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MENTORING AFTER PRISON: RECOGNITION AS A TOOL FOR REFLECTION

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Abstract

Many organisations offer mentoring schemes to support people leaving prison and resettle back into the community. Mentorship relationships are complex but despite this, there remains limited theoretical and/or research informed tools to guide mentorship practices and hereby the success of ex-prisoner mentorship. The aim of the paper is to contribute to this shortfall by presenting a theoretically informed framework to assist reflection on mentorship practices and the mentorship relationship: the Recognition Reflection Framework (RRF). The framework has potential to provide mentors with a tool to reflect on ex-prisoners´ need for recognition of worth if they are to desist from crime. The paper describes the theoretical development and preliminary validation of this reflection framework, underpinned by a strengths-based mentoring approach, and developed through the merger of concepts from recognition theory, person centred care and therapeutic alliances. We present this framework as a means through which mentors can reflect on how they may specifically contribute to secondary and tertiary desistance, as well as reflect on ways they can personally develop a constructive mentor-client relationship.

Keywords

Ex-prisoners, mentoring, recognition, framework, development

Background

High recidivism rates are a challenge internationally (Fazel and Wolff, 2015). This is partially attributed to poor prisoner reintegration after release. Several organisations support ex-prisoners during this transition, the third sector included (e.g., Bryans et al., 2002; Epstein, 2009). Mentorship programmes are often a model for this support (Hinde and White, 2019; HM Government, 2019), providing human and social capital for ex-prisoners. Relational aspects are key to this process, involving the formation of one-to-one relationships between mentor and ex-prisoner, the former often being a volunteer, acting as a positive role model and source of advice and guidance. Mentorship can contribute to ex-prisoners achieving successful re-entry that is characterised by feelings of contentment, healthy relationships, resilience, sobriety, having a contribution to make to the community and staying out prison (Kjellstrand et al., 2021). However, mentorship practices are commonly associated with normative 'social deficit' approaches (Andrews and Bonta, 2010) and there are calls for strength-based mentorship to supplement risk-based approaches and that focus on ex-prisoners rebuilding their lives in a way that makes meaning for them (Hucklesby and Wincup, 2014; Brown and Ross, 2010).

Strength-based mentorship aligns with desistance approaches, desistance defined as the process of abstaining from crime by individuals previously engaged in a sustained pattern of offending (Healy, 2012; Brown and Ross, 2010). Desistance approaches have three dimensions: no longer engaging in criminal behaviour (primary desistance), adopting a non-offending identity (secondary desistance) and recognition by others that ex-prisoners are capable of change (tertiary desistance). This is associated with ex-prisoners having a sense of belonging back in society (HM Probation, 2022). Taking a desistance approach in mentorship emphasises individuals´ experience and circumstances, the way they think, and what is important to them (HM probation 2022; Maruna and Mann, 2019).

Mentorship relationships are complex, however, often unsuccessful, and short-lived. This is attributed to many factors including prisoner motivation, mentor inexperience and lack of training, societal and mentor preconceptions of the ex-prisoner (Hucklesby and Wincup, 2014; Sæbjørnsen et al., 2021a). Despite this, there remains limited evidence or theoretical development underpinning mentorship processes (Brown and Ross, 2010) and, hereby, theoretical and/or research informed tools promoting reflexivity in mentorship practices. Mentor self-reflection is particularly important as not reflecting on one's own actions will hinder mentors´ professional development and possibly even foster malpractice (Eraut, 2003).

The aim of this paper is to promote reflective mentorship by presenting a potential theoretical framework for reflection on the mentorship process and especially the mentorship relationship: the Recognition Reflection Framework (RRF). The framework has potential to provide mentors a tool to reflect on ex-prisoners´ need for recognition of worth, and how their struggles to achieve this may impact on their behaviours and eventually desistance from crime. The RRF has potential use by mentors as a tool for individual or peer group reflection.

The paper presents our preliminary deductive and theoretical development of this reflection framework, underpinned by a strengths-based and relational mentoring approach, and developed through the merger of concepts from recognition theory and person-centred care and therapeutic alliances. We present this framework as a means through which mentors can reflect on their potential contribution to secondary and tertiary desistance, as well as reflect on ways they can personally develop a constructive mentor-client relationship. We also present the preliminary validation of the RRF tool by testing it as a tool to guide our own reflections as academics on our experiences when working with an English prisoner mentorship organisation. We conclude with future developments required in empirical testing of the framework.

Method of Framework Development

The authors were part of COLAB, a European funded consortium comprising seven universities and three criminal justice organizations from various countries including the UK and Norway (Hean et al., 2021). COLAB´s aim was to build international research capacity in innovation and collaboration in criminal justice by introducing expertise from various disciplines such as social work, nursing, critical ethnography, organisational psychology, and development work research. The consortium's objectives were achieved through staff exchanges between academic and practice partners. The authors were Norwegian academics exchanging with an English non-profit organization engaged in mentorship of recently released ex-prisoners. Mentors, with the exception of three paid caseworkers, were voluntary workers from varied demographic backgrounds, professions and experiences including students, retired legal professionals and academics, social workers, and people with experience of being prisoners themselves. The researchers aimed to embed themselves ethnographically in the organization before research began to maximize the credibility of their future work. This research is reported elsewhere (see Kloetzer et al., 2021; Sæbjørnsen et al., 2021a, 2021b).

The authors spent varying amounts of time in the organization (between 1 and 8 months each) shadowing mentors and their interactions with ex-prisoners and one of us becoming a mentor themselves. The team regularly reflected on our personal experiences embedding ourselves ethnographically in the mentorship environment that we would later research. To manage these reflections, we combined personal theoretical backgrounds in person-centred approaches and Honneth´s theory of recognition (Honneth, 2007, 2008; Sæbjørnsen and Sjo, 2018) (Table 1) with the Gibbs six phase model of reflection (Gibbs et al., 1988) (Figure 1) to develop a prototype of the RRF tool with utility for those who mentor ex-prisoners. The framework focuses in particular on the “love” sphere in Honneth´s tridimensional description of sense of worth.

Figure 1 Gibbs model of reflection (Gibbs, 1988)

In developing the framework, we unpicked each constituent dimension of our theoretical perspectives, applying these deductively to the new context of ex-prisoner mentorship to produce a preliminary theoretically informed reflection framework. We followed the six phases of Gibbs´ reflection cycle, applying the lens of therapeutic alliances, person care and recognition theory to inform each of the six phases. As a first validation, we then applied this framework to our own experiences as researchers embedded in this mentorship organisation (see Table 2 in appendix A). Based on this experience we reworked the instrument to produce the next iteration of the RRF (Table 3 in Appendix B).

Validity is a measure of how well a tool measures what it is supposed to measure (Beatty et al, 2020). There are multiple methods to assess the validity of a tool, and no single method can provide a comprehensive assessment of validity. For instance, content and construct validity of an instrument are the degree to which the tool covers all aspects of the construct and the degree to which the tool is related to other constructs it is theoretically related to, respectively. Predictive validity involves using the tool's scores to predict future outcomes. Validating the RRF as a reflection tool is more challenging than validating an assessment tool or questionnaire. However, as the focus of the tool is on the process of reflection the framework stimulates, rather than the actual answers it generates and the responses will, and are intended to be, subjective. This makes validation of the instrument more challenging but still necessary if the framework is to have utility in building more effective mentorship relationships. By effective, we mean that the reflection the tool generates should foster mentorship relationships perceived by both parties as constructive and in the long-term able to develop stronger desistance identities in people receiving mentorship upon release from prison. We adhere to a relativistic perspective to the validity of framework (Beatty et al., 2020), taking the stance that the reflections the framework stimulates will be highly variable and strongly dependent on the objective of using this instrument and the socio-cultural context in which the framework is administered. This means the framework will vary in validity depending on the people that use it and what they use it for. In the long term, a range of methods to test out the validity of the RRF will include expert reviews, cognitive interviewing with different stakeholder groups and focus groups with key stakeholders exploring the various dimensions of the instrument in terms of content, construct and predictive validity for instance (Maitland et al., 2020).

In this paper, we report validation through expert review using researchers as stakeholders and an expert review panel assessing the theoretical validity of the tool. The expert constituted a panel made up by the authors as researchers who had theoretical expertise in relational work. We also acted as stakeholder/respondent group, by applying this tool to our own experiences as research visitors seconded to the third sector organisation mentoring organisation as part of the COLAB project. The framework provided a lens for us to reflect on the complex, unfamiliar secondment environment. We reflected on our actions (Schön, 1991) as well as reflecting on the actions of the mentors we were shadowing and their interactions with the ex-prisoners. Many mentors being voluntary, and often not health/social care trained, are in the same position as ourselves and hence we feel would benefit from this theoretically informed reflective tool we employed as novices in this setting. The tool was also shared with the organisation for comment on its current utility and analysis of our preliminary reflections following Gibbs et al. (1988) informed the next iteration of the tool. The RRF and our utilisation of the tool are presented in Table 2 and 3 respectively.

Constituent theoretical dimensions of the RRF

Recognition theory is central to the theoretical underpinning of the RRF. Applying recognition theory to mentorship practices has potential for mentors seeking to understand how clients react towards them or the often destructive and chaotic behaviours clients exhibit when re-entering society: We propose that these behaviours could be a symptom of lack of recognition and ex-prisoners´ struggles to achieve this, even if this is through antisocial means. Using recognition theory as a lens to reflect on mentorship practices with ex-prisoners is worth developing, based on its utility in similar contexts: for instance, it has proven useful in promoting multiculturalism (Taylor, 1992) and understanding behaviours of misrecognised groups: for example, children (Thomas, 2012), young refugees' (Pedersen, 2008) and individuals with complex problems (Skjefstad, 2015). Recognition theory has relevance for mentorship in criminal justice as prisoners reintegrating into society will seek recognition in the community, whilst being subjects of misrecognition also. The utility of the theory has been demonstrated in other reintegration processes, the reintegration of ex-combatants back into civil society for instance (Hart and Gomez, 2022). This group share similarities with ex-prisoners, including lack of education, stigma, and work opportunities: recognising ex-combatants´ social expectations during demobilisation, and acknowledging their experiences of marginalisation during reintegration was shown to be key to the reintegration process. Brown and Ross (2010) demonstrate how mentorship programmes may offer social capital in the form of sustained emotional and practical support and the theory of recognition may build on our understandings of the dimensions with which this social capital is generated in this context and in the long term the desistance process itself.

Honneth´s theory of recognition predicts that experiencing recognition from other human beings is fundamental to being human and the development of personal identity (Honneth, 2008, 2007). Striving for recognition drives human behaviour, and individual transformation. Honneth (2008) distinguishes between three modes and spheres of recognition (see Table 1).

Table 1. The modes, spheres, and attitudes of Honneth's theory of recognition

Recognition mode	Recognition sphere	Attitude toward self	Violation
Love	Intimate sphere	Self-confidence	Bodily violation
Rights	Rights sphere	Self-respect	Denial of rights
Solidarity/social Valuation	Social valuation Sphere	Self-esteem	Debasement

The first recognition mode is primarily associated with experiencing love or care in a so-called intimate sphere (Honneth, 2008). This is crucial for developing self-confidence (Table 3). Second, individuals compare their own personal rights to those of people in their community. If these rights are seen as similar, it is more likely that individuals develop self-respect in the rights sphere. Third, individuals experience recognition through feelings of solidarity. It involves feeling valued by society for one's contributions in professional or volunteer work and is key in the development of self-esteem and self-fulfilment.

Studies using recognition theory (Taylor, 1992; Hart and Gomez, 1992) often focus on the social valuation and rights modes of the theory and the path to self-realisation but the three recognition modes are not rungs on a developmental ladder. Rather, individuals fluctuate between spheres, each building on the others in unison (Honneth, 2008). A person experiences complete wellbeing when all three forms of recognition are achieved (Honneth, 2008). Recognition of love is, however, the most basic of the three modes impacting individual experiences of recognition in the other two spheres. The RRF framework focuses on this dimension, therefore, although there is scope in future development of the framework for the other two dimensions to be incorporated (Taylor, 1992; Hart and Gomez, 2022).

Love refers to the strong, complex emotional interactions that occur between individuals (Honneth, 2008). Ancient Greeks differentiated between romantic love (Eros), friendship (Phileo), and family loyalty (Storge), the latter illustrated by children feeling cared for by parents and hence worthy of being loved. Unconditional love (Agape) is illustrated by the love of a god for humans. People's experience of love recognition in some or all dimensions may influence personal development, quality of life and behaviours in individual struggles to gain recognition (Honneth, 2008). Whilst experiencing love recognition develops self-confidence, misrecognition in the intimate sphere may leave people feeling socially isolated, unheard, or ignored (Sæbjørnsen and Sjo, 2018). At the most extreme, it is experienced as violation, typically leading to negative relations with self and others.

Reflecting on the concept of "love recognition" in mentorship with ex-prisoners may help mentors understand and strengthen ex-prisoners' sense of self, rather than causing them harm through misrecognition (Sæbjørnsen and Sjo, 2018). Kjellstrand et al. (2021), for instance, in a study of ex-prisoners' perceptions of voluntary mentorship, show two areas where mentors provide love recognition when they describe the positive relational aspects of mentorship: companionship (for example, contact and being available) and emotional support, nurturing, caring, encouragement. They present also negative examples of mentorship support, aspects that could be described by Honneth as misrecognition (for example, lack of time or connection, lack of empathy and feeling misunderstood by the mentor).

To practically operationalise love recognition into the RRF in mentorship practices and help mentors reflect on the forms of love mentorship should offer, we draw also on concepts from the therapeutic alliance and person-centred therapy in general (Rogers, 1959) and as applied in other criminal justice areas (for example, prison, probation) (Fletcher, 2007; Kristoffersen and Iversen, 2018; Dale et al., in press). This literature examines professional client/prisoner interactions, stressing the value of developing reciprocal therapeutic alliances between those involved.

Reflecting on researcher experiences of mentorship to inform the development of the RRF

The research team reflected on their experiences of embedding themselves in the mentorship organisation before research began. The initial framework and the reflections it generated are summarised in Table 2. These reflections were based solely on the Gibbs reflection framework using the theoretical perspective just described as theoretical lens. Amongst our key conclusions from this reflection process was that the mentor organisation lacked formal guidance dedicated to how they manage their relationships with clients. Part of our action plan was the development of the RRF based on our reflections. We therefore developed the RRF form out of reflections in Table 2, adding dimensions of facilitation and provision of love recognition, professional distance, and sense of worth as themes that had arisen in our analysis/review.

The RRF framework (Table 3) comprises column 1 indicating the phase of reflection; column 2 spells out key dimensions and potential exemplar questions to prompt evaluation and analysis of one´ reflections. Column 3 links these questions back to the underpinning theoretical justification. The list of questions is not exhaustive and will require development and refinement when the tool is tested with other stakeholders including a sample of mentors. The framework is not intended to be an assessment tool and all questions are not necessarily relevant in all interactions.

The framework asks mentors to describe the interaction with their client and then in line with the reciprocal ideas of a therapeutic alliance, reflect on both the mentor and ex-prisoners` emotional reactions in the interaction. Further, transferring in guidance from Fletcher (2007), Kristoffersen and Iversen, (2018) and Dale et al. (in press), the framework asks mentors to reflect on how they achieve, or not, the following in their mentorship sessions: active listening, showing positive regard, empathy, authenticity, and respect to ex-prisoners, and focusing on problem-solving, learning, and reflection. They should examine the amount and appropriate amount of contact they have with the client, and how they build trust bearing in mind these strategies will vary from client to client. The framework also encourages the user to examine the balance they achieve between encouraging the ex-prisoner's free will and responsibility, whilst simultaneously providing support and advice, and facilitating growth and self-realization. Again, care should be taken not to see these features of the mentorship as normative, as each mentorship relationship will be unique: what is relevant in one relationship may not be in another.

With its focus on love recognition, the framework encourages mentors to consider the different forms of love in the mentor-client relationship and whether these are appropriate. They should also be aware of the criticism that unconditional love, such as agape, can imply a power imbalance and that the ex-prisoner may never fully be recognized or achieve equality with the mentor (Tollefsen, 2021). Romantic love, or eros, is often seen as unprofessional due to power imbalances and vulnerability of both mentor and client. The framework does not take a normative stance or assess the appropriateness of the mentors´ reflections on professional distance, but encourages them, instead, to reflect and critique their own actions in this regard.

The unconditional positive regard for the client emphasised in a person-centred approach is particularly relevant in mentorship and mirrors an agape form of care. The framework therefore points mentors towards reflecting on agape in their mentorship practices, examining their own feelings towards clients as well as the reverse (Novick and Novick, 2000). The framework hence asks mentors to examine their own need for recognition, transferences they make from their own personal histories and counter transferences experienced by both them and the ex-prisoner and at various phases of their mentor-ex-prisoner relationship as it changes over time.

The framework distinguishes between mentors´ role as facilitating love recognition for the client (for example by helping them rebuild their social networks after prison) versus mentors providing love recognition directly to the mentoree. The latter means an examination of the therapeutic alliance in the mentorship relationship. Here the framework acknowledges that mentors may become significant others for the ex-prisoner, and hence provide love recognition for the client directly. In unpicking their role as provider of love recognition, the tool encourages mentors to reflect on dimensions related to phial and agape forms of love and care and building a therapeutic alliance with the client based on a reciprocal and person-centred approach and if this is possible and how.

Both recognition theory and person-centred practices are compatible with desistance approaches in criminal justice where there is an emphasis on individuals and their ways of meaning making. Recognition theory aligns especially with tertiary desistance (McNeill, 2015), as prisoners´ development of a non-criminal identity requires recognition by people in wider society. This recognition may begin with mutual recognition between ex-prisoner and the mentor themselves. Mentors, therefore, as some of the first community contact the prisoner may have, and mentors can then reflect on their role in providing positive recognition and rebuilding prisoners´ feelings of self-worth.

Whilst the theory of recognition has utility in reflecting on mentor–ex-prisoner relationships, it also has application at group levels to explain the contribution that lack of recognition makes to social injustices. Mutual recognition between population groups, on the other hand, can lead to societal transformation and moral progress (da Cunha de Souza, 2015). In prisoner reintegration, high reoffending rates internationally have partially been attributed to the stigma ex-prisoners face upon release (Kyprianides et al., 2019) that compromises their secondary and tertiary and ultimately primary desistance potential. Stigma is essentially a lack of societal recognition as a group: a group who are not cared for and/or worthy of love. From the perspective of love recognition, moral progress is achieved by reducing discrimination and promoting greater acceptance of ex-prisoners back into society: a recognition that prisoners are human and worthy of care and empathy: an acceptance that they have had difficult early experiences different from those of the community at large but that they have the potential for change. Mentors can reflect on these views on social justice, the role they feel they have to play in being societal agents of change, and how this may begin with their recognising, or at least seeking out, the worth of the ex-prisoner in their personal interactions with them. The RRF encourages mentors to actively question social norms that reject prisoners as unable to change and "once a criminal, always a criminal". Mentors should consider their role in changing these norms. Even if for some mentors this seems overly ambitious, they may still wish to consider how they could support and prepare the prisoner to live in a world of prejudice and lack of recognition in the love sphere (for example, supporting positive social networks). The act of volunteering itself is a form of recognition as Brown and Ross (2010) suggest when reflecting on high responses from the public to be engaged in mentoring programmes. This points to the fact that these programmes can be key in reducing stigma, in this case, through community members having direct contact with the ex-prisoners as volunteers.

Limitations and future possibilities

The RRF is an instrument in development with theoretical and methodological limitations in its current form. Theoretically, the theory of recognition is criticised for not taking into account people's emotions and reactions when they experience misrecognition or recognition in their daily life (Kalyvas, 1999). Gibbs´ reflection cycle (Figure 1) and consideration of the therapeutic alliance helps balance the RRF in some respect, but this could be elaborated in future iterations. Recognition theory is critiqued also for not considering different contexts, being Eurocentric, not taking into account normative principles and plurality and that what may be moral progress in one culture may not be perceived as such by not another (Fraser, 2003). The RRF framework is therefore careful not to provide ways in which recognition can be provided, as this will differ from individual client to client and mentor to mentor. It is clear that when using the tool that it is not aimed at what the mentor should do but to reflect on clients´ and one´s own behaviour in and out of the mentorship session through a recognition lens. When using the RRF, we acknowledge personal values and social norms regarding ex-prisoners will differ. The RRF has potential international relevance but was developed by a Norwegian team seconded to a mentorship organisation in England. This will have impacted on the theoretical perspectives chosen and its later iterations. This means the RRF in its current form remains Eurocentric, as is the criticism of recognition theory more widely. We call for testing of the framework in other populations and in other national settings. The differing views of the purpose of prison itself is an example of this. As Norwegians, observing the British system, we were repeatedly reminded of the focus on retribution and public safety in UK society as compared to a more rehabilitation focus, in Norway. These may impact differentially the mentorship experience in the two countries for instance. The RRF encourages mentors to examine these principles in themselves, rather than suggesting what the social norm should be. Mentors should also consider norms related to what is moral conduct: for instance, when trying to build social networks, break antisocial networks, or find employment for prisoners, we are in fact imposing on the ex-prisoner what we perceive to be meaningful and consider morally correct. Differing cultures may vary in these perspectives as may those of the prisoner, who may in fact be happier back in the secure and structured environment of the prison or engaged in future criminal activity.

Recognition theory could also be considered reductionist. The RRF has similar limitations, focusing currently on the mentorship relationship and love recognition spheres alone. The tool should be considered, therefore as one tool only, in a toolbox that can support mentorship practices. Finally, recognition theory is also critiqued as not taking into account social and economic structures that shape the way recognition is distributed, with little utility for policymaking (Fraser, 2003). Fraser believes focussing only on recognition and identity of a stigmatised group alone can lead to authorities neglecting the pressing demands for redistribution of resources to these groups to redress fundamental economic and social inequalities. She argues for recognition and redistribution to be both taken into account in addressing social justice: That is i addressing both economic and social inequalities, while also taking into account the validation of social identities. The RRF considers only the latter and does not explore how mentors and their leaders may wish to redistribute time and financial resource to their clients dependent on need.

Further, the therapeutic alliance dimensions of the RRF are not without critique either: these respectful, horizontal, and reciprocal relationships may be more difficult to establish and maintain with certain populations, such as individuals with severe mental illness or those with a history of trauma. Additionally, some individuals may have difficulty trusting others, which can make it difficult to form a therapeutic alliance. So, developing a therapeutic alliance may be very difficult to achieve with some ex-prisoners if mentor and client are in different ages, socio economic backgrounds and genders. Mentors could reflect on this and perhaps consider rematching mentor and client or recruit more ex -prisoners into peer mentorship. Further mentors´ bias, can lead to disparities in the quality of care provided to different patient populations (Novick and Novick, 2014). Some of these dimensions could be elaborated upon in future iterations of the RRF.

There are also methodological limitations to the RRF in its current form: for instance, there are limitations to the content validity of the instrument achieved so far. It does not capture all aspects of mentorship practice and even all aspects of the mentorship relationship. Other tools should aid reflection if a more holistic perspective on mentorship is to be achieved. Further, not all dimensions of recognition theory are yet included and there is further development required to include the rights and value dimensions of the theory in greater detail. Further, to establish predictive validity, further research is required to explore how the use of the reflection tool by mentors impacts future mentorship relationship and even recidivism rates. In terms of construct validity, there is also a scope to compare this framework with other tools reflecting on recognition used in other contexts as well as related constructs related to stereotyping, discrimination, and marginalisation of offenders` post release. There is also a need to test the instrument using individual and focus group interviews both with mentors as well as their clients to explore the construct and content validity from the perspective of other stakeholders as well as include other expert reviews such as academics in mentorship and criminal justice fields.

Concluding comments

We believe that using this RRF, informed by the theories of recognition, therapeutic alliances and person-centred care is consistent with a strength based and desistance based approach to mentorship. Additionally, the RRF offers mentor a tool with which to reflect on their interactions and relationships with the ex-prisoner. Using the tool, may help mentors to work with ex-prisoners in adopting a non-offending identity, by reflecting explicitly on how they provide and facilitate recognition of self-worth at a personal and societal level. The framework now requires validation in varied populations of mentors and to be evaluated in terms of its impact on the mentorship relationship.

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Appendix A

Table 2. Reflection on Shadowing experiences by researchers using Gibbs Cycle of reflection and recognition theory and therapeutic alliance/person centred care as analytical lens.

Experiences and reflections	
Period	Researchers spent 1 to 8 months in the organisation, shadowing mentors and working with the organisation.
Examining our own reactions and feelings: Describe the emotions present	We had limited experience in criminal justice environments. We felt nervous working with these clients and doubted our contribution as academics. We worried about getting in the way and our language differences and the impact on our rapport with our hosts and their clients. Staff/mentors told us they felt overwhelmed by the number of visiting researchers and their ability to support them. They weren't clear how we constructively contribute to the organisation (as was the intention of the COLAB secondment), especially with limited time/ financial resource available. We observed in shadowing mentors the emotional toll for both client and mentor and the dependence clients had on their mentors. We were often upset by the life histories mentors and clients shared with us and experienced first-hand the mentors´ frustration of not being able to provide the help the clients so obviously needed and the uncertainty of how to manage the complexities of the mentor-client relationship.
Evaluation and Analysis of experiences using Love recognition in Mentorship as lens	Facilitating love recognition We are continually reminded of the social isolation of ex-prisoners. We saw first-hand the impact of damaged relationships with family/ friends, their loneliness, lack of support and the impact on self-confidence and wellbeing. We know this is not unique to this organisation (Leigh-Hunt et al., 2017; Gable and Bedrov, 2021). In other words, these ex-prisoners lack love recognition, in eros, phileal or agape form and their confidence is impacted negatively. Mentors worked actively to help ex-prisoners regain this

recognition through helping them build new social networks, encouraging them to attend different events and activities. Clients were not homogeneous, varying in their optimism about desistance in the longer term. Our later research suggested this was often dependent on an individual´s existing social networks (Sæbjørnsen et al., 2021b). In some cases, however, mentors strove to break clients´ links to anti-social networks. We wondered how then clients gain recognition in the intimate sphere and the impact upon them if this is not found.

Providing Love recognition

Both clients and the organisation's CEO spoke to us during our shadowing experiences of the importance of keeping mentorship voluntary and provided by non-professionals. It showed, they believed, that mentors genuinely cared for the client, independent of remuneration and professional orientation. Hucklesby and Wincup (2014) would agree maintaining the strength of mentorship is the lack monitoring/control function. Clients spoke to us informally of the importance of mentors as part of their social network post-release. We saw mentors providing for ex-prisoners´ basic needs, providing or advising on food as needed, for instance. We interpret this as mentors providing love recognition to ex-prisoners nurturing them, both physically and mentally. Our research showed later that this care was important for ex-prisoners and strengthened their sense of self (Sæbjørnsen and Sjo, 2018). It compensated to some degree their experiences of misrecognition in childhood and in earlier adult lives.

From our shadowing experiences, and working with clients ourselves, mentors seemed to have built supportive, trusting and respectful relationships with clients, characterised by acceptance despite the clients´ history. This agape form of love was illustrated when ex-prisoners reflected informally to us of mentors seeing them for who they were and not only their behaviour. Our later research showed, however, that mentor/clients views were not always aligned in this regard (Sæbjørnsen et al., 2021a). Despite this, many ex-prisoners still classified mentors as friends. They felt mentors´ with similar histories to themselves were more credible and non-judgemental than others. Our reflections here were supported by the literature (Matthews, 2021; Gosling and Buck 2015; Buck, 2020).

Professional distance

Staff we shadowed talked to us of needing to keep professional distance, suggesting some awareness for the balance of the different forms of care implicit in their practice. Our informal conversations often turned to the over-dependence on the mentor although some rejected a single mentor preferring a peer group of fellow clients. We didn't observe mentors using any formal guidelines on how to maintain professional distance, but mentors spoke of trying to link clients to external social networks to

	reduce dependence.
Recognition of worth	During our shadowing events, we saw little opportunity for activity dedicated to ex-prisoners' personal growth. Participation in an affiliated third sector organisation offering a house repair service was used by mentors but in most cases mentorship sessions related to meeting the clients´ basic needs for example, . food or housing). Mentors described mentoring as a 'firefighting exercise' addressing the basic needs of sometimes desperate people, or people in desperate situations. Our later research confirms this (Kloetzer et al., 2021). Ex-prisoners sometimes appeared very passive and lacking confidence in the mentor-client relationship, and this may be partially attributable to internalising the negative public stigma related to being an ex-prisoner (Markina, 2019). When we were on secondment, the organisations ran regular outreach events, some in partnership with the local university and other organisations. These were open to the general public. These events often had charismatic ex-service users presenting which we suggest serve as a means of combating misrecognition by society by slowly change the stereotyping of ex-prisoners described above and the public beliefs of their potential to change. We wondered how this mentorship organisation might hereby be contributing to moral progress in the community.
Draw conclusions	Key mentorship practices seemed to revolve around facilitating as well as providing love recognition for an ex-prisoner. On the one hand, mentors helped ex-prisoners build or rebuild appropriate social networks. This means they supported ex-prisoners in their struggle to achieve recognition in the intimate sphere, necessary to rebuild their self-esteem that is required if they are to rebuild their lives on the outside. Mentors discourage negative social networks, but this may leave a gap if there are no positive ones to replace these. Ex-prisoners vary in their needs and experiences, but we hypothesise that there may be a relationship between ex-prisoners` optimism about future desistance behaviours and their current social networks. Mentors are also a source of recognition in the intimate sphere themselves and as researchers we wondered how the mentors negotiated the forms of recognition, they can provide the client and how they can do this in a professional way. They were cogent of the danger of individuals becoming overly dependent on the mentor as a misdirected need for recognition in the intimate sphere. Mentor-client relationships we observed were built on authenticity, trust, and respect but the relationships are not necessarily being viewed as a reciprocal one, in which the feelings and impact on the mentor are as relevant in the relationship as that of the ex-prisoner themselves. Discrimination is a key issue in mentorship practice we observed. Mentors may be unconsciously discriminating against the client they are trying to support and hereby could perpetuate the misrecognition experienced by the ex-prisoner. Further,

misrecognition by society as a whole is also a problem and outreach activity organised by the organisation offers mentors an opportunity to actively effect change in societal views that condemn ex-prisoners to lives without labour and social opportunities.

Being embedded in this practice context, showed us as research areas potentially relevant for our hosts. Some of these areas for exploration are as follows:

- the heterogeneity of ex-prisoner experience, exploring specifically the relationship between love recognition/misrecognition in the private sphere and desistance identity.
- mentors’ views on promoting personal growth in their client and the clients´ ability to contribute to their local community and barriers to achieving this.
- Mentors’ own stereotypes/predictions related to ex-prisoners` ability to remain crime free in the future.
- Mentors’ views of their role as an agent of change in society: i.e. tackling public stereotyping of ex-prisoners.
- Strategies mentors use to help ex-prisoners develop desistance identity and resilience needed to manage discrimination and stigma (Kyprianides et al., 2019).
- How mentors express and facilitate love recognition in their therapeutic alliances with ex-prisoners.

We noted that mentors’ organisation lacked formal guidance dedicated to how they manage their relationships with clients. As academics/researchers, our theoretical knowledge of therapeutic alliances, theory of recognition and reflection frameworks may have utility for the organisation develop this dimension of their mentorship practices and may be where we can contribute to this mentorship organisations without overwhelming them with our proposed research projects that they fear will have no immediate impact on the host organisation.

Develop an action plan

We will:

- Explore the relevance and feasibility of exploring the above research areas with the organisation, indicating the link the research has to improving mentorship relationships as well as mentor/client relationships with society.
- Develop the RRF framework based on our initial validation, adding dimensions of facilitation and provision of love recognition, professional distance and sense of worth (see table 3 in Appendix B).
- Continue the validation of the RRF with a sample of mentors.
- Explore with organisation how the framework might contribute to developing standards and training in the organisation that promotes regular

	reflection individually and collectively between mentors and between mentors and clients.

Appendix B

Table 3. Recognition Reflection Framework

Phase of reflective cycle (Gibbs model of reflection)	**Prompts to ask oneself when mentoring an ex-prisoner**	**Theoretical basis for questioning**
Describing what happened	As a mentor describe in detail your meeting with the ex- prisoner. What happened? What did you do? What did they do? Describe your clients` behaviours in and outside of your mentorship sessions.	
Examining one own reactions and feelings: Describe the emotions present.	Describe how you felt during the meeting? How do you feel about the ex-prisoner? Describe also how you think the ex-prisoner felt during the same meeting? How do you think they feel about you? Why might this be the case?	Therapeutic alliance and person-centred approaches. It means that the mentor needs to examine their own feelings and those of the prisoner. They should examine the transference from their own personal histories and counter transferences experienced by both them and the ex-prisoner and at various phases of their mentor - ex-prisoner relationship as it changes over time (Novick and Novick, 2000).
Evaluating your mentoring session:	<u>Facilitating love recognition</u> Every human being	Promoting recognition In the intimate sphere

	needs positive human relations to build self-confidence. Reflect on the nature of the clients' social networks: Describe your clients need for social contact? Who are they in contact with and what do they get out of these relationships? How are they currently building or seeking out social relationships. Are these actions appropriate? What are the benefits or disadvantages of these networks and how positive social networks can be built.	
Making sense of the interaction: analysis	Providing Love recognition whilst building appropriate relationships with the mentoree	Promoting recognition In the intimate sphere
	What was good or bad about the meeting from your perspective? What do you think the client would say if asked the same question?	Therapeutic alliance and person- centred approaches
	How regular is your contact with the client and is this sufficient?	Therapeutic alliance and person- centred approaches
	Is your relationship with the client based on mutual empathy, equality and respect with your client? Reflect on how you achieve this and if it is possible.	Therapeutic alliance and person- centred approaches
	Do you ask about and actively listen to the ex-prisoners' thoughts and feelings?	Therapeutic alliance and person-centred approaches
	Do you try to be non-judgmental when exploring openly the client´s perspectives?	Therapeutic alliance and person- centred approaches
	Explore some of your	Tertiary desistance

	own personal bias when dealing with ex-prisoners and some of the biases of people that they may encounter in their everyday lives.	Rights Recognition
	Professional distance: How would you describe the nature of your relationship with your client? How open and clear have you been with the client about the role and function of you as a mentor? How do you achieve a balance between professional distance with your mentoree and achieving an empathic relationship with them?	Achieving agape or phileo without falling to an authoritarian version of agape and avoiding eros
	Recognition of worth Have you helped the client observe and evaluate their own actions? Do you actively elicit hope for change in your client? Do you emphasize the convict's free will and responsibilities? Do you encourage them to learn from their own prior experiences and problem solve? Can you support or advise them on how they can achieve personal growth and self-realization? Can you help them problem-solve and think about the choices they can make? How do you promote a feeling of tolerance in the area that you live when they come in contact with your mentoree.	Recognition of worth and ability to change (recognition of social value) Strengths based approach to rehabilitation Honneth's (2008) theory of recognition at a group level (moral progress)

	How can you help employers and other stakeholders manage fear or distrust of prisoners in the wider society that you live in?	
Drawing conclusions	Draw conclusions about your own actions as a mentor and how your actions impact on the prisoner during the meeting. How as a mentor do your action impact on the self-esteem, self-respect, and self-confidence of the ex-prisoner? How likely is it that your client will maintain crime free as a result of your sessions? Explain?	Therapeutic alliance and person- centred approaches Honneth's (2008) theory of recognition Primary and tertiary desistance theory Honneth's (2008) theory of recognition
Develop an action plan:	What could have been done differently, what might the best next steps in future meetings be to improve the mutual respect in the relationship and promote the client's sense of worth?	Therapeutic alliance and person- centred approaches