as the relationship was beginning to recover after the first, a further sentence which separated them again prevented this from happening. It sent them right back to the beginning, or perhaps further given that it was not at the same starting point it had been prior to the first period of imprisonment.

Where physical distance has been introduced into a relationship through a family member's removal to prison, necessitating the use of different methods of communication, these can also result in changes in the communication itself along with the method. The result of this could be an emotional distance introduced into the relationship through an editing of what the young people choose to share with their parent or sibling. This editing could be done for a number of reasons. Some have been covered previously, e.g. in Chapter 6 around not wanting to worry or burden a parent who is in prison. Editing also takes place due to an awareness of all forms of communication being monitored in some way (staff are present in the visit room, telephone calls are recorded

and some of the young people felt staff were reading their letters). Some of this editing was due to not wishing to discuss elements of criminality, but this was not always the case. Morven spoke about how she felt about people being able to read her letters:

> "So you don't want to, like, release too much, even though there's nothing going on you just-, Do I really want, like, wee Sally at the front desk knowing what my life is like?"

In the 'Prison Visits' Section above, Morven also spoke of trying not to talk too much about "the outside world", something Declan also spoke about in relation to his own experience of being in prison.

Where we again think about young people's experiences as distinct from younger children, while they are under 16 and cannot attend a visit alone, they may find it difficult to speak to one parent or their sibling when another parent or carer is present. How they behave in these visits may also change in relation to how they would have behaved outside with their family member. Amie commented at one of the KIN sessions about the fact she was never allowed to argue with her brother during visits, something she later expanded on in her interview as being "so unnatural". She was also unable to visit her brother without her parents, even when she was over 16, as the prison's location meant private transport was required and she could not drive.

Where you do not feel free to openly share and talk about what is going on in your life, for whatever reason (in the 'Prison Visits' Section above this was due to the surveillance felt within visit rooms), this can create an emotional distance within the relationship where the young person can lose a closeness they previously had with their family member. The differences between a physical and emotional distance in relationships was also highlighted by Amie's observation that she had "friends that are on the other side of the world that I'd feel more able to connect with than even if my brother's in the same room as me, do you know."

7.4.2 Emotional Closeness

The idea of a family member's imprisonment improving relationships is rarely discussed in any depth in familial imprisonment literature, though in relation to children's experiences it has been commented on more in passing (e.g. Saunders, 2017). McCarthy and Adams (2018) is one exception to this. Related to this omission in the literature, they point out one of the main deficits of familial imprisonment research; the assumption that it is the prison sentence itself and not the pre-prison context in which family is being carried out that imposes harm on family ties. Challenging this assumption allows the imposition of a prison sentence to be seen as having the ability to 'improve' relationships, as they discuss in their article based on the experiences of primary caregivers (mainly mothers) of incarcerated young men. Their categorisation of pre-prison relationships through levels of conflict within them allowed the stories of 'improving' relationships to then be placed in context rather than sitting alone, as if in a vacuum. The lack of drug use, surplus of time, and provision of a controlled and stable environment in which to carry out these relationships were all identified as factors in the move towards them being viewed more positively by the caregivers.

This widening of the analytical focus, away from simply looking at the relationship during the time the family member is in prison, is also carried out by Comfort (2008) where she looks at her participants during and prior to their current relationship with an imprisoned partner. She also links their differing experiences of secondary prisonisation to the three family types outlined in *Report on the Work of the Prisoners' Wives Service* (Thompson and Morris, 1972): those for whom the imprisonment is the central problem; those where the imprisonment is part of a web of difficulties; and those for whom the imprisonment may alleviate existing problems. While I am not going to go through and explicitly link each of the young people's experiences to these, or other, categories here, they are useful to show, particularly for the second and third types that this could go some way to explaining the ability of prison to bring families 'closer' together.

Where the young people spoke of actually having closer relationships due to a family member's imprisonment, this tended to be either due to changes in what was needed from family members in this particular space or to mean that there was a greater amount of contact between the young person and their family member compared to levels prior to the imprisonment. I have tried to address the importance of frequency and type of contact pre-imprisonment as a contextual factor throughout this thesis by including these details where I can. Here, for example, some of the young people spoke of having closer relationships where these came from base levels of almost no contact or where that which did take place was difficult. Comparing this to the participants who demonstrated close relationships with frequent or constant contact prior to the imprisonment, even their relatively frequent (for prison) visits and/or calls still did not feel enough for them. Saunders' (2017) research looking at children and young people's experiences of contact with imprisoned parents found that those participants who had more difficult relationships with their parent prior to the imprisonment tended to describe their relationships as continuing to be difficult, and sometimes even breaking down completely. This was compared to those who had had closer and more supportive family relationships pre-imprisonment, who instead tended to report having regular contact with their parent during their sentence.

7.4.2.1 Closeness Through Communication

Where I talk about contact for my participants, this could be through letters and telephone calls rather than face-to-face contact where both the young person and their family member were serving a sentence at the same time but in different prisons, but also for young people outside of the prison. As Comfort's (2008) work with partners of prisoners has shown, letter writing allows a more intense connection than can be achieved by a telephone call or visit (particularly given the restrictions around physical contact and connection in the latter). Her participants comment that it had taken their partner going to jail for them to get emotional and "sensitive" through their letter writing.

This theme of emotional writing is reflected in the letters written to one of the young people by his dad, which he described as "deep and meaningful":

> "But, aye, so, it did get really deep and meaningful, you know, like, talking about things that he wants to do when he gets out. Erm, and how he feels the now, and we never, I don't think we've spoke about feelings or that to each other since." (Kev, KIN)

The reflection of another participant on the one time she wrote a letter to her brother, however, illustrates that this is not a universal experience:

> "…'cause the only time that my, I wrote this, like, mega-emotional letter to my brother, like, spilt everything and he just wrote back in this letter, it was one page and went, 'you're genuinely adopted lol'. And I was like, that was it […] I think he's just so bad with emotion, like, he couldn't even answer anything I said, he was, like, 'oh I'd better make a joke', okay, goodbye." (Amie, KIN)

Darren also said that he didn't write "big stupid letters" to his dad. Instead he mainly used them to make arrangements or send money if he hadn't been able to go up and see him, rather than any other kind of more conversational communication, never mind something emotional or "deep and meaningful". Here this cautions us, again, from seeing these young people as a homogenous group and instead recognises the range of their experiences, though highlighting the potential for an emotional closeness through written communication that was not present in the relationship previously.

7.4.2.2 Experiences of Young People in Prison Themselves

Where participants spoke of closer relationships with family outside of prison this tended to come from the young people who were in prison themselves talking about their connection with their own family members outside. While the purpose and focus of this PhD was always intended to be on experiences as a family member of someone in prison, rather than prisoners' experiences with their own family outside of the prison, given the situation of the YOI group that I interviewed an entanglement between the two became inevitable. I've included these aspects here as I think they are relevant. That said, none of the young people who were not within the YOI spoke of a family member's imprisonment bringing this type of closeness to their relationships. This could be contextual

and be based on their situation pre-imprisonment, be down to the self-selection of participants to join a project such as KIN, or be related to the extent to which, for the KIN participants more than for those in the YOI (although not true for all), the imprisonment was a major and unprecedented rupture for the families. It may also, however, highlight a key difference in aspects of familial imprisonment where both the young person and their family member are imprisoned concurrently, something which is currently missing from familial imprisonment literature.

Siblings in the Same YOI

For the two participants who had prior relationships with their sibling and whose sibling had been alongside them in the same prison, their discussions around feeling closer to their sibling seemed to be in terms of having to be there for each other and feeling a level of protectiveness:

> "I hink I've got a better relationship now that I've been in here and spent time wae him, know what I mean, knowing that you've gotta be there for each other has made it a bit better for me." (Chris)

> "When we were outside it was more, he got kicked out [of the family home] 'cause he was, like, attacking me basically. So we weren't very close, but as soon as I got the jail we got very close. […] I'm a lot more protective of him now" (John)

This ties in to ideas of trust, which were touched on in Section 7.2.2 above, and were also mentioned by other participants, as well as the fact that prison is somewhere which seems more dangerous or threatening than life outside. Therefore, the location in which the siblings are now carrying out their relationship has an impact on it and what you may need from a family member in these circumstances.

As Crewe et al. (2014) pointed out, it is not simply that violence is common within prisons (e.g. King and McDermott, 1995; O'Donnell and Edgar, 1998) but that there is a constant threat and fear of violence, regardless of it actually taking place or being personally more or less likely for individuals to be victims

of it. The environment in which these brothers were now conducting their relationships had changed its meaning and what was needed from a sibling in this situation.

The importance of trust can be linked into ideas of intimacy. Jamieson (2005) speaks about how the concept of intimacy is seen as involving a "very particular form of 'closeness' and being 'special' to another person, associated with high levels of trust" (p. 189). Research with prisoners shows that they feel a low level of trust within the prison environment (Crewe, 2009). Looking at the different levels of relationships male prisoners spoke about having, "proper friends" or "real mates" were at the top of this hierarchy and mainly consisted of men they had known prior to their imprisonment: "relatives, co-defendants or close friends from the community" (Crewe, 2009: 305). While the men spoke of "prison friendships" these did not involve the same depth and reciprocal behaviour (e.g. they may lend them goods without interest or trust them to enter their cell without stealing anything but they "wouldn't go in fighting like for a Co-D [co-defendant] or if my brother was in here" (p.305)). Trust was the main element which was seen to prevent the formation of friendships in prison. I am not arguing that trust can only come from 'blood' family members, and in fact some of Crewe's (*ibid.*) participants spoke of their friends as their family, but that the experiences of my participants showed that they only felt this high level of trust for their sibling within the YOI. Where we have not considered the experiences of intra-prison sibling relationships (something I am not aware of having been done previously), the idea of intimacy within these relationships, stemming, in some parts, from elements of trust is a concept which may be useful in any future research which takes place.

This behaviour could also be seen as a form of care (see Eldén, 2016), not always something we hear associated with the experiences of prisoners, with one of the participants in Crewe et al.'s (2014) research explicitly stating, "I can't be caring" (p. 65) when asked about which emotions he felt he did not use in prison. Where we see care as something inherent to family relationships, where it is present in this form within relationships carried out in prison, we must be aware of how prison has shaped this specific notion of caring, as required by the environment the siblings here now inhabit.

Closeness with Family Outside of Prison

Three of the Glenview participants spoke specifically about being closer to their families now that they were in prison themselves. Again, what 'being closer' means for them seems to be linked to the fact that they talk to their families more now, and this is, again, forced on them by the way the prison system works, or is in relation to constraints on their spending time together in their lives away from the prison.

For Ryan, in relation to his relationship with his dad, they had had little contact before Ryan was imprisoned and hadn't spoken for about three years at one point. His dad had got back in touch when he had entered the YOI "…he heard I was in the jail so got a haud of my ma and that and then he come up and seen us a few times", before his dad was sentenced to a period of imprisonment himself. They were still in touch through telephone calls and writing when I spoke to Ryan but comments he made indicated that he felt they were only in touch while they were in prison because it was something to do. Therefore, you could argue that Ryan's imprisonment had improved their relationship, or represented a growing closeness, as they were back in contact, however the motivation behind the communication (there's "[n]othing else to dae") and whether it is sustained after Ryan's release suggests this assessment is too simplistic.

Ryan also spoke about being closer to the rest of his family (mum and siblings).This appears to come from the fact they now have time to speak during visits, whereas as a teenager he would rarely sit down and have long conversations with parents or siblings.

> "I'm closer to my family noo and that but when I was oot there I didnae want to talk to them, stuff like that, dae my ain hing", and when asked about how visits are different to how he'd spend time with his family before he was in prison he said, "I'd sit and talk to them aboot stuff that I'm daein and aw that, whit the hoose is like, but oot there I wouldn't give a fuck aboot any of that." (Ryan)

While on the face of things these long conversations and time spent together may seem positive, when you look at what Ryan is actually saying you can see

that these are not the kinds of conversation he would have had with his family previously. While the prison may create the space for these conversations and support this contact, they do not mirror how young people and their family would be or interact outside of prison. Rather, the prison changes relationships. In this context I would argue perhaps partly through its preoccupation with the number and length of visits rather than their content. As noted previously, Kotova (2018) states in her research with partners of prisoners that there can be assumptions that more visits, more phone calls and more opportunities for time together as a family are positive changes, but this can be too simplistic where the quality of the family contact is poor.

Associated with the quality of this contact can be its relation to how family is done at home. Here, the family would be able to spend time together within the same space but there is not a need to be constantly interacting with each other during the time they are sharing this space. For example, the young person and their family member may be watching TV together or playing a computer game, something which Sam pointed out can facilitate comfortable conversations:

> "…but it was, like, I think it was hard, like I said, for me and my dad to talk, like, he's just completely into his games and so am I, so, like, we used to be, like, used to sit and play the X-box and, I think that was, like, the time that we really got, it sounds stupid, but got to know each other more, do you know what I mean. We had, like, random conversations, we used to watch the football and, like, watch the wrestling, but see after, like, you take the TV out of it, or you take the computer out of it, or you take food out of it, we're two separate people, like, I'll sit on one couch, he'll sit on the other couch and we just won't talk."

Or, of course, there may be no need for conversation at all. This is something which is unlikely to happen within a prison visit, where silence when two people are sitting opposite each other for any extended length of time with no distractions is likely to be felt far differently to the more comfortable silence within the family home. Drawing again on the concept of intimacy, Gabb (2008) speaks about the idea of "talking-not talking" (p. 124) where families can feel

close to each other without having to rely on conversation to do so, something which is difficult to achieve in the prison environment.

John also spoke about being closer to his brother (who had been in and out the YOI a few times during John's sentence), and all his family, after he went to prison:

> **John:** When we were outside it was more, he [his brother] got kicked out 'cause he was, like, attacking me basically. So we weren't very close, but as soon as I got the jail we got very close.
> **Kirsty:** Yeah, so you think you're closer now that, like, when you were, you were growing up?
> **John:** Closer with all of my family.

When asked later about what he meant when he said he was "closer" to his family he described it as talking to them more, saying he loved his parents on the phone and hugging them when he saw them, which he wouldn't have done previously.

Chris also talked about the changes in his relationship with his dad since he has been in prison himself:

> "I wisnae really that close to my dad when I was oot there, you know what I mean, I never really spoke to him that much, I seen him once in a blue moon, now I see him roughly every Tuesday, you know what I mean."

Chris spoke of the opportunity to spend more time with his family while he was within the YOI than he had before he was sentenced.

> "…there's parts of it in here you do enjoy, know what I mean, like, spending time wae your family and that, and that's the stuff that I missed when I was oot there, know what I mean. I didnae really dae much like that wae them because I was getting auld, but see in here you, you take it for granted, you know what I mean, I spent, it, it felt like it went on for

> ages when I was spending time wae them, ae" (talking about the family event day he attended)

Although he later appeared to contradict this when he said the following when talking about what he would do given he was a teenager before he went to prison: "I was just spending time wae ma family. I am one of they, know what I mean, I always spend time wae ma family if I kin, know what I mean, I'm no one goin oot drinking, taking drugs and that, I dinnae dae any of that." This statement, however, led into a discussion about his offence and may have formed part of a narrative which is around not taking drugs or drinking or not being a 'bad' person. This links in to discussions in Chapter 4 around the implications of interviewing people who are currently in prison on their experiences of imprisonment, their own or a family member's, the point they are at in their sentence, and their engagement with the prison rehabilitation rhetoric on the narratives they may tell.

Chris' comment around his dad now coming in to see him regularly, as well as Ryan noting that his dad re-established contact on finding out he had received a sentence, may also link into ideas around family and obligations. Families are constructed as somewhere people look for support in terms of crisis, be that practical, financial or emotional support (McKie and Callan, 2012) and they then tend to provide this. A sentence of imprisonment for these young people may represent this crisis and see family members provide support, whereas they may not previously have played a large part in their children's lives. Jay also reflected this idea of family being there when you need them. He spoke about the fact that his dad left the family home when he was around eleven and he didn't see him much after that and doesn't speak to him much either, but that his arrest and imprisonment had an impact on this:

> "I don't, I don't go and see him all the time and that but he comes up here, see every time I've been arrested he's always been there for me, like, took me to court, got arrested in [ ], that's, like, three hours away from mine, he used to always drive me back and forth to court every time I went, and he comes up here and sees me and that sometimes."

For Chris, family is being one of eight siblings to a single mother, so this home situation may also have had an impact on how he specifically experienced family relationships while serving his sentence. His brother was also within the YOI at some points during his sentence and therefore they both got to visit with their mum together at times:

> "And even, know what I mean, we were going to visits thegither wi ma mum and that so we were aw spending time sitting talking, having a laugh and stuff like that, know what I mean. It wisnae stuff that we were doing oot there that much because we aw had our ain hings ae […] it's a lot easier in here because, know what I mean, there's no much tae dae in here. So you've got mair opportunity to spend time wae your family and that in here…"

He went on to talk about his brother and how he "liked it in here". When I asked him to elaborate on what he meant by that he responded:

> **Chris:** So I notice, know what I mean, that he obviously liked it in here, but didnae like it at the same time, I hink he, he's never had an actual sentence yet, he's only been remanded […]
> **Kirsty:** What, like, when you say he liked it in here, what about it do you think that he liked, even though he obviously didn't like being in here?
> **Chris:** I hink it could've been, like, mibbe the peace and quiet and stuff like that, know what I mean, because it is alright having, like, peace and quiet in here but, wae us having quite a big family, know what I mean. We dinnae get around them that much, ae, you know what I mean, so it's quite hard, and I hink he's in here, he's not attention seeking but he's, he's wanting to spend mair time wae them, know what I mean, and being in here it's, we're, obviously I told, about six of us it's roughly a week. She's, my mum's always up seeing him, me, know what I mean, stuff like that, and I think it made, I think he, I think it made him feel, like, a bit mair important, know what I mean."

When part of a large single parent family, a prison sentence removes you from that environment and can offer the opportunity of rare one-on-one time with, and attention from, a parent.

I am aware that some of these experiences and arguments could be interpreted as saying prison has been a positive thing for, at least some aspects of, these relationships. Instead, I would argue that it highlights that whatever prison's negative effects through constraining and distorting family life, it shouldn't be assumed that family life for those without someone in prison is always easy, or lacking in stress, disorder or even violence. The black and white, prison is bad, family is good dichotomy is too simplistic.

As pointed out previously, it is not just the frequency of contact which is important but also the level of intimacy which can be achieved during it. While it is not always possible to achieve the same intimacy with someone while they are in prison it may be possible to achieve different forms of intimacy. The relationship can be less intensive, with fewer things going on and less external distractions when someone is inside prison, leading to what can be perceived as easier or closer relations. As with all aspects of this thesis, these experiences must be seen as part of a bigger story, where who is seen by the young person as their family, what it means for them to 'do' family and what family closeness means to those involved must be taken into account.

When I asked these three young people from Glenview, Chris, John and Ryan, about whether they felt this "closer" relationship would continue after they were released, they all gave different answers. Chris said that it would and spoke about how while he had been in prison he had received a lot of support from his family and so wanted to give that back after he was released:

> "What they've done for me I need to dae for them, that's what I kinda feel like."

He noted that it was mostly his family that had been up to see him and supported him during his sentence rather than his friends, and that although he

would see his friends when he was released that his family had become more important to him.

John spoke about how he thinks this behaviour is only because of where he is, “because it’s more stressful for them [his family]” when he is in prison. He has therefore changed his behaviour as he realises that they worry about him more when he’s inside and they have to think about what he is doing every day, whereas this is not what happened when he was outside.

Ryan spoke about the fact that, after he was released, he didn’t expect that he would continue to write to his dad and have that relationship, making it likely that it would go back to what it was like for him before he was sentenced.

All of these participants are teenagers, or young adults in their early twenties, so it is likely that, when they were at home, they may not have been spending a lot of time with their parents or siblings. Where prison imposes limited options and restrictions on the free time of those within it, seeing or communicating with family, or anyone, can become more important to them. For young people however, whether they are the ones inside or outside of the prison, even though visits may be short and infrequent, compared to how long a teenager may actually spend sitting down talking to a family member at home, with no other background distractions, they may have longer contact in prison than when they are at home. As with the content of Ryan’s conversation above, this can be an unnatural way of ‘doing’ or ‘being’ a family. Where someone’s experience of parenting or of being a family only takes place within a visit room, particularly during longer sentences, this can make it difficult to prepare for what parenting or what being in a family can be like outside.

Where bonding visits for very young children can, to some extent, alleviate this, there are very few provisions or opportunities around the parenting of older children or teenagers, who are at a life stage when parenting can be equally as important, just in different ways. The specific environment within a prison gives rise to certain kinds of relationships, a context which must always be borne in mind when someone speaks about being closer to family while they are in prison. Their location at the time will impact on the narratives they tell. The

opportunity to explore what happens in these relationships following someone's release would be useful.

Closeness Through Shared Experience

Another aspect of potentially being 'closer' to someone is where both the young person and their family member have been in prison, though not necessarily at the same time. Here, the closeness is a function of a shared experience, something which could be seen across relationships (e.g. through becoming parents, attending the same university or following the parent down the same career path), but here it is specifically in respect of the experience of imprisonment. For example, while Declan did not serve a sentence at the same time as any of his family members, he did speak about communication with people who had been in prison at some point, and how this was different from those who had not. He talked about there being a common language (e.g., they would always say gaff not cell) and they wouldn't tell you about what was happening outside (though this is something that Morven was also aware of though she had never served a sentence herself) or ask you what it is like to be inside. He also noted that they wouldn't tell you that they miss you in the letters they write because they know how hard that is for someone to hear because they've been there themselves.

> "Obviously, like, when you get people in the jail that's already had that experience, like, they don't, hingmy, like, send a letter, like, that kinda stuff. They already know what tae dae and say kinda hing, aw, whit you daein, whit yous daein and, obviously, you don't call it a cell you call it, like, hoose, gaff, kinda hing, or you just say, 'Whit you daein in the gaff or anything, whit you watching?' That kinda stuff. Like, when, like, don't say, 'Oh I miss you,' or anything like that, obviously, when they know what it's like to be inside and get that kinda letter." (Declan)

Chris also touched on the special kind of support he received from family members who had served a prison sentence, particularly in the institution he was now in:

> "So he told me, you know what I mean, that's what helped me in here, just get tae a work party, settle doon and you'll get there quickly […] my grand-da done the exact same…"

This ability to understand, and perhaps provide support to, a young person by family members who have also served a sentence is something which may be lost, either when we only look at young people with a family member in prison who are not in prison themselves, or where we have a narrow view of desistance and the idea of pro-social bonds. By widening out who we see as families of prisoners and what they are for, as was explored in Chapter 5, we allow these types of discussion to take place.

7.5 Conclusion

Prison can impact on family relationships in different ways, having the ability to both separate *and* bring together young people and their family members. This distance (or closeness) can be considered through a number of lenses: spatially due to the physical location of family members or the space face-to-face contact is now taking place within; temporally, due to a (de)synchrony of routines and the different passing of time inside and outside of prison; and relationally or emotionally, which can be affected by, or be the result of, elements of the spatial and temporal aspects. Linking this to Chapter 5, which looked at who families of prisoners are and what they are for, the dominant narrative has previously been around the disruptive nature of a prison sentence to families. While it is true that prison very often disrupts family life, this is not the whole story. Where the young person's family member is also in prison or has been in prison previously, or through the young person's own experience in prison, this can sometimes create 'closer' relationships. Though, as with all familial imprisonment experiences, this is not universal, and was not even universal across the young men I spoke to in Glenview. It cannot simply be assumed that 'closer' is always positive, but equally we cannot ignore the 'positive' elements as they are told to us in this way. Again, as was mentioned in previous chapters, context is key. What these narratives or experiences may mean and how they are seen and made sense of must depend on the relationships and family

experiences of the young people prior to their own or their family member's imprisonment.

Spatially, the prison has the ability to separate a young person from their family member *and* bring them closer together. This movement can be both across and within the prison walls. While imprisonment is not the only factor in these young people's lives which introduces separation into their relationships it can bring unique aspects. Rules and restrictions on forms and types of communication can see young people writing letters rather than sending text messages and having to carry out their face-to-face communication within the prison. These visit spaces bring the young person and their family member back into close physical proximity but how they are set up and furnished can instead introduce emotional distance through discouraging the promotion and experience of intimacy or an emotional closeness.

Where we consider space, we must also consider cyberspace as well as the physical world as somewhere that family can be done. Prison is now able to separate families in both the on- and offline worlds. As with other areas of familial imprisonment research, the failure to recognise the impact of technology on family relationships, both inside and outside of prison, is something which can be lacking within this body of literature. Issues of how to maintain relationships and communicate, and the experience or fear of stigma by family members will now be experienced differently because of the advent and proliferation of the use of social media and other digital technology or platforms. Research in these areas should take account of this.

Where siblings are brought together in the same physical space by their concurrent imprisonment in the same YOI this can have both positive and negative aspects to it. The siblings may see each other more often where both are imprisoned together than when only one is serving a sentence, but the relationship is still being carried out in a prison environment and is changed and shaped by this. Their physical proximity within the shared prison space leads to a need for them to 'back each other up'. This is behaviour which can also take place outside, but there is the perception of an increased need to do this within

a prison environment and a differential in consequences where this behaviour takes place inside rather than outside of a prison.

Temporally, the prison has the ability to seemingly stretch out time, lengthening the time conversations take place over through letter writing rather than the use of text messages or other messaging applications; or make time slow down or stand still compared to how it is felt to pass outside. This desynchrony, where the young person is outside the prison, can arise from this seemingly different experience of time, as well as from the fact that their life runs to a different schedule and rhythm compared to their family member in prison. A young person's life in particular, when compared to younger children, is unlikely to fit into the rigid timetabling of prison phone calls and visits, making sustaining relationships difficult.

There are also, however, examples of temporal synchronicity. Where the young person and their family member are both within the prison estate their schedules become synchronised and time can have a similar meaning for both, something to be 'done' and something of which there is much but with little to fill it. Synchronicity is not only the experience of young people who are serving a prison sentence as well as their family member though. Where the young person is outside of prison there may not be an explicit forced synchronising of routines; instead, synchronisation may be forced through the restrictions which allow the prison to exert an arms-length control over the young person. Seeing synchronicity and desynchrony in binary, positive/negative terms is too simplistic. That young people and parents in prison are all temporally homogenised and no longer have their own lives and routines and schedules, or that those outside have their autonomy over their free time restricted, cannot be seen as positive.

Finally, relationally and emotionally there is also a potential shift in relationships, both further away and closer together, through the experience of prison. The introduction of distance is, as with the spatial and temporal aspects above, the dominant narrative within familial imprisonment literature. By removing a family member physically from the young people's lives and placing restrictions on how they are able to keep in touch, the emotional connection felt

with this person was sometimes reduced. One participant described this as the relationship becoming like one she expected to have with extended family members not her sibling. This distance could also be introduced through a lack of opportunity to experience intimacy through their connections. This could be due to feeling unable to talk freely in visits, calls or letters, either because of an awareness of monitoring by the prison or through a wish not to upset their family member by talking about things they were currently unable to experience or take part in.

Where there is a lessening of the emotional distance in the young people's relationships, or a growing feeling of closeness, this seems to depend on whether it is only the family member or also the young person who has had, or is currently serving, a prison sentence. This section therefore draws exclusively on data from the Glenview interviews, though this experience is not universal across them. This is perhaps where there is most need for context and also a nuanced view of these narratives, rather than simply taking the fact they are said to be 'closer' as a positive thing. Closer may simply mean that the young person sees more of their family member, on the surface a positive. Firstly, it must be taken in context, so it was sometimes a function of a low or non-existent baseline of contact previously. Secondly, where we look deeper it can show, as in Ryan's conversations, the unnaturalness of this relationship, as well as the potential for it to disappear on either the young person or their family member's release. Linking back to Chapter 5 around what families of prisoners are for, there is the potential for families to be used, by either the system or the person in prison while they are serving their sentence, and then on release, to either no longer be needed, or for other challenges or simply other aspects of life to take over. The potential further harm for young people when these relationships, which are cultivated in and by a prison and become 'closer', to then break down after release is something that must be considered. Where policy and practice only focus on the quantity of communication and contact, for example through visits, rather than also on their quality, this can also oversimplify the solutions to helping young people maintain relationships with family members in prison and can fail to fully support them in doing this.

Where an increased emotional closeness comes from siblings being placed together in the same YOI, this closeness can be seen through their care for each other. This care, however, is something which is now manifesting itself through feeling increasingly protective towards the sibling compared to when they were outside, with a need to 'be there for each other'. As I noted in respect of the spatial section of this chapter above, the prison changes the way the sibling relationship is carried out, and here, the way that caring is enacted within the relationship. It is now a function of the greater threat and lower availability of those you can trust within prison. Elements of closeness, or intimacy, within the relationships carried out in these spaces are a function of the trust which is felt in family members. Therefore, again, ideas of closeness cannot always be simplistically linked to elements of positivity.

Where the young people spoke about closer relationships with their own family members outside of prison, this was reflected through an increase in the use of emotional language or behaviour by the young person towards their parents (hugging them and telling them they loved them). Again, as with the sibling relationships above, this was a function of the need to reassure those outside due to their current location within a place perceived as dangerous, as well as the inability of those outside, and with no experience of it, to know about the prison environment the young person was now inhabiting. Or the closeness was reflected as a function of time – the time to spend with family members during visits, away from the everyday stresses, strains and pressures of family life on the outside.

Given the discussions within this chapter of the potential for prison to bring young people closer to their family member, whatever that may mean, I am aware of the danger of using this language given the known, and evidenced, harm caused by imprisonment. This is why the context of relationships prior to the imprisonment is so important, as is an in-depth exploration of what closer actually means. But these counter-intuitive experiences should not be ignored simply because they do not fit with the dominant narrative of harm, and the message that we may wish to give around prison and imprisonment. For example, some research has told of some participants', particularly female prisoners', feelings of 'safety' within a prison environment, when compared to

the lives they were living prior to the incarceration (e.g. Weston-Henriques and Jones-Brown, 2000; Bradley and Davino, 2002). In respect of young offenders, Neustatter (2002) writes about some of the young people she spoke to having been "glad" to have come into prison as it offered them the chance to escape from the chaos that had characterised their lives previously, noting that some "simply found prison life easier to cope with than life outside" (p. 138). This was set against a backdrop of, for example, having had to sleep on the streets whereas at least in prison they were provided with a roof over their head, or prison staff representing someone who they felt cared for them for the first time in their lives. These narratives could be interpreted as 'positive' elements of the imprisonment experience. The experiences of my own participants are just as relevant.

It is also important that young people's experiences within this chapter have come from the point of view of those both inside and outside of prison themselves. This is key in beginning to challenge the current dominant framing of familial imprisonment research, where the prisoner is inside the prison and the family member is outside – producing an artificial construct where you cannot be a prisoner *and* a family member of a prisoner within this body of literature. This ignores the elements of the quantitative literature which links parental imprisonment to a future risk of offending and imprisonment for the child. It draws on it only to justify a focus on families through their role in resettlement and reducing reoffending. This demarcation also supports the myth of the non-porous prison border where family members are outside and may only cross this boundary temporarily during visits before returning again to the outside world. Instead, particularly given the growing prison population and specific geographic areas this population tends to be drawn from, family relationships can be carried out entirely within the prison estate. They will be altered and impacted on by the environment but can move across the border as an entire dyadic unit rather than the prison walls always being assumed to represent a physical barrier between the prisoner inside and the family member outside.

The concluding chapter of this thesis follows and will firstly summarise the concluding arguments and key themes from this and each of the preceding

chapters. It will then go on to synthesize the separate chapter conclusions by pulling out the key contributions of the thesis for the reader. From there it will go on to highlight the potential policy and practice implications following on from this.

8 Chapter 8 - Conclusion

The research upon which this thesis is based sought to explore young people's experiences of having a family member in prison, with a specific focus on what family meant to them and how it was done, before, during and after the period of imprisonment. This chapter summarises the arguments made throughout the preceding chapters, emphasises the original contributions the thesis makes and then looks at some of the implications for theory, future research and policy and practice and recommendations stemming from it.

8.1 Summary of Thesis

In Chapter 1, I introduced the research underpinning the thesis, outlined the key arguments and previewed elements of the original contribution it has gone on to make.

Chapter 2 included sections discussing the concepts of childhood, young people and family, situating the future discussions of young people's experiences of a family member's imprisonment within these contexts. I went on to provide a critical overview of the relevant literature within the field of familial imprisonment research, commenting on how and why it has evolved over time. From this overview, I highlighted the gaps within this body of literature, which the thesis went on to address and explore. These were the lack of a specific focus on young people's experiences, almost no focus on sibling imprisonment, and the lack of recognition of intra- and inter- prison family relationships, where the young people and their family member have served sentences simultaneously. I also highlighted the lack of contextual focus in much of the research and the need to centre the family rather than the prison, as this research has tried to do.

Within Chapter 3, I outlined and discussed the methods used within this research, the reasons underlying these choices and the potential implications of their use on the data upon which this thesis is based. I charted my progress through the research process, how this impacted on the decisions I made and how these then influenced the final thesis which was produced.

In Chapter 4, I reflected on the methods used and the implications of the methodological decisions I made. I began by exploring the different relationships I had with the two groups of participants who took part in this research: those who were part of KIN and those who were resident in Glenview Young Offenders Institution (YOI). These relationships, along with the spatial and temporal aspects of the interview experience, began to highlight the importance of context as a theme within the thesis, seen here in relation to the methods used and the data coming from them. This is something I continued to draw on across my findings chapters. I discussed my role as insider and outsider depending on, and relative to, the individual interview participants. My being a member of KIN was important in this respect, as it was also relevant for the young people themselves. Their being part of an arts collective exploring familial imprisonment prior to speaking to me about the same subject will necessarily have changed the interviews and perhaps their narration of their own experiences. Similarly, the location of the second group of participants within a YOI will not only have changed the practicalities of my conducting interviews, but also potentially have impacted on the young people's narration of their experiences of a family member's imprisonment, as well as the bleeding into these narratives of their own experiences of imprisonment. Looking through a temporal lens highlighted the impact of distance from the event which I was now asking about, something which, for those in Glenview, may be intrinsically linked to the space they were now occupying.

Finally, the concept of power is one that runs across many of the methodological reflections in Chapter 4. In some respects power lay with me as the researcher; I chose the topic, the group of participants and the questions to ask. Sometimes it lay with the gatekeepers who controlled access to spaces and populations, and sometimes it lay with the prison, both in respect of those held within its institutions and of those, like myself, spending time in them temporarily while carrying out interviews. This chapter contained levels of reflexivity which are continued throughout the thesis and was intended to provide a more in-depth consideration and background for the data which the thesis went on to discuss than may usually be provided, or even be possible to provide given the medium academic research tends to be published in.

Chapter 5 was the first findings chapter to consider the substantive topic of familial imprisonment. It considered the two-part question "Who are prisoners' families and what are they for?". In doing so, it argued that there is a specific implicit underlying purpose of family within policy and practice in this area, and some of the research which stems from it, and how this can exclude certain young people and their experiences. The chapter began by trying to widen the idea of prisoners' families from the dominant construction of (female) partner and (younger) child. It did so by firstly arguing that we need to recognise and treat young people as a specific subset of the 'children' we consider in research and in policy and practice. It did this by exploring the liminal space young people occupy; no longer children but equally not yet adults. This is reflected through the lack of provision for carrying out these types of relationship within prison visits, along with a lack of understanding of the young person's potential need for support: they are often viewed as *risky* rather than *at risk*. I explored how this period is a time of transition, potentially compounding the impact of a family member's imprisonment, as going to high school is seen as a time children can be told more of the 'truth' of where their family member is, but this is also a time of 'difficult' teenage years and dealing with puberty. Young people's growing understanding can cause a loss of innocence, a greater awareness for the potential of stigma and need for secrecy, as well as a growing anger at their family member's 'choice' to continue behaving in a way that sees them being sent to prison.

Potential differences in young people's experiences were also highlighted through the increasing time they spent away from the family home as they move towards adulthood and a growing independence. This further compounded the restrictions made on communication through the set times they had to make themselves available for telephone calls from and visits to the prison. Young people were asked to alter their lives to fit with the routine of prison and could face judgment where they did not. However, I argued that whilst young people were required to fit into the prison routine, the construction of family by the prison service, with a focus on younger children, results in the prison failing to accommodate them and their needs; even while simultaneously representing family relationships as assets for rehabilitation and even while formally acknowledging the diversity of family forms.

Chapter 5 continued to explore the question of who prisoners' families are by considering the experiences of young people with a sibling in prison. As with young people generally, siblings can also feel excluded within visiting environments where 'children's' visits appear to be for those who satisfy the category of child biologically, so under the age of eighteen *and* relationally, so those visiting a parent. Visits also fail to provide a space where sibling relationships can continue to be carried out in at least a similar manner to how they would have been done at home, with the opportunity to play together or even simply sit side by side. Siblings have a different relationship to that of a parent and child and young people may confide more in a sibling at this time in their life, having a greater reliance on them and a closer relationship, highlighting the potentially deep impact of this loss. I argued that the absence of sibling imprisonment from the literature not only renders this group and their unique experiences invisible but also raises the issue of the need for a wider definition of who a parent may be. A sibling may also perform functions of the parental role, for a variety of reasons. Therefore, the loss of a sibling to a period of imprisonment can be felt as both sibling and parental imprisonment.

Exploring what prisoners' families are for highlighted a focus on desistance or reducing reoffending, and a construction of families as resources or assets in this process. The result of this is to individualise, responsibilise and fail to recognise the needs of these young people in their own right. I would argue it also compounds the exclusion of certain groups of young people. In this case, it excludes the voices and experiences of young people with a family member in prison who are also in prison themselves. It also means we can fail to consider wider structural issues such as poverty and inequality which then compound the exclusion some of these young people may already be subjected to.

Where families fail to be considered in their own right, this can produce an uncritical encouragement of family contact and the rebuilding or maintaining of family relationships without any consideration of the consequences of this on someone's release. Where a relationship has been cultivated and supported but then goes on to break down after release, for any number of reasons, this has the potential to cause further harm to the young person.

In Chapter 6, I went on to explore the young people's experiences of family. Within this chapter I argued that families are living organisms, dynamic and constantly changing and adapting over time, both naturally and in response to internal and external factors acting upon them. This allows us to move away from seeing the family as simply a single entity, rigid and unchanging, and either wholly good or wholly bad – whatever these subjective terms may mean. While imprisonment can be one of these external impact factors it is not the only one the young people experienced and nor should it be taken in isolation. Young people and their families do not exist in a vacuum, either pre, during or post their family member's imprisonment, and this chapter explored the factors that were relevant to the family experiences of the young people I spoke to. Building on the importance of context as discussed within Chapters 3 and 4 around the interviews, here the contexts of the young person's family experiences are key in looking specifically at their experiences of familial imprisonment.

Firstly, Chapter 6 looked at losses or absences in these young people's lives. It explored the impact of absences through work or parents divorcing or separating, as well as imprisonment. It considered the concept of ambiguous loss as a framework to try and understand some of these losses; where the family member could be physically absent but psychologically present, or vice versa. It also explored how it felt for the young person to experience the loss of a family member to imprisonment as a "disappearance", where the young person was not told of the reason behind the absence, and the potential difference of someone being away for a one-off extended period of time compared to repeated, although perhaps shorter, absences.

Throughout this analysis I drew on the themes of space, time and relational aspects. Ideas of space were drawn on where the place the family is carried out or situated changes depending on the reason for the absence of the family member. Family may now be carried out across different residences where parents have separated, in the homes of extended family members who have taken on caring responsibilities or within prison visit rooms. The empty space the person left can be felt differently depending on previous or current living arrangements for the young person, and the concept of ambiguous loss could perhaps help us understand this physical absence or space but with a simultaneous psychological presence in the young people's lives. Where someone

is physically absent but psychologically present, I related the comments of one young person who explained the temporal aspects of this as meaning that his dad's timeline halted while his continued. This caused a disconnect on his dad's release where he expected the young child he had left not the teenager his son had become. Temporal aspects could also be seen in the potentially different experiences of a parent's single long-term sentence compared to repeated shorter periods of imprisonment. Both these aspects then tie in to the relational changes which were explored; where siblings became more like parents, and where who was seen by the young person as family changed (perhaps due to the introduction of extended family care).

The chapter then went on to explore further relational changes for the young people, where there were elements of a role reversal with their parents (parentification), or a move towards a more horizontal relationship (parent as peer). The former experience meant that young people took on practical tasks within the family such as caring for younger siblings or the parent themselves, as well as more emotional elements such as worrying about or taking on a more psychologically caring role in respect of the parent. Both aspects of parentification and the parent becoming more of a peer are in fact natural processes and ones that will, and should, happen to almost every child as they grow up. The issue is more around *when* and *how* these processes take place and the inequalities inherent in this. Though I would argue that there are also elements of unnecessarily pathologising some of these behaviours within certain families. This can come where we take a white middle class family experience as a baseline for comparison, and fail to recognise the inherent natural diversity in families and their experiences across a society.

By looking at families first and foremost, rather than prisoners' families, this allowed a fuller exploration of these young people's experiences. It allows us to see the impact of a parent or sibling's imprisonment on the temporality and dynamics of being a child or young person within a family within the context of the family more generally. Changes in these elements are affected not only by the imprisonment but also by other factors in the family and even the young people's lives more generally. These changes highlight inequalities where some young people can find themselves growing up, or being viewed as more grown up, more quickly than others. They can also find their family experiences judged

or labelled in certain ways due to the western middle class norm that has been established for what a child or what family is and does.

While some of the familial imprisonment literature does acknowledge that pre-existing family relationships and experiences will have an impact on the subsequent experience of a family member's imprisonment, it rarely explores this in the depth and detail as has been done within this thesis. The importance of this context is key for being able to more fully and widely consider a family member's imprisonment for young people and to move the emphasis from experiences of familial *imprisonment* to *familial* imprisonment.

Chapter 7 developed and built upon the discussions and arguments made in previous chapters. It placed the experience of familial imprisonment at its centre, while the intention of Chapter 6 was to include experiences of familial imprisonment where relevant but to place these in the context of the young people's lives and experiences of family more widely. The intention of structuring the thesis in this way was to address a critique I make of the existing body of literature, which fails to provide and take account of this wider context and see the young people's lives beyond their experiences of a family member's imprisonment. The chapter continued to draw on themes running through previous chapters by looking at the young people's experiences of a family member's imprisonment through the lens of spatial, temporal and affective-relational aspects. Within the second half of this chapter in particular, I drew extensively on the interviews with the young people within Glenview YOI to highlight the unique aspects of their experiences of familial imprisonment, which tend not to be reflected in the current body of literature. By considering these intra-prison relationships, I showed how the interaction between the family and the prison is not a one-way exchange; the prison does impact on the family but the family can also impact on the prison. By not considering the latter, I would argue that we are narrowing our view of familial imprisonment.

The inclusion of the Glenview participants also allowed a broadening out of the more dominant narrative within the familial imprisonment literature; prison can separate families but it can also bring *some* young people together with their family members. Again, I would reiterate that while these narratives tended to come from the Glenview interviews, they were not universal across them. They

must also be read within the context of the young people's pre-imprisonment family experiences.

Spatially, the prison can separate *and* bring together family members. The latter occurred not only where the young person and their family member were serving sentences within the same institution, but also where they were not but were instead brought together within what has been termed the "liminal space" of the prison visit room. The physical separation of families by the prison, along with the rules and restrictions on methods and frequency of communication that come with this, highlights how the digital age we now live in has changed the experience of families of a member's imprisonment. Where we could argue that lack of access to the internet, social media and other forms of technology is a new pain of imprisonment for prisoners, so too can we argue that this extends on to the young people outside, as they are unable to use the text or other messaging options they would in their other day-to-day interactions. Where their face-to-face interactions now have to be carried out within a visit room, the young person may physically be in close proximity to their family member but the spatial lay-out and facilities within the room can introduce an emotional distance through the discouraging and lack of opportunity to achieve a level of intimacy.

Leading on from the arguments above around a new digital pain of imprisonment through the inability to use digital communication technology, we must also consider how the spatial separation of families can now take place in both the physical world and in cyberspace. Family can be done and displayed both on- and offline, and a family member's imprisonment can disrupt both of these aspects for young people. I would argue that this highlights a need generally to begin to consider familial imprisonment differently due to the proliferation of technology within our day-to-day lives.

Where siblings are brought spatially closer together through concurrent imprisonment within the same YOI this can be both a positive and negative experience for them. This challenges the 'close is good, distance is bad' binary. While siblings may see each other more often where both are imprisoned together, compared to when one is serving a sentence and one is still at home, the fact the relationship is being carried out within the prison environment

changes and shapes these relations. Their physical proximity within the unique prison environment led to a need for them to 'back each other up'. While this could also be apparent in sibling relationships taking place outside prison, I would argue that there is an increased need to do this in prison due to the greater threat and lower availability of those you can trust within this environment. The potential consequences should you carry out this behaviour within a prison are also higher than those which may take place outside.

Where we consider aspects of temporality, prison can seemingly stretch out time, making it appear to pass more slowly for those inside its walls. It also impacts on the conversations between young people and their family member, now conducted through the slower, more drawn out medium of letter-writing rather than the instantaneous text or other digital messaging options. As with the spatial aspects, prison can introduce both elements of closeness, or synchronicity, as well as distance, or desynchrony, within the young person's life and relationship with their family member. This desynchrony can come from the seemingly different experience of time within a prison, as well as from the fact the young person's life will run to a different schedule and rhythm compared to their family member's. This adds to the argument made in Chapter 5 that we should consider young people specifically rather than as part of the grouping of children more generally, as their lives are less likely to fit into the rigid timetable in place around prison calls and visits compared to younger children.

Where there is temporal synchronicity this could be where the young person and their family member were serving sentences simultaneously, though not necessarily within the same prison, or where the young person outside had altered their routine to fit with that of their imprisoned relative. This highlights the incongruity in seeing synchronicity and desynchrony in binary positive/negative terms and that this is too simplistic. That young people and their relatives in prison are all temporally homogenised and no longer have their own individual routines or schedules, or that prison is able to exert an arms-length control over the lives of young people outside of prison, cannot simply be seen as positive because there is an inherent closeness resulting from these behaviours.

Finally, this chapter looked at the impact of a family member's imprisonment on relational and emotional changes within the young people's relationships with, again, movement introducing elements of distance and closeness. These were often intrinsically linked to the spatial and temporal aspects which have come before and, again, the importance of contextualising them was key to exploring their meaning for the young people.

As with the spatial and temporal aspects, the dominant narrative within familial imprisonment literature is of imprisonment creating emotional distance within families. Here, that could be seen as coming from the physical distance between the young person and their family member and the time they had spent apart due to this. It could also be seen as a function of the reduced intimacy in their relationships – where they felt unable to talk freely in letters, calls or visits. Sometimes this was down to the perceived surveillance of their communication through these mediums and sometimes it was due to their own self-censorship of what they shared so as not to upset their family member with talk of the "outside world".

Elements of an emotional closeness within the young people's relationships due to imprisonment mainly came from narratives from those within Glenview (though not from all of these young men). Closer here tended to mean one of two things. First, it could have been due to the changing care they exhibited for their siblings who were resident in the same YOI. Their spatial closeness fostered an emotional closeness, but this was a function of the specific environment which they were in. The fear and lack of trust of others meant the importance of trust placed in these sibling relationships took on a greater significance, as did the need to be there for each other, and what this meant in practice. Therefore, while outside of prison you may still feel protective of your sibling and wish to back them up if required, the *need* to do this in prison produced the feeling of closeness spoken about here.

Secondly, closer here often meant that they saw more of their family members while they were in prison themselves, or communicated more with them through calls or letters where face-to-face contact was not possible. This should of course be considered relative to levels of pre-imprisonment contact, which for

some was almost non-existent. Closer could also mean the young people in prison themselves were more emotionally demonstrative with their family members. Again, I would argue against automatically conflating closer here with positivity. While the young person may see or communicate more with their family member, when we look deeper, as with Ryan's conversations, we can see a level of unnaturalness to them. Linking back to Chapter 5, on what prisoners' families are for, we also run the risk of young people being used by the prison system, or the family member inside simply being in a place they are better able to cultivate these relationships while they are in prison. On release, these relationships may no longer be needed to the same extent or the challenges present prior the imprisonment may again take precedence within their family member's life. There is therefore the potential for further harm to be caused to the young people when relationships which are cultivated in prison, and become 'closer', then break down after release. This is something which is often not considered. I also argued that where we focus solely on the quantity or frequency of communication rather than also the quality, something which could be done by employing ideas of intimacy, this can oversimplify the issues around maintaining relationships and result in a failure to fully support young people to be able to do this.

In concluding with the summary of this final findings chapter, I would like to point out that I am aware of some of the potential dangers in speaking about prison bringing young people closer together with their family members, whatever that may mean for them. Given the known, and evidenced, harm caused by imprisonment to those within prisons and their family members, there is a risk in using this language. However, where we consider the context of these stories and are able to consider what "closer" may mean to these young people, I think that their inclusion is important and necessary to fully explore experiences of familial imprisonment.

8.2 Contribution of the Thesis

This thesis aimed to contribute to a growing body of knowledge around familial imprisonment, particularly that section of work based around research including the voices of participants themselves. It has done so throughout the thesis in several ways. Firstly, it has contributed to the small body of literature available

with a specific focus on young people (or teens or adolescents, as they are variously termed) and on sibling imprisonment, and has argued for the need to look in more depth at these experiences. It has also argued for the need to consider young people experiencing familial imprisonment beyond the age of eighteen, as we are beginning to do with young people within the justice system themselves, viewing them as still distinct from adults beyond these age-defined boundaries. It also cautioned against the dominant focus on familial imprisonment, particularly within policy and practice, being rooted solely in desistance theory or reducing reoffending. While this is not unhelpful in being able to raise the profile of these issues within government or the criminal justice system, and I acknowledge that many young people would be supportive of their family member stopping offending, this focus can lead to an exclusion of certain people or experiences from the literature.

This thesis engages with experiences of family generally more deeply than tends to be present within much familial imprisonment literature and highlights the importance of context for understanding these young people's experiences. More widely, by placing family at the centre of this research, the thesis contributes through its ability to recognise the family as a living organism, which changes and adapts naturally as well as in response to internal and external factors, of which a member's imprisonment is one. It therefore introduces the idea of familial imprisonment as a factor which can cause new change on a family unit in and of itself, but can also speed up or slow down changes which would be and are occurring anyway. This allows it to challenge some of the assumptions made about families, prison, and the relationship between these two institutions. This way of thinking about familial imprisonment, with a centring of the family rather than the prison, raises the question of why this research is almost exclusively based within the criminological or sociology of the prison discipline. This implicitly suggests a focus primarily on the prison and prisoners rather than on families or the experiences of the children and young people within them, as would its situation within the sociology of the family or of childhood. It also raises the potential issues of looking at family or familial imprisonment only in the offline world and not recognising the impact of the digital age we now live in on these experiences.

Specifically, through its participants, this thesis contributes the unique perspectives of young people with a family member in prison who are also in prison themselves, whose voices and experiences are not, as far as I am aware, represented within the existing body of literature. It emphasises the range of different familial imprisonment experiences there can be and challenges the binary construct of prisoners being inside the prison and family members being outside. Instead, it recognises that young people, and anyone, can hold both of these identities simultaneously; it is possible to be a prisoner *and* a family member of a prisoner.

Through challenging this delineation, the thesis is also able to challenge the idea of non-porous prison boundaries, where family members are always outside and can only cross this borderline temporarily during visits before returning again to the outside world they came from. Given the growing prison population and the fact it tends to be drawn predominantly from particular areas within the country, it is increasingly likely that family relationships can be and are being, carried out entirely within the prison estate. Families are no longer simply living "in the shadow of prison" (Codd, 2008, Title), nor are they experiencing the prison as a "domestic satellite" (Comfort, 2008: 99) but certain family relationships are actually, at times, being done entirely inside the prison walls. The relationships will be altered and impacted on by the environment but can move across the border as a complete dyadic unit rather than the prison walls always being assumed to represent a physical barrier between the prisoner inside and the family member outside.

This thesis also contributes methodologically to the field of familial imprisonment research by arguing that it is not enough just to explore these issues qualitatively but that it must also be done interpretively. So, not simply looking at what happened as a result of the family member's imprisonment but asking specifically how the young people experience and make sense of these things. As Amie said, "…like, how does it impact is very different to, kind of, what I've been asked before."

8.3 Implications for Theory and Future Research

While implications for theory and future research can be found in the sections above within this conclusion chapter, this sub-section pulls these together to ensure they are more easily accessible for the reader. The main implications for theory come from my argument that when looking at experiences of familial imprisonment our focus should be on the family rather than the imprisonment. The first theoretical implication which follows from this assertion is that by doing so we are able to construct and view the family as a living organism in its own right, constantly and naturally changing and adapting over time, rather than as a static object waiting to be acted upon by the outside force of a member's imprisonment. In so doing, we are able to take greater cognisance of other factors within these young people's and their families' lives, rather than simply viewing the experience of a family member's imprisonment as if it took place within a vacuum. This allows us to provide and consider their experiences within a context.

Secondly, a focus on families allows us to see that imprisonment is not always the only, or even the main, issue causing disruption, difficulty or harm in some of these young people's lives (although clearly for some it is and this needs to be recognised and addressed). By focusing on the family and not just the imprisonment we are able to have a greater idea of the range of inequalities some of these young people face, how they deal with them and how they deal with yet another example of this in their lives when a parent or sibling is sentenced to a period of imprisonment.

A final theoretical implication of this research is that it brings out the fact that prison does not just impact on families but that families are also able to impact on the prison – the institutional influence is not simply one-way. This mainly comes from the young people who were experiencing, or had experienced, intra-prison relationships with their siblings while resident within the same Young Offenders Institution (YOI). The implication of this goes beyond those researching families of prisoners however, and has implications for those carrying out prisons research more generally. Where we are looking at prisoners' experiences, or at the prison as an institution more widely, the impact of family relationships being done entirely within the prison estate must be taken account

of. The ability of family members being present within the same institution to create a “homely” feeling, and what this change in perception of the space means will potentially impact theoretical work within the realm of prisons research.

Moving on to implications for future research, the first comes from the fact this research included young people as participants who, as well as experiencing a family member’s imprisonment, were also serving a sentence themselves at the time of being interviewed. This group have been missing from familial imprisonment research and future research on the topic also needs to include their experiences. This could come from young people resident within a YOI or those held in secure accommodation (whether for offending or other grounds). Secondly, this research shows that while the experiences of young people can be similar to those of younger children they can also differ and be impacted in particular ways due to their age or stage of development. This highlights the need to consider this group specifically in future research. Thirdly, it underlines the need for future research to look at sibling imprisonment, rather than simply focusing on children and young people with a parent in prison. It echoes Meek’s (2008) call for this which came over a decade ago. A final implication coming from this thesis in respect of future research is that, where children and young people’s experiences are concerned, it may be better placed to be located within the field of sociology of families or of childhood rather than always within criminology.

8.4 Implications of Research for Policy and Practice

In addition to the theoretical and academic contributions outlined above, this thesis also aims to contribute to policy and practice. Its findings reinforce the negative impacts of a family member’s imprisonment found in other studies and the need to try and mitigate these through the provision of children’s visits or other support. Although it emphasises that these should be provided for children under the biological rather than the relational sense, so not simply for those with a parent in prison. It cautions against basing the introduction of these services on the basis solely of reducing reoffending and instead argues for a focus on the young people themselves, and their needs, which will prevent some from being excluded. It also highlights the need to consider young people as a

specific group, separate from children more generally, recognising that they can feel the same as younger children but also have specific needs and experiences and that support is rarely provided for them. For example, providing for the needs of older children in relation to play is only seen as desirable rather than essential within the National Performance Framework for Prison Visitors' Centres in Scotland (2017), and while facilities for younger children have improved within Scottish prisons, those to enhance the quality of a young person's visit have not.

The quality of contact is also key. It is not enough to consider young people's needs solely in quantifiable terms such as number and length of visit (although these are, of course, also important). Drawing on the concept of intimacy, and how it could be felt or achieved, can help when considering how it is possible to improve the quality of visits and other aspects of maintaining relationships with someone in prison. One aspect of this can be around the architecture of the visit room where the need to sit directly opposite the person who is being visited, often in a seat which is bolted to the floor, can inhibit any kind of comfortable conversation for the young person visiting. Within a family environment at home these are not the kinds of situations where teenagers and young people are likely to feel able to best connect to their parent, or sibling, and neither is it conducive to disclosures and the sharing of information necessary to foster intimacy within relationships.

While the impact of parental imprisonment is now widely accepted and on the radar of the prison service, third sector organisations and those in government, that of sibling imprisonment is not. This research highlights the equally negative, though different, impact of a sibling's imprisonment, as well as their loss having the potential to contribute to elements of a more parental imprisonment experience depending on their role within the family. A recognition of sibling imprisonment and its impact is needed within both policy and practice, as well as within academic research, to address this. As is, perhaps, a wider definition of parent given who can provide this role, or important elements of it, for children and young people. For example, where an organisation provides support for children and young people it could be labelled as for those experiencing the imprisonment of a family member rather than the more restrictive parental imprisonment only. In many prisons children's visits are exclusively for those

who meet the age criteria to be a child (e.g. under the age of eighteen) but *also* are the child of the person they are visiting. This results in those who are under the age of eighteen and visiting siblings in prison being unable to take advantage of contact within these more relaxed children's visit environments where they would be able to move around more freely and interact with their sibling.

Finally, policy and practice focus is solely, as far as I can tell, on young people outside of prison. Given that young people can be held within secure accommodation or within a YOI while being classed as children (i.e. under the age of eighteen, or older if care experienced) and have a parent, or sibling, in prison they do not seem to be considered in the same way as those young people not currently within custody. A recognition of these young people, their experiences and rights around family contact and maintaining relationships also requires to be considered.

8.5 Limitations of the Research

Limitations of the research have been touched on in other areas of the thesis (e.g. the pragmatic form of recruitment resulting in no experiences of female sibling imprisonment being included). Other limitations from this form of recruitment include the lack of ethnic diversity in the sample. Though this is reflective of the Scottish prison population overall (96% of prisoners are white), and the Scottish population in general (Sturge, 2018).

Looking specifically at the idea of generalisability, due to the difficulties of recruitment in research such as this leading to low numbers of participants, it cannot be claimed to be representative of a population more widely. This research was never intended to be generalizable in this way and instead reflects the experiences of *this* group of young people. That said, I would argue that while it may not be statistically generalizable to a wider population, it is analytically generalizable (Yin, 2003). This is where the empirical data can be used to support existing theories or ones which come inductively from the data itself, therefore being generalizable to theory rather than to a population.

For example, this thesis contributes to the concept of desynchrony. The discussions in Section 7.3.2 relate specifically to the experiences of young

people separated from their family member due to a period of imprisonment but can be applied to the use of this concept in other contexts, for example absences due to military service. This piece of research has also expanded on the thinking around desynchrony. It considers not only the temporal disconnect that can happen while two family members are separated and how this can be mitigated, but expands this into thinking about the disconnects that can continue even on someone's return.

Another example of this thesis' contribution in this way is what it contributes to the understanding and use of the concept of parentification. While originally being used to think more clinically around children's experiences following their parents' divorce, it has since been applied in a number of other areas. While the experiences of both practical and emotional aspects of parentification cannot be generalised to the population of young people experiencing familial imprisonment as a whole, they can contribute to the need to construct this concept as a classed experience, regardless of the underlying reason for it occurring.

8.6 Afterword

I wanted to finish the thesis with some reflections about what it means, or how it feels, to carry out research looking at families' experiences of a member's imprisonment while not addressing the bigger picture of the levels of imprisonment generally and what this means for families. I struggled in the writing of this conclusion with the focus on some of the 'small' aspects of mitigating harm caused to young people with a family member in prison by focusing on improvements around visits, for example, while not addressing the 'big' picture of Scotland having one of the highest imprisonment rates in Europe, and of imprisonment intrinsically separating families and inflicting harm on those within them through the imprisonment of one of their members. In fact, Oldrup (2018) points out the contradiction inherent in trying to create "family-friendly visits rooms" (p. 13), and while we should try and humanise and improve the experiences of young people with a family member in prison as much as we can, we should also question whether this imprisonment is necessary in the first place.

I also struggled with the telling of some of the young people's experiences of prison as providing them with a 'closer' relationship, whatever that may mean to them. These 'positive' stories contradicted my own view of prison as harmful and, in many cases, unnecessary, but they are stories which were told and highlight the need for context and nuance in both their exploration and that of the experience of familial imprisonment more generally.

This thesis does contribute, in some respects, to the multitude of ways in which families of those in prison can, by extension, also experience what Sykes (1958) classed the "pains of imprisonment". In so doing I would hope that it adds to the arguments made for reducing the prison population, and therefore the inevitable, and sometimes unintended, harms caused to both prisoners and their families. It also, however, recognises some of the harms and difficulties caused to young people and their families just by living their lives, quite apart from having a family member in prison. It is therefore important to bear in mind that young people with family members in prison are not a homogenous group, and neither are their experiences homogeneous. For some, a family member's imprisonment is a singular, devastating event in their life but for others it is just something which happens and is perhaps no easier or no more difficult to cope with than previous and current family experiences of a different nature. For some, prison can even provide some respite and/or what some of the young people described as a "closer" relationship.

This perhaps, again, emphasises the need to focus on the institution of the family rather than the prison when we look at familial imprisonment. This allows us to understand how these families can be the subject of an array of inequalities in their lives. Through dealing with the different structural disadvantages they can encounter in their lives they come into contact with a number of state institutions, of which the prison may only represent one example. These inequalities are refracted through each of these institutions, and by having a focus on the prison rather than one rooted within their experiences we risk misrepresenting and misunderstanding these experiences, their lives more generally and the potential solutions to the myriad of difficulties they can face.

Appendices

Appendix A – Sample Information Sheet

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF FAMILIAL IMPRISONMENT

Name of Researcher: Kirsty Deacon

INFORMATION SHEET

What is it like to have a family member in prison?

Hello, I'm Kirsty. I'm doing a PhD at Glasgow University. A PhD is a type of degree where instead of going to classes at the university I do a three year research project and then write a report known as a thesis. My research is looking at what it is like for young people who have, or have had, a family member in prison and their experiences of this.

I am speaking to young people who have experienced the imprisonment of a family member and I understand that you have had this experience so may wish to take part in my research.

Here is some information you need to know first.

What do you need to know?

- If you do want to take part I will ask you to sign a consent form so that I know you are agreeing to take part in this interview and I can keep a record of this (although you can change your mind at any time).

- The interview will take place in a private space within the prison.

- The interview might take around 60 minutes but could be shorter if you want.

- I would like to audio record the interview with you so that I have an accurate record of what you say but you do not have to agree to this.

- Anything I write about your interview will not include your name or any other information that would mean you could be identified so I will always use a pseudonym (substitute name) for you and you can choose this yourself if you like.

- I do not work for the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) but I will be providing them with a copy of my thesis and may also write other reports for them based on my research. No one from SPS will see a copy of your interview.

Things to remember

- Taking part in this research is completely up to you
- You can change your mind about taking part in the research at any time
- Choosing not to take part will have no impact on any of the services you access within HMP Polmont

Is the research private?

- In general, anything that you tell me is private but if you say anything that makes me think that you or someone else might be in danger of harm I will have to tell someone else about this.

- When I type up the interview this and the recording will be saved on my password protected laptop or computer at the university so all of the information will be kept safe and secure. The University of Glasgow expects data to be retained for 10 years after the completion of the project but this will always be stored securely so that it is safe and no one else can access it.

- I will use this interview to help me write the report for my PhD. I might also use this information to write articles for journals, reports or conference papers which are other things that PhD students have to write as part of their degree. I will not identify you in any of these documents and will use the pseudonym we talked about earlier.

- The organisation that pays for me to do this research, What Works Scotland, is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The ESRC like to make the interviews available through what is known as a "data repository" so that other researchers interested in this topic could look at them and use them in their own work. The interviews that they will see will be anonymised so no one accessing them would know who you were. You do not have to say yes to this information being made available.

Any questions?

If you have any questions, you can contact me:

Kirsty Deacon: k.deacon.1@research.gla.ac.uk, 0141 330 5126

Or my research supervisors:

Professor Fergus McNeill, Fergus.McNeill@glasgow.ac.uk, 0141 330 5075

Dr Sarah Armstrong, Sarah.Armstrong@gla.ac.uk. 0141 330 7715

This research has been approved by the College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. If you have any questions about ethical issues you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer Dr Muir Houston on Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk.

Appendix B – Sample Consent Form

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences

Title of Project: YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF FAMILIAL IMPRISONMENT

Name of Researcher: Kirsty Deacon

CONSENT FORM

Please tick the boxes as appropriate

☐ I confirm that I have been given an introduction to the research, and understand the contents of the information sheet I have been provided with.

☐ I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I understand that my participation in this study is **voluntary** and that I may end my participation in this study at **any** point, should I so wish.

☐ I understand that I do not have to answer a question if I do not want to.

☐ I confirm that I have been informed that my interview will be recorded by audio equipment. I agree to this being used.

☐ I confirm that I have been informed that notes from the interview(s) will be typed up on the researcher's password protected laptop or PC, in a secure data file.

☐ I understand that the researcher may use some of my words in her research report and in the presentation of her findings. I understand that these will be anonymised but that due to the small number of people involved with the project it may be possible to identify me from these.

☐ I confirm that I have been told that my interview will be stored in a "data repository" and that other researchers will have access to this and can use it in their own research, including quotes of things that I have said. I

understand that it will be anonymised so that they will not know who I am and I am happy for the interview to be stored and shared in this way.

Participant		Researcher
Print Name:	……..	……
Sign Name:	……..	……
Date:	……..	……

Appendix C – Sample Interview Guide

Interview Themes

For use after the information sheet has been read through (particularly in respect of confidentiality and possibility of limited anonymity), consent form signed, and there has been an opportunity to ask questions.

Reinforce that they can stop the interview at any time or if they don't want to answer a question or talk about a topic then that's okay, just say. Don't feel obliged to answer any questions, you are the most important person here so whatever you are comfortable with is okay.

As I've said at the KIN sessions we've been at, I want to learn about the experience of "familial imprisonment", so, what it is like for people who have had experience of a family member being in prison. I'm also interested in what it has been like for people with this experience to work with a project like KIN which is there to specifically look at this issue and to work with young people who have had this experience in a creative way.

I've maybe mentioned at KIN sessions, though, that although my research is looking at the experience of having a family member in prison I don't want to just focus on this as if that's all your life is about and most people have said something similar, that yes having a family member in prison is part of your life and has had an impact but it doesn't define you.

So, this first question might seem a bit random but I just want to start by talking a bit about who you are. So, if I was to ask you to describe yourself to me as if you were describing a friend and I know nothing about you what would you say?

- *Similar to the exercise we did for the Families Outside anniversary event*
- *Who are you as a person? What do you like to do? What is it that you do or like that makes you, you?*

If you feel having a family member in prison is important when telling someone about you then you can include it but pretend you're just telling an average person that you meet not me as a researcher so you don't have to mention it.

Thanks for doing that – I know it might seem weird to just walk about you in this way when the interview's about familial imprisonment.

Moving on then to talk about that experience – when I met with you to talk about what the interview would involve I asked you to think about 3 experiences or stories of an event or something that may have happened that would help me to understand best about what it's like to have a family member in prison.

Do you have examples that you want to talk about and we could start there? **Or**, do you just want to talk about what the experience has been like for you, tell me what happened and I might then ask some questions round about it? **Or**, I have a copy of the cards with themes that I gave you last time I met you that are things that have come up in previous

KIN sessions or events that might make you think how things have been if you want to use those to help you think of things?

You can also use the cards to let me know if there's anything you don't want me to ask you about.

Comparisons of these events before the imprisonment

A typical day now and before the imprisonment

Has a typical day/life changed with you leaving school/home and going to work/uni?

- *How old were you?*
- *Who else is in your family?*
- *Initial experience – feelings, practicalities of things changing*
- *Were they told where their family member was?*
- *Prison visits/communication with family member – how often, experience of them*
- *School – experience, did you tell teachers, was there support there*
- *Social support – school, friends, other groups – who did you tell – why/why not*
- *Changes in relationships with family members*
- *Release of family member and experience after this (if applicable)*
- *Stigma – talked about during project but is this something you have personally experienced – examples of this*
- *How have your feelings changed over time – how long was your family member away for?*
- *What has happened while your family member has not been there that you wish they had been there for – how was the family member included in things?*

So, you've obviously been part of the KIN project, which is how I met you, can we now talk a bit about that.

- How/Why did you become involved with the project?
- What did you hope the project could achieve – for you and wider? Has it met these expectations? Where could you see it going over the next couple of years – where would you like it to go?
- It was designed to be led with the people who have the lived experience of familial imprisonment – to what extent and in what ways (if at all) do you think you've been able to influence and shape the direction the project has taken?

- What have been the best bits of the project for you – why?
- What do you think of the experience of spending a day or a weekend with people with the same experience of having a family member in prison?
- Experience of making the film and the “audio tours” – their reactions to the finished products (or what has been done so far)
- It was a project specifically for people who had experienced familial imprisonment – are there other things that you think could be there to support young people going through this experience – what would you have liked to see when you were a child to help support you?

Thanks so much for your time and taking part in this interview, it’s been really helpful.

So, I think that’s us finished now. Do you have any questions about anything? Is there anything else you think I should be aware of or is important to look at more? Was there anything that you thought I would ask or want to talk about knowing that the interview was about the experience of familial imprisonment and your working with KIN that hasn’t come up?

Cover consent again (now that they know what they are consenting to being used in my research). Are you happy with everything that we’ve talked about today, is there anything that you’re uncomfortable having spoken about and would rather I took out of the interview?

Next steps. I’ll type up the interview and can then send you a copy of this, if you’d like, so that you can see what you have said and if there’s anything that you don’t want me to use in my PhD you can tell me then, or at any time in the future, if you change your mind about something just let me know.

My plan is to type up these interviews, which can take a bit of time, and to then maybe come back to the group with some initial thoughts around themes, like we’ve discussed before at KIN sessions, so if you’d be interested in being involved in that I can be in touch with you by email.

Feel free to get in touch if there’s anything else that you think of that you think is important I know, or to ask any questions you might have.

Thanks!

Glossary: Regional dialect presented in the thesis

Aboot – About

Ae – You know?

Aff – Off

Ain – Own

Aw – All

Aye – Yes

Bairns – Children

Buttoned – Pressed the end call or ignore button on a phone

Cannae – Can't

Clathes – Clothes

Da – Dad

Dae – Do

Didnae – Didn't

Disnae/Doesnae – Doesn't

Does your nut in – Annoys

Doon – Down

Fae – From

Faw out – Fall out (to have a disagreement)

Gie – Give

Go roond to – Go round to (visit)

Hame – Home

Haud of – Hold of (reached on the telephone)

Hauf – Half

Hoose – House

Hing – Thing

Hink – Think

Hunners – Hundreds – A lot

Ken – Know

Likesay – Like, You know (used as a filler word)

Ma - My

Ma/Maw – Mum

Mair – More

Me – My (e.g me mum – my mum)

Mibbe – Maybe

Naw – No

No – Not

Noo – Now

Oot – Out

Tae – To

Telt – Told

Thegither – Together

The tag - Electronic monitoring tag (when released on Home Detention Curfew)

The mora - Tomorrow

Toe-rag – Worthless person

Wan – One

Wae – With

Wee – Small

Wisnae – Wasn't

Wouldnae – Wouldn't

Source: Various

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