

Barred from Each Other: Why Normative Husbands Remain Married to Incarcerated Wives

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Abstract : This study explores men's motivation and justification to remain married to their criminal, imprisoned wives. Using semi-structured interviews and content-analysis, data were collected and analyzed from eight men who maintain stable marriage relationships with their incarcerated wives. Participants are normative men who describe incarceration as a challenge that enhances mutual responsibility and commitment. They exaggerate the extent to which their partners resemble archetypal romantic ideals. They use motivational accounts to explain the woman's criminal conduct, which is perceived as non-relevant to her real identity. Physical separation and lack of physical intimacy are perceived as the major difficulties in maintaining their marriage relations. Length of imprisonment and marriage was found to be related to the decision whether to continue or terminate the relationships. Women-inmates' partners experience difficulties and use coping strategies very similar to those cited by other normative spouses facing lengthy separation.

Keywords : female inmates, marriage, normative spouses, romantic accounts

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