Doing Well While Doing Time:

Incarceration and the Meaning of Positive Adjustment to Harmful Spaces

by

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ABSTRACT

People are not expected to do well while in prison. People often do not do well in prison. Prison research is replete with accounts of the harmful psychological, behavioral, and social effects of incarceration, but much less attention or acknowledgment is given to the people who do not experience these negative outcomes and perhaps even flourish while on the inside. This dissertation better understands who is doing well in prison, who is experiencing change for the better in prison, and how the prison experience impacts reflections on well-being in life through three separate studies.

The first study uses a negative case framework to identify incarcerated men who are doing well by avoiding negative outcomes across a number of psychosocial and behavioral domains (e.g. mental health, coping strategies), as well as assesses what background and environmental characteristics are associated with those who are doing well behaviorally and psychosocially. The second study identifies individuals who are reporting improvement in their personal circumstances during the first year of incarceration and assesses the processes and events that are associated with reported improvements. Specifically, an equifinality framework is used to highlight the numerous pathways that can lead to a single positive outcome (e.g., reporting improvement in prison). A multifinality framework is also used to highlight the numerous outcomes that can be associated with a single life event (e.g., incarceration). The final study of the dissertation descriptively assesses life satisfaction, psychological flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life among a sample of incarcerated men, as well as assesses the correlates of high well-being during incarceration. Using data from The Arizona Working and Living in Prison project (studies 1 and 2) and the Enhancing the Prison Environment project (study

3), results from this dissertation reveal a sizeable portion of incarcerated people who are doing well while incarcerated via avoiding negative outcomes and experiences, experiencing change for the better, and reporting high levels of well-being.

DEDICATION

For Jean

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CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Prison is harmful. Correctional scholars have consistently documented the negative impacts of time spent in prison on mental health, physical health, and exposure to violence (Fazel et al., 2016; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Wolff et al., 2007). In-depth, qualitative accounts of the incarceration experience document the complex emotional geography of prison life (Crewe et al., 2014; Laws & Crewe, 2016), the deprivations inherent to life on the inside (Listwan et al., 2013; Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960), the loneliness of prison (Schliehe, Laursen, & Crewe, 2021), and subcultural adaptations to incarceration that demand allegiance to a strict and harmful prison code (Clemmer, 1940; Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes, 1958; Trammell, 2012). Work examining the collateral consequences of incarceration has unveiled the troubling impact of imprisonment on families and communities (Kirk & Wakefield, 2018). At an even broader level, some research has shown that the prison itself is somewhat criminogenic (Bales & Piquero, 2012; Petrich et al., 2021). It is undeniable that imprisonment leads to a host of negative outcomes and experiences for those who are incarcerated, as well as for the people closest to them.

Is it possible for prisons to amount to more than these harms, though? There is an abundance of research highlighting the negative effects of imprisonment partially because there is an uneven focus on negative outcomes among correctional scholars in the United States. For the most part, correctional scholars in the U.S. come from traditions in sociology, criminology, and urban studies that focus on addressing community harms, or from traditions in psychology that focus on ameliorating individual risks and pathologies. For the most part, we are trained to identify harms and negative outcomes and fix them,

and that is what we have done, understandably so. However, as a result, we have generated a great deal of research unpacking the harmful psychological, behavioral, and social effects of incarceration, but know considerably less about the people who may not experience these negative outcomes and perhaps even flourish.

This is unfortunate because some people manage to do well in prison. A small, emerging body of research recognizes positive outcomes and positivity as an understudied and underdeveloped aspect of punishment that could be taken more seriously. This work has shown that, for some, the prison can serve as a reinventive institution (Crewe & Ievins, 2019; also see Ugelvik, 2022) and a space for spiritual re-birth and introspective reflection (Comfort, 2012; Maruna, Wilson, & Curran, 2006). Scholars in this space have also observed that some people in prison experience post-traumatic growth and positive self-change (van Ginneken, 2016; Vanhooren, Leijssen, & Dezutter, 2018), find hope and meaning in their incarceration (Liebling et al., 2019), and are able to construct new identities and self-narratives (Kazemian, 2019; Maier & Ricciardelli, 2021; Maruna, 2001; Novek, 2005). Yet, this work is still relatively scarce, largely concentrated outside of the United States, and often accompanied by hesitation and discomfort in suggesting that the prison might function positively for a minority of people in prison (see Crewe & Ievins, 2019, p. 2; Liebling & Maruna, 2013, p.20; Maier & Ricciardelli, 2021).

To be fair, it *is* uncomfortable to suggest that the prison might hold a positive function and exist as a source of positive growth for a small group of people *because of* the well-documented harmful effects of imprisonment. A critical, but limited, reading of the suggestion that some people might do well in prison could be taken as support for the unbridled use of incarceration, which would be counterproductive to decarceration and

other prison reform efforts (Crewe & Ievins, 2019; Vann Ginneken, 2016). But it is precisely because we are currently committed to reimagining the prison and reestablishing our rehabilitative roots that we could begin to identify and better understand people who, contrary to almost all expectations, are doing well in prison and experiencing positive outcomes. It is also for this reason that we should consider and honestly discuss the limitations of an approach to U.S. correctional research that concentrates so heavily on the destructive elements of prisons and incarceration.

In this dissertation, I suggest that a predominantly harm-focused approach to U.S. correctional research is not fully compatible with identifying solutions to make prisons better. Specifically, I propose that efforts from U.S. correctional scholars to reimagine our correctional future and meaningfully reform prisons could be bolstered by a better understanding of those who appear to do well in prison, what it means to do well in prison, and how the prison experience impacts incarcerated people's reflections on well-being. The broader purpose of this dissertation is to leverage innovative data, methodologies, and frameworks to critically assess what it might mean for people to do well in an institution that is broadly characterized by harm.

The remainder of this chapter will briefly review the harm-focused approach to correctional research in the U.S. Specifically, I discuss three limitations of our current approach to correctional research that focuses heavily on the destructive elements and negative outcomes of imprisonment. I then suggest three ways that we could change our approach to correctional research that would begin to address the limitations of our current approach. Next, I discuss the broad research questions that frame the three empirical

chapters of the dissertation. Lastly, I discuss the data and methodology that will be used for this dissertation.

Review of the Literature

A Harm-Focused Approach to Correctional Research in the U.S.

"Culture of harm" (Haney, 2012), "penal exceptionalism" (Garland, 2020**)**, "addicted to incarceration" (Pratt, 2008), "culture of control" (Garland, 2001), "penal harm" (Clear, 1994)—correctional scholars have amassed a number of phrases that depict the state of incarceration in the U.S. but are also emblematic of a relatively harm-focused approach to correctional research more broadly. In the U.S., a harm-focused approach to correctional research has manifested in three notable forms. First, U.S. correctional scholars have mostly focused on the damaging effects of imprisonment. For instance, scholars have documented individual-level harms that occur in the prison setting itself. Such work has highlighted the prevalence and risk of victimization during incarceration (Wolff & Shi, 2011; Wolff, Shi, & Siegel, 2009), the negative mental health and psychological well-being consequences of imprisonment and specific prison practices (e.g., solitary confinement) (Haney, 2008; 2012; Reiter et al., 2020), and the overall loss of personal control and autonomy (Goodstein, MacKenzie, & Shotland, 1984; Sykes, 1958). There is a large body of work documenting the prison as coercive (Colvin, 2007), violent (Hemmens & Marquart, 1999; Trammell, 2012), overcrowded and overstimulating (Gaes, 1985; 1994), but also isolating and lonely (Adams, 1992). Ultimately, the prison is understood by many scholars as a place to survive (see Toch, 1977).

U.S. correctional scholars have also documented the negative impacts of mass incarceration more broadly, highlighting how incarceration stigmatizes people in ways that

negatively impact housing and employment prospects upon release (Pager, 2008; Western, Kling, & Weiman, 2001). U.S. scholars have focused on how incarceration negatively impacts the likelihood of marriage and divorce (Lopoo & Western, 2005, but see Apel et al., 2010), disrupts families (Comfort, 2007; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010; Wildeman & Muller, 2012), and contributes to a legacy of lasting harm through negative mental health and behavioral outcomes for the children of incarcerated parents (Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011). U.S. correctional scholars have also been attuned to the negative impacts of incarceration on communities and neighborhoods through coercive mobility and "prison cycling" (Frost & Gross, 2012). From this body of research, it is clear that the harms of imprisonment extend well past the prison walls themselves.

A second indication of a more harm-focused approach to correctional research in the U.S. is scholars' focus on alleviating and avoiding the aforementioned harms and negative impacts of incarceration. In terms of institutional corrections, U.S. scholars have largely been concerned with avoiding violence and misconduct. As such, U.S. scholars have focused on the correlates and causes of prison violence and serious misconduct (Camp et al., 2003; French & Gendreau, 2006; Steiner et al., 2014) and proposed new frameworks and blueprints for establishing safer and more secure prisons (Steiner & Meade, 2014; Wooldredge, 2020). Within the context of reentry, U.S. correctional scholars have focused their efforts on how to prevent reoffending, rearrest, and reconviction upon release from correctional supervision. U.S. scholars have been especially focused on "what works" to reduce recidivism (Andrews et al., 1990; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007), with the leading model of rehabilitation in the U.S. using recidivism reduction as its primary indicator of success

(Wright, Morse, & Sutton, In Press). Taken together, two particularly popular areas of study for correctional scholars in the U.S. have been largely concentrated on establishing the causes of harmful behaviors during and after incarceration, and identifying effective strategies to reduce or avoid those outcomes altogether.

Third, and as a result of the previous two points, U.S. correctional scholars typically view and assess people in prison in terms of their risks and deficits relevant to the behaviors we are trying to avoid. Regarding institutional violence and serious misconduct, U.S. correctional scholars have focused on developing and refining risk assessment instruments to help aid in the effective security classification of people in prison based upon their actual or predicted risk to behave violently while in prison (Campbell, French, & Gendreau, 2009; Cunningham & Sorensen, 2006; Cunningham, Sorensen, & Reidy, 2005). The emphasis on risks and deficits also extends to how correctional treatment is theorized and designed by U.S. correctional scholars, most notably through the Risk Need Responsivity Model (RNR). Specifically, the RNR model prioritizes treatment for those in prison with the highest risk for recidivating and then tailors treatment to address their criminogenic needs (Andrews, Bonta, & Hoge, 1990; Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006; Bonta & Andrews, 2017). Since its initial introduction, the RNR model has accrued a wealth of empirical support and, in effect, has set the standard for evidence-based correctional treatment in the U.S. (Cullen, 2012; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007). Though it should be noted that alternatives to the RNR model exist, namely the Good Lives Model of offender rehabilitation, that place far less emphasis on risks and are more strengths-based in nature (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Marshall, 2004; Ward & Maruna, 2007). However, U.S. correctional scholars have

still been mostly focused on treatment and security practices that reduce risks and ameliorate deficits.

Limitations of the Harm-Focused Approach

U.S. correctional scholars have built an impressive knowledge base about the harms of incarceration and these contributions should not be understated, especially as scholars, practitioners, and policy makers work to reduce the U.S.'s overreliance on incarceration as a form of intervention and consider other alternatives to punishment altogether. However, for all of its contributions and strengths, there are also notable limitations to this approach. Specifically, the current harm-focused approach has restricted the methodologies U.S. correctional scholars use, narrowed scholars' focus and obscured the full function of the prison as an institution, and limited U.S. correctional scholars' ability to identify and develop solutions about how to make prisons better.

Restricted Methodologies

U.S. correctional scholars have often excluded, or given significantly less weight to, the voices and experiences of people in prison. The exclusion has manifested in two notable ways. First, similar to most criminological research, correctional research is more often quantitative than qualitative, as top tier U.S. journals still favor quantitative based analyses for publication even as there has been some recent growth in the use of qualitative methods across the discipline (Buckler, 2008; Copes et al., 2020; Tewksbury, Dabney, & Copes, 2010). Additionally, much of the quantitative research focuses on reporting the *average effects* of imprisonment on people in prison as a group. Van Ginneken (2016, p. 209) notes, "When researchers examine the impact of prisons on people as a group, as they often do in quantitative studies, the differential effects tend to go unnoticed." What is

limiting about this is that by reporting and discussing only point estimates it sends the impression of uniformity in effect when there may be variation in effects.

Second, people in prison and their experiences and voices often are not considered or consulted in the research process. Again, mirroring larger trends in U.S. criminological research, correctional research relies heavily on methods that involve very little contact with participants. Specifically, the use of administrative data and survey data are particularly popular to study most criminological issues, including the prison experience (Kleck et al., 2006; Woodward et al., 2016). While this approach to prison research is understandable and logical, especially as prisons have become difficult for scholars to access (see Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018), it has also been exclusionary and has distanced U.S. correctional scholars from the people for whom our research is meant to serve.

Narrow Focus on Diverse Incarceration Experiences

Another limitation to the current approach to correctional research in the U.S. is that it has considerably narrowed our focus on what the prison experience is and can be. The near exclusive focus on the harms of the prison experience implies that there is a single path that is traversed during imprisonment, with less appreciation or recognition for individual differences or the possibility of diverse experiences. It can begin to imply that prison is uniformly hopeless, dreadful, and painful for everyone. It also begins to suggest that the prison might be fundamentally incompatible with anything other than harmful outcomes, let alone the rehabilitative outcomes it was originally premised on and designed to produce. Yet, Crewe and Ievins (2019, p. 2) point out that they "would be surprised if anyone who has done even a small amount of empirical prison research has not heard some prisoners—albeit a minority—say that the prison has 'saved them', been a progressive

'turning point' in their life, or words to that effect." This sentiment rings true anecdotally, but the current approach to correctional research in the U.S. does not necessarily allow scholars to effectively identify the people for whom prison has served as a positive turning point and then try to better understand their experiences.

A strong emphasis on the harms of imprisonment has also constrained our collective focus to all of the things we do not want the prison to be or people in prison to be, without as much consideration for the potential of the institution or the people within it to be more than the absence of something negative. We do not want prisons to be unsafe. We do not want people in prison to be violent. We want to eliminate individual risks and deficits. However, in the absence of everything we wish to prevent, what are the outcomes we aspire to? By focusing more narrowly on the ways prison is harmful, we are likely missing an opportunity to see and understand the ways in which the prison can be reinventive or reformative, even if just for a small group of people (Crewe & Ievins, 2019). Again, research from scholars outside of the U.S. is especially informative here as they have begun to consider the ways in which the prison social environment can be beneficial or conducive to a "good life" using strengths-based approaches and methodologies (Liebling, 2017; Liebling, Hulley, & Crewe, 2012; Ward & Brown, 2004).

Limited Ability to Develop Solutions

Perhaps most importantly, the current approach to correctional research in the U.S. has limited our ability to identify and develop solutions about how to make prisons better, operating under the assumption that even with efforts to rely significantly less on incarceration that prisons will still exist in some form for, hopefully, a much smaller group of people. Several U.S. correctional scholars are invested in making prisons better and have

embraced the undertaking of reimagining the American prison (see Cullen, Jonson, & Stohr, 2014). There are also widespread calls for prison reform (Clear & Austin, 2009; Lucken, 2011; Simon, 2010; Tonry, 2011; 2014). U.S. correctional scholars have advanced calls to "embrace the practice of redemption" (Cullen et al., 2020, p. 309) and explore the ways in which the prison might serve as an opportunity to facilitate a meaningful life during and after incarceration (Wright, 2020). In many ways, U.S. correctional scholars are beginning to envision a prison that can produce positive outcomes for people in the system and are hopeful that the prison, with reform, can hold a positive function. However, as Kazemian (2019, p.9) cautions, "Highlighting the negative dimensions of prison helps us to understand what not to do, but it does not inform our next steps in prison reform. We will never learn how to do things better if we only focus on highlighting ineffective and damaging practices." A harm-focused approach to correctional research in the U.S. might not lend itself to much more than imagining the possibilities of a reformed prison that is conducive to positive outcomes.

We cannot facilitate positive outcomes for people in prison by only reducing or eliminating negative outcomes. Martin Seligman (2019) acknowledges this challenge in the context of the development of positive psychology by discussing three kinds of opposites. The first type of opposite is when two sides lie on the same continuum and they differ from one another in terms of degree (e.g., 'hot and cold' or 'heavy and light'). The second kind is when the two sides do not lie on the same continuum and one of the sides is simply the absence of the other. Seligman (2019) gives the example of colored and colorless, where the latter is nothing more than the lack of the former. The last type of opposite is "when each side forms its own distinct world, a world with properties that are

not deducible from the absence of the properties of the other world" (Seligman, 2019, p.19). Civility is used as an example to illustrate this:

> "The presence of civility leads to cooperation, friendship, and loyalty. Civility is a positive-sum game. Incivility leads to revenge, hate, and divorce. Incivility is a negative-sum game. Civility and incivility are different in kind not just in degree. The benefits of civility are more than just the absence of revenge, hate, and divorce, and the costs of incivility are more than just the absence of cooperation, friendship, and loyalty. Good and bad, positive and negative, are this third kind of opposite. The good and the bad each form their own unique worlds" (Seligman, 2019, p.19).

This is salient for correctional research in the U.S. and where U.S. correctional scholars are trying to go. Within the field of correctional research, U.S. scholars have accomplished a relatively good understanding of the "negative world." The harms associated with incarceration and the conditions under which people fare poorly are well known. We are far less familiar with, or knowledgeable of, the "positive world," or the circumstances in which people do well in prison and what it even means to do well in prison, though this has begun to pique our interest as we look to reform the prison and reimagine our correctional future. Our current approach of heavily focusing on the harms of imprisonment is incompatible with other aspirational outcomes that exist in another world.

Beyond the Harm-Focused Approach

We could change our approach to correctional research in three ways that could start to address the limitations of the harm-focused approach (although see Colvin, Cullen, & Ven, 2002, and Cullen, Wright, & Chamlin, 1999 for discussions on creating correctional policies that reduce coercion and increase social support). First, we could begin to use more inclusive methodologies that incorporate the insights and experiences from those who are incarcerated in the research process. Second, we could begin to utilize new frameworks that expand our focus on the numerous pathways that can be traversed

during incarceration. Third, we could incorporate insights from other disciplines to assess a broader range of outcomes associated with incarceration.

Inclusive Methodologies: Participatory Action Research and Negative Case Analysis

U.S. correctional scholars could begin to address some of the aforementioned limitations of the current approach by more frequently incorporating and utilizing inclusive methodologies. Participatory Action Research (PAR), in particular, offers a lot of promise for correctional research to include the insights and experiences of participants in the research process. PAR is a collaborative, empowerment-based, action-oriented research methodology that prioritizes conducting research and identifying solutions with participants, as opposed to on participants or for participants (Baum, MacDougal, & Smith, 2006; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). At its core, PAR values the expertise of participants and recognizes that they are the group that is most directly impacted by the research. As such, this methodological approach is iterative, reflexive, and includes participants at all points of the research process, from identifying and generating research questions, to designing and developing survey instruments, to collecting data and disseminating findings (Baum et al., 2006; Dupont, 2008; Kidd et al., 2018). Supporters of PAR emphasize the value of its inclusive approach for enhanced construct validity and impact validity (Sandwick et al., 2018), as well as point out that "the researcher, as a part of the group, often gets access to contexts, people, and knowledge that would otherwise be inaccessible using traditional methods" (Kidd & Kral, 2005, p.191). PAR is not frequently used in criminological research (see Dupont, 2008). However, there is small body of work that has used this approach in the prison setting (Fine et al., 2003; Fine & Torre, 2006; Payne &

Bryant, 2018) and there have been recent calls from scholars to continue the use of PAR within the field of corrections (Haverkate et al., 2020; see also Telep et al., 2020).

Negative case analysis provides an opportunity for correctional research to be more inclusive. While U.S. correctional scholars often focus on the typical or average experience, negative cases represent a deviation from a theoretically or empirically expected relationship. Negative cases are the events or occurrences that are inconsistent with our hypotheses and "challenge expected patterns of behavior" (Doherty & Bersani, 2020, p. 1629). While not overly common in criminological research (cf., Giordano, 1989; Laub & Sampson, 1998; Reckless, Dinitz, & Murray, 1957), the study of negative cases is considered important for the development, refinement, and expansion of theory (Emigh, 1997; Sullivan, 2011). For correctional research, the use of negative case analysis offers a meaningful opportunity to identify, include, and better understand the outcomes that do not conform to our expectations of the typical prison experience, such as positive adjustment.

New Conceptual Frameworks: Equifinality and Multifinality

Borrowing from General System Theory (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972; Von Bertalanffy, 1972) and developmental psychopathology (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996), multifinality and equifinality are useful concepts that could be used by U.S. correctional scholars to better understand diverse experiences during incarceration. Multifinality refers to the observation that a single starting point can result in pathways to a number of different ends, such that "a particular adverse event should not necessarily be seen as leading to the same psychopathological or nonpsychopathological outcome in every individual" (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996, p. 598). Applied to correctional research this means that prison as a starting point could lead to a host of different behavioral or psychosocial

outcomes for different people, good or bad. The use of multifinality as an organizing concept in correctional research could better capture the diversity of outcomes that result from a single event.

Equifinality, on the other hand, refers to the idea that "the same end state may be reached from a variety of different initial conditions and through different processes" (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996, p.597). In essence, a number of different paths can lead to a single end state or outcome. Within the context of corrections this means that people in prison who experience the same outcome (e.g., report incarceration as a positive turning point) may reach that outcome through a variety of different experiences. The use of equifinality as an organizing concept in correctional research could better capture the diversity of pathways that lead to a single outcome.

Our current approach to correctional research most often conceptualizes the prison as a starting point for negative, maladaptive outcomes. A new approach to correctional research, guided by equifinality and multifinality, could begin to unpack and fully explore the diversity of outcomes that can come from imprisonment, as well as the diversity of pathways that can lead to each of these outcomes. Ultimately, this could allow for greater complexity and nuance in our study of prison adjustment.

Adjacent Disciplines: Insights from Positive Psychology

The field of positive psychology can help U.S. correctional scholars identify if, how, and why people are doing well during incarceration. Premised on the assumptions of humanistic psychology, positive psychology is the "the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions" (Gable & Haidt, 2005, pp. 103). As a discipline, positive psychology is

primarily focused on human potential and assumes that people are naturally socially concerned and seeking personal fulfillment (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As such, this field is focused on promoting and measuring outcomes that are inherently positive and strengths-based, including but not limited to: subjective well-being, psychological flourishing, life satisfaction, happiness, optimism, resilience, and generativity (Diener, 2000; Gable & Haidt, 2005; Linley et al., 2006). Positive psychology is attuned to people's potential and the things that make life enjoyable.

The insights from positive psychology could help correctional scholars in the U.S. move beyond a deficits-based orientation and provide a road map for evaluating and promoting more positive outcomes. Specifically, positive psychology could help U.S. correctional scholars move past a medical model approach to correctional research and rehabilitation (see Maruna, 2017) that is primarily concerned with treating peoples' pathologies and minimizing their risks for future harmful behavior. Positive psychology offers an important reminder that people crave a life that is more than the absence of bad experiences or negative traits (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; also see Ward & Maruna, 2007 for a similar discussion within the context of GLM). Instead, people find happiness and contentment in a life that is fulfilling, meaningful, and psychologically rich (Diener, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Oishi et al., 2020). In effect, borrowing insights from positive psychology could encourage U.S. correctional scholars to view people in prison more holistically and consider outcomes such as subjective well-being, generativity, and flourishing just as telling to how people in prison are adjusting and doing as our more traditional, negative indicators.

The Study

While the present literature documenting the negative consequences and harms of incarceration in the U.S. has been incredibly important for advancing our knowledge base and inciting important discussions about the need for reform, it is also limited in its ability to deliver solutions or illuminate how the prison experience might vary for different people in prison. The path forward in U.S. correctional research could entail a better understanding of what facilitates positive outcomes if we are serious about reforming prison practices and reimagining the prison as an institution that can positively intervene in the lives of people in prison. This dissertation aims to take a first step in addressing this need by better understanding who is doing well in prison. Specifically, this dissertation asks three broad questions:

1. Who is doing well in prison?
2. Who is experiencing change for the better in prison?
3. How does the prison experience impact reflections on well-being in life?

Research Design

The dissertation answers the three aforementioned questions across three separate studies, using secondary data analysis of two datasets. The following briefly details the overview, data source, key measures, and analytic strategy for each study.

Study 1: Gleaning Positive Outcomes in Prison

The purpose of this first study is to identify who is doing well in prison. Specifically, this study will use negative case analysis to identify incarcerated men who are avoiding negative outcomes across a number of psychosocial and behavioral domains (e.g., mental health, coping, negative relations), as well as systematically assess what

background and environmental characteristics are associated with those who are doing well behaviorally and psychosocially. Additionally, the study will highlight the utility of a negative case framework to identify positive outcomes in prison more broadly.

Data

This study utilizes interview-based survey data from the Arizona Living and Working in Prison project (AZLWP). The AZLWP is a prospective longitudinal study of life during the first year of incarceration among adult male prisoners in Arizona. The study used a prospective cohort design to interview incarcerated men at three time points over a one-year time period. Baseline interviews were conducted in September 2017 through August 2018. The interviews were open to all adult men incarcerated in the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCRR) who were within three weeks of their permanent placement in maximum custody, close custody, or medium custody and who had at least one year to serve on their sentence.

The inclusion criteria for the baseline interview required that the men were either entering ADCRR from county jail to begin a new sentence, returning to prison to begin a new sentence due to a parole violation, or reclassifying to maximum custody from a lower custody placement within ADCRR. Among those eligible to be included in the study, 57.9% participated, producing a baseline sample of 326 men. Two follow-up interviews were conducted 6 months after the baseline interview and 12 months after the baseline interview. At the 6-month follow-up interview, 288 men participated (88.3%) and at the 12-month interview, 266 men participated (81.6%). Across the three waves of data collection, the surveys gauged participants' global mental health, coping strategies, perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy, among a number of other relevant

measures. Ultimately, these data offer unique insight into the first year of prison placement at various custody levels.

Key Measures

Four key measures are used to conceptualize and define doing well in prison.

Mental health. Mental health was measured using the Symptom Checklist-90-R (SCL-90-R) (Derogatis, 1994). The SCL-90-R is a 90 question self-report symptom inventory that assesses symptomology across 9 distinct dimensions: somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation, and psychoticism. Participants were asked how much they were bothered by each of the 90 symptoms in the last 7 days on a 5-point scale (0= "Not at all", 4= "Extremely") and this was assessed across all three waves of data collection.

Coping strategies. Coping strategies were measured using the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1987). The Brief COPE asked participants to think about what they generally do or feel when they experience stressful events and how they then respond when they confront difficult or stressful events in prison. The inventory is comprised of 14 subscales that capture different coping strategies: self-distraction, active coping, denial, substance use, emotional support, instrumental support, behavioral disengagement, venting, positive reframing, planning, humor, acceptance, religion, and self-blame. Coping strategies were measured at all three waves of data collection.

Pains of imprisonment. Pains of imprisonment was measured using a 19-item scale (Rocheleau, 2013) that asked participants how hard a number of items had been for them over the last 6 months. The pains of imprisonment included items such as "conflicts with staff," "concerns about the future," "conflicts with prisoners," and "not being able to

make my own decisions." The items were rated on a 5-point scale, with higher scores reflecting more difficulty with the pains of imprisonment. Experiences with the pains of imprisonment were measured at the first two points of data collection.

Negative relations. Negative relations were measured using an 11-item scale that asked participants about a number of negative experiences that may have occurred in prison (Listwan et al., 2011). Items were rated on a 4-point scale and asked participants how often over the last 6 months certain experiences occurred, such as "fighting with another person," "people threatened you," and "your belongings being taken." The sum of the items was used to produce a negative relations score for each participant. Negative relations were measured at the first two points of data collection.

Analytic Plan

The study proceeds in four main parts. The first part of the study focuses on critically conceptualizing and defining the metrics that constitute "doing well" in prison. First, the study conceptually identifies dimensions of doing well in prison, using the aforementioned measures as the key components that comprise "doing well." Using a negative case analysis framework, the second portion focuses on identifying individuals who are avoiding negative outcomes within each domain identified in the first part of the study. Specifically, this portion of the study aims to identify those who simultaneously (1) have low mental health symptomology, (2) experience little difficulty with the pains of imprisonment, (3) have few negative relations, (4) avoid maladaptive coping strategies, and (5) have minimal difficulties with the prison environment at the last point of data collection (12-month interview).

The third portion of the study creates a descriptive profile of those who are identified doing well across all of the domains simultaneously based on a number of demographic, background and institutional variables such as age, race/ethnicity, relationship status, prior incarceration, custody level, work status, and program status. Finally, the study compares and contrasts people who are doing well across each domain, with a particular emphasis on identifying differences between those who are found to do well in multiple domains compared to those who are not doing well in any domains.

The first study of this dissertation is descriptive and exploratory in nature, and is mainly concerned with simply identifying (1) if anyone is doing well in prison by avoiding negative outcomes across a number of psychosocial and behavioral domains simultaneously, (2) if there are people doing well, describing who these people are, and (3) comparing people who do well in multiple domains to those who are not doing well in any domains.

Study 2: Equifinality and Multifinality as Organizing Frameworks for Unpacking Self-Perceived Change in Prison

The broad purpose of the second study in the dissertation is to assess who is experiencing change for the better in prison. This study identifies individuals who are reporting improvement in their personal circumstances during the first year of incarceration and assesses the processes and events that are associated with reported improvements. Additionally, the study compares those who are reporting improvements to those who are staying the same or getting worse, evaluating if the same processes and events are at play. The study uses an equifinality framework to highlight the numerous pathways that can lead to a single positive outcome (e.g., reporting improvement in prison). A multifinality

framework is also used to highlight the numerous outcomes that can be associated with a single life event (e.g., incarceration).

Data

This study also uses data from the AZLWP. See data description in Study 1.

Key Measures

One key measure is used to assess self-perceived change over the first year of incarceration and a number of other relevant measures area used to differentiate the numerous pathways that can lead to these self-reported improvements.

Change. At the beginning of the 6-month interview and 12-month interview participants were asked two questions related to change. Participants were asked "Thinking about the past 6 months since we last spoke, how would you say things have changed for you, if at all?" This was a close-ended question that gave participants 3 options to choose from: "Stayed the same," "gotten better," or "gotten worse."

Procedural justice. Procedural justice was measured using 12 items related to prisoners' perceptions of correctional officer fairness, neutrality, standing, and voice (Beijersbergen et al., 2016). Items were rated on a 5-point scale and asked participants how much they agreed with statements such as "staff members of this correctional facility give me a chance to express my views before they make decisions" and "staff members of this correctional facility treat me with respect." Perceptions of procedural justice were measured at each of three points of data collection.

Legitimacy. Legitimacy was measured using a 3-item scale (Reisig & Mesko, 2009) that gauged obligation to obey correctional staff and was rated on a 5-point scale. This included items such as, "You should accept the guards' decisions even if you think

they are wrong." The average of items was used to produce a legitimacy score for each of the three waves of data collection.

Prison employment. Prison employment was measured at the last two points of data collection and asked participants, "Are you currently working in here?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question.

Program participation. Program participation was measured at the last two points of data collection and asked participants, "Are you currently participating in ADC programs/classes?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question.

Mental health treatment. Mental health treatment was measured at the last two points of data collection and asked participants, "Are you currently receiving treatment (i.e., medication, group therapy, individual therapy, or other forms)?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question.

Visitation. Visitation was measured at the last two points of data collection and asked participants, "Are you currently receiving visits?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question.

Social Support. Social support was measured at the 6-month and 12-month waves of data collection using a 6-item scale that asked participants how many people were able to support them in a number of different ways. (Listwan et al., 2011). This included questions such as "thinking about the people in your life, how many can you count on to be dependable?" and "thinking about the people in your life, how many can you count to care about you?"

Mental health, coping strategies, **pains of imprisonment,** and **negative relations.** See measures description in Study 1.

Analytic Plan

The study proceeds in three main parts. The first part of the study examines what self-perceived change in prison looks like at both the 6-month time point and 12-month time point. Specifically, this is a descriptive breakdown of how many participants are reporting that they had either gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed the same at the 6-month interview, and then repeated again for the 12-month time point. This also includes a cross-tabulation of the responses from both time points to identify other potentially meaningful groups (e.g., reported getting better at the 6-month interview but then reported things getting worse at the 12-month interview vs. reported things getting better at both time points, etc.), that also capitalizes on the longitudinal nature of the data.

The second portion of the study uses an equifinality framework to assess what self-reported change for the better is associated with in prison. This part of the study follows a similar analytic strategy as Sweeten & Khade's (2018) equifinality of desistance study. Specifically, the analysis first focuses on those who are reporting things continuously changing for the better across the 6-month and 12-month time point and (1) determine what proportion of this group experiences a number of salient incarceration events (prison employment, program participation, mental health treatment, and visitation) and (2) to what extent this group is experiencing change on the relevant continuous measures (mental health, coping strategies, procedural justice, legitimacy, pains of imprisonment, negative relations, and adherence to the prison code).

Finally, the study compares those who are reporting things change for the better to those who are reporting things changing for the worse or staying the same across the 6-month and 12-month time point to see if (1) those reporting positive change are

experiencing the salient incarceration events more often or at a higher rate than those reporting negative change and (2) if those reporting positive change are improving more than those reporting negative change on the continuous measures.

Study 3: Positive Psychology to Explore Life Satisfaction, Flourishing, Generativity, and Meaning in Prison

The broad purpose of the third study in this dissertation is to develop a deeper understanding of how imprisonment relates to reflections on different aspects of well-being. Specifically, this study will assess perceptions of life satisfaction, psychological flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life among a sample of incarcerated men and evaluate the correlates of high well-being. More broadly, this study uses a positive psychology framework to highlight the utility of measures that gauge human strengths and positive attributes to better understand the incarceration experience.

Data

This study uses data from the Enhancing the Prison Environment in Arizona project. The purpose of this project was to gain a better understanding of the prison experience of those who are incarcerated in Arizona, with the ultimate goal of improving the prison environment. Accordingly, the project utilized a PAR approach through which incarcerated men were active participants in all stages of the research project (Fine & Torres, 2006).

Specifically, the project was developed and carried out by five incarcerated members of the Arizona Transformation Project (ATP). The ATP is an Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program think tank whose members are ASU faculty, graduate students, and currently incarcerated men. These five ATP members and researchers were trained in

human subjects research and general qualitative interviewing techniques prior to the start of the project, and researchers conducted interviews with 386 incarcerated men between March 2020 and October 2020. All of the participants and incarcerated researchers were housed in a medium security prison within the Arizona State Prison Complex at Florence (ASPC-Florence). The interviews were semi-structured and contained both close- and open-ended questions that measured constructs relevant to enhancing the prison environment such as prison quality of life and well-being.

Key Measures

Five key measures are used throughout this study.

Life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is measured using Cantril's Ladder (Cantril, 1965). Participants were instructed to "Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you." Then, participants were asked "if the top step is 10 and the bottom step is 0, on which step of the ladder do you feel your personally stand at the present time?"

Psychological flourishing. An 8-item flourishing scale was used to measure psychological flourishing (Diener et al., 2010). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a 5-point scale with statements such as "my social relationships are supportive and rewarding," "I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others," and "I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me." Higher scores indicate a person with many psychological resources and strengths.

Generativity. An abbreviated form of the Generativity Scale (Adams & St. Aubin, 1992) was used to measure generativity across 6 items. Participants were asked how much

they agreed with statements such as “I try to pass along the knowledge I have gained through my experiences” and “I have made and created things that have had an impact on other people.” Items were rated on a 5-point scale, with higher scores indicating a person high in generativity.

Meaning in Life. Meaning in life was measured using the WHO-SRPB Subscale (World Health Organization, 1998). The scale is composed of 4 items that ask questions such as, “To what extent do you find meaning in life?” and “To what extent do you feel your life has purpose?” The average of items was used to produce a meaning in life score. Participants responded on a 5-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of meaning in life.

Analytic Plan

The study proceeds in two parts. The first part of the study focuses on simply assessing where this incarcerated sample lies on a number of measures typically used in positive psychology that are more strengths-based and positive in nature. Specifically, this portion of the study uses descriptive statistics to assess the frequencies of life satisfaction, psychological flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life among the sample of incarcerated men.

The second part of the study evaluates the correlates of high well-being in prison. This is done by first identifying a group of people who are simultaneously reporting high levels of life satisfaction, flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life. Then, differences across a number of demographic and institutional experiences are assessed between the high well-being group and the rest of the sample. The broader purpose here is to develop a deeper understanding of how imprisonment relates to reflections on different aspects of

well-being, as well as to highlight the utility of positive psychology for understanding spaces that are harmful.

The three studies for this dissertation are intended to serve as a humble starting point for moving beyond a harm-focused approach to correctional research in the U.S. Additionally, each of the studies in this dissertation offer different ways for U.S. correctional scholars to consider studying what it means to "do well" while incarcerated. Doing well in prison could be studied as "not doing bad" (think Seligman, 2019's first kind of opposite) and might include identifying outliers on a number of key behavioral and psychosocial measures (Study 1). Doing well in prison could be studied by assessing change over time and by identifying people who are reporting that things are improving for them in prison (Study 2). Doing well in prison could be studied by identifying the people who are flourishing, not just avoiding the bad or harmful outcomes (think Seligman, 2019's third kind of opposite) and exploring the correlates of these experiences (Study 3). Ultimately, by exploring who is doing well in prison, who is experiencing positive change in prison, and how the prison experience impacts reflections on well-being in life, we are afforded an opportunity to critically discuss what it might mean for people to do well in an institution that is broadly characterized by harm.

Organization of Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation will be organized into four chapters. Chapter 2 will be the first empirical chapter and will cover Study 1. Chapter 3 will be the second empirical chapter and cover Study 2. Chapter 4, the third empirical chapter, will cover Study 3. The final chapter, Chapter 5, will provide an overview of the findings from the

empirical chapters, discuss the key takeaways from the dissertation, and consider limitations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

GLEANING POSITIVE OUTCOMES IN PRISON: IS THERE ANYONE ON THE INSIDE DOING WELL?

Introduction

Decades of correctional research have helped produce a set of expectations about what prison is like and how prison is typically experienced by people who are incarcerated. For most people, most of the time prison is painful and associated with a host of negative outcomes and experiences (Haney, 2012; Sykes, 1958; Toch, 1977). We know that people in prison often suffer from poor mental health, maladaptive coping, strained relationships, negative interactions with others, and that they perceive the prison environment itself as harsh and depriving (Prins, 2014; Zamble & Porporino, 1988). We know that these struggles are both imported into the prison, as well as sourced directly from the prison itself. What we are less knowledgeable of is if there are people who do not experience imprisonment this way—if there are people in prison who do not have poor mental health, maladaptive coping skills, and negative interactions with other people and their environment. Overall, we do not know much about who, if anyone, is doing well in prison.

Part of not knowing much about who is doing well in prison is a function of our interests. Criminologists who study the impact of incarceration on people often focus on negative outcomes like poor mental health, institutional violence, and eventually, recidivism (Wright et al., In Press). As such we frequently use scales and measures that tap into how often undesirable things are occurring (e.g., how often someone is experiencing symptoms of mental illness, how often someone engages in institutional violence, how

often someone is coping maladaptively, and so on). At first glance, these kinds of outcomes do not appear to offer much in terms of assessing who might be doing well in prison. A lack of bad outcomes or experiences does not automatically imply the presence of something good for people who are incarcerated. Yet, as researchers, we care deeply about these "negative outcomes," and with good reason. Poor mental health, negative interactions with others, maladaptive coping and the like influence behavior and can significantly impact quality of life (Steiner, Butler, & Ellison, 2014). And so, one conservative way to begin thinking about doing well in prison might be to acknowledge when harmful outcomes, behaviors, adaptations, and experiences are avoided.

Our lack of knowledge about people who are doing well in prison is not only a function of *what* outcomes we choose to measure though, but also a function of *how* we analyze those outcomes. We are usually interested in the typical or average experience to gauge how most people are doing in prison (see Van Ginneken, 2016, p. 209). Through this approach we have uncovered important trends and patterns that illuminate the harms of being imprisoned for most people. Though, repeatedly observing people faring poorly across a number of psychosocial and behavioral domains has come to shape our expectations about what prison is like for everyone. Consequently, we know very little about those who lie on the outskirts of our expectations, and we do not often try to isolate the experiences of people who do not fit the patterns we typically observe. Since it has been continually established that imprisonment is associated with an abundance of negative outcomes for most people, inquiring about whether or not there are people who do well in prison inherently necessitates searching for outliers and pattern breakers.

The current study aims to identify these outliers and pattern breakers. Using a negative case framework, this study identifies incarcerated men who are doing well in prison across individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains. Specifically, this study 1) conceptually identifies dimensions of doing well in prison, 2) identifies individuals who are avoiding negative outcomes across each domain, 3) assesses background and descriptive characteristics associated with those who are doing well across all domains simultaneously, and 4) compares and contrasts individuals who are doing well across each domain. More broadly, this study demonstrates how we can more purposefully uncover people who are positively deviating from our expectations in prison and begin to unpack if there are people who are doing well in prison simply by avoiding some of the many negative outcomes we are accustomed to observing among people who are incarcerated.

Review of the Literature

The study of how prison is experienced has commonly occurred across three broad domains—individual experiences, interpersonal experiences, and experiences with the prison environment (Wright, 1991). Thus, in thinking about doing well in prison, it is important to identify people who avoid negative outcomes across these domains. In this way, doing well in prison can be thought of as doing well with yourself, doing well with others, and doing well with your environment.

Individual Experiences: Doing Well with Yourself

Individual-level adaptations and adjustment to imprisonment have received a considerable amount of scholarly attention over time. The mental health and coping strategies of incarcerated individuals, in particular, have been notable areas of interest and several studies have sought to understand the effects of imprisonment by unpacking how

time spent incarcerated impacts prisoners' mental health as well as how people who are incarcerated adaptively, or maladaptively, cope with imprisonment. The importance designated to mental health and coping in prison offers a natural starting point for beginning to identify people doing well in prison at an individual-level, specifically if there are people who deviate from the negative trends that are often observed in these areas.

Mental Health in Prison

It has been well-documented that people with mental health problems are over-represented in U.S. prisons (Abram et al., 2003; Diamond et al., 2001; James & Glaze, 2006). Though exact prevalence estimates are difficult to ascertain and can vary considerably across sources (see Prins, 2014), it was recently estimated by the Bureau of Justice Statistics that 41% of all state and federal prisoners had a history of a mental health problem and 13% reported experiences that met the criteria for serious psychological distress (Maruschak, Bronson, & Alper, 2021). Among state prisoners specifically, 27% reported being diagnosed with a major depressive disorder, 22% with an anxiety disorder, and 14% with post-traumatic stress disorder. Collectively, these estimates highlight greater prevalence of mental health problems among people who are incarcerated compared to non-incarcerated populations (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020).

There are two lines of reasoning that are typically evoked to help explain this disparity. The first is that the overrepresentation of people with mental illness in prison, and in the criminal justice system more broadly, is a direct consequence of deinstitutionalization and the criminalization of mental illness (Abramson, 1972). Specifically, the vast closure of public mental hospitals across the U.S. beginning in the

1970s left many people with mental illness without access to proper treatment in the community and undesirable behaviors that were once subject to mental health dispositions and psychiatric intervention became subject to legal dispositions and criminal justice intervention (Lamb & Weinberger, 2005; Lamb, Weinberger, & Gross, 2004). The second explanation focuses on the direct impact of prison itself on mental health. This work has emphasized how the deprivations inherent to prison, such as separation from social supports and loved ones, lack of stimulation, and loss of freedom and autonomy, negatively affect mental health (Edgemon & Clay-Warner, 2019; Wooldredge, 1999). Additionally, research in this area has also focused on how the physical environment of prison and particular housing practices can be detrimental to incarcerated people's mental health, particularly through prison overcrowding (De Viggiani, 2007; Huey & McNulty, 2005) and the use of solitary confinement (Haney, 2018; Kaba et al., 2014; Reiter et al., 2020; but also see O'Keefe et al., 2013; Walters, 2018). Thus, the causes of poor mental health in prison are sourced from both within and outside of the prison environment.

The consequences of poor mental health in prison and the overrepresentation of mental illness in prison are far reaching and highly damaging. For one, mental health problems have been repeatedly linked to prison misconduct (Semenza & Grosholz, 2014; Steiner et al., 2014; Walters & Crawford, 2014). Additionally, mental health problems have been found to be a risk factor for victimization during incarceration (Blitz, Wolff, & Shi, 2008; Wolff, Blitz, & Shi, 2007). Perhaps most importantly, and tragically, mental health problems are linked to self-harm and suicidal behaviors in prison (Favril et al., 2020; Gates et al., 2017). While the causes and consequences of poor mental health in prison have received a considerable amount of attention, far less is known about those who do not

report to have mental health problems or a history of mental illness, and what their prison experiences are like.

Coping in Prison

How people cope with incarceration and its associated strains and stressors is another notable area of research that offers insights into how imprisonment is experienced at an individual level. Though, how coping is defined and studied varies considerably between studies. As Rocheleau (2014, p.150) points out, some work defines coping so broadly that it is essentially tantamount to prison adjustment, while others conceptualize coping more narrowly as a specific skillset used to handle stress. In this narrower sense, and from a social psychological perspective, coping is commonly referred to as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person," (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.141).

Coping styles are numerous and have been classified across a variety of different categories and dichotomies. Broad classifications include strategies that are avoidant (i.e., strategies that facilitate escaping or avoiding the problem or stressor), emotion-focused (i.e., strategies that manage the emotions around the problem or stressor), and problem-focused or approach-focused (i.e., strategies that confront and alter the problem or stressor) (Endler & Parker, 1994). While these strategies are commonly assessed based on how they promote psychological well-being and actually address the problems producing stress, what constitutes effective or ineffective coping is varied and situationally based (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Somerfield & McCrae, 2000). In other words, coping is contextual,

and strategies that are effective or adaptive in one environment may not serve the same function in a different environment.

The prison represents a particularly unique situational context with regard to coping in that it introduces many stressors to cope with but is designed in such a way that it constrains the number of coping strategies that are available to use (Zamble & Porporino, 1988). In a restrictive, highly regulated environment without autonomy and freedom, coping strategies are inherently more limited than they are on the outside. Initial works broadly exploring coping strategies among incarcerated individuals painted a grim picture. Zamble and Porporino (1990, p. 57), for example, observed the use of problem-oriented coping strategies among of a group of incarcerated men that were "unsystematic and mostly scattered, sporadic, and unplanned," ultimately rendering their coping strategies as ineffective for managing their problems in prison. Research since has documented that people in prison often use avoidant and emotion-focused coping, using task-oriented or approach-focused coping strategies the least (LaCourse et al., 2019; Phillips & Linday, 2011; Ricciardelli, 2014a).

Simultaneously, research has unveiled the use of multiple coping styles and their respective impacts on a number of different outcomes, though some relationships have been observed inconsistently. For instance, the use of avoidance coping in prison has been linked to psychological distress and feelings of shame among people who are incarcerated (Ireland, Brown, & Ballarini, 2006; Kovácsa, Kun, Griffiths, & Demetrovics, 2019; Luke et al., 2021; but also see Gullone, Jones, & Cummins, 2000). Emotion-focused coping strategies have been linked to reduced depression and psychological stress (Van Harreveld, Van Der Pligt, Claassen, & Van Dijik, 2007), but also increased likelihood of serious prison

misconduct and future arrest (LaCourse et al., 2019; Rocheleau, 2014). Coping strategies that involve eliciting emotional and instrumental support have been associated with less prison violence and serious misconduct, reduced depression, lower levels of distress, and better psychological adjustment to the prison (Luke et al., 2021; Rocheleau, 2014; 2015; Van Harrevald et al., 2007; Wooldredge, 1999).

While problem-focused or task-oriented coping strategies have generally been considered to be associated with positive mental health outcomes and emotion-focused and avoidance coping strategies have been associated with poorer outcomes, some coping research in the prison context suggests that this pattern may not hold the same for those who are incarcerated due to a limited ability to alter or control the prison environment through problem-oriented coping strategies (Van Harrevald et al., 2007). Collectively, though, it is clear that coping styles and strategies matter for the incarceration experience. Avoidance coping is generally associated with less desirable outcomes, yet the current research base suggests it is the most commonly used set of strategies, while approach coping strategies are used least. Similar to trends in mental health research in prison, far less attention has been paid to identifying and isolating those who are engaging in the most adaptive coping strategies while avoiding engaging in more maladaptive coping strategies, which could offer further insight into those who might be doing well and avoiding negative outcomes at an individual level.

Interpersonal Experiences: Doing Well with Others

A defining social feature of the prison is how people interact with and relate to one another. Accordingly, interpersonal relationships and the social interactions that structure daily life on the inside have been a key area of interest for correctional scholars. Naturally,

this work has been divided across the interpersonal relationships that exist among people who are incarcerated and the relationships that exist between correctional staff and those who are incarcerated.

Interactions with Correctional Staff

The interactions between correctional staff and those who are incarcerated have been described as being "at the heart of any prison" (Crewe, 2011, p. 455). The nature of these relationships has been long considered contentious due to the inherent power differential that exists between officers and incarcerated individuals, as one group exercises authority and control over the other for a sustained period of time (Haney et al., 1973; Hepburn, 1985). Prisoner-staff relations can be difficult, tense, and full of conflict (Bottoms, 1999; Colvin, 1992; Sparks, Bottoms, & Hay, 1996). In fact, some of the main tenets of the well-documented prison code contribute to an "us versus them" mentality between people who are incarcerated and correctional staff, calling for those who are incarcerated to distance themselves from correctional staff and to treat them with suspicion and distrust (Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). Ultimately, the social structure of the prison is composed in such a way that it can often and easily breed resentment, conflict, and tension between people who are incarcerated and correctional staff.

Of course, the interactions between correctional staff and people who are incarcerated matter a great deal for other in-prison experiences. The quality of correctional staff-prisoner relationships influences overall adjustment to the prison, as correctional staff provide crucial information about the informal and formal rules of the institution (Clemmer, 1940; Dilulio, 1987; Vuolo & Kruttschnitt, 2008). These relationships, unsurprisingly, are also related to safety within the prison. Conflict with correctional staff

has been shown to lead to more misconduct among people who are incarcerated (Rocheleau, 2013) and recent work exploring perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy illustrate the importance of staff-prisoner interactions for violence and serious misconduct (Beijersbergen et al., 2015; Campbell et al., 2020; Reisig & Mesko, 2009; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2018). Above compliance, rule-breaking, and violence, interactions with correctional staff also matter for well-being (Liebling, 2011). The more that staff-prisoner relations are characterized by fairness and care, as opposed to disrespect and degradation, the less harmful the prison experience can be overall. As such, a very meaningful aspect of doing well in prison at an interpersonal level is how people who are incarcerated and correctional staff interact with one another, and efforts to identify those who are doing well should acknowledge and account for those who have more positive relationships with correctional staff and are avoiding conflict.

Interactions between Incarcerated Individuals

Similar to relations with correctional staff, social relationships among incarcerated men and women themselves matter greatly for how incarceration is experienced. The social organization of prisons has long occupied an area of fascination for correctional scholars, particularly the codes, conventions, and social hierarchies that are enacted to organize and structure life and relationships on the inside (Clemmer, 1940; Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). Research in this space paints a complicated portrait of social relationships among people in prison. Expectations of the prison code, for example, require people in prison to be guarded, keep to themselves, maintain a tough front, and conceal any weakness (Crewe, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2020; Ricciardelli, 2014b; Sykes & Messinger, 1960; Trammel, 2009; 2012). The more recent emergence of racialized

prison gangs has also led to a set of "racial politics" that govern behavior and social interaction on the inside, largely prohibiting the development of social bonds across racial lines and going as far to dictate who people in prison recreate with, eat with, and generally socialize with (Skarbek, 2014; Walker, 2016).

Naturally, the strict prescriptions of these codes can easily put people in prison in conflict with one another. Further, both the prison code and racial politics are enforced by threatening and using violence when the tenets of the codes are violated (Bloch & Olivares-Pelayo, 2021; Skarbek, 2014; Trammel, 2012; Walker, 2016). Much of the literature that spans prison social organization highlights the precariousness of these social interactions and how stressful and dangerous they can be. As a smaller body of work has begun to spotlight prosocial relationships on the inside (and during release) and the positive influence of mentors, "old-heads," and "wounded-healers" (Crewe, Hulley, & Wright, 2016; Kreager et al., 2017; LeBel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015; Maruna, 2001), it is increasingly clear that a fundamental element of doing well in prison revolves around avoiding conflict with other people who are incarcerated and even building and maintaining more supportive relationships.

Experiences with the Prison Environment: Doing Well with Your Space

Outside of individual and interpersonal adjustments, how incarcerated individuals adapt to and cope with the prison environment represents an important facet of the prison experience. The prison environment (also commonly referred to as prison climate) has been conceptualized and defined rather broadly, encompassing the "social, emotional, organizational and physical characteristics of a correctional institution as perceived by inmates and staff" (Ross et al., 2008, p. 447). Given the discussions of the individual and

interpersonal prison experiences in the preceding sections, and the considerable overlap with the social and emotional qualities aspects of this definition, this discussion of the prison environment is primarily concerned with how the physical characteristics of the prison are experienced by people in prison.

The prison as a physical space is particularly harsh. By design, prisons remove many amenities and access to goods and services that are available on the outside (Applegate, 2001; Hancock & Jewkes, 2011; Sykes, 1958). In fact, Johnson and colleagues (2017, p.83) go as far to say that "prisons consign inmates to conditions of relative poverty." Prisons are often noisy and overcrowded, affording few opportunities for privacy (Camp, 1999; Sommer, 1971; Suedfeld, 1980). They can be unkempt and unclean (Sloan, 2012; Wright, 1985). The food and the environment in which people eat is typically regarded poorly and can be a significant source of stress (Godderis, 2006; Wright, 1985). Overall access to material goods, amenities, and quality services, such as healthcare, is highly constrained (Applegate, 2001; Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2005).

Many of these conditions stem directly from the structural designs of the facilities themselves. Prisons have been architecturally designed to achieve a number of goals, including to promote safety and security, as well as retribution and deterrence (Nadel & Mears, 2020). As a result, prisons are constructed to be uncomfortable and unpleasant through the use of design elements (such as dim lighting, solitary cells, imposing fences and walls, etc.) that make them appear bleak, unstimulating, and uninviting (Nadel & Mears, 2020; Sykes,1958). Today the "supermax prison" is perhaps the epitome of an environment constructed to be unpleasant and painful. Designed to exert maximum control and surveillance over the most disruptive and potentially dangerous men and women on

the inside, supermax prisons house people in single-cells for 23 hours a day and offer only the most basic essentials (Riveland, 1999). Though most individuals do not spend an entire sentence in these kinds of facilities or conditions, the use of these facilities as a means to manage difficult and dangerous behavior on the inside highlights how the physical conditions of the prison can be altered and leveraged as a mechanism for punishment, deterrence, and control.

Many people in prison have a difficult time acclimating to the physical prison environment and the deprivations inherent to its design. Men and women in prison report having a problem with, or finding it hard to cope with, the lack of privacy and access to goods and services, the cleanliness of the facilities, and the quality of the food and medical care (Rocheleau, 2013; Zamble and Porporino, 1988). Additionally, both overcrowded conditions and the isolation associated with solitary confinement present significant difficulties for people who are incarcerated (Haney, 2012). Overall, these "spatial pains of imprisonment" (Hancock & Jewkes, 2011) are a significant aspect of how incarceration is experienced. A more recent body of work has emphasized the importance of constructing positive prison environments that are more moral and enabling and have begun to explore the impact of these kinds of environments for behavior such as reoffending (Auty & Liebling, 2020; Liebling, 2011). However, it is less clear if there are people who manage to avoid being negatively impacted by the harsh and depriving physical characteristics that are common to most prisons.

Doing Well in Prison and Institutionalization

It is important to note that avoiding poor mental health outcomes, being unbothered by the physical deprivations of the prison environment, sidestepping conflict with others,

and the like might not necessarily mean someone is truly doing "well" in prison. In some instances, these indicators could signify institutionalization whereby some people in prison are more accustomed and resigned to life on the inside compared to life on the outside (Haney, 2003; Leigey, 2010). For some, prison is more secure and stable than life on the outside and it is easier exist within a total institution than a life on the outside that marred with hardship (Chatman, 1999; Goffman, 1961; Owen, 1998). To be unaffected by, and indifferent to, all of the pains of imprisonment is not the same as to be resilient in the face of them, and efforts to better understand what it means to do well in prison and positively adjust should be sure to differentiate between these types of adjustment.

The Utility of a Negative Case Framework

Broadly speaking, a negative case framework is fitting to help identify people in prison who are avoiding negative outcomes. Negative cases refer to "those subjects in our research whose pattern of responses do not fit neatly with our hypotheses" (Giordano, 1989, p.261). Negative cases can refer to statistical outliers in a given set of data, but also conceptual outliers that "challenge expected patterns of behavior" (Doherty & Bersani, 2020, p.1629). As described above, correctional research is typically interested in describing the incarceration experiences that are most common or probabilistic. Though the previously discussed literature does not claim that there is a singular incarceration experience that is inherently and universally negative, it does paint a relatively clear picture of the trends—many people in prison struggle across a number of domains. Thus, the people who avoid negative outcomes while incarcerated would be conceptual outliers, they challenge the expected patterns of behaviors based on what we know of how people typically experience incarceration.

The utility of a negative case approach here is that it intentionally tries to isolate the people, events, circumstances that do not "fit" and often are hidden among the most common, typical, or average cases. A negative case approach changes what we look for, it forces us to avert our gaze from the expected to the unexpected all with the understanding that a better knowledge of the cases that do not fit our expectations allows us to further develop, refine, and expand our theories and knowledge base (Emigh, 1997; Sullivan, 2011). In this case, searching for and isolating those who are avoiding some of the most commonly documented negative prison experiences based on a set of conceptual criteria can help us better understand if there are people who are doing well or positively adjusting in prison. It is not unreasonable to think that this group of people might exist (see Crewe & Ievins, 2019 and Kazemian, 2019)—a negative case approach allows us to actually uncover this group.

Current Focus

Prison is an incredibly difficult and painful place to be for individual, interpersonal, and environmental reasons. The literature discussed above paints a relatively clear picture—most people struggle across various life domains while incarcerated and experience a host of negative outcomes. What is much less clear is if there are people on the inside who do not experience these outcomes that are typical of the average incarceration experience. With every reason to expect people to fare poorly while in prison, is there anyone on the inside doing well? The current study answers four research questions to determine if there are people in prison doing well across individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains. First, the study conceptually identifies dimensions of doing well in prison and identifies individuals who are displaying positive outcomes or avoiding

negative outcomes across each domain. Second, this study assesses whether or not there are any individuals who are doing well across all three domains. Then, attention is turned to assessing the background and descriptive characteristics associated with those who are doing well across all three domains. Finally, this study compares and contrasts individuals who are doing well in a single domain, multiple domains, or no domains at all. The broader purpose of this study is to demonstrate how we might begin to alter our correctional gaze to uncover people in prison who are positively deviating from our expectations.

Methods

This study uses data from the Arizona Living and Working in Prison project (AZLWP). The AZLWP is a prospective longitudinal study of life during the first year of incarceration among adult male prisoners in Arizona. Using a prospective cohort design, incarcerated men at Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR) were interviewed at three time points over a one-year period. Baseline interviews were conducted in September 2017 through August 2018. The interviews were open to all adult men incarcerated in the Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCRR) who were within three weeks of their permanent placement in maximum custody, close custody, or medium custody and who had at least one year to serve on their sentence.

The inclusion criteria for the baseline interview required that the men were either entering ADCRR from county jail to begin a new sentence, returning to prison to begin a new sentence due to a parole violation, or reclassifying to maximum custody from a lower custody placement within ADCRR. Among those eligible to be included in the study, 57.9% participated, producing a baseline sample of 326 men. Two follow-up interviews

were conducted 6 months after the baseline interview and 12 months after the baseline interview. At the 6-month follow-up interview, 288 men participated (88.3%) and at the 12-month interview, 266 men participated (81.6%). Across the three waves of data collection, the surveys gauged participants' global mental health, coping strategies, perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy, among a number of other measures relevant to life during the first year of incarceration. The current study uses data from the third wave of data collection at the 12-month interview, resulting in a final sample size of 266 incarcerated men.

Measures

Individual Wellness Variables

Mental health. Mental health was assessed using the Symptom Checklist-90-R (SCL-90-R; Derogatis, 1994). The SCL-90-R is a 90 question self-report symptom inventory that assesses symptomology across nine distinct dimensions. The men interviewed in this sample were asked how much they were bothered by symptoms within each dimension on a 5-point scale (0 = "Not at all", 4 = "Extremely"). Three symptom dimensions in particular were used for this study. *Depression* was measured using a 13-item subscale of the SCL-90-R and asked how much participants were bothered by symptoms such as "feelings of worthlessness" and "feeling low in energy or slowed down" in the last week. The items were averaged to create a mean score, with higher scores indicating greater depression (a = 0.88). The average depression score in the sample was 0.86 (SD = 0.75). *Anxiety* was measured using a 10-item subscale that asked how much participants were bothered by symptoms such as "spells of terror or panic" and "feeling tense or keyed up" in the last week. The items were averaged to create a mean score, with

higher scores indicating greater anxiety (a = 0.88). The average anxiety score in the sample was 0.49 (SD = 0.65). Finally, *hostility* was measured using a 6-item subscale that asked men in the sample how much they were bothered by symptoms such as "getting into frequent arguments" and "having urges to break or smash things" in the last week. The items were averaged to create a mean score, with higher scores indicating greater hostility (a = 0.88). The average hostility score in the sample was 0.69 (SD = 0.80).

Coping. Coping strategies were measured using the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1987). The Brief COPE asked participants to think about what they generally do or feel when they experience stressful events and how they then respond when they confront difficult or stressful events in prison on a 4-point scale (1=don't use the strategy "at all", 4 = uses the strategy "a lot"). The inventory is comprised of 14 subscales that capture different coping strategies. For this study, one scale is created that measures avoidance coping. *Avoidance coping* is a combination of the denial, substance use, venting, behavioral disengagement, self-distraction, and self-blame subscales (a = 0.54). The average avoidance coping score in this sample was 1.77 (SD = 0.42), with higher scores signifying greater use of avoidance coping.

Interpersonal Wellness Variables

Negative Relations with Others. Negative relations with others were measured using 3 items from Listwan and colleague's (2011) larger negative relations scale that asked participants about a number of negative experiences that may have occurred in prison. Negative relations with others refer to negative experiences with other people in the prison environment, with a particular emphasis on experiences with direct victimization. Items were rated on a 4-point scale (1= "never," 4= "often") and asked

participants how often over the last 6 months certain experiences occurred, such as "your belongings being taken," "you getting into a fight with another person," and "you being disrespected and talked down to." The items were averaged to create a mean score, with higher scores indicating more negative relations with others (a = 0.53). The average negative relations score in the sample was 1.49 (SD = 0.59).

Conflict with Correctional Staff. Conflict with correctional staff was measured using a single item from Rocheleau's (2013) pains of imprisonment scale that asked participants how hard a number of items had been for them over the last 6 months. The conflict with correctional staff item asked participants "Over the past six months, how hard were conflicts with staff for you." The item was rated on a 5-point scale (0 = "not hard at all," 4 = "extremely hard), with higher scores reflecting more difficulty with conflicts with staff. The average conflict with staff score in the sample was 0.93 (SD = 1.23).

Conflict with Incarcerated Individuals. Conflict with other incarcerated individuals was also measured using a single item from Rocheleau's (2013) pains of imprisonment scale. Specifically, this item asked participants "Over the past six months, how hard were conflicts with prisoners for you." The item was rated on a 5-point scale, with higher scores reflecting more difficulty with conflicts with other incarcerated individuals. The average conflict with staff score in the sample was 0.89 (SD = 1.13).

Environmental Wellness Variable

Environmental Pains of Imprisonment. Environmental pains of imprisonment were measured using 8 items from Rocheleau's (2013) larger pains of imprisonment scale that asked participants how hard a number of items had been for them over the last 6 months. The 8 items used for this measure asked about pains of imprisonment related to

the physical prison environment. Items were rated on a 5-point scale (0 = "not hard at all," 4 = "extremely hard) and asked participants how difficult certain experiences had been for them, such as "lack of privacy," "cleanliness of the facility," "excessive noise," and "quality of food." The items were averaged to create a mean score, with higher scores indicating more difficulty with environmental pains of imprisonment (a = 0.82). The average environmental pains of imprisonment score in the sample were 1.86 (SD = 1.04).

Background Variables

Several background variables were included from the baseline interview to provide a descriptive profile of the participants. Demographic variables included a continuous variable for *age* (in years), a categorical variable for *race* (White, Black, Hispanic, Other), a dummy variable for being in a *relationship* (1 = Yes), a dummy variable for *having children* (1 = Yes), and a dummy variable for *high school education* (1 = Yes). Several relevant variables capturing institutional experience were also included. *Prior incarceration* was a dummy variable (1 = Yes) measuring if participants had served at least one prior prison term. *Adult years spent in prison* was a continuous variable measuring how many years participants had spent in prison since their 18th birthday and *years to release* was a continuous variable measuring how many years participants had left on their current sentence until release. A categorical variable for *custody level* (minimum, medium, close, and maximum custody) at the 12-month interview was also included. Finally, a continuous variable asking participants on a 5-point scale how hard *missing freedom* had been for them was included as a simple proxy for potential institutionalization (0 = "not hard at all," 4 = "extremely hard"). See Table 1.1 for descriptive statistics for study variables.

Analytic Strategy

The analysis proceeds in four stages. First, the number of individuals doing well in the individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains are estimated separately. This is done by setting a cutoff point for each variable within each domain and then identifying the number of individuals who fall within the cut off points for all variables of interest within the domain concurrently. Guided by the prior literature, this study is specifically interested in identifying people who have low mental health symptomology, low avoidance coping, are avoiding negative interactions with other people in prison and correctional staff, and are not struggling with the physical characteristics of the prison environment. For the individual wellness domain, a cut off was set to identify those with low depression symptomology (those who averaged 1 or less on the depression subscale), low anxiety symptomology (those who averaged 1 or less on the anxiety subscale), low hostility symptomology (those who averaged 1 or less on the hostility subscale), and low avoidance coping (those who averaged 1 or less on the avoidance coping subscale). Those who fell within the cutoff point for all of these variables were placed in the group of "doing well with yourself." For the interpersonal wellness domain, a cut off was set to identify those with low negative relations with others (those who averaged 2 or less on the subscale), low conflict with incarcerated individuals (those who reported 1 or less on the item), and low conflict with correctional staff (those who reported 1 or less on the item).

Table 1.1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (*N* = 266)

	Wave	%/M	N/*SD*	Range	*α*
Individual Wellness					
Depression	12-month	0.86	0.75	0 – 3.15	0.88
Anxiety	12-month	0.49	0.65	0 – 3.6	0.88
Hostility	12-month	0.69	0.80	0 – 4	0.88
Avoidance Coping	12-month	1.77	0.42	1 – 3.25	0.54
Interpersonal Wellness					
Negative Relations	12-month	1.49	0.59	1 – 4	0.53
Conflict with Staff	12-month	0.93	1.23	0 – 4	
Conflict with Incarcerated Individuals	12-month	0.89	1.13	0 – 4	
Environmental Wellness					
Environmental Pains of Imprisonment	12-month	1.86	1.04	0 – 4	0.82
Demographics					
Age	Baseline	33.23	9.68	18 – 76	
White	Baseline	27.44%	73		
Black	Baseline	15.41%	41		
Hispanic	Baseline	35.34%	94		
Other	Baseline	21.81%	58		
Relationship	Baseline	30.45%	81		
Children	Baseline	56.77%	151		
High School Education	Baseline	40.60%	108		
Institutional Experience					
Prior Incarceration	Baseline	73.68%	196		
Adult Years Spent in Prison	Baseline	7.32	7.18	0 – 34	
Year to Release	Baseline	6.55	8.34	0 – 73	

Missing Freedom	12-month	3.12	1.28	0 – 4
Custody Level				
Minimum	12-month	9.40%	25	
Medium	12-month	32.33%	86	
Close	12-month	30.83%	82	
Maximum	12-month	27.44%	73	

Notes. %/M is reported for categorical variables whereas *N*/*SD* is reported for continuous indicators. Cronbach's alphas reported for all study scales and subscales.

Abbreviations: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of respondents; % = Percentage of respondents

Those who fell within the cutoff point for all of these variables simultaneously were placed in the group "doing well with others." For the environmental wellness domain, a cut off was set to identify those with low environmental pains of imprisonment (those who averaged 1 or less on the scale). Those who fell within this cutoff were placed in the group "doing well with your space."

Second, the number of people who are doing well in more than one domain, including those doing well in all three domains are estimated. The third stage of the analysis focuses on assessing the background characteristics of those who are doing well across all three domains concurrently. The final stage of the analysis compares individuals who are doing well in a single domain, more than one domain, or no domain at all. Specifically, differences are assessed between groups on the key background variables using one-way analysis of variance tests for continuous variables and chi-square tests for categorical variables.

Results

Prevalence of Doing Well Across Individual, Interpersonal, and Environmental Domains Separately

The first stage of the analysis explores how many people are doing well in the individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains separately, based on the inclusion criteria and cut off points specified above. Figure 1.1 contains a flow diagram illustrating how the number of individuals doing well in each domain was reached based on the inclusion criteria. For the individual wellness domain, 178 men (66.92%) were identified as self-reporting low depression symptomology, 224 men (84.21%) reported low anxiety symptomology, and 210 (78.95%) reported low hostility symptomology. A total of 153

(57.52%) men fell within all three of these groups, reporting low mental health symptomology as it relates to depression, anxiety, and hostility. With regard to coping, of the 266 men in the sample, 211 (79.32%) fell within the criteria for low avoidance coping. Of the 153 men who self-reported low mental health symptomology and 211 men who self-reported low avoidance, 143 men (53.76%) self-reported all three, constituting the final "doing well with yourself" group.

For the interpersonal wellness domain, 230 men (86.79%) reported having low negative relations with others. That is, they reported having either never or rarely experiencing events such as getting into a fight with another person or being disrespected or talked down to. 188 men (70.68%) and 195 men (73.31%) reported conflict with staff and conflict with other incarcerated individuals, respectively, as being either not hard at all or only a little hard for them over the past six months. Of the entire sample, 143 men (53.76%) fell within the cut off points for each criterion, establishing the final "doing well with others" group that simultaneously had low negative relations with others, low conflicts with staff, and low conflict with other incarcerated individuals.

Finally, for the environmental wellness domain, 67 men (25.19%) of the 266 men in the total sample self-reported low levels of perceived difficulty with the environmental pains of imprisonment. In other words, this group self-reported items such as excessive noise within the facility, lack of privacy, and cleanliness of the facility as either not being hard at all for them to deal with or only a little hard for them to deal with. This group of 67 men composed the final "doing well with the environment" group.

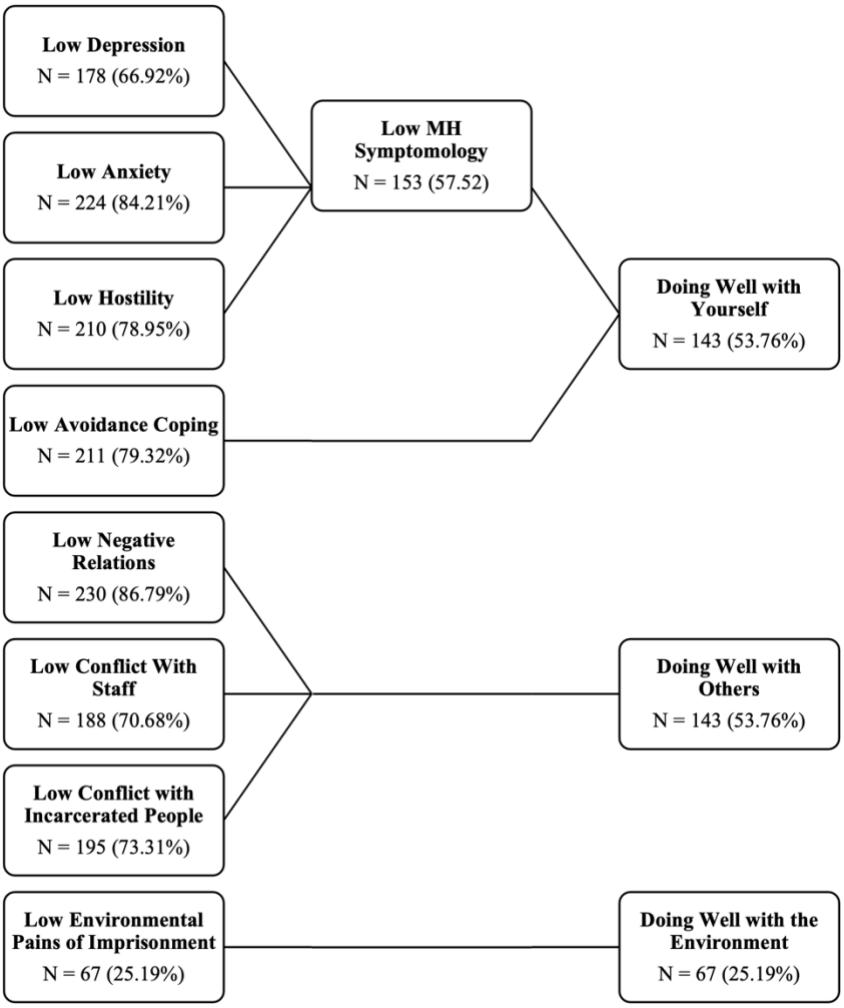

Fig. 1.1 Formation of Wellness Domains Based on Inclusion Criteria

Prevalence of Doing Well Across Multiple Domains

The second stage of the analysis focuses on identifying people who are doing well across multiple domains, particularly if there is anyone who is doing well across all three domains. Figure 1.2 displays the four primary group combinations: 1) doing well with yourself and doing well with others, 2) doing well with yourself and doing well with the environment, 3) doing well with others and doing well with the environment, and 4) doing well with yourself, doing well with others, and doing well with the environment. 108 (40.60%) men were identified as doing well individually and interpersonally, 59 (22.18%)

men were identified as doing well individually and with their environment, and 59 (22.18%) men were identified as doing well with others and with their environment. Finally, the groupings did reveal a sizeable portion of the sample that fell into all three groups. A total of 53 men, or 19.92% of the sample, were identified as doing well individually, doing well with others, and doing well with their environment.

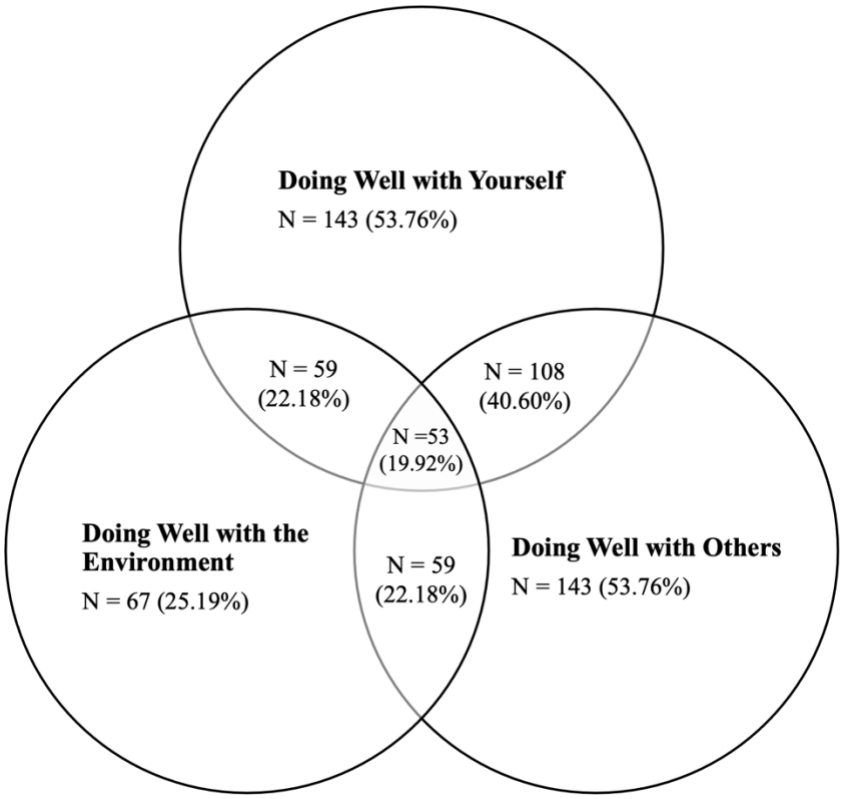

Fig. 1.2 Overlapping Wellness Domains

Descriptive Profile of those Doing Well

Having established a small group of men who are doing well in the individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains, the third stage of the analysis concentrates on describing this group based on the background variables of interest (see Table 1.2 for descriptive statistics). On average, the men in this group were 32 years old. About 21% of the group identified as White, 11% of the group identified as Black, and 53% identified as

Hispanic. Less than half of the group (40%) had a high school education or higher. A little over a quarter of men in the group reported being married or in a relationship and 60% reported having a child. The majority of the group had served a prior prison term (80%). On average, the group had spent 7 years of their adult life in prison and had 4.5 years to release on their current sentence. The men in this group were housed across all custody levels, with the majority housed in close custody (43%). On average, this group rated missing freedom as being "moderately hard" for them (m = 2.15).

Differences Between Doing Well in One Domain, Multiple Domains, or No Domains

The final stage of the analysis assesses differences in the background variables across the multiple domains of doing well and the rest of the sample (i.e., those who did not fall into any of the domains). Given the domains are not mutually exclusive, it was necessary to sort the sample into mutually exclusive groups to make meaningful comparisons. Figure 1.3 illustrates the 8 distinct groupings that exist in the overall sample based on membership in one, multiple, or none of the wellness domains. Ultimately, this part of the analysis was interested in comparing potential differences between doing well in a single domain versus doing well in multiple domains versus not doing well in any of the domains. Roughly 23% of the sample (n = 60) was doing well in one domain, while 45% (n = 120) were doing well in multiple domains. The remaining 32% of the sample (n = 86) did not fall into any of the domains.

Table 1.2. Descriptive Statistics for People Doing Well in Individual, Interpersonal, & Environmental Domains (*N* = 53)

	Wave	%/M	N/*SD*	Range
Demographics				
Age	Baseline	32.15	8.92	19 – 50
White	Baseline	20.75%	11	
Black	Baseline	11.32%	6	
Hispanic	Baseline	52.83%	28	
Other	Baseline	15.10%	8	
Relationship	Baseline	26.42%	14	
Children	Baseline	60.38%	32	
High School Education	Baseline	39.62%	21	
Institutional Experience				
Prior Incarceration	Baseline	79.25%	42	
Adult Years Spent in Prison	Baseline	7.18	7.16	0 – 30
Year to Release	Baseline	4.49	3.42	0 – 19
Missing Freedom	12-month	2.15	1.49	0 – 4
Custody Level				
Minimum	12-month	15.09%	8	
Medium	12-month	22.64%	12	
Close	12-month	43.40%	23	
Maximum	12-month	18.87%	10	

Notes. %/M is reported for categorical variables whereas *N*/*SD* is reported for continuous indicators.
Abbreviations: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of respondents; % = Percentage of respondents

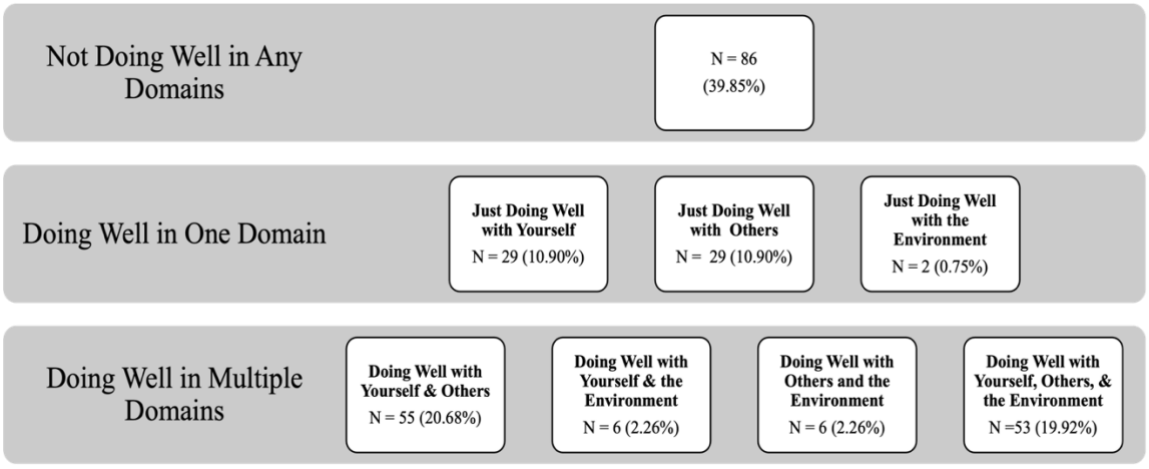

Fig. 1.3 Mutually Exclusive Wellness Domains

Table 1.3 shows the results of the bivariate analyses assessing differences in the background variables between the groups. Three significant differences were observed. First there was a statistically significant difference between the groups in age. A Tukey post-hoc test showed that, on average, the men doing well in multiple domains were older than those doing well in just one domain ($p < 0.001$). There was no statistically significant difference in age between those doing well in multiple domains versus those not doing well in domains, nor was there a significant difference in age between those doing well in one domain compared to those not doing well in any domains. Second, there was a significant difference between the groups in the number of adult years spent in prison. A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that, on average those who were doing well in multiple domains had spent more adult years in prison compared to those were doing well in just one domain ($p < 0.01$). Additionally, those who were not doing well in any of the domains, on average, had spent more adult years in prison than those doing well in one domain ($p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference in adult years spent in prison between those doing well in multiple domains and those not doing well in any domains. Finally, there was a statistically

significant difference between groups with regard to missing freedom. A Tukey post-hoc test revealed that missing freedom was statistically significantly harder for the group of people not doing well in any of domains compared to the group of people doing well in multiple domains ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, missing freedom was significantly harder for the group of people doing well in one domain compared to the group of people doing well in multiple domains ($p < 0.05$). Lastly, there was also a statistically significant difference between the group of people doing well in one domain and the group of people not doing well in any of the domains, with missing freedom being more difficult for those not doing well in any domain ($p < 0.05$). There were no significant differences in race, education, relationship status, having children, education, prior incarceration, time left to serve, or current custody level between the three groups.

Table 1.3. Differences in Demographics and Institutional Experiences by Wellness Domains (*N* = 266)

	Well in One Domain (n = 60)	Well in Multiple Domains (n = 120)	Well in No Domains (n = 86)
Demographics			
Age***	30.92 (7.61)	35.02 (10.98)	32.34 (8.60)
White	35.00%	28.33%	20.93%
Black	13.33%	12.50%	20.93%
Hispanic	28.33%	40.00%	33.72%
Other	25.30%	19.17%	24.41%
Relationship	26.67%	29.17%	34.88%
Children	58.33%	50.83%	63.95%
High School Education	40.00%	41.67%	39.53%
Institutional Experience			
Prior Incarceration	66.67%	77.50%	73.26%
Adult Years Spent in Prison**	4.77 (4.64)	8.16 (8.17)	7.94 (6.82)
Year to Release	6.55 (8.61)	5.6 (6.88)	7.87 (9.80)
Missing Freedom***	3.17 (1.09)	2.69 (1.45)	3.67 (0.86)
Custody Level			
Minimum	13.33%	10.00%	5.81%
Medium	36.67%	35.83%	24.42%
Close	26.67%	34.17%	29.07%
Maximum	23.33%	20.00%	40.70%

Notes. Mean (SD) or percentages within groups reported. Chi-squares were used for all categorical variables. One-way Analysis of Variance were used for all continuous variables.

* = p<0.05 **= p<0.01 ***= p<0.001

Given the significant differences between the groups with regard to missing freedom, an additional cross tabulation was included to show how everyone in the three groups rated the difficulty of missing freedom across the five response options (see Table 1.4). The majority of the sample struggled with missing freedom during incarceration. Roughly, 76% of the sample (n = 202) reported that missing freedom had been "quite hard" or "extremely hard" for them over the last 6 months. A much smaller portion of the sample, approximately 6% (n = 16), reported that missing freedom had been "not hard at all" over the last 6 months. However, of the 16 people who did not have difficulty missing freedom, 12 of them (75%) were in the group of people doing well across multiple domains. So, while the majority of the sample reported difficulties with missing freedom during incarceration, the small group of people who are not bothered by this are disproportionately concentrated in the group of people that is considered to be doing well across multiple domains.

Table 1.4. Differences in Missing Freedom Responses by Wellness Domains

	Well in One Domain (n = 60)	**Well in Multiple Domains (n = 120)**	**Well in No Domains (n = 86)**	**Total (n = 266)**
Missing Freedom				
Not Hard at All	2.33%	10.00%	2.33%	6.02%
A Little Hard	8.33%	17.50%	3.49%	10.90%
Moderately Hard	6.67%	11.67%	1.16%	7.14%
Quite Hard	31.67%	15.00%	10.47%	17.29%
Extremely Hard	50.00%	45.83%	82.56%	58.65%

Discussion

In her exploration of post-traumatic growth narratives among women in prison, Esther van Ginneken (2016, p.209) prefaced the intention of her work by noting "there is danger that even a cautious suggestion of imprisonment as a positive experience for *some* people in *some* circumstances will be taken as an argument in favor of incarceration. This would be unwarranted and undesirable, given the well-documented harmful effects of separation, isolation, and institutionalization. The aim of this study is not to promote imprisonment, but to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of adaptation to imprisonment." In the same spirit as van Ginneken's (2016) work, this study began with the premise that we know a great deal about the harms and pains of imprisonment and that there is something to be gained by trying to identify and better understand people whose experiences depart from the harmful effects we most commonly observe. There is an expansive literature that details the challenges and harmful effects people in prison frequently face across individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains. The purpose of this study was to determine if there are people who are doing well in prison by avoiding negative outcomes within each of these domains. Based on the results of this study, three conclusions can be reached.

First, there are people doing well on the inside. There is a group of people who report low mental health symptomology, avoid maladaptive coping, avoid conflict with correctional staff and other incarcerated people, and are able to adjust to the deprivations of the physical prison environment. This is a sizeable group—53 people, almost 20% of the entire sample, met the criteria established for doing well in the individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains simultaneously. The size of the group is somewhat surprising

but still aligns with the trends of past research: prison is incredibly difficult across a number of domains for the majority of people and a lot of people are not doing exceptionally well.

However, the identification of this particular group has noteworthy theoretical and methodological implications. With good reason to expect that no one might simultaneously avoid several of the negative outcomes that are well-documented in prior research, this group that does represents a set of conceptual outliers. Their experiences run counter to what we would typically expect of people who are imprisoned. While we have spent a decent amount of time theorizing why prison is harmful the vast majority of the time, we could begin to turn our attention to theorizing why this is not always the case and what mechanisms may enable more positive experiences. A small body of work has begun this endeavor, citing instances in which the prison acts as a reinventive institution for some (Crewe & Ievins, 2019) or instances in which people experience post-traumatic growth at an individual level (van Ginneken, 2016; Vanhooren et al., 2018), though this remains an area ripe for continued work. Relatedly, this group of people who appear to defy our expectations of how prison is experienced typically go unnoticed because their experiences are masked by the experiences of the many. This group was only identified because conceptual and methodological efforts were made to intentionally isolate these less-common experiences. The use of negative case frameworks and methodologies, as used in this study, provide an opportunity for future work to continue identifying people who are doing well in prison.

Second, there are distinct groups of doing well that span individual experiences, interpersonal experiences, and experiences with the environment. Some people in prison are doing well individually and interpersonally but are struggling with their environment.

Some are getting along well with others and coping positively with the environment but experiencing poor mental health and coping at an individual level. Some are doing well in just one domain, some are doing well across multiple domains, and many (a little less than half of the sample in this study) are not doing well in any of the domains. Prison is experienced and adapted to on multiple fronts (Wright, 1991), findings from this study highlight that people can do well in different ways while in prison.

A notable theoretical implication is that there are both inward and outward manifestations of "doing well" while in prison. To do well outwardly in how you interact with others and acclimate to your physical space can be different from your more personal and internal experiences and how you cope psychologically with imprisonment. In a sense, this hearkens back to Goffman's (1959) accounts of "frontstage" and "backstage" personas in which people present themselves and understand themselves differently in the presence of others versus in private. Continued efforts to unpack what it means to do well in prison and identify who is doing well in prison could further consider these distinctions and different groupings of doing well, particularly what might theoretically predict doing well in one domain but not in others. From a practice and policy perspective, the observation that people adjust to prison differentially across distinct domains might present an opportunity for more individualized treatment. By knowing who is doing well or needing more support in individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains, people who work in correctional settings could allocate resources and support in a more targeted and individualized manner that are specific to people's needs within each domain.

Third, the distinct groups of doing well are generally quite similarly descriptively, with the exception of age, time spent incarcerated as an adult, and missing freedom. Across

most demographic variables and institutional variables, people who were doing well in one of the domains or multiple domains were relatively indistinguishable, and this extended to comparisons with the rest of the sample who were not doing well in any of the domains. However, the differences in missing freedom are particularly notable. Those who were identified as doing well across multiple domains were the least bothered by missing freedom of the three groups. The group that was most bother by missing freedom was the group of people who were not doing well in any of the domains.

"Doing well" as defined by a lack of adverse outcomes might not be indicative of adjustment that is entirely positive. Rather, if some have succumbed to the poor conditions of confinement, become dependent on the institution for everyday living, or find prison more stable and secure than life on the outside their good mental health, positive coping strategies, and acclimation to the prison environment may reflect institutionalization, which would be hard to classify as "doing well". Missing freedom, though, is an imperfect proxy for institutionalization and should be taken as such. This does not necessarily reflect institutional dependence nor signify that those who do not report having difficulty with missing freedom would fare worse on the outside than those who do have a harder time missing freedom. However, the distinction between institutionalization and doing well in prison by avoiding negative outcomes is particularly salient from a theoretical perspective and future efforts to better understand doing well in prison and positive adjustment could continue to untangle this overlap.

Of course, this study is not without limitations. First, though guided by the literature and prior prison research, the inclusion criteria used to identify the different groups uncovered in this study were ultimately defined by the author and partially informed and

constrained by the available data. In this sense it is unsurprising that the study found what it was looking for (people doing well in prison) and it is worth noting that this could be viewed as almost inherent to its design. Second, this study relied entirely on self-report data which, while valuable, also introduces its own challenges related to reliability and validity (Junger-Tas & Marshall, 1999; Sullivan & McGloin, 2014). Specifically, considering how frequently interpersonal conflict has been documented in the prison setting, the findings related to how many people reported no conflict at all with correctional staff and other incarcerated people in this study were particularly surprising. Though the interviews that generated these data were conducted one-on-one, they were often held in settings in which other incarcerated people were being interviewed nearby and correctional staff were present. This style of interview and method of data collection may have influenced how participants responded to questions about correctional staff and other incarcerated people and unintentionally created discomfort around discussing or disclosing conflict in these relationships. Ultimately, other data collection methods might reflect a different reality. Third, and strongly related to the prior point, qualitative methods may be better suited to fully unpack the meaning of positive adjustment and avoiding negative outcomes during incarceration. Though the current study was able to identify groups of people who appear to be doing well based upon a pre-determined set of criteria, it cannot speak to the nature of these individuals' lived experiences. In-depth interviews or ethnographic observations of the men who were identified as doing well in this study, again, might reveal a different reality. This study was unable to incorporate these voices and hear from the men directly about how they feel they are doing in prison and what meaning they ascribe to that. The set of criteria used to create and identify these wellness

groups may accurate reflect what we know is important based upon prior research but could be divorced from the reality of the participants themselves. Finally, this study assessed doing well in prison at a single time point and longitudinal analysis that can speak to change over time and causality would make this work stronger. Each of these limitations offer exciting opportunities for continued work in this space and future research would do well to account for the places where this study fell short.

Prison is designed to be unpleasant. To avert some of the most commonly documented harms and negative outcomes associated with imprisonment that span people's relationships with themselves, with others, and with their environment would be a feat in and of itself. Yet, as researchers, we do not often look for these people and based off of prior research, we have little reason to think they exist. We have grown accustomed to observing the numerous ways prison negatively impacts people's lives. The purpose of this study was to see if there is anyone doing well on the inside across individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains. Limitations notwithstanding, the small group of men who positively defied expectations offer a glimmer of hope that there are people who might be doing well on the inside and that as researchers we can utilize methodologies that bring the positive experiences of the few to the forefront. A deeper understanding of those who manage to do well while in prison could inform efforts to make prison a less harmful space for everyone.

CHAPTER 3

EQUIFINALITY AND MULTIFINALITY AS ORGANIZING FRAMEWORKS FOR UNPACKING PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN PRISON

Introduction

Prison usually makes a bad situation worse. Many people enter prison with a wealth of risk factors, having experienced negative or traumatic events before having had contact with the criminal justice system (Testa et al., In Press). Then imprisonment becomes a springboard for even more negative events and maladaptation as mental health and wellbeing decline and the pains of imprisonment set in (Turney & Wakefield, 2019). This is *one* path people can traverse in prison and perhaps even the most traversed path. Yet, a cursory overview of institutional correctional research in the U.S. might lead most to believe that this is the *only* path people take during incarceration. Though important and informative, the large body of work emphasizing the abundance of harm that accumulates during incarceration begins to imply, broadly speaking, that there is a single path that is traversed during imprisonment. Prison is commonly thought of as a starting point, or a turning point, for negative, maladaptive outcomes while on the inside and after release. Consequently, there is little recognition for the possibility of diverse experiences during incarceration—the possibility of multiple paths.

Change is a relatively understudied concept in prison to begin with, but implicit in the suggestion that prison is a starting point for more negative outcomes and experiences is that when change does occur in prison it is for the worse. Another way to begin pushing past the harm-focused approach to correctional research in the U.S. and assess what it might mean to do well in prison could be to focus more on change during incarceration.

Specifically, it would be useful to give more attention to how people in prison perceive change for themselves and how they think things are changing around them, especially perceptions of change that are positive or for the better. On average, people in prison spend 2.7 years incarcerated (Kaeble, 2021). It is highly unlikely that this time is void of change, and possibly positive change, but we are limited in our knowledge about the full scope of changes people experience during imprisonment.

In part, the study of doing well in prison or positive change has been hindered by a lack of conceptual frameworks that allow researchers to capture numerous, co-occurring prison experiences. While prison may be a starting point for negative outcomes and adverse experiences, it may also be a starting point for positive outcomes or changes. Simultaneously, a single outcome in prison, such as positive change, might be reached through a number of different pathways. Ultimately, imprisonment is likely experienced differently by different people, and efforts to identify those who are doing well and what it means to do well in prison requires methodologies and conceptual frameworks that allow for the recognition and identification of multiple pathways and diverse experiences.

The current study begins to explore these pathways and diverse experiences. Using an equifinality and multifinality framework (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996), this study identifies people in prison who are reporting change in their personal circumstances during the first year of incarceration and examines the processes and events that are associated with reported improvements. Specifically, this study 1) examines what self-perceived change in prison looks like descriptively at two different time points during the first year of incarceration for a sample of incarcerated men, 2) assesses a group of individuals who report experiencing change for the better and explores what proportion of the group is

experiencing a number of salient incarceration events and changes in various adjustment processes, and 3) compares those who are reporting improvements to those who report staying the same or getting worse, evaluating if the same processes and events are at play. The purpose of this study is to identify people who are doing well in prison and unpack what it means to do well in prison by examining change over time and by identifying people who are reporting that things are improving for them in prison. More broadly, this study highlights the utility of equifinality and multifinality as organizing conceptual frameworks to allow for greater complexity and nuance in our study of the prison experience.

Literature Review

Change in Prison

Broadly speaking, change in prison has been relatively understudied. However, this is likely reflective of wider correctional research trends in the U.S. in which prison-based research has stagnated in recent decades (Wacquant, 2002). While in-depth, observational, prison-based work that highlighted the social organization and lived experiences of people in prison characterized correctional research during the mid-twentieth century, this approach largely subsided in the era of mass incarceration (Kreager & Kruttshnitt, 2018; Simon, 2000). As Kreager and Kruttshnitt (2018) highlight, this shift occurred for a number of reasons. For one, as the number of people in prison increased, correctional administrators shifted their attention to managing an ever-growing prison population. Combined with the emergence of the "nothing works" era that questioned the legitimacy and effectiveness of rehabilitative programs (Martinson, 1974), research observing prison life and evaluating program effectiveness became impractical and was essentially devalued. Enhanced requirements and oversight from universities and institutional research

boards also helped widen the gap between scholars and prison-based research, resulting in the use of administrative data and other secondary sources as the primary means to study imprisonment (Kreager & Kruttshnitt, 2018). The "privileged access" (Simmon, 2000, p. 289) granted to prison sociologists in the 1950s and 1960s that resulted in rich, descriptive accounts of life on the inside of prison is doled out far less often, and research on prisons is now more commonly conducted from a distance.

Further, when researchers are able to gain access to prisons it is often very difficult to conduct studies over long periods of time or include multiple points of data collection. Though highly valued, longitudinal data is difficult to obtain and, thus, longitudinal research in criminology more broadly is limited and often reliant on a few large-scale datasets (Woodward et al., 2016). Longitudinal research is even less common in the correctional context and susceptible to its own unique challenges (Fahmy et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2018). In the instances longitudinal designs are utilized in correctional research, it is often within the context of reentry (La Vigne et al., 2003; Western, 2018; Western, Braga, & Kohl, 2017), and there are less assessments and accounts of people's experiences in prison, over time. Consequently, there is a greater knowledgebase about people's experiences leading up to imprisonment and experiences over time upon release during the reentry process, but many in-prison processes and experiences remain unobserved over time. Combined with the difficulties in obtaining access to conduct research within prisons to begin with, the lack of longitudinal data makes it difficult to speak to change during incarceration.

Prison Adjustment

Despite these limitations, the study of prison adjustment offers some important and noteworthy insights into some of the ways scholars already think about and study change in prison. First, this area of study reveals some of the most common metrics and outcomes we assess change in to define adjustment. Prison adjustment is broadly understood to be "comprised of psychological and behavioral strategies offenders use to cope with life in prison (Butler, 2019, p.74), though definitions throughout the literature vary (Tongeren & Klebe, 2010). Interestingly, but perhaps unsurprisingly, adjustment has mostly been assessed using negative outcomes or adverse events. For example, early prison works conceptualized adjustment in terms of prisonization or the ways in which, over time, people in prison were "taking on in greater or lesser degree of the folkways, mores, customs, and general culture of the penitentiary" (Clemmer, 1940, p. 270). The study of adjustment in this way was largely concentrated on subcultural adaptations to imprisonment and adherence to the prison code (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes, 1958; Thomas, 1977; Wheeler, 1961). Engagement in institutional misconduct and violence have also been used commonly as proxies to gauge how people are adjusting to prison over time (Jiang & Fisher-Giorlando, 2002; Meade & Steiner, 2013; Toman et al., 2015), as well as the prevalence of mental health problems (Adams, 1992; Butler, 2019; Haney, 2012). Collectively, the use of these particular indicators suggests that the study of prison adjustment has largely been the study of prison maladjustment, with a particular emphasis on how people in prison are changing in relation to adverse events and outcomes.

Second, the study of prison adjustment has produced some noteworthy patterns about how people adapt to imprisonment over time. With regard to mental health, some

research has supported a stress proliferation perspective that contends longer periods of confinement are associated with more deteriorations in mental health due to prolonged exposure to numerous strains and stressors (Sugie & Turney, 2015; Thompson & Loper, 2005). Other research has supported an adaptation perspective in which the initial phases of incarceration are most harmful for mental health and, over time or with longer sentences, mental health gradually improves and stabilizes (Adams, 1992; Porter & DeMarco, 2019; Zamble, 1992). More recent work has highlighted the racial inequalities of this relationship, uncovering evidence in support of the stress proliferation perspective with some racial groups and the adaptation perspective with others (Porter et al., 2021).

Prison misconduct and violence have also been shown to vary over time, though similar to mental health problems in prison, findings have been mixed. Some work has observed a positive relationship between time served or sentence length and misconduct and violence, in which more time served has been associated with greater odds and frequency of misconduct and violence (Steiner, Butler, & Ellison, 2014; Steiner & Meade, 2016). Conversely, other studies have found more prison violence and misconduct associated with shorter sentences and less time served (Cunningham & Sorsen, 2007; DeLisi, 2003; Sorsen & Cunningham, 2008; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012). However, it has been suggested recently that this relationship is non-linear with Toman and colleagues (2015) observing an inverted "U-shape" in which increases in sentence length are associated with increased misconduct up to a certain threshold when increases in sentence length then have no observable impact on misconduct before being associated with decreasing misconduct in the face of especially long sentences (see also Lahm, 2009).

Taken together, the prison adjustment literature does speak to change in prison, albeit in limited ways. The study of prison adjustment generally assesses how people have acclimated to prison by taking stock of their experiences with adverse events and outcomes, such as mental health problems, institutional infractions, and violence. Patterns of adaptation are illustrative of the fact that change is present on the inside—there is variation in mental health problems, misconduct and violence at different points of incarceration, though the direction of these relationships are still being debated. However, many works in this area rely on cross sectional data, using time served or sentence length to assess and speak to how outcomes may vary over different periods of time (see Leigey, 2010, p.250 for a note on methodological limitations of prison adjustment research and Butler, 2019, p.75 for a note on methodological limitations of time-served measures). As such, this body of work is often unable to speak to changes over time on specific measures within individuals and typically views adjustment, or maladjustment, in terms of change in predetermined negative outcomes, not necessarily perceptions of change directly from people who are incarcerated.

Change for the Better in Prison: Post-Traumatic Growth and Positive Self-Change

Though most work assessing change or adjustment in prison is oriented towards negative changes or maladjustment, research on post-traumatic growth in prison offers some insights about positive change experiences on the inside, utilizing the voices and lived experiences of people in prison. Post-traumatic growth is concerned with positive change amid adversity and specifically refers to "positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances" (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004, p.1). Recently, a small body of work has begun to explore

post-traumatic growth among people who are incarcerated, noting that imprisonment is highly associated with trauma and that people in prison have often had many experiences and problems with trauma before even becoming incarcerated (Hearn, Joseph, & Fitzpatrick, 2021).

For some, imprisonment is associated with positive changes. Van Ginneken (2016), for example, found evidence of post-traumatic growth narratives among a small sample of incarcerated women in England in which the initial shock of incarceration was originally very disruptive and challenged participants' sense of identity, but was later viewed as a silver lining and an opportunity for personal development and identity change. Using a mixed-methods approach, Vanhooren and colleagues (2017a) also found evidence of post-traumatic growth with a group of previously incarcerated people in Belgium. Specifically, the men in this study described the ways in which being incarcerated resulted in appreciating life more fully, finding new purposes in life, and experiencing personal change by engaging in therapy and other forms of support and treatment. Additionally, post-traumatic growth narratives in prison have documented how imprisonment can serve as a catalyst for more nuanced ways of thinking, new strengths, and changed meaning in life (Vanhooren et al., 2017b).

Above work documenting the content of post-traumatic growth narratives in prison, other research has begun to identify relationships between post-traumatic growth and other outcomes, as well as what behaviors predict post-traumatic growth. Participation in psychotherapy and the use of particular coping strategies, such as seeking out emotional support and religious coping, have been positively associated with post-traumatic growth (Vanhooren et al., 2018). Post-traumatic growth is also related to other positive outcomes

such as lower levels of psychological stress (Vanhooren et al., 2017a) and more positive perceptions of relationship quality with correctional staff, such as experiencing empathy, acceptance and positive regard from staff (Hearn et al., 2021).

However, the post-traumatic growth research is limited in some notable ways. First, this is an emerging area of study so, consequently, there are a limited number of studies looking at post-traumatic growth in prisons to begin with. Second, of the studies conducted, most rely on samples of formerly incarcerated people who are speaking retrospectively about their in-prison experiences. Relatedly, while this work does tap into the concept of change over time, the work is not typically longitudinal or following and documenting people's experiences over time. Finally, a lot of this research is based outside of the U.S. and so it is not entirely clear what post-traumatic growth looks like within the U.S. correctional context.

What is especially noteworthy about both bodies of work is that they think about change slightly differently compared to one another. Within the study of prison adjustment, few studies have explicitly analyzed incarcerated men and women's perception of change in a global sense. More often change is assessed by measuring differences in various psychosocial and behavioral outcomes. This is one way to think about change in prison — how people are experiencing change on particular outcomes of interest over time. Another way to think about change is to assess perceptions of change or self-change from incarcerated people themselves, which is more aligned with what post-traumatic growth research typically does. This type of change tends to be more subjective and global in nature, referring to a broader sense of change or personal growth as compared to more objective and discrete change scores on variables of interest. None of which is to suggest

that one approach is superior to the other, rather that change can be thought of and experienced in meaningfully different ways. Change can be a subjective sense of how things are evolving at a personal level; it can also be the specific changes in mental health, coping, and various behaviors that may or may not be noticed by people themselves but nonetheless speak to how they are changing over time. Unpacking what change is and looks like in prison requires a little of both approaches and conceptualizations.

Multifinality, Equifinality, and Change in Prison

Multifinality

The concept of multifinality is largely utilized in the field of developmental psychopathology and refers to the idea that a single event can be a starting point that results in various pathways to a number of different ends. Stated differently, the same beginning can have different ends for different people. Within the context of developmental psychopathology, multifinality has been used to unpack how the same adverse event can manifest in different psychological outcomes in people, both pathological and non-pathological (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996). Ultimately this concept acknowledges that "individuals may begin on the same major pathway and, as a function of their subsequent 'choices,' exhibit very different patterns of adaptation or maladaptation," (Cicchetti, 2006, p.13).

Interestingly, multifinality has rarely been applied within criminal justice research, despite its applicability. A recent exception to this comes from Drury and colleagues (2020) who used a multifinality framework to assess diverse outcomes at midlife among a sample of former chronic juvenile delinquents. This work found that while former juvenile offenders were significantly more likely to engage in chronic offending as adults, the

majority of the sample did not engage in chronic offending at midlife. Rather, the conduct and offending problems of childhood transformed into different problematic outcomes in adulthood such as increased physical health problems, mental illness, and unemployment.

Within the context of correctional research, multifinality has been utilized sparingly (though see Mulvey & Schubert, 2017 for a brief discussion within the context of mental health in prisons and jails). With the exception of post-traumatic growth research and similar works beginning to highlight positive self-change in prison (see Maier & Ricciardelli, 2020), a large portion of correctional research is premised on the assumption that prison most of the time leads to predominantly negative and maladaptive outcomes on the inside. However, the juxtaposition of prison adjustment research and post-traumatic growth research begins to offer compelling evidence of multifinality in prisons. If imprisonment is conceptualized as an adverse event, both bodies of literature highlight some of the various adaptations that can result. For some imprisonment leads to deteriorations in mental health, institutional misconduct, and violence. For others, imprisonment, despite its harms and pains, becomes a catalyst for identity change and renewed meaning and purpose in life. Though multifinality is essentially implied across these works, it is rarely explicitly stated or looked for. Utilizing a multifinality framework in correctional research would allow scholars to hold all of these possibilities simultaneously when assessing how people are changing and adapting to prison. Simply put, an equifinality framework could help us better appreciate and unpack how prison as a starting point could lead to a variety of different outcomes, both good and bad.

Equifinality

Also predominantly used in the study of developmental psychopathology, the concept of equifinality refers to the idea that a single outcome can be reached through a number of different paths. Within the context of developmental psychopathology "equifinality has been invoked to explain why a variety of developmental pathways may eventuate in a given outcome, rather than expecting a singular primary pathway to the adaptive or maladaptive outcome" (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1996, p.597). If multifinality is about how a single means can lead to multiple ends, then equifinality is about how different means can lead to the same end (see Figure 2.1).

Equifinality has also been used infrequently in criminal justice research, although recent work in life-course criminology showcases its utility as an organizing conceptual framework (Sweeten & Khade, 2018; see also Bushway, Thornberry, & Khron, 2003). In particular, Sweeten and Khade (2018) utilized an equifinality perspective to examine what explanations of desistance are experienced by those who have desisted from crime. Among people who had desisted from crime, the study identifies what proportion experienced each theoretical explanation of desistance and then compares to non-desisting and persisting offending groups to see if the proportions are different. Because equifinality acknowledges that numerous, diverse pathways can lead to the same outcome, it allows for the incorporation of multiple theoretical perspectives simultaneously such that the authors could "provide evidence for the relative importance of competing explanations for desistance" (p.1). The findings of this work revealed that many desistance processes are at work for both desisting and persisting groups, but that those who were persisting experienced a slower rate of change on relevant theoretical constructs, such as positive

identity development, compared to those desisting from crime. Ultimately, the use of an equifinality framework revealed that many significant changes co-occur, which is particularly important since research is often only considering one causal explanation at a time.

Though not employed in correctional research, equifinality offers a lot of promise as an organizing conceptual framework to study change in prison, particularly positive change. While there are not necessarily theories of positive change in prison there are several salient incarceration events and experiences that have been linked to prison adjustment and post-traumatic growth that are experienced differentially and, potentially, offer different paths to reporting or experiencing positive change. Specifically, social support via visitation and positive correctional staff relations are important aspects of imprisonment and subsequent adjustment (Beijersbergen et al., 2016; Cochran, 2012; Day, Brauer, & Butler, 2015; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2018). Access to rehabilitative programs, mental health treatment, and employment or vocational programs on the inside are also salient experiences linked to adjustment and post-traumatic growth (French & Gendreau, 2006; Richmond, 2014; Vanhooren et al., 2018). Availability, access, and participation in each of these domains is likely to fluctuate and vary over the course of a prison sentence and, as highlighted by Sweeten & Khade (2018), an equifinality framework would allow researchers to look at the relative importance of each of these events and experiences among those experiencing positive change. Ultimately, people can end up in the same place for different reasons, and equifinality allows us to unpack and explore those reasons and their relative importance. The use of equifinality as an organizing concept in correctional

research could better capture the diversity of pathways that lead to people experiencing positive change.

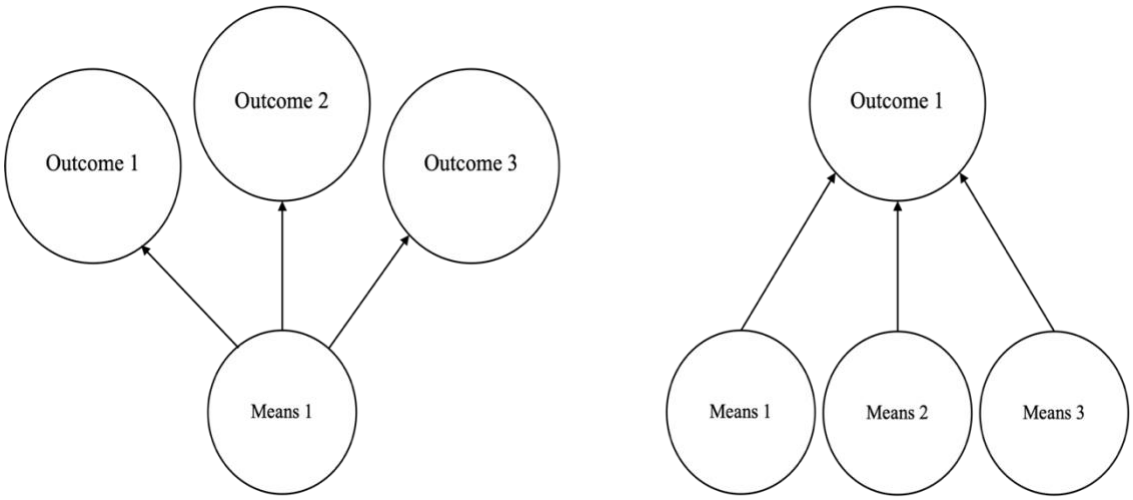

Fig. 2.1 Multifinality configuration (left) and equifinality configuration (right) adapted from Kruglanski et al. (2015).

Current Focus

The study of change in prison has been hindered by a lack of access to prison-based research and the ability to follow-up with people who are incarcerated over time. Much of the research on prison adjustment in the U.S. paints prison as a starting point for negative, maladaptive outcomes and experiences, though post-traumatic growth research outside of the U.S. offers a glimmer of hope for positive change on the inside. The emphasis on prison maladjustment, coupled with a lack of prison-based longitudinal research has, perhaps inadvertently, narrowed our focus on what the prison experience is and can be. The implication becomes that a single path is traversed on the inside, without much appreciation for co-occurring, diverse experiences. Multifinality and equifinality as organizing conceptual frameworks remind us that multiple outcomes can result from a single experience and that a single outcome can be reached a number of different ways.

With all of this in mind, the aim of the current study is to unpack what it means to do well in prison by examining change over time, using a multifinality and equifinality framework. Specifically, the current study answers three broad questions. First, how do people perceive things are changing for them during the first year of incarceration? Second, what are the in-prison experiences of those who report experiencing change for the better? Third, are there significant differences between those who report experiencing change for the better and those who do not in terms of their in-prison experiences? A multifinality framework is used to highlight the numerous outcomes (different kinds of change) that can be associated with a single life event (incarceration) and an equifinality framework is used to highlight the numerous pathways that can lead to a single positive outcome (reporting change for the better in prison). The broader purpose of this study is to introduce more nuance into our study of the prison experience and unpack what it means to do well on the inside.

Methods

Data for this study comes from the Arizona Living and Working in Prison project (AZLWP). The AZLWP is a prospective longitudinal study of life during the first year of incarceration among adult male prisoners in Arizona. Using a prospective cohort design, incarcerated men at Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR) were interviewed at three time points over a one-year period. Baseline interviews were conducted in September 2017 through August 2018. The interviews were open to all adult men incarcerated in the ADCRR who were within three weeks of their permanent placement in maximum custody, close custody, or medium custody and who had at least one year to serve on their sentence.

The inclusion criteria for the baseline interview required that the men were either entering ADCRR from county jail to begin a new sentence, returning to prison to begin a new sentence due to a parole violation, or reclassifying to maximum custody from a lower custody placement within ADCRR. Among those eligible to be included in the study, 57.9% participated, producing a baseline sample of 326 men. Two follow-up interviews were conducted 6 months after the baseline interview and 12 months after the baseline interview. At the 6-month follow-up interview, 288 men participated (88.3%) and at the 12-month interview, 266 men participated (81.6%). Across the three waves of data collection, the surveys gauged participants' global mental health, coping strategies, perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy, among a number of other measures relevant to life during the first year of incarceration. After accounting for missing data, the final sample includes 238 incarcerated men who were interviewed at all three points of data collection.[1]

Measures

Change

Perceptions of change during incarceration were measured by using a question at the beginning of the 6-month and 12-month interview that asked participants "Thinking about the past 6 months since we last spoke, how would you say things have changed for you, if at all?" This was a close-ended question that gave participants three options to choose from: "Stayed the same," "gotten better," or "gotten worse."

[1] Men who participated in the baseline interview and 12-month interview, but did not participate in the 6-month interview (N=11) were not included in the sample for analysis. Additionally, 17 cases or approximately 6% of sample were missing on at least one variable of interest, falling within the threshold of appropriateness for listwise deletion (Allison, 2000), and subsequently removed from the analysis.

Salient Incarceration Experiences

Custody level change. Custody level change was measured using a dummy variable (1 = Yes) indicating whether or not participants had ever changed custody level (minimum, medium, close, and maximum custody) at any point during the study.

Employment. Prison employment was measured at the 6-month interview and 12-month interview, and asked participants, "Are you currently working in here?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question. Using this question from both points of data collection a dummy variable was created to measure whether or not participants had ever worked in prison, at either the 6-month or 12-month interview (1= Yes). Approximately 50% of the sample had a job in the prison at either the 6-month or 12-month interview.

Program participation. Program participation was measured at the 6-month interview and 12-month interview and asked participants, "Are you currently participating in ADC programs/classes?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question. Using this question from both points of data collection a dummy variable was created to measure whether or not participants had ever participated in a program, at either the 6-month or 12-month interview (1= Yes). Roughly 59% of the sample had participated in an ADCRR program at either the 6-month or 12-month interview.

Mental health treatment. Mental health treatment was measured at the 6-month interview and 12-month interview and asked participants, "Are you currently receiving treatment (i.e., medication, group therapy, individual therapy, or other forms)?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question. Using this question from both points of data collection a dummy variable was created to measure whether or not participants had ever received mental health treatment, at either the 6-month or 12-month interview (1= Yes).

Approximately 42% of the sample had received mental health treatment at either the 6-month or 12-month interview.

Visitation. Visitation was measured at the 6-month interview and 12-month interview and asked participants, "Are you currently receiving visits?" This was a close-ended, yes/no question. Using this question from both points of data collection a dummy variable was created to measure whether or not participants were ever visited, at either the 6-month or 12-month interview (1= Yes). Roughly 43% of the sample reported that they had received a visit at either the 6-month or 12-month interview.

Mental health. Mental health was assessed at all three points of data collection using the Symptom Checklist-90-R (SCL-90-R; Derogatis, 1994). The SCL-90-R is a 90 question self-report symptom inventory that assesses symptomology across nine distinct dimensions. The men interviewed in this sample were asked how much they were bothered by symptoms within each dimension on a 5-point scale (0 = "Not at all", 4 = "Extremely"). Four symptom dimensions in particular were used for this study.

Depression was measured using a 13-item subscale of the SCL-90-R and asked how much participants were bothered by symptoms such as "feelings of worthlessness" and "feeling low in energy or slowed down" in the last week. The items were averaged to create a mean score across the baseline, 6-month, and 12-month waves of data collection. The subscale scales for each wave were then averaged again to create the average score across waves, with higher scores indicating greater depression (a = 0.85). The average depression score in the sample was 0.96 (SD = 0.69).

Anxiety was measured using a 10-item subscale that asked how much participants were bothered by symptoms such as "spells of terror or panic" and "feeling tense or keyed

up" in the last week. The items were averaged to create a mean score across the baseline, 6-month, and 12-month waves of data collection. The subscale for each wave were then averaged again to create the average score across waves, with higher scores indicating greater anxiety (a = 0.79). The average anxiety score in the sample was 0.57 (SD = 0.61).

Hostility was measured using a 6-item subscale that asked men in the sample how much they were bothered by symptoms such as "getting into frequent arguments" and "having urges to break or smash things" in the last week. The items were averaged across the baseline, 6-month, and 12-month waves of data collection. The subscale scales for each wave were then averaged again to create the average score across waves, with higher scores indicating greater hostility (a = 0.79). The average hostility score in the sample was 0.66 (SD = 0.65).

Finally, *global mental health* is a single, general score of distress and mental health calculated across the nine subscales of the SCL-90-R referred to as the Global Severity Index (GSI). The score for each wave of data collection was averaged to create the average score across all waves (a = 0.87). The average global mental health score in the sample was 1.11 (SD = 0.82).

Coping. Coping strategies were measured at all three points of data collection using the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1987). The Brief COPE asked participants to think about what they generally do or feel when they experience stressful events and how they then respond when they confront difficult or stressful events in prison on a 4-point scale (1=don't use the strategy "at all", 4 = uses the strategy "a lot"). The inventory is comprised of 14 subscales that capture different coping strategies. For this study, two scales are created that measure approach coping and avoidance coping.

Approach coping is a combination of the active, positive reframing, planning, acceptance, emotional support, and instrumental support subscales (a = 0.81). The average approach coping score in this sample, across all three waves of data collection was 2.69 (SD = 0.53), with higher scores signifying greater use of approach coping. *Avoidance coping* is a combination of the denial, substance use, venting, behavioral disengagement, self-distraction, and self-blame subscales (a = 0.75). The average avoidance coping score in this sample, across all three waves of data collection was 1.78 (SD = 0.35), with higher scores signifying greater use of avoidance coping.

Procedural justice. Procedural justice was measured at all three waves of data collection using 12 items related to prisoners' perceptions of correctional officer fairness, neutrality, standing, and voice (Beijersbergen et al., 2016). Items were rated on a 5-point scale and asked participants how much they agreed with statements such as "staff members of this correctional facility give me a chance to express my views before they make decisions" and "staff members of this correctional facility treat me with respect." The items were averaged across the baseline, 6-month, and 12-month waves of data collection, with higher scores indicating greater perceptions of procedural justice. The average score for each wave was then averaged again to create the average score for all three waves (a = 0.78). The average procedural justice score in the sample was 2.76 (SD = 0.66).

Legitimacy. Legitimacy was measure at all three waves of data collection using a 3-item scale (Reisig & Mesko, 2009) that gauged obligation to obey correctional staff on a 5-point scale. This included items such as, "you should accept the guards' decisions even if you think they are wrong" and "you should do what the guards tell you to do even if you do not like the way you are treated." The average of items was used to produce a legitimacy

score for each of the three waves of data collection, with higher scores representing greater perceptions of legitimacy. The average score for each wave was then averaged again to create the average score across all three waves (a = 0.79). The average legitimacy score in the sample was 2.75 (SD = 0.88).

Negative relations. Negative relations were measured at the 6-month and 12-month waves of data collection using an 11-item scale (Listwan et al., 2011). Items were rated on a 4-point scale (1= "never," 4= "often") and asked participants how often over the last 6 months certain experiences occurred, such as "fighting with another person," "people threatened you," and "your belongings being taken." The items were averaged to create a mean score across the 6-month and 12-month waves of data collection, with higher scores indicating more negative relations. The average score for each wave was then averaged again to create the average score across both waves (a = 0.74). The average negative relations score in the sample was 1.8 (SD = 0.71).

Pains of imprisonment. Pains of imprisonment were measured at the 6-month and 12-month waves of data collection using a 19-item scale (Rocheleau, 2013). Items were rated on a 5-point scale (0 = "not hard at all," 4 = "extremely hard) and asked participants how difficult certain experiences had been for them, such as "conflicts with staff," "concerns about the future," "conflicts with prisoners," and "not being able to make my own decisions." The items were averaged to create a mean score across the 6-month and 12-month waves of data collection, with higher scores indicating more difficulty with the pains of imprisonment. The average score for each wave was then averaged again to create the average score across both waves (a = 0.79). The average pains of imprisonment score in the sample was 2.02 (SD = 0.59).

Social Support. Social support was measured at the 6-month and 12-month waves of data collection using a 6-item scale that asked participants how many people were able to support them in a number of different ways. (Listwan et al., 2011). This included questions such as "thinking about the people in your life, how many can you count on to be dependable?" and "thinking about the people in your life, how many can you count to care about you?" Each item was measured as counts of the number of people[2] and summed to create a social support total at the 6-month and 12-month waves of data collection. The totals were then averaged to create an average social support score across both waves (a = 0.85). The average number of social supports in the sample was 35.53 (SD = 34.19).

Demographic Variables

Several variables were included from the baseline interview to provide a descriptive profile of the participants. Demographic variables included a continuous variable for *age* (in years), a categorical variable for *race* (White, Black, Hispanic, Other), a dummy variable for *relationship status* (1 = Yes), a dummy variable for *having children* (1 = Yes), and a dummy variable for *high school education* (1 = Yes). *Prior incarceration* was also included as a dummy variable (1 = Yes) measuring if participants had served at least one prior prison term. Finally, a series of dummy variables for *custody level* (minimum, medium, close, and maximum custody; 1 = Yes) at the 12-month wave of data collection were also included. See Table 2.1 for descriptive statistics for study variables.

[2] Due to extreme values, each item was truncated at 35, as a minimum of 95% of the sample reported 35 or less supports for each question.

Table 2.1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (*N* = 238)

	Wave	M (SD)	Range	*α*
Demographics				
Age	Baseline	33.42 (9.71)	18–76	
White	Baseline	0.29 (0.46)	0–1	
Black	Baseline	0.14 (0.35)	0–1	
Hispanic	Baseline	0.36 (0.48)	0–1	
Other Race	Baseline	0.2 (0.4)	0–1	
Relationship	Baseline	0.31 (0.46)	0–1	
Children	Baseline	0.55 (0.49)	0–1	
High School Education	Baseline	0.42 (0.49)	0–1	
Prior Incarceration	Baseline	0.73 (0.44)	0–1	
Custody Level				
Minimum	12-month	0.09 (0.29)	0–1	
Medium	12-month	0.33 (0.47)	0–1	
Close	12-month	0.31 (0.46)	0–1	
Maximum	12-month	0.27 (0.44)	0–1	
Incarceration Experiences				
Custody Level Change	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month	0.43 (0.49)	0–1	
Employment	6-month & 12-month	0.5 (0.5)	0–1	
Program Participation	6-month & 12-month	0.59 (0.49)	0–1	
Mental Health Treatment	6-month & 12-month	0.42 (0.49)	0–1	
Visitation	6-month & 12-month	0.43 (0.49)	0–1	
Depression	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	0.96 (0.69)	0–3.36	0.85

Anxiety	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	0.57 (0.61)	0–3.6	0.79
Hostility	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	0.66 (0.65)	0–3.06	0.79
Global Mental Health	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	1.11 (0.82)	0–3.9	0.87
Avoidance Coping	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	1.78 (0.35)	1–3.19	0.75
Approach Coping	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	2.69 (0.53)	1.11–3.83	0.81
Procedural Justice	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	2.76 (0.66)	1–4.97	0.78
Legitimacy	Baseline, 6-month, 12-month average	2.75 (0.88)	1–5	0.79
Negative Relations	6-month & 12-month average	1.8 (0.71)	0.19–3.39	0.74
Pains of Imprisonment	6-month & 12-month average	2.02 (0.59)	1–3.82	0.79
Social Support	6-month & 12-month average	35.53 (34.19)	0–180	0.85

Notes. Cronbach's alphas reported for all study scales and subscales.

Abbreviations: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of respondents

Analytic Strategy

The analysis for the current study proceeds in three stages. First, multifinality of change outcomes is assessed using a cross-tabulation of the change measure at the 6-month wave and 12-month wave. This cross-tabulation is used to assess what perceptions of change look like at the 6-month wave and 12-month wave, independently and what group patterns emerge across both periods of data collection. The cross-tabulation is also used to identify two groups for comparison: those who are reporting continuous improvement in their circumstances across both waves and those who are consistently reporting things are changing for the worse or not changing at all across both waves.

Second, equifinality of change for the better across both waves is assessed. Specifically, attention is turned to the group that is reporting continuous improvement in

their circumstances[3] to determine 1) what proportion of this group is experiencing each of the salient incarceration events and 2) to what extent this group is experiencing change on each of the continuous variables.[4] Finally, comparisons are made between the group that is reporting continuous improvement in their circumstances and the group that is consistently reporting things are changing for the worse or not changing at all to determine if 1) the change for the better group is experiencing the salient incarceration events at a different rate than those who are reporting change for the worse or no change at all and 2) the change for the better group changes at a different rate on continuous constructs than those who are reporting change for the worse or no change at all. The statistical significance of differences between the two groups are assessed using difference of proportions tests and t-tests.

Results

Multifinality of Change in Prison

The first stage of the analysis explores perceptions of change at two different time points among the sample of incarcerated men. Table 2.2 contains the cross tabulation of the change measure at both time points. At the 6-month interview, when asked how things had changed for them over the last 6 months, roughly 45% of the sample (N=106) reported that things had changed for the better while 34% (N=82) and 21% (N=50) said things had stayed the same or gotten worse, respectively. Responses were somewhat different at the

[3] Another way to look at equifinality would be to treat change for the better at 12 months as the outcome of interest and change experiences at 6-month as distinct paths and compare experiences of those who changed for better at 6-month with those who reported change for the worse or no change at 6-months. This supplemental analysis is included in Table 3.4 in the Appendix.

[4] An absolute change score was created for each continuous variable for each wave of data collection. For variables that were measured at all three waves of data collection there are two change scores (one between the baseline interview and the 6-month interview and one between the 6-month and 12-month interviews). For variables that were measured at two points of data collection there was one change score reflecting the absolute change between the two waves.

12-month interview with slightly more people reporting that things had changed for the better (~48%, N=114) and less people reporting that things had stayed the same (~31%, N=73). Roughly the same number of people reported that things had changed for the worse at the 12-month interview as at 6-month interview. Of the three types of change, change for the better had the most respondents at both time periods and change for the worse had the least.

Table 2.2. Perceptions of Change During Incarceration at 6-Month and 12-Month Waves

		Change at 12-Months		
	Worse	**Stayed the Same**	**Better**	**Total**
Change at 6-Months				
Worse	20 (8.40%)	12 (5.04%)	18 (7.56%)	50 (21.01%)
Stayed the Same	13 (5.46%)	32 (13.45%)	37 (15.55%)	82 (34.45%)
Better	18 (7.56%)	29 (12.18%)	59 (24.79%)	106 (44.54%)
Total	51 (21.43%)	73 (30.67%)	114 (47.90%)	238 (100%)

The cross-tabulation also highlights nine distinct change groups across the 6-month and 12-month time periods. Of the different combinations of change groups, those who reported that things had changed for the better at both the 6-month and 12-month waves was the largest, with approximately 25% of the sample falling into this group (N=59). Only 8% of the sample reported that things had changed for the worse at both time points (N=20) and roughly 13% of the sample reported no change at both time points (N=32). The remainder of the sample, roughly 54%, varied in their response between the 6-month interview and 12-month interview. For some things stayed the same and then got worse (~5%), or got better (~16%). For others, things got worse and then got better (~8%), or stayed the same (~5%). Finally, some people reported that things got better initially and

then got worse (~8%), or stayed the same (~12%). Ultimately, the variation in perceptions of change at both time periods offers evidence of multifinality. With prison as a starting point for everyone in the sample, there were different experiences and perceptions of change at two different follow-up periods, illustrating multiple outcomes from a single starting point (see Figure 2.2).

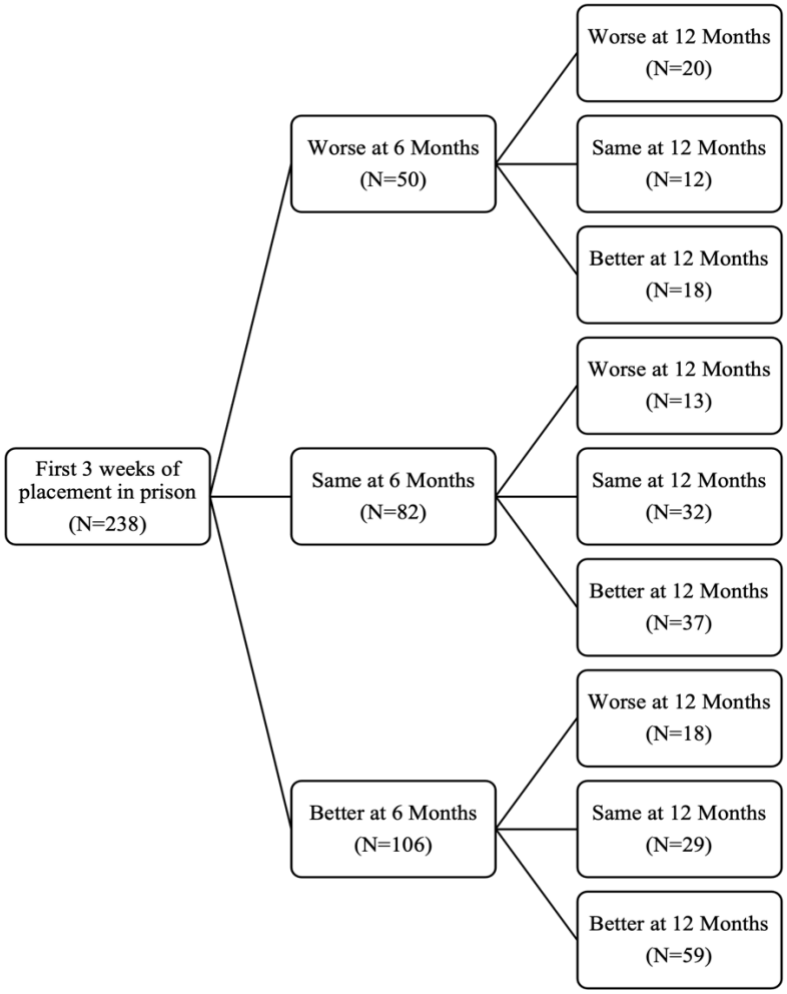

Fig. 2.2 Multifinality Configuration of Perceptions of Change During the First Year of Incarceration

Equifinality of Consistent Change for the Better

The second stage of the analysis focuses on the experiences of people in the sample who self-report consistent change for the better across the 6-month and 12-month waves

and then compares their experiences to those who report consistent change for the worse or no change at all. The "change for the better" group consisted of those who reported things changing for the better at both the 6-month and 12-month waves, as well as those who reported no change at 6-months but things changing for the better at 12-months (N=96). The "change for the worse or no change" group included those who reported things changing for the worse at both 6-months and 12-months, those who reported no change at the 6-month wave and change for the worse at the 12-month wave, and those who reported no change at either wave (N=65).[5]

The first half of Table 2.3 shows what proportion of the change for the better group experienced each of the aforementioned incarceration experiences. Several salient incarceration events were experienced by this group. Nearly 70% of this group had participated in a program at some point during the first year of their incarceration and roughly 60% had held a job within the institution at some point. Only 39% had received some form of mental health treatment and less than half of this group experienced a change in custody level (48%) or had been receiving visits during this first year (43%). These findings are visually summarized in Figure 2.3.

On average, those who consistently reported things changing for the better also reported being minimally bothered by symptoms of depression (m=0.814), anxiety (m=0.457), and hostility (m=0.529), and had a low GSI score (m=0.93). Additionally, this group, on average, reported engaging in avoidance coping infrequently (m=1.714), and

[5] Those who fluctuated between reporting things changing for the better and things changing for the worse across both waves were not included in the creation of these groups as they represent a conceptually distinct set of experiences that cannot necessarily be reduced "change for the better" "change for the worse" or "no change." However, this is a group that warrants further analysis in future work.

engaged in approach coping more often (m=2.95). On average this group disagreed that they were being treated in procedurally just ways (m=2.95) and reported similarly low perceptions of legitimacy (m=2.832). People who reported change for the better also reported that they were "rarely" bothered by negative relations during their first year of incarceration and were, on average, found the pains of imprisonment to be "a little hard" for them.

Additionally, this group did experience changes on each of the continuous constructs between waves of data collection and, for the most part, in ways that are logically consistent. Specifically, symptoms of depression, anxiety, and global mental health problems decreased

Table 2.3. Comparison of Incarceration Experiences Between Change for Better and Change for Worse and No Change Groups

	Better (N=96)	**Worse or No Change (N=65)**	***p* value of difference**
Incarceration Experiences			
Custody Level Change	0.479	0.431	0.545
Employment	0.593	0.385	0.009**
Program Participation	0.698	0.523	0.024*
Mental Health Treatment	0.398	0.433	0.666
Visitation	0.427	0.4	0.732
Depression	0.814	1.183	0.001**
Anxiety	0.457	0.77	0.002**
Hostility	0.529	0.84	0.004**
Global Mental Health	0.93	1.394	0.001**
Avoidance Coping	1.714	1.86	0.015*
Approach Coping	2.636	2.669	0.706
Procedural Justice	2.95	2.447	0.000***
Legitimacy	2.832	2.6	0.091
Negative Relations	1.815	2.309	0.000***
Pains of Imprisonment	1.62	2.01	0.001**
Social Support	35.391	37.838	0.661

Change Variables			
Depression Change 1	-0.218	0.046	0.014*
Depression Change 2	-0.049	-0.204	0.116
Anxiety Change 1	-0.173	0.131	0.004**
Anxiety Change 2	-0.028	-0.208	0.089
Hostility Change 1	0.045	0.092	0.671
Hostility Change 2	-0.012	0.059	0.483
Global Mental Health Change 1	-0.092	0.073	0.027*
Global Mental Health Change 2	-0.01	-0.1	0.201
Avoidance Coping Change 1	0.042	0.115	0.223
Avoidance Coping Change 2	-0.031	-0.067	0.604
Approach Coping Change 1	0.084	0.000	0.358
Approach Coping Change 2	0.038	-0.013	0.542
Procedural Justice Change 1	-0.008	-0.165	0.165
Procedural Justice Change 2	0.057	-0.021	0.429
Legitimacy Change 1	0.007	-0.41	0.015*
Legitimacy Change 2	0.274	0.128	0.329
Negative Relations Change	-0.145	0.086	0.013*
Pains of Imprisonment Change	-0.366	-0.544	0.073
Social Support Change	-1.698	0.569	0.592

Notes. For depression, anxiety, hostility, global mental health, coping, procedural justice, and legitimacy variables "Change 1" refers to change between the baseline and 6-month waves and "Change 2" refers change between the 6-month and 12-month waves. For negative relations, pains of imprisonment, and social support variables "Change" refers to change between the 6-month and 12-month waves.

* = $p<0.05$ **= $p<0.01$ ***= $p<0.001$

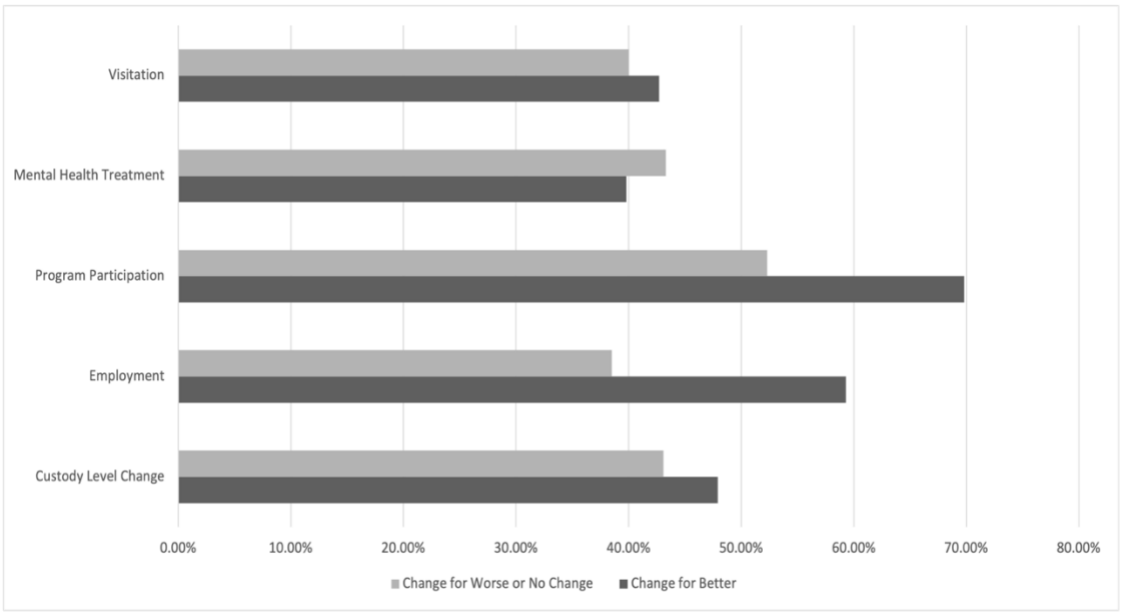

Fig. 2.3 Comparison of Change for the Better and Change for the Worse or No Change Groups on Salient Incarceration Events

across waves. Perceptions of legitimacy and the use of avoidance coping increased across waves, while difficulties with negative relations and the pains of imprisonment decreased. There were also some changes that were slightly counterintuitive. For example, being bothered by symptoms of hostility and the use of avoidance coping increased between the baseline wave and 6-month wave, but decreased between 6-months and 12-months. Also, perceptions of procedural justice decreased between the baseline wave and 6-month wave, but increased between 6-months and 12-months. However, it is important to note these changes overall are all very small. As can be seen in Table 2.3, even though participants on average were experiencing change on these measures within the first year of their incarceration, they were not changing very much.

In order to gauge how unique each of these experiences may or may not be to those who are experiencing things changing for the better in prison, the final part of the analysis compares those who report things changing for the better and those who report things

changing for the worse or no change at all. Specifically, the prevalence of each experience and the rate of change on the continuous constructs are compared between the two groups. There are several statistically significant differences between the group that is consistently reporting things changing for the better and the group reporting things changing for the worse or staying the same. Participation in a prison program is experienced more frequently by the group reporting change for the better, compared to the change for the worse or no change group (p=0.024). This was also observed for employment in which 59% of the change for the better group had a job at some point during data collection, while only 38% of the change for the worse or no change group did (p=0.009). Those who reported things changing for the better were also less bothered by symptoms of depression (p=0.001), anxiety (p=0.002), hostility (p=0.004), and had a lower GSI score (p=0.001), on average across all three waves of data collection. Compared to the group that experienced change for the worse or no change at all, those who reported change for the better engaged in avoidance coping less frequently (p=0.015), had greater perceptions of procedural justice (p<0.0001), and were less bothered by negative relations (p<0.0001)and the pains of imprisonment (p=0.001).

There were also statistically significant differences in the rates of change on the continuous variables between these two groups. Figure 2.4 illustrates these differences. Between the baseline and 6-month interview, the group that reported change for the better experienced a slight decline in being bothered by symptoms of depression and anxiety, while those who reported change for the worse or no change at all experienced a slight increase in both ($p_{depression}$=0.014, $p_{anxiety}$=0.004).

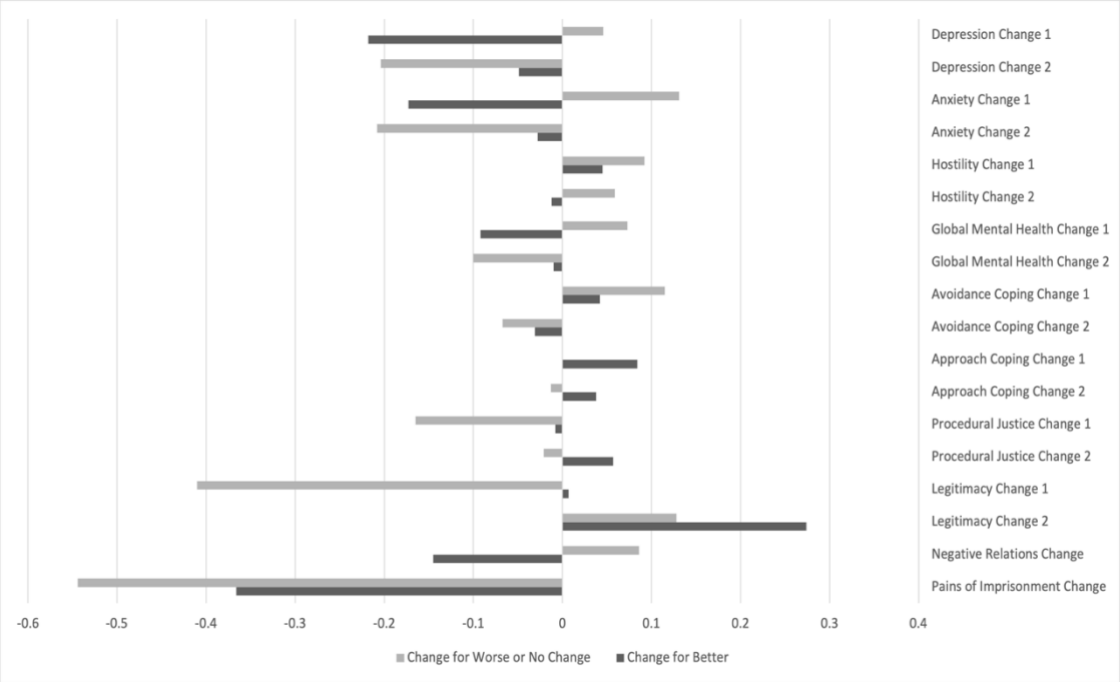

Fig. 2.4 Comparison of Change for the Better and Change for the Worse or No Change Groups on Changes in Continuous Constructs

There was also a significant difference in the change of the GSI score between the baseline and 6-month interview in which the score decreased, on average, for those who reported changing for the better while the score increased among those who reported change for the worse or no change at all (p=0.027). Changes in perceptions of legitimacy between the baseline and 6-month interview also differed between the groups such that the change for the better group experienced enhanced perceptions of legitimacy, while perceptions of legitimacy declined for those in the change for the worse or no change at all group (p=0.015). Finally, the change in being bothered by negative relations in prison from the 6-month interview to the 12-month interview differed between the two groups. On average, those in the change for the better group reported being less bothered by negative relations over time, while those in the change for worse or no change group reported being

more bothered by negative relations. Again, it is important to note that, while significant, many of these changes are small, practically speaking. However, the directions of these changes is meaningful on its own. These differences between the two groups highlight that people who are reporting change for the better during the first year of incarceration are generally improving on a number of measures over time, while those who are reporting change for the worse or no change at all are experiencing more difficulties, comparatively speaking.

Discussion

For a period of time the presiding notion of imprisonment was that it was equivalent to a "behavioral deep freeze" (Zamble & Porporino, 1988), through which it was assumed that not much changed for people on the inside during their time. In observing this tendency of thought, Liebling and Maruna (2013) insightfully pointed out that "the logical conclusion of this 'deep freeze' argument is not so much that 'nothing works,' but essentially 'nothing much matters'" (p.3). The danger of the "deep freeze" assumption was that it greatly underestimated and underappreciated the harmful effects of imprisonment. Correctional research has since progressed and built an evidence base that demonstrates the numerous ways imprisonment inflicts harm and has gained a much stronger appreciation for the damaging effects of imprisonment overall. In the process, however, we may have over-corrected. In the same ways we once underappreciated how people are harmed and negatively changed while in prison, we may now not fully appreciate or recognize the entire range of experiences people can have on the inside, particularly when people experience change for the better. The purpose of this study was to unpack what it means to do well in prison by examining perceptions of change over time, using a

multifinality framework to highlight the various change outcomes that can result from imprisonment and an equifinality framework to highlight diverse pathways and experiences that can potentially lead to reporting change for the better while on the inside. From the results of this study, three conclusions can be reached.

First, there are diverse change experiencing happening in prison. Results from this study showed that there are variations in perceptions of change across multiple time points during the first year of incarceration—some people report that things have stayed relatively the same, while others report change for the worse or change for the better. Most notable is that many people report that things are *changing for the better*. At the 6-month interview and at the 12-month interview almost half the sample reported change for the better, and almost a quarter of the sample reported this positive change at both time points. With imprisonment as a shared starting point, the incarcerated men in this study did not all end up in the same place by the time they were six months into their incarceration or a year into their incarceration.

Second, self-reported change for the better is associated with several co-occurring experiences on the inside. It is not just one experience or event that matters, rather a combination of changes and experiences that are happening simultaneously that likely influence perceptions of change on the inside. The men in this study who reported that things had changed for the better were largely participating in prison programs, holding a job on the inside, reporting few struggles with symptoms of mental illness, and were minimally bothered by negative relations on the inside and the pains of imprisonment. By utilizing an equifinality framework, this study was able to assess the relative importance of a series of experiences for reporting change for the better.

Third, both people who are reporting things changing for the better and people reporting change for the worse or no change at all are experiencing slight changes in several psychosocial processes. While many of these changes are very small in magnitude and relatively indistinguishable between the two groups, others are more distinct. Those who report things changing for the better are also demonstrating some improvements with mental illness symptoms, perceptions of legitimacy, and struggles with negative relations, while those who reported things changing for the worse or no change at all showed negative changes in each of these areas. Again, while the differences were statistically significant, the actual size of the differences were all very small so it is important to note that these differences in changes were slight at best, practically speaking. However, the difference in the direction of the changes for both groups is interesting and meaningful on its own, implying that there may be distinct developmental patterns among those who are experiencing change for the better compared to others.

The findings from this study also have implications for the study of prison adjustment, prison effects, and the greater prison experience. To some degree it is relatively unsurprising that the men in this sample had diverse experiences with change. It seems rather intuitive that people can end up in the same place a number of different ways and that people can start in the same place to then end up in a number of different places later on. Yet, the study of prison adjustment and prison effects typically has a narrower focus. Of the research that centers positive change and positive prison experiences, most is accompanied with trepidation and several disclaimers as if to avoid insinuating that one person's positive experience or change would detract from the significance of several others' more harmful experiences (see Crewe & Ievins, p.2). The use of equifinality and

multifinality frameworks allow for a more expansive view of imprisonment and encourages researchers to *expect* diverse experiences, outcomes, and pathways among groups that are subject to the same systems and social conditions. Part of the utility of these frameworks is that they offer scholars methods, language, and terminology so that we can not only identify a wider array of experiences that are occurring simultaneously, but so that we can also speak more boldly about positive change amid adversity without being dismissive of negative changes, harmful effects, and maladjustment.

Additionally, the findings from this study are also a testament to the importance of prison-based research that follows people over time. Though limited to three time points, findings from this study highlight numerous changes and perceptions of change that are occurring just within the first year of incarceration for men on the inside. While certainly easier said than done, on-the-ground research in prisons over the long-term has much to offer and could be better prioritized (see Hepburn, 2013), particularly to better understand, conceptualize, and theorize how change is experienced and perceived over the course of a prison sentence.

Importantly, the findings and implications of this study should be taken within the context of its limitations. For one, the question used to measure change in this study (*Thinking about the past 6 months since we last spoke, how would you say things have changed for you, if at all?*) is imperfect. This measure is very subjective and open to interpretation. It did not ask participants how they felt they had changed themselves and the study was not able to speak to how participants interpreted "things." Ultimately, the change measure in this study is somewhat vague and unspecified—things changing for the better could mean different thing to different people. Relatedly, this study was unable to

speak to *why* participants believed things had changed for the better, changed for the worse, or stayed the same which would enhance the understanding of change experiences among this particular group. This study also used absolute change scores to analyze change on continuous constructs, which are not sensitive to the different types of change people may experience on the same measure. To report finding the pains of imprisonment "extremely hard" in one wave and then "quite hard in the next" is substantively different than going from finding the pains of imprisonment "a little hard" to "not hard at all," but these would receive the same change score when looking at the absolute differences. Finally, this study compared those who reported things changing for the better with both those who reported things changing for the worse and no change at all, as one group. Conceptually speaking, staying the same and changing for the worse might be distinct and potentially warrant analysis apart from one another.

We know now that prison is not the behavioral deep freeze it was once thought to be. It is also more than a one-track path to harm and despair. The broad purpose of this study was to begin exploring the diverse experiences and numerous paths people can traverse while incarcerated, particularly as they relate to perceptions of change and, especially, change for the better. With the limitations of the study in mind, the results of this work support the notion that imprisonment can serve as a shared starting point for diverse outcomes. It also underscored that people can experience change for the better and that there are different ways to reach that state. Capitalizing on frameworks, such as multifinality and equifinality, that emphasize the diversity of experiences people can have in a single setting could allow for greater complexity and nuance in our study of the prison experience.

CHAPTER 4

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY TO EXPLORE LIFE SATISFACTION, FLOURISHING, GENERATIVITY, AND MEANING IN PRISON

Introduction

In his 1998 Presidential Address to the American Psychological Association, Martin Seligman noted that, as a field, "we have scant knowledge of what makes life worth living" (p.560). This observation was part of the logical foundation for the development of what soon came to be known as Positive Psychology. While psychologists had long studied pathologies and adversities, there was little appreciation for the positive qualities in life that went beyond avoiding the worst of what life has to offer. Positive psychologists advocated for a shift to studying and appreciating how people enjoy and build some of the best things that life has to offer, like a sense of purpose and well-being (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Arguably, the same could be said of correctional research—we have scant knowledge of what makes life worth living *in prison*. We know a great deal about what people have to endure in prison and the numerous harms that make life on the inside painful, but we know far less about whether it is possible to flourish and obtain more of the positive things that make life worth living.

While it is certainly important to avoid harm on the inside, conceptualizations of doing well in prison could also extend past enduring, surviving, or avoiding the worst of prison, to assessing how being incarcerated impacts flourishing and well-being. The absence or avoidance of negative outcomes does not inherently imply the presence of good outcomes or experiences. In other words, people can languish (Keyes, 2002). On the continuum of mental health languishing represents a state in which people are "neither

mentally ill nor mentally healthy" (Keyes, 2003, p. 294) and this is what most correctional research is able to capture given our typical outcomes of interest. Flourishing, on the other hand, represents a state in which people are not just avoiding mental illness but are experiencing positive emotions towards life (Keyes, 2003). Collectively, we know far more about how prison relates to states of mental illness and languishing than we do about how it relates to states of well-being and flourishing. Insights from the field of positive psychology have the potential to help orient correctional research towards more positive outcomes and evaluate doing well in prison in terms of attaining psychological well-being.

The current study begins to assess these positive outcomes and indicators of well-being with a particular appreciation for people who are reporting high levels of well-being. Guided by a positive psychology framework, this study explores how incarceration impacts a number of well-being outcomes typically used in positive psychology that are more strengths-based and positive in nature among a sample of incarcerated men. Specifically, this study 1) descriptively assesses life satisfaction, psychological flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life among a sample of incarcerated men and 2) assesses the correlates of high well-being during incarceration. The broader purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of how imprisonment relates to reflections on different aspects of well-being, as well as to highlight the utility of positive psychology for understanding spaces that can be harmful.

Literature Review

Positive Psychology and Well-Being

Though popularized and advanced considerably by Martin Seligman and colleagues, positive psychology is deeply rooted in humanistic psychology and the works

of scholars such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow who sought to understand what makes a good life and how to reach self-actualization (Duckworth et al., 2005)[6]. Sharing these same values, the field of positive psychology is "the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions" (Gable & Haidt, 2005, pp.103). Positive psychology as a distinct field of study emerged out of frustration with a seemingly imbalanced approach to psychological research that disproportionately highlighted and emphasized the negative or neutral aspects of life compared to the positive. And so, positive psychology was put forth to "[launch] a science and profession whose aim is the building of what makes life most worth living," (Seligman, 1999, p. 562).

The study of positive psychology has grown substantially since it was first introduced and, in the process, progressed through different periods of development (see reviews from Gable & Haidt, 2005; Linley et al., 2006; Lomas et al, 2021; Seligman, 2019). At first, scholars in this field were primarily concerned with identifying and measuring the prevalence of positive emotions and positive personality traits, such as optimism, hope, and happiness (Lomas et al., 2020; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Next, research linked these outcomes to both mental and physical health, offering evidence that positive traits could simultaneously promote wellness and protect from mental illness (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Then numerous positive psychology interventions (PPIs) were developed and deployed to test how effective interventions could impact, and ultimately promote,

[6] While the overlap between humanistic psychology and positive psychology is recognized and appreciated, it is important to note that they are not one in the same. In fact, there has often been a considerable degree of tension, debate, and even divide between these two fields. See Waterman (2013) for a thoughtful discussion and review of the philosophical differences between the two fields and the state of this divide.

well-being. Some of these PPIs include identifying and using signature character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), mindfulness-based practices (Carmody & Baer, 2008), positive psychotherapy (Seligman et al., 2006), and practicing gratitude (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Though the efficacy of these interventions has been debated and come under scrutiny for small effect sizes (White et al., 2019), PPIs have generally been found to enhance well-being while also decreasing stress and symptoms of mental illness such as depression and anxiety (Boiler et al., 2013; Carr et al., 2020; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Taken together, the development and progression of positive psychology has maintained a focus on how psychological science can capitalize on people's strengths and positive traits, demonstrating that there is value and opportunity in enhancing the good in people's lives to make life better, instead of less bad.

Central to all of this is well-being as a primary outcome of interest in positive psychology research. Most interventions aim to enhance well-being and better understand what positive traits and emotions are associated with it. Technically speaking, subjective well-being is defined as "people's evaluations of their lives—the degree to which their thoughtful appraisals and affective reactions indicate that their lives are desirable and proceeding well." (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2015, p.234). Oftentimes, well-being is referred to as happiness, though it is multifaceted and can be gauged using a variety of measures that highlight different aspects of wellness.

Life Satisfaction

A frequently used indictor of well-being is life-satisfaction. Life satisfaction refers to "a conscious cognitive judgement of one's life in which the criteria for judgement are up to that person" (Pavot & Diener, 1993, p.164). Central to the concept of life satisfaction

is the idea that it is a global evaluation of one's life as a whole that goes beyond how a person is feeling in a single, particular moment (Baumeister et al., 2013; Pavot & Diener, 2008). Generally, people tend to pull from the same types of information and experiences to formulate evaluative judgments of their life satisfaction. For example, Schimmack and colleagues (2002) found that people rely on chronically accessible and stable sources of information such as romantic relationships, family relationships, and academic performance to make life satisfaction judgements. Importantly, as changes occur in these sources of information, self-reported levels of life satisfaction also change, speaking to the stability in these judgements for most people.

Several factors have been shown to influence or be related to life satisfaction. At an individual-level life satisfaction and age have been shown to have a U-shaped relationship from early adulthood through the 70s such that life-satisfaction generally decreases and bottoms-out around age 40 when it begins to increase again (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008; Diener et al., 2018). Then, around 70, sharp declines in life satisfaction have been observed (Baird et al., 2010). Race and ethnicity have also been connected to life satisfaction, though findings have been mixed. Some research has found that Hispanic people reported greater levels life satisfaction than White people and Black people (Marquine et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). Other work has observed that Hispanic people and Black people had lower life satisfaction than White people (Berger et al., 2009). Higher levels of education are related to greater life satisfaction, but the relationship is not particularly strong at the individual level (Michalos, 2008; Diener et al., 2018). Marriage or being in a committed relationship is also related to life satisfaction. People who are married or in committed relationship report greater life satisfaction than those who are

single, divorced, or widowed, however the effects are small (Bucher et al., 2019; Lucas & Dyrenforth, 2006). The relationship between life satisfaction and parenthood is slightly more complex. Some research shows that there can be a positive relationship between the two but that it is contingent on other factors such as being married and is subject to gender differences (Angeles, 2010; Musick et al., 2016). Other research suggests that parenthood can detract from life-satisfaction in many instances due to the costs and burdens associated with raising a child (Hansen, 2011; McLanahan & Adams, 1987; Pollmann-Schult, 2014). Three of the most consistently documented correlates of life satisfaction are strong social relationships, high levels of income, and religion (Diener et al., 2018).

Flourishing

Flourishing has been conceptualized and operationalized a number of different ways and, sometimes, used interchangeably with well-being and happiness (Diener et al., 2010; Hone et al., 2014; Keyes, 2002; Seligman, 2012). While some conceptualize flourishing as possessing both hedonic and eudemonic well-being (Huppert & So, 2013), flourishing often emphasizes eudemonia and psychological functioning. Specifically, Diener and colleagues (2010) refer to flourishing in terms of social-psychological functioning that meets universal human psychological needs such as competence, connectedness, flow, engagement, and self-acceptance. Ultimately, psychological flourishing is less concerned with optimal feelings and more concentrated on optimal functioning.

While a handful of works have validated different measures of flourishing across diverse populations (see Howel & Buro, 2015; Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016b; Silva & Caetano, 2013), less work has established consistent predictors and correlates of

flourishing. Some of this is complicated by flourishing being used interchangeably with well-being and some of the lack of consistency and uniformity in its conceptualization and operationalization across studies. However, of the work that has explored correlates of psychological flourishing, findings have shown that higher levels of education, higher levels of social support, higher levels of income and marriage are all related to flourishing (Keyes, 2002; Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016a).

Generativity

Generativity is another meaningful aspect of well-being, although it emerged long before positive psychology and the more contemporary study of well-being. Specifically, this concept was introduced from the work of Erik Eirkson (1950) and broadly refers to a concern for the well-being of future generations. Put slightly differently, generativity can be thought of as contributing in ways "that will extend beyond one's personal existence" (Ward & King, 2017, p.61). Generativity can be expressed through concern, belief, action, commitments, and narration (see Adams & St. Aubin, 1992) and can take the form of sharing skills with other people, contributing to a cause or purpose that is greater oneself, passing along knowledge from personal experiences to other people, and the like.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, generativity is strongly related to, and predictive of, other indicators of well-being. For instance, Huta and Zuroff (2007) found that symbolic immortality meditated the relationship between generativity and life satisfaction, suggesting that generative behavior may lead to well-being because people feel that they have made a lasting difference in someone else's life. Additionally, generativity is a strong predictor of meaningfulness, leading Schnell (2011, p. 672) to conclude "although pathways to meaning are manifold, an ability and willingness to self-transcend will

enhance the probability of actually living a meaningful life." Even though generativity is an important component of well-being, it also reinforces and contributes to the development of other aspects of well-being.

Meaning in Life

Considered a cornerstone to well-being, meaning in life "provides us with the sense that our lives matter, that they make sense, and that they are more than the sum of our seconds, days, and years" (Steger, 2012, p.165). Meaning in life is multi-faceted and generally reflects the degree to which people feel that their lives have value and significance, have some sort of broader purpose, and are coherent and make sense (Martela & Steger, 2016, p. 531). People make assessments about meaning in life both cognitively and emotionally, and these assessments are not limited to the immediately present situation in which they are making the assessment (Baumesiter et al., 2013). Rather, assessments of meaning are more holistic, and people consider their past, present, and future when gauging meaning in their lives.

Broadly speaking, most people consider their lives to be meaningful. In a review of research on meaning in life, Heintzelman and King (2014) concluded that perceptions of meaning in life are widespread and relatively high, noting that meaning in life is viewed by many as a human necessity and something that is continuously pursued. These patterns also typically hold even as people experience adversity and challenging life circumstances. People still report relatively high levels of purpose and meaning in life even as they struggle with experiences such as substance abuse, mental and physical illnesses, and disabilities (Baumeister et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2011).

Meaning in life has been noted to have a strong relationship with age, such that with people who are older reporting having more meaning in life while younger people typically report searching for meaning in life (Hicks et al., 2012; Steiger, Oishi, & Kashdan, 2009). In fact, Kraus and Rainville (2020) recently observed a J-shaped curvilinear relationship between age and meaning, with meaning in life generally increasing with age but then becoming even more pronounced in later adulthood. Meaning in life has also been found to be strongly related to positive affect, but the relationship is bi-directional. Having a positive affect or a positive mood increases meaning in life, and meaning also enhances our mood (King et al., 2006). Additionally, social relationships matter for meaning in life (Hicks & King, 2009). Being excluded, ignored, or feeling lonely can negatively impact meaning, compared to those who experience more social inclusion (Williams, 2007). However, beyond social exclusion and ostracism decreasing meaning, social relatedness, belonging, and feeling accepted and needed by social groups enhances meaning in life (Lambert et al., 2013). This is particularly salient for positive familial relationships (Lambert et al., 2010). Religiosity is also positively related to meaning in life as religion often inherently offers a meaning making system or lens to see and understand the world through (King & Hicks, 2021; Park, 2013). Religion can also provide a lot of structure and routine for people, which is another correlate of meaning in life (Heintzelman & King, 2019). Finally, King and Hicks (2021) discuss the importance of "mental time travel" and a strong sense of self for meaning in life. Mental time travel specifically refers to the idea that being able to project and place yourself in your past and future is positively related to meaning in life. Relatedly, having a good sense of self and being able to generate a coherent life story is also closely related to enhanced meaning in life.

Positive Psychology and Well-Being in Prison

Despite its relevance, the influence of positive psychology has been largely absent from the study of institutional corrections (Morse, Wright, & Klapow, 2022). Some notable exceptions, however, include efforts to establish Positive Criminology (Ronel & Segev, 2015) and the development of the Good Lives Model (Ward & Maruna, 2007), both of which have some theoretical roots in positive psychology and emphasize strengths-based approaches in treating and intervening with people who come into contact with the criminal justice system. Overall, though, the influence has been pretty minimal, particularly in the U.S. correctional context. The study of prison life, adjustment, and effects has largely been oriented towards risks, deficits, and individual pathologies, and so success or well-being is commonly thought of and pursued as the absence of these outcomes (Wright et al., In Press).

Consequently, not much is known about what well-being in its truest, most positive sense looks like among people who are in prison or how being incarcerated influences well-being. Although, a few notable exceptions exist (see Bloem et al., 2019; Kasser, 1996; Wildeman et al., 2014). Most notably, in a study of hedonic well-being among currently incarcerated, recently incarcerated, and non-incarcerated men, Wildeman and colleagues (2014) found that incarceration led to significant reductions in life satisfaction. Specifically, current incarceration, even after adjusting for pre-incarceration characteristics, was strongly associated with a substantial decline in life satisfaction. The same was not found for recent incarceration, as lingering effects of being imprisoned did not impact life satisfaction. Importantly, Wildeman and colleagues (2014) also compared people whose life satisfaction decreased during incarceration with those whose life

satisfaction increased and found some meaningful differences. First, those who had decreases in life satisfaction were far happier before incarceration compared to those who had increases in life satisfaction during incarceration, leading the authors to suggest that "the latter were not necessarily resilient but that they were so unhappy that their happiness could hardly decline further" (p.158). Second, the people who had improvements in life satisfaction were much more likely to be depressed with over half of the group exhibiting symptoms of major depressive disorder. It was eventually concluded that "…few inmates are resilient to the pains of imprisonment. And indeed, of the few who are, their increasing happiness during incarceration is more likely a product of their previous misery than their resilience" (p.159). Ultimately, this work suggested that high well-being, in terms of happiness or life satisfaction, might be artificial in prison, or at the very least, strongly misleading in some cases.

Research on desistance from crime, however, paints a promising picture of the power of generativity for justice-involved people and offers compelling evidence of generativity and generative concern among those who have engaged in crime and have been previously incarcerated. Particularly, work from Maruna (2001) found that compared to people who did not successfully reintegrate back into the community, people who "went straight" had more generative self-narratives, generative concerns, and generative actions. This group was more focused on promoting others and creating or contributing to lasting causes and accomplishments. Other work has documented the role of the "wounded healer," noting the salience of formerly incarcerated people who end up desisting through a helping and healing profession, such as counseling (Kavanagh & Borrill, 2013; Lebel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015). Ultimately, the process of giving back can help facilitate

successful reintegration back into the community, which has led to calls to establish a generative correctional system that promotes and facilitates opportunities for people to "make good" while on the inside (see Maruna, LeBel, & Lanier, 2004, p. 146).

While there is some work that speaks to a few different components of well-being among people in prison or people who have engaged in crime, a lot is still unknown about what the several different aspects of well-being look like for people who are currently in prison. There are clearly reasons to expect well-being to be low while incarcerated. Most notably, imprisonment removes, or greatly alters many of the resources and connections that typically facilitate well-being. As previously discussed, some of the most consistently documented correlates of life-satisfaction, flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life are strong social relationships, income, education, and social support. Via the pains of imprisonment, prison strips most of these away (Sykes, 1958). Yet, there are also reasons to entertain the possibility that some people could still achieve meaningful levels of life satisfaction, flourishing, generativity, and well-being while in prison. For example, two other strong correlates of the aforementioned dimensions of well-being are religion and age. Religion or finding God can be a transformative experience on the inside (Maruna et al., 2006) and, thus, might offer a route to enhanced well-being during confinement. Additionally, research on "old heads" in prison (Kreager et al., 2018) highlights the interaction of age and generative behavior, as older men with longer sentences and more institutional experience can serve as meaningful mentors to younger people on the inside. Though prison dramatically restricts many sources of well-being, there are hints scattered throughout the literature that suggest some people may be able to cultivate well-being, or high well-being, while on the inside.

Current Focus

Insights from the field of positive psychology offer a useful reminder to correctional scholars that there is much more to life than avoiding suffering, or languishing. Rather, the things that make life full and worth living involve having a sense of purpose and meaning, being competent and capable in the activities that matter most to us, and contributing to causes, communities, and people in ways that will remain long after we are gone. Correctional research has yet to fully explore these more positive aspects of life within the prison setting. We know that people can endure prison, but can they flourish within it?

The current study answers two questions to gauge different aspects of well-being on the inside. First, what does life satisfaction, flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life descriptively look like for currently incarcerated men? Second, what are the correlates of high well-being during incarceration? The broader purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of how imprisonment relates to reflections on different aspects of well-being, as well as to highlight the utility of positive psychology for understanding spaces that are harmful.

Methods

Data for this study come from the Enhancing the Prison Environment in Arizona project. The purpose of this project was to gain a better understanding of the prison experience of those who are incarcerated in Arizona, with the ultimate goal of improving the prison environment. Accordingly, the project utilized a participatory action research (PAR) approach through which incarcerated men were active participants in all stages of the research project (Fine & Torres, 2006).

The project was co-developed and carried out by five incarcerated members of the Arizona Transformation Project (ATP). The ATP is an Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program think tank whose members are ASU faculty, graduate students, and currently incarcerated men. This is the second PAR study conducted by this group, with the first project occurring in 2017 and focused on recidivism in Arizona (Haverkate et al., 2020; Thrasher et al., 2020). The five incarcerated researchers and members of ATP were trained in human subjects research and general qualitative interviewing techniques prior to the start of the project. All of the study procedures were approved by Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board as well as the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation, and Reentry (ADCRR).

The study took place within the East Unit at the Arizona State Prison Complex at Florence (ASPC-Florence), a medium security prison that housed 670 incarcerated people at the time of data collection. Flyers posted around the prison yard and word of mouth were used to recruit participants. Correctional staff did not play a role or have an influence in selecting participants. Rather, the recruitments flyers provided information about the study as well information about the ATP interviewers so that potential participants could follow up to ask questions about the study or schedule a time to be interviewed.

ATP researchers conducted interviews between March 2020 and October 2020[7]. The interviews were semi-structured and contained both close-ended and open-ended questions that measured constructs relevant to enhancing the prison environment such as

[7] Data collection occurred during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic and, as such, several measures were taken to limit transmission between researchers and participants. Researchers adhered to precautions and procedures as specified by ADCRR policy. Further, researchers took additional steps to prevent spreading COVID-19, such as conducting interviews outdoors while social distancing and allowing participants to self-administer their own surveys.

prison quality of life and well-being. All of the interviews were conducted one-on-one and lasted approximately 45 minutes. All of the data were de-identified to ensure participants confidentiality. A total of 386 men were interviewed for the study. After accounting for missing data,[8] the final sample for this study includes 356 incarcerated men.

Measures

Well-Being

Life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is measured using Cantril's Ladder (Cantril, 1965). Participants were instructed to "Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you." Then, participants were asked "if the top step is 10 and the bottom step is 0, on which step of the ladder do you feel your personally stand at the present time?"

Psychological flourishing. An 8-item flourishing scale was used to measure psychological flourishing (Diener et al., 2010). Participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a 5-point scale (1 = "strongly agree," 5 = "strongly disagree"), with statements such as "my social relationships are supportive and rewarding," "I actively contribute to the happiness and wellbeing of others," and "I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me." Lower scores indicate a person with many psychological resources and strengths. The average of items was used to produce a flourishing score (a = 0.82).

[8] 30 cases, or approximately 7% of the sample, were missing on at least one variable of interest, falling within the threshold of appropriateness for listwise deletion (Allison, 2000) and were removed from the analysis.

Generativity. An abbreviated form of the Generativity Scale (Adams & St. Aubin, 1992) was used to measure generativity across 6 items. Participants were asked how much they agreed with statements such as "I try to pass along the knowledge I have gained through my experiences" and "I have made and created things that have had an impact on other people." Items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = "strongly agree," 5 = "strongly disagree"), with lower scores indicating a person high in generativity. The average of items was used to produce a generativity score (a = 0.81).

Meaning in life. Meaning in life was measured using the WHO-SRPB Subscale (World Health Organization, 1998). The scale is composed of 4 items that ask questions such as, "To what extent do you feel you are here on Earth for a reason?" and "To what extent do you feel your life has purpose?" Participants responded on a 5-point scale (1= "not at all," 4 = "an extreme amount"), with higher scores indicating higher levels of meaning in life. The average of items was used to produce a meaning in life score (a = 0.85).

Independent Variables

Demographics. Demographic variables included a continuous variable for *age* (in years), a categorical variable for *race* (White, Black, Hispanic, Other), a dummy variable for being in a *relationship* (1 = Yes), a dummy variable for *having children* (1 = Yes), and a categorical variable for *education* (less than high school education, high school education, more than high school education).

Institutional experience. Several relevant variables capturing institutional experience were also included. *Prior incarceration* was a continuous variable measuring how many times participants had been to prison before as an adult. *Time served* was a

continuous variable measuring how many years participants had served on their current sentence. A dummy variable for *life sentence* (1 = Yes) was also included. Finally, a continuous variable asking participants on a 5-point scale to what degree they believed "being in prison had forced me to *reassess* my past decisions in life" was included (1 = "strongly agree" 5 = "strongly disagree").

Analytic Strategy

The analysis proceeds in two stages. First, to assess how incarcerated men in the sample are doing in terms of the four different indicators of well-being, basic descriptive statistics are presented for the life satisfaction measure and flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life scales. Additionally, given the novelty of these measures in the prison setting, descriptives are calculated for the individual items within each of the well-being scales (flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life) to provide a more detailed account of what well-being looks like among this sample of incarcerated men.

Second, the correlates of high well-being in prison are explored. To do this a group of people who are simultaneously reporting high levels of life satisfaction, flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life are identified. This is done by setting a cutoff point for each variable then identifying the number of individuals who fall within the cutoff points for all variables of interest concurrently. Specifically, high life satisfaction is defined as reporting a 7 or higher on the Cantril's Ladder measure,[9] high flourishing is defined as averaging 2 or less on the flourishing scale (the equivalent of averaging "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" across the scale), high generativity is defined as averaging 2 or less on

[9] Cantril's Ladder can be assessed many ways. Gallup (2009) conceptualizes a score of 7 or higher on Cantril's Ladder as thriving, a score of 5-6 as struggling, and a score of 4 or less as suffering. In accordance with this, 7 is used as the cutoff point in this study to indicate high life satisfaction.

the generativity scale (the equivalent of averaging "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" across the scale), and high meaning in life is defined as averaging a 4 or more on the WHO-SRPB Subscale (the equivalent of averaging "Very Much" or an "Extreme Amount" across the scale). Those who fell within the cutoff point for all of these variables were used to create the high well-being group. Then, at the bivariate level, mean differences in the independent variables are examined across the high well-being group and the rest of the sample using chi-square tests for categorical variables and independent samples *t*-tests for continuous variables. Finally, a logistic regression model predicting high well-being is estimated including all of the independent variables.

Results

Well-Being in Prison

The first stage of the analysis descriptively assesses life satisfaction, flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life among the sample of incarcerated men. Table 3.1 provides descriptive statistics for the sample. When asked where they currently stood on Cantril's ladder (with 10 being their best possible life and 0 being their worst possible life), participants in this study, on average reported 5 out of 10, which would be classified as "struggling" (Gallup, 2009). The average flourishing score for this group of incarcerated men was 1.92, indicating a relatively high number of psychological strengths.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (*N* = 356)

	M	SD	Range	*α*
Well-Being				
Life Satisfaction	5.678	2.412	0–10	
High Life Satisfaction	0.404	0.491	0–1	
Flourishing	1.924	0.483	1–3.375	0.82
High Flourishing	0.638	0.481	0–1	
Generativity	1.987	0.581	1–3.833	0.81

High Generativity	0.629	0.483	0–1	
Meaning in Life	4.023	0.804	1.5–5	0.85
High Meaning in Life	0.654	0.476	0–1	
High Well-Being	0.256	0.437	0–1	
Demographics				
Age	40.205	13.337	19–79	
Race				
White	0.323	0.468	0–1	
Black	0.295	0.457	0–1	
Hispanic	0.258	0.438	0–1	
Other Race	0.124	0.329	0–1	
Relationship	0.2837	0.451	0–1	
Children	0.694	0.462	0–1	
Education				
Less than High School	0.233	0.423	0–1	
High School	0.357	0.479	0–1	
More than High School	0.410	0.493	0–1	
Incarceration Experiences				
Prior Incarceration	0.556	0.498	0–1	
Time Served	9.347	9.749	0.333–61	
Life Sentence	0.107	0.309	0–1	
Reassessed	1.379	0.716	1–5	

Notes. Cronbach's alphas reported for all study scales and subscales.
Abbreviations: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of respondents

Table 3.2 provides frequencies for each of the items for the individual scales used and shows that at least 78% of the sample either agreed or strongly agreed with every item on the flourishing scale. The most strongly agreed upon item in the flourishing scale was "*I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me,"* with almost everyone in the sample (97%) reporting that they either agreed or disagreed with this statement. The item with the lowest agreement frequency for this scale was *"I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being others"* with 78% of the sample saying they either agreed or

strongly disagreed with this statement. Overall, this sample reported strong agreement with all of the scale items that tap into psychological flourishing.

The incarcerated men in this sample also self-reported high generativity with an average score of 1.98 on the generativity scale across the sample. At least 70% of the sample either agreed or strongly agreed with each of the individual items on the generativity scale. Almost 90% of the participants agreed that they try to pass along knowledge they have gained through their experiences, and approximately 72% said that they have important skills that they try to teach others. Additionally, 80% of the sample believed that they had made or created things that had an impact on others and even more agreed they try to be creative in most of the things that they do (89%). Finally, most disagreed with the idea that they had done nothing of worth that contributed to others (84%) or that they had done nothing that will survive after they die (72%).

Similar to the other well-being measures, the men in this sample also reported high levels of meaning in life with an average of 4.02 on the WHO-SRPB Subscale across the sample. When asked *"to what extent do you find meaning in life"* about 75% of the sample reported "very much" or "an extreme amount." Even more felt that their lives have purpose (78%) and that they are on Earth for a reason (82%). Lastly, a large portion of this sample indicated finding meaning in helping others with roughly 71% of this group reporting that taking care of other people provides either "very much" or "an extreme" amount of meaning for them. Collectively, the descriptives and frequencies of these well-being measures highlight a sample of incarcerated men that are experiencing relatively high amounts of flourishing, generativity, and meaning in their lives, but slightly less life satisfaction.

Table 3.2. Descriptives for Flourishing, Generativity, & Meaning in Life Items (*N* = 356)

	% Agree	*N*	Range	Mean	SD
Flourishing					
People respect me.	92.13%	328	1 - 5	1.89	0.55
My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.	82.30%	293	1 - 5	2.04	0.75
I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.	87.36%	311	1 - 5	1.90	0.71
I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.	78.09%	278	1 - 5	2.09	0.80
I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.	97.47%	347	1 - 4	1.65	0.55
I am a good person and live a good life.	82.30%	293	1 - 5	1.93	0.72
I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.	78.37%	279	1 - 5	2.06	0.83
I am optimistic about my future.	85.67%	305	1 - 5	1.82	0.85
Generativity					
I try to pass along the knowledge I have gained through my experiences.	89.61%	319	1 - 5	1.77	0.72
I have made and created things that have had an impact on other people.	80.90%	288	1 - 5	1.99	0.80
I try to be creative in most things that I do.	88.76%	316	1 - 5	1.85	0.65
I have important skills that I try to teach others.	72.75%	259	1 - 5	2.17	0.86
I feel that I have done nothing that will survive after I die.*	71.91%	256	1 - 5	2.20	1.00
I feel as though I have done nothing of worth to contribute to others.*	84.27%	300	1 - 5	1.93	0.82
Meaning in Life					
To what extent do you find meaning in life?	75.84%	270	1 - 5	4.02	0.92
To what extent does taking care of other people provide meaning of life for you?	70.79%	252	1 - 5	3.86	0.96
To what extent do you feel your life has purpose?	77.81%	277	1 - 5	4.06	0.96
To what extent do you feel you are here on Earth for a reason?	82.26%	292	1 - 5	4.15	1.01

Notes. "% Agree" column denotes those who marked "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" for Meaning in Life this denotes "Very Much" or "An Extreme Amount" due to different phrasing of the items.
*Items were reverse coded; frequencies denote those who marked "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree"

***Abbreviations*:** SD = Standard Deviation; N = Number of respondents

High Well-Being in Prison

The second stage of the analysis explores the correlates of high well-being. Of the entire sample, 144 men (40.4%) were identified as reporting high life satisfaction, 227 were identified as reporting high levels psychological flourishing (63.85%), 224 were identified as reporting high levels generativity (62.9%), and 233 were identified as reporting high levels of meaning in life (65.4%). A total of 91 men, or 25.6% of the sample, fell into all four of these groups simultaneously, constituting the "high well-being group" for the analysis (see Table 3.1).

The results of the bivariate analysis comparing differences in demographics and incarceration experiences between the high well-being group and the rest of the sample are presented in Table 3.3. There were only two significant differences between these groups. First, men in the high well-being group were, on average, older than the remaining sample. On average men in the high well-being group were 43 years old, while the rest of the sample was 39 on average (p=0.012). Second, a larger proportion of men in the high well-being group had a life sentence compared to the rest of the men in the sample. Roughly, 17% of the men in the high well-being group had a life sentence, while 8% of the remaining sample had a life sentence (p=0.038). The difference between men in the high well-being group and the rest of the men in the sample in having less than a high school education approached statistical significance.

Table 3.3. Differences in Demographics and Incarceration Experiences by High Well-Being (N = 356)

	High Well-Being (N=91)	Everyone Else (N=265)	*p* value of difference
Demographics			
Age	43.24	39.16	0.012*

Race			
White	0.286	0.336	0.378
Black	0.341	0.279	0.268
Hispanic	0.275	0.253	0.681
Other Race	0.099	0.132	0.407
Relationship	0.275	0.287	0.826
Children	0.714	0.687	0.623
Education			
Less than High School	0.165	0.257	0.074+
High School	0.363	0.355	0.892
More than High School	0.473	0.389	0.161
Incarceration Experiences			
Prior Incarceration	0.484	0.581	0.106
Time Served	10.068	9.1	0.415
Life Sentence	0.165	0.087	0.038*
Reassessed	1.275	1.415	0.107

+ p<0.10, * = p<0.05, **= p<0.01, ***= p<0.001

The results of the logistic regression can be found in Table 3.4[10]. A 1-year increase in age increased the likelihood of high well-being by 4% (p= 0.002). Compared to those who are currently serving their first sentence, those who have been previously incarcerated are 50% less likely to have high well-being. Additionally, a 1-year increase in time served decreases an incarcerated man's likelihood of high well-being by 5%. Finally, incarcerated men in the sample who are serving a life sentence are 155% more likely to have high well-being than those who are not serving a life sentence.

[10] To test for multicollinearity, diagnostic tests were conducted to assess the level of collinearity between the independent variables. Variance inflation factors did not exceed 1.35 and conditional index values did not exceed 16, both falling within the criteria for collinearity concerns (Midi et al., 2010).

Table 3.4. Logistic Regression of Demographics and Incarceration Experiences on High Well-Being (*N* = 356)

	Odds Ratio	Standard Error
Age	1.042**	0.014
Race		
Black	1.427	0.468
Hispanic	1.662	0.583
Other Race	0.831	0.381
Relationship	0.934	0.269
Children	1.106	0.332
Education		
High School	1.655	0.612
More than High School	1.692	0.620
Prior Incarceration	0.492*	0.136
Time Served	0.952*	0.019
Life Sentence	2.548*	1.145
Reassessed	0.696	0.144
Constant	0.109***	0.071

LR $\chi^2 = 26.28$ $p<0.01$
R-squared = 0.07
Notes. White serves as the reference group for Race and less than a high school education serves as the reference group for Education.
+ $p<0.10$, * = $p<0.05$, **= $p<0.01$, ***= $p<0.001$

Discussion

In many ways the study of, and discourse around, institutional corrections in the U.S. echoes the developments in psychology that lead to the emergence of positive psychology. A similar preoccupation with people's maladaptation, pathologies, risks, and maladjustment that lead to frustration with "psychology as usual" (Lomas et al., 2020, p.3) exists in correctional research. Though correctional research has rightfully brought attention to the many destructive elements of imprisonment and helped galvanize calls for reform and to reimagine the American prison (Cullen et al., 2014), it has also, on occasion, caused us to lose sight of some of the things that matter most to people. There are

aspirational outcomes that exist for people in prison outside of the realm of avoidance goals and, currently, we do not do a particularly great job at recognizing or promoting these. The purpose of this study was to leverage insights from the field of positive psychology to develop a deeper understanding of how imprisonment relates to reflections on different aspects of well-being. Specifically, this study sought to descriptively assess numerous indicators of well-being among a sample of men in prison, as well as explore the correlates of high well-being. The results of this study lend themselves to three conclusions.

First, well-being exists in prison, but some aspects of well-being are more present than others. The vast majority of men in this sample reported high levels of flourishing, generativity, and meaning in life, but life-satisfaction was lower. In other words, this was a group of men that identified a lot of meaning in their lives but was not necessarily happy. This observation could potentially be the result of the time frames that people use to evaluate these constructs in their lives. Even though life satisfaction measures are meant to tap into an integrative appraisal of people's life as a whole, they are sometimes more oriented towards how people feel in the present, whereas evaluations of meaning often span the past, present, and future (Baumeister et al., 2013). It would make sense, then, for relatively low life satisfaction scores in this sample to reflect the immediate present of living in prison during a pandemic, whereas self-assessed meaning may reflect how these men view themselves and their lives outside of prison in the future or before coming to prison. Further, this group might exemplify what Baumeister and colleagues (2013) refer to as the "highly meaningful but unhappy life." People who identify as having high meaning but lower happiness have been found to do a lot of deep thinking, reflect on past struggles, think about the future, and even perceive themselves as having experienced more

negative events than other people (Baumeister et al., 2013). And so, imprisonment might lend itself to this particular pattern in which being in prison is highly unpleasant and relatively unconducive to happiness, but might also foster meaning through opportunities to reflect and take stock of the past, as well as think about the future.

Second, there are people in prison who have high well-being, and this appears to be more influenced by institutional experiences than demographics. A sizeable portion of this group of men, just over 25% of the sample, simultaneously reported high life satisfaction, high psychological competence (flourishing), high generative concern, and high levels of meaning in life. Surprisingly, most of the demographic and background variables that are strongly related to different aspects of well-being did not significantly predict membership in this group. The one exception was age, in which increases in age resulted in a greater likelihood of high well-being, although the effect is relatively small. Institutional experiences appear to matter more, with prior incarceration and more years spent in prison decreasing the likelihood of high well-being. All of which implies a negative relationship between institutional contact and high well-being.

Third, there is a notable relationship between having high well-being and serving a life sentence. While people who were serving a life sentence made up a small portion of the sample (just under 11%), those who were serving a life sentence were more than twice as likely to be in the high well-being group compared to those not serving a life sentence. This finding aligns to a degree with prior research with lifers that finds people who are serving long term sentences describe maturing, making positive changes while on the inside, and seeking redemption for the past (Irwin, 2009; See also Crewe, Hulley, & Wright, 2017). If these same processes are occurring with this group, they might also

facilitate enhanced well-being. What is difficult to untangle here is the distinction or interaction between maturity and aging, time served, and the life sentence itself, especially since an increase in time served was negatively related to high well-being. There could be something particularly unique to the life sentence for well-being in which people are forced to reassess and renegotiate what life will be moving forward in an institutional setting. There is likely strong motivation to cultivate and redefine meaning and other aspects of well-being as a means to cope knowing that the sentence is permanent. As such, there may be motivations and opportunities to be generative, mentor others, and give back while serving a life sentence; however, this was unable to be explored in this study, but certainly warrants attention moving forward.

The findings of this study have theoretical implications for both positive psychology and corrections. First, this study contributes to our understanding of well-being in adverse or negative spaces. While some well-being research has explored different aspects of well-being, such as meaning, among people who have experienced challenging life circumstances, very little has explored numerous indicators of well-being among people who are currently incarcerated or sought to identify people who have high levels of well-being. This study adds that well-being, particularly flourishing, generativity and meaning, are highly prevalent on the inside and that there is a sizeable group of people who perceive high levels of all of these constructs as being present in their lives, even amid imprisonment. Further, this study also lends insight into what may differentiate those with the "highly meaningful but unhappy life" and those with the highly meaningful *and* happy life during incarceration. While nearly the entire sample reported high meaning in their lives, a smaller portion was also high in life satisfaction. This study points to institutional

experiences and age as making the difference, suggesting that, while in prison, going from meaning without life satisfaction to meaning with life satisfaction is less a product of the traditional correlates of happiness that are available on the outside and more so a product of how much experience one has with the institution. Ultimately, this is a group that warrants more attention within positive psychology and well-being research, particularly with regard to what distinguishes those with high well-being.

Second, this study has implications for a life-course perspective of time spent in prison. Findings that high well-being was negatively related to prior incarceration and more time served, but positively related to age and a life sentence highlight that well-being is likely meaningfully shaped by where people are situated in their lives as well as in their current sentence. A long sentence with an end in sight and a long sentence with no end in sight are different in nature and likely structure the pursuit of well-being in different ways. Combined with prior incarceration experiences and increasing age, people can vary greatly in terms of what stage of their incarceration they are in, how much prior experience they have had with incarceration, and where they are at developmentally. It stands to reason then that a critical step forward for correctional research is to understand these positive outcomes as they unfold during the incarceration experience and over the life-course in more nuanced ways than what this study was able to accomplish. An age-graded corrections or life-course corrections would emphasize that things like the amount of time spent in prison and different stages of incarceration will structure people's well-being (Jarman, 2020; Kazemian & Travis, 2015; Schinkel & Lives Sentenced Participants, 2021). In fact, in their study of positive self-change in prison, Maier and Ricciardelli (2021) called for researchers to “consider further how the length of time spent in prison or the particular

setting of the prison, for example, may impact prisoners' sense of self" (p.13). The findings of this study offer evidence that these elements all matter for high well-being, seemingly above traditional correlates of well-being. Therefore, rather than take the incarceration experience as a constant that impacts everyone's well-being the same, a more thorough assessment of positive outcomes and flourishing in prison ideally would continue to account for the interactions between age and exposure to incarceration in terms of previous incarceration, length of incarceration, and length to serve of incarceration.

The implications and findings of this work should also be weighed alongside the limitations of the study. There are four particularly noteworthy limitations. First, there may have been a social desirability bias in reporting levels of well-being that this study was unable to account for. For all of the things that make PAR a great methodological approach—enhanced inclusivity, impact, and construct validity to name just a few—at the end of the day, participants were sharing very personal information about themselves and how they view their lives to people that they live with and see every day. This familiarity could be a double-edged sword, allowing for trust to participate in the interviews but simultaneously creating vulnerability given the sensitive nature of the questions. Further, the study could not account for subcultural dynamics that might shape how participants respond to other incarcerated men, particularly with regard to questions asking about psychological competencies. For example, one of the flourishing questions asked to what degree people agreed with the statement "I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me" and almost the entire sample (97%) either agreed or strongly agreed. While tapping into an aspect of psychological flourishing, this question may also be tapping into the interplay of the prison code and expectations of what it means to be a man

in prison, both of which highly value competence and not being seen as incapable or weak (Morse & Wright, 2022). Men in prison asking other men in prison if they view themselves as competent and capable, and questions of the like, may have unintentionally created pressure to respond in self-preserving ways or ways that are consistent with how people are expected to behave in prison. The current study was unable to account for these dynamics but should be accounted for in future work.

Second, the analysis ultimately explained very little of the variance in high well-being among this group of men in prison, only around 7%. There were several important potential indicators of well-being that the study could not account for such as religion, income, number of social supports, quality of social supports, and current mental health. Just as relevant, there are a number of salient incarceration experiences that likely matter for well-being and high well-being in prison, such as participation in correctional programs, having a job on the inside, and experiences with the pains of imprisonment, that were unaccounted for. Of these, religiosity would be especially important for future work to include, especially given its relevance to many people on the inside (Maruna et al., 2006).

Third, this study was able to look at well-being at a single point in time and assessments that span multiple time points would offer a more complete picture of well-being for men in prison. This limitation is particularly important because this study could not speak to well-being in prison relative to well-being on the outside. Wildeman and colleagues (2014) observed relatively high life satisfaction for currently incarcerated people, but the seemingly positive gains in life satisfaction were actually more reflective of severe unhappiness on the outside than transformative experiences on the inside.

Relatedly, this study asked about people's well-being in the first months of a global pandemic and the analysis and findings were unable to parse out the meaning and significance of this larger phenomena in how people were evaluating their lives. Data that spans more time would ultimately help contextualize the meaning and relevance of well-being in prison in ways that this study could not.

Finally, and closely aligned with the prior points, this study could not speak to how participants viewed the role of the prison in direct relation to their well-being. The current work was able to assess how people view their well-being across a number of indicators while in prison but reporting high well-being in prison does not mean that being in prison caused high well-being. The distinction matters and can be the difference between doing well *because of prison* versus doing well *in spite of prison* (see Comfort, 2007; Maier and Ricciardelli, 2021). Ideally, future work could unpack how people in prison view meaning, flourishing, generativity, and happiness in direct relation to their incarceration.

In his book on meaning and void within people's lives, Eric Klinger (1977, p.10) remarked that "the meaningfulness of someone's life cannot be inferred just from knowing his or her objective circumstances. Meaningfulness is something very subjective, a pervasive quality of a person's whole inner experience." The objective circumstance of imprisonment might reasonably lead most to believe that meaning, flourishing, and other aspects of well-being are not worth looking for in prison. The broad purpose of this study was to capitalize on insights from the field of positive psychology and the study of well-being to better understand what it means to do well in spaces that are harmful. Findings from this study highlight that people can still have high levels of meaning, psychological competence, happiness, and generative concern while in prison; some can experience all

of these simultaneously. Ultimately, by leveraging insights from positive psychology and other adjacent fields, the study of prison adjustment could begin to extend past what it takes to endure and survive prison, to better understanding how being incarcerated impacts human flourishing and well-being.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In 2011 Robert Sampson wrote a policy essay discussing the "eras" of incarceration research, identifying two eras that work up to that point could fall within and offering the possibility of what the next era of research could look like moving forward. Research in Era 1, Sampson (2011) argued, focused heavily on identifying the deterrent and incapacitation effects of incarceration, while research in Era 2 has focused almost exclusively on documenting the negative, harmful, and criminogenic effects of incarceration. In envisioning a new era of research, Sampson (p.824) noted:

> "I am far from a policy expert, but if I were in the trenches of making decisions I would want to know the full ramifications of incarceration's costs *and* benefits, especially of the unintended variety. I believe that evidence from eras 1 and 2 has greatly improved our cumulative knowledge but at the price of complexity and a kind of stalemate of dueling advocates that view incarceration as either 'good' or 'bad.'"

Sampson then proposed a new social ledger for incarceration that would start to untangle the complexities inherent to incarceration. Though this discussion was framed around the societal consequences of mass incarceration, the insight and observation holds for the study of individual-level effects and experiences of imprisonment. The harms of imprisonment are undeniable, but in the process of documenting them we may have inadvertently created a paradigm in corrections in which we are constantly starting with the premise that prison is harmful and then offering evidence of harm. This then truncates the world we see and teeters on the edge of being deterministic. Ultimately, we see what we look for. The issue is not that what we have seen is not true or is not there, it is that we are likely not seeing everything that is there. The purpose of this dissertation was to expand our view of imprisonment to the possibility of doing well while on the inside and to offer suggestions

and examples of how correctional scholars could begin to study doing well in prison more explicitly. Specifically, this dissertation examined who is doing well in prison, who is experiencing change for the better in prison, and how imprisonment relates to reflections on different aspects of well-being. The broader purpose of this dissertation was to leverage innovative data, methodologies, and frameworks to critically assess what it might mean for people to do well in an institution that is broadly characterized by harm. From this work there are four primary takeaways.

Key Takeaways

First, there are people who avoid the worst of what prison has to offer. Findings from the first study of this dissertation showed that there are many men in prison who do well in prison by avoiding negative outcomes across individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains. Specifically, the study found that over half of the sample reported not struggling with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and hostility, and did not engage in avoidance coping. Over half of the sample also reported avoiding negative interactions with correctional staff and other incarcerated people, and about a quarter of the sample self-reported low levels of perceived difficulty with the environmental pains of imprisonment. A smaller group of these men (about 20% of the sample) did well in all three domains simultaneously. Further, there were differences between men who did well across multiple domains compared to men who did well in one domain or did not do well in any domains at all. On average, men who were doing well in multiple domains were older, had spent more time in prison as an adult, had less time to serve on their current sentence, and struggled with missing freedom less than men who were doing well in just one domain or men who were not doing well in any domains. Collectively, there is a

sizeable portion of men on the inside who appear to escape some of the most commonly documented harms of imprisonment during the first year of incarceration, and there are a select few who seem to avoid most of these harms.

While the study of "doing well" in prison hopefully reaches higher ground conceptually in terms of recognizing the presence of good things, not just the absence of bad things, it also makes sense to identify the people who are not doing as poorly as we would typically expect (or poorly at all), even if that is a crude measure of doing well. If someone were to ask for a set a criteria or checklist to help identify who is doing well in prison there are some minimum expectations that we would likely have and those would likely circle around the things that trend towards "not doing poorly" but might not equate to "thriving." If doing well exists on a continuum of "not doing poorly" to "thriving," (or in separate worlds per Seligman, 2019) the findings from the first study in this dissertation speak to that first part of the spectrum and that set of bare bones indicators (not depressed, not interacting poorly with others, etc.). Even still, there are several questions that remain related to these finding. For one, what are the minimum expectations or indicators that constitute doing well by not doing poorly? This study offered some initial suggestions, but this is not exhaustive. For example, the first study relied primarily on participants' perceptions, but behavioral outcomes could be included such as avoiding institutional misconduct and violence. Further this study identified that the these were distinct groups. Some people just did well with themselves, just did well with others, or just did well with their environment. What distinguishes being able to do well with yourself and others, but not the environment and so on? How could we help facilitate positive adjustment for everyone across all of these domains?

Though there is much more that can be done in terms of thinking about what it means to do well in prison beyond avoidance goals, we do not do a particularly good job of identifying who is not doing poorly to begin with, and this is a necessary first step. The approach taken in this first study of this dissertation is the floor, not the ceiling, in terms of conceptualizing what it means to do well in prison, but it provides a relatively simple starting point for correctional scholars to begin looking at the prison experience slightly differently and with an eye for people who might otherwise escape our notice.

Second, there are people who report experiencing change for the better while in prison, and there are differences between those who experience positive change and those who do not. The second study of this dissertation showed evidence of multifinality. With prison as a shared starting point, the men in the second study of this dissertation did not all end up in the same place by the time they were six months into their incarceration or a year into their incarceration. In fact, most report experiencing positive change. When asked how things had changed for them over the last six months at two different time points, almost half of the men in the study reported that things had changed for the better and roughly a quarter of the entire sample disclosed that things had changed for the better at both time points. The second study also provided evidence of equifinality of change for the better in prison. That is, change for the better was found to be associated with several co-occurring experiences and these experiences differed from those who either reported things changing for the worse or reported no change at all. Specifically, people who reported experiencing change for the better were simultaneously participating in correctional programs, working on the inside, and reporting minimal struggles with the pains of imprisonment and symptoms of mental illness. The men in this group also experienced some improvements

with mental illness symptoms, perceptions of legitimacy, and struggles with negative relations over time, while those who reported things changing for the worse or no change at all showed slight declines in each of these areas. Ultimately, there are people who report and experience improvements while on the inside and changes are occurring while people are incarcerated.

The findings from the second study in this dissertation lend themselves to just as many questions as they answer, if not more. The study was able to identify various co-occurring incarceration experiences among those who reported things changing for the better, but could not specify distinct pathways to reporting change for the better. What specific pathways lead to experiencing change for the better? Who follows which path and under what circumstances? Further, what are the experiences of those who have more varied change experiences (e.g. people who report getting better then report getting worse, getting worse then report staying the same, etc.)? Each of these questions warrant further consideration to better understand people who are doing well in prison and what it means to change for the better in prison. Despite these lingering questions, acknowledging diverse incarceration experiences through multifinality and equifinality frameworks offers correctional scholars another viable way to assess doing well in prison by looking at it as a function of improvement over time or positive change.

Third, there are people who, by their own accounts, are flourishing in prison. Study 3 in this dissertation showed that men in prison reported high levels of generative concern, meaning in life, and psychological competencies or flourishing, and moderate levels of life satisfaction or happiness. At least 70% of the sample of incarcerated men in the third study agreed or strongly agreed that each individual item tapping into flourishing, generativity,

and meaning were present in their lives. Additionally, there was a sizable group of men in the sample (about 25%) who reported high life satisfaction, high flourishing, high generative concerns, and high meaning in life. The significant correlates of being in this high well-being group included age, prior incarceration, time-served, and having a life sentence. In sum, people can flourish and find meaning to high degrees while in prison.

The implications of the findings from the third study, while encouraging, are complicated and raise additional questions. At first glance the findings of the third study might imply a false binary in which everyone is doing really well in prison in terms of well-being and few people are suffering or doing poorly, but this would be overly simplistic. The third study of the dissertation was able to descriptively highlight well-being outcomes, but was unable to account for the interplay of positive and negative experiences and positive and negative outcomes. Though people are reporting psychological competencies, meaning and purpose in their lives, and high generative concern, it is unclear how these experiences are coming about and how they are interacting with the more well-document negative incarceration experiences such as the pains of imprisonment. Instructively, Lomas and colleagues (2020) point to the difference between positive and negative valence and positive and negative outcomes in which positive or negative valence refers to whether or not something is experienced as good or bad, while positive or negative outcomes refers to whether or not something promotes or prevents well-being. The distinction is important as "one can find situations in which positively-valenced qualities can have negative outcomes…[and] conversely, negative-valenced qualities can have positive outcomes" (Lomas et al., 2020, p.3). For instance, Lomas and colleagues (2020) give the examples of unrealistic optimism being linked to risky behaviors and anger

motivating people to act against situations or experiences that are harming them. In the context of corrections, recent work from Haverkate and Wright (2021) explores the possible value of uncertainty (a potentially negative-valenced quality) for reentry. The third study of this dissertation was unable to distinguish these qualities but, unpacking the intricacies of the interactions between positive and negative experiences and outcomes is needed to further contextualizes what it means to flourish and have high well-being in prison.

Finally, it is possible to do well in prison, but it is unclear whether or not this a good thing. The three studies that make up this dissertation collectively offer relatively strong support for the notion that people can do well, in a number of different ways, while incarcerated. But what does it mean to do well in a harmful space? One interpretation of the findings from this dissertation is that it is all relatively positive—not everyone is crushed under the weight of imprisonment, some even manage to find enhanced well-being and meaning in life. Another equally plausible interpretation is that these findings are not as positive as they appear on the surface and that self-reported change for the better, high well-being, and the like may actually reflect people on the inside coping with desperation and trying to make sense of an impossible situation. While the studies in this dissertation were unable to parse out these possibilities, the point remains that there is a distinction between doing well in a harmful space as defined by a particular set of criteria and the meaning ascribed to doing well in a harmful space. People can avoid negative outcomes in prison, experience change for the better, and report that they are flourishing, generative, and happy, but that does not necessarily speak to whether or not these are inherently "good" things given how well-documented the harms of imprisonment are for most people. This

is not to suggest that the findings of this work are for naught. For all of the reasons invoked in Chapter 1 it is important to expand past the current harm-oriented approach to U.S. correctional research and more explicitly consider how people can do well on the inside but this should also be accompanied by a deeper philosophical and ethical conversation about what it means to do well in a harmful spaces.

Limitations and Future Research

Importantly, there are several limitations of the dissertation that should be noted, but that also serve as a helpful guidepost for future work in this area. First, this dissertation was unable to directly assess the role of the prison as an institution in doing well. The studies in this dissertation were able to assess whether or not people *can* do well in prison based upon a pre-determined set of criteria, but it was not able to assess how the prison did or did not facilitate change for the better, well-being, or avoiding negative outcomes. Of the work that that has begun to focus on positive outcomes in prison there has been more of an emphasis on the role of the prison as an institution and how it does or does not influence positive outcomes. For example, Mair and Ricciardelli's (2021) analysis of change narratives in prison spoke to how participants viewed their change relative to being in prison, with some people sharing that they felt prison provided space for reflection but that their change was mostly a product of their inner will and desire to change. Additionally, Crewe and Ievins' (2019) narrative analysis highlighted how the prison can function as a reinventive institution for some people. This dissertation was able to look at different indicators of doing well among groups of men that are in prison, but could not fully unpack the relationship between the institution and doing well and future work in this area would do well to explore this relationship more thoroughly.

Second, and related to the above, this dissertation relied entirely on survey data and there are other methodologies and sources of data that would be helpful for assessing what it means to do well in prison. For one, qualitative methods would be especially useful to address the questions posed by this dissertation. Well-being, positive change, and the like all possess very subjective qualities and arguably would be best understood by the people who are experiencing them. The studies in this dissertation were unable to assess how participants felt about their time in prison, whether or not they believed they were doing well overall, or even what doing well in prison means to them. While the findings of this dissertation suggested that a sizeable portion of people are doing well in prison by avoiding negative outcomes, experiencing positive change, and reporting high well-being, their lived experiences and interpretations of the prison might tell a different story, or at least a more nuanced story.

Third, this dissertation ultimately assessed peoples' experiences in prison at a single moment in time or over very small periods of time and the outcomes of interest for each of these studies would ideally be examined over longer periods of time. Given findings from this dissertation that pointed to time-served, age, and time left to serve all mattering for people who avoided negative outcomes, reported things changing for the better, or experiencing high well-being, it stands to reason that doing well in prison is unfolding and developing in different ways over time, especially as people serve particularly long sentences in prison. Findings from the second study of the dissertation were illustrative of a number of small changes that were occurring just within the first year of incarceration, and so future work that can examine positive outcomes over even longer periods of time would greatly help push research in this area forward.

Fourth, this dissertation was unable to speak to experiences before incarceration that are likely very relevant to how people are doing on the inside and what it means to do well on the inside. Findings from the first study found significant associations between doing well across individual, interpersonal, and environmental domains in prison and difficulties with missing freedom, with those doing well across multiple domains struggling with this less than others. It could be that doing well in prison is a function of life on the inside being better, or more stable, than life on the outside. It could also be a function of institutional dependence. Ultimately, future work in this area should account for how people's time spent in prison relates to their life experiences prior to prison, especially with regard for people who appear to do well on the inside.

Looking Ahead to Policy and Practice

While the findings from this dissertation offer insight into what it looks like to do well while incarcerated, it would be premature to make recommendations for policy and practice about *how* to promote positive outcomes based solely on the findings from these studies. However, there are steps that can be taken by correctional scholars that build on the findings of this dissertation, and its limitations, to make the study of doing well in prison even more relevant to correctional policy and practice. Specifically, there are two areas of inquiry that are particularly relevant to policy and practice.

First, a primary concern for correctional policy and practice is the degree to which the prison itself can facilitate or influence doing well. It is especially important, moving forward, to be able to distinguish between instances in which people are doing well because of a service or function the prison provides and instances in which people are doing well but it is unrelated to the functions of the prison or, perhaps, in spite of the harms of

imprisonment. Further, if the prison can facilitate positive outcomes, it is necessary to identify what specific functions or services are causal to this. Findings from this dissertation revealed associations between positive change and certain institutional experiences such as participating in correctional programs, having a job within the prison, and perceiving treatment from people within the institution as fair and procedurally just, all of which offer a natural starting points for looking at specific services that could make the prison a space that promotes positive outcomes. Ultimately, correctional policy would benefit from knowing what specific practices and services minimize harm and lead to positive outcomes. Correctional researchers can aid in generating this knowledge specifically by 1) deciphering if people in prison perceive the prison as being causal to their more positive experiences, and 2) identifying the correctional services and practices that are causal to positive change, high well-being and the like.

Second, an additional area of inquiry that is especially relevant for policy and practice concerns better understanding what people's lives looked like before they had contact with the criminal justice system and how relevant those experiences are to positive experiences and outcomes on the inside. The work of Wildeman and colleagues (2014) is especially insightful and instructive here, specifically their observations that people who experienced gains in life satisfaction on the inside were miserable on the outside. The appearance of doing well, in this context, was essentially artificially inflated because of how poor life was before incarceration. If doing well in prison is largely a product of misery and misfortune before prison then this may alter or limit how much correctional administrators can do from a policy and practice standpoint to meaningfully make people's lives better. However, from a broader stance, paying more attention to people's experiences

and circumstances prior to incarceration might aid in shifting our focus to prevention and early intervention efforts from a criminal justice policy and practice standpoint. All in all, the policy and practice implications of the findings from this dissertation are largely contingent on how much doing well in prison is a function of well-being on the outside. Correctional scholars can enhance the relevance of these findings for policy and practice by further unpacking the relationship between well-being before incarceration and well-being during incarceration.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to begin moving past a harm-focused approach to correctional research by examining what it might mean for people to do well in an institution that is broadly characterized by harm. Specifically, this dissertation examined who is doing well in prison, who is experiencing positive change in prison, and how imprisonment relates to reflections on different aspects of well-being. Limitations notwithstanding, the findings of this dissertation emphasize that there are people who are doing well while on the inside and that there are several methodologies and frameworks at our disposal that can help bring these more positive experiences and outcomes within confinement to the forefront of correctional research. There are opportunities for future research to build upon the work started in this dissertation to help build a better understanding of what facilitates positive outcomes and to help reimagine the prison as an institution that can positively intervene in the lives of people who are incarcerated.

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APPENDIX A

SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS FOR CHAPTER 3

Table 3.4. Comparison of Incarceration Experiences Among Change for Better Group at 12-Months Based on Change at 6-Months

	Change for Better at 6-Months (N=59)	Change for Worse or Stayed the Same at 6-Months (N=55)	*p* value of difference
Incarceration Experiences			
Custody Level Change	0.441	0.455	0.882
Employment	0.576	0.6	0.797
Program Participation	0.729	0.564	0.065
Mental Health Treatment	0.4	0.429	0.768
Visitation	0.492	0.364	0.168
Depression	0.806	0.943	0.278
Anxiety	0.469	0.551	0.408
Hostility	0.53	0.676	0.208
Global Mental Health	0.946	1.066	0.414
Avoidance Coping	1.737	1.729	0.907
Approach Coping	2.766	2.504	0.009**
Procedural Justice	2.967	2.801	0.14
Legitimacy	2.881	2.752	0.447
Negative Relations	1.826	1.928	0.336
Pains of Imprisonment	1.588	1.827	0.072
Social Support	37.559	29.463	0.135
Change Variables			
Depression Change 1	-0.293	-0.028	0.028*
Depression Change 2	0.001	-0.166	0.116
Anxiety Change 1	-0.217	0.02	0.055
Anxiety Change 2	0.002	-0.209	0.066
Hostility Change 1	0.037	0.069	0.809
Hostility Change 2	0.008	-0.112	0.354
Global Mental Health Change 1	-0.065	0.004	0.117
Global Mental Health Change 2	-0.009	-0.076	0.41
Avoidance Coping Change 1	0.011	0.106	0.172
Avoidance Coping Change 2	-0.035	-0.082	0.535
Approach Coping Change 1	0.106	0.13	0.832
Approach Coping Change 2	-0.027	0.112	0.179
Procedural Justice Change 1	-0.016	-0.025	0.939
Procedural Justice Change 2	0.008	0.283	0.044*
Legitimacy Change 1	0.000	0.048	0.797

Legitimacy Change 2	0.254	0.194	0.693
Negative Relations Change	-0.114	-0.258	0.205
Pains of Imprisonment Change	-0.314	-0.507	0.122
Social Support Change	-2.576	2.091	0.339

Notes. For depression, anxiety, hostility, global mental health, coping, procedural justice, and legitimacy variables "Change 1" refers to change between the baseline and 6-month waves and "Change 2" refers to change between the 6-month and 12-month waves. For negative relations, pains of imprisonment, and social support variables "Change" refers to change between the 6-month and 12-month waves.

* = $p<0.05$ **= $p<0.01$ ***= $p<0.001$