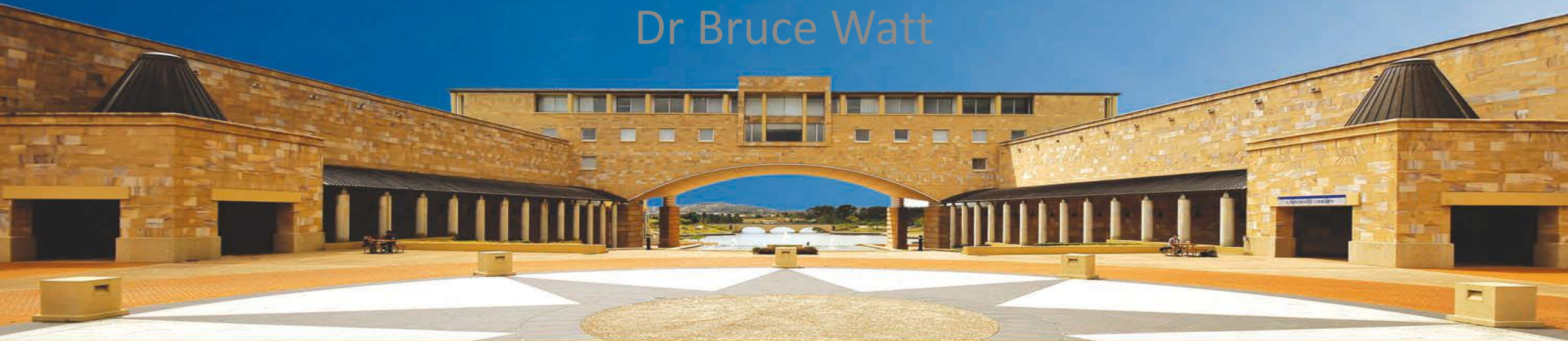




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BRINGING AMBITION TO LIFE

Researching Incarcerated Populations

Dr Bruce Watt



Overview

- Why conduct research with incarcerated samples?
- The vulnerability of incarcerated samples.
- NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research applied to incarcerated samples.
- Research examples with child and adult incarcerated samples.
- Ethical Considerations Specific to Participants.

Anger Management Program for Violent Offenders (Watt & Howells, 1999)

- Evaluation of Skills Training for Aggression Control (STAC).
- CBT program for incarcerated and community sentenced violent offenders.
- Two studies investigating treatment effectiveness for anger control and aggression.
- Allocation of resources, and requirement of achieving parole.

Anger is

- (a) Hitting another person.
- (b) Swearing and slamming doors.
- (c) A normal emotion. (Correct response).
- (d) What we say to ourselves.

When you take time out from an angry situation you should:

- (a) Go for a drive in your car.
- (b) Go to the pub.
- (c) Listen to some music. (Correct response).
- (d) Think ways to get back at the person who you were angry with.

Table 2. Pre-test and post-test means and standard deviations on WAKS, STAXI and NAS Scores for Study 1

	<i>N</i>	Pre-test		Post-test	
		<i>M</i>	SD	<i>M</i>	SD
Experimental group					
WAKS	18	17.35*	6.28	22.85*	6.00
STAXI–Trait Anger	18	20.61	7.55	19.83	4.76
STAXI–Anger Out	18	16.61	3.87	17.28	4.08
STAXI–Anger In	18	18.61	6.61	17.83	4.66
STAXI–Anger Control	18	21.89	6.29	22.06	5.81
NAS–Behavioural Domain	17	31.24	6.19	32.24	5.77
NAS–Cognitive Domain	17	30.85	4.79	31.53	5.21
NAS–Arousal Domain	17	30.24	6.73	30.65	6.33
NAS–Trigger Domain	17	61.50	15.94	63.50	18.06
Control group					
WAKS	13	18.96	6.69	19.44	6.33
STAXI–Trait Anger	12	18.67	5.18	19.58	5.20
STAXI–Anger Out	12	15.08	4.83	15.17	4.24
STAXI–Anger In	12	15.79	5.02	16.75	5.63
STAXI–Anger Control	12	19.00	7.66	18.67	6.61
NAS–Behavioural Domain	12	25.50	4.95	27.33	5.73
NAS–Cognitive Domain	12	30.33	5.57	29.83	4.02
NAS–Arousal Domain	12	27.67	4.40	28.58	5.09
NAS–Trigger Domain	12	54.42	12.92	56.58	11.60

* $p < .05$.

Table 3. Pre-test and post-test means and standard deviations on WAKS-R and NAS for Study 2

	Control group				Experimental group			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	<i>M</i>	SD	<i>M</i>	SD	<i>M</i>	SD	<i>M</i>	SD
Anger knowledge								
HTA	15.9	7.0	17.2	7.0	17.2	6.1	17.6	7.5
LTA	20.4	5.2	20.9	5.9	20.7	5.2	23.5	4.9
NAS-M Arousal scale								
HTA	33.5	3.4	35.5	7.0	32.8	5.8	34.2	5.4
LTA	24.6	3.8	24.6	4.4	25.1	4.0	24.5	5.1
NAS-M Cognitive scale								
HTA	32.0	7.5	34.0	8.2	33.7	4.3	33.5	5.0
LTA	27.8	3.7	27.8	4.2	27.7	3.0	26.4	4.1
NAS-M Behavioural scale								
HTA	33.2	7.1	35.2	8.9	33.3	5.0	33.3	5.6
LTA	24.2	4.9	24.2	4.8	22.0	2.0	22.2	4.4
NAS-M Trigger scale								
HTA	59.0	21.6	59.0	22.7	66.4	7.4	65.7	6.4
LTA	48.4	10.7	50.7	13.0	50.0	7.9	52.2	10.0

HTA = High Trait Anger.

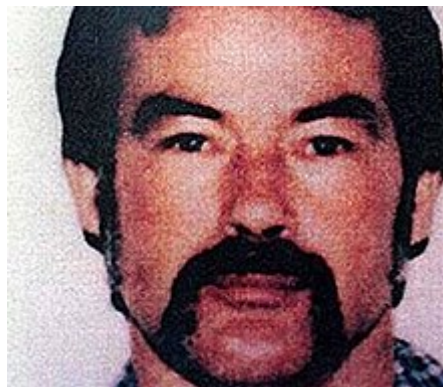
LTA = Low Trait Anger.

Note. Sample size for control group, high trait $N = 4$ and low trait $N = 15$. Sample size for experimental group, high trait $N = 6$ and low trait $N = 13$. Figures rounded to one decimal place.

Why research incarcerated samples?

- What works for offender rehabilitation.
- Accuracy of risk assessment procedures.
- Strategies to manage self-harm and suicide risk among prisoners.
- Identifying underlying functions of offending behaviours.
- Omega-3 and prison misconduct.

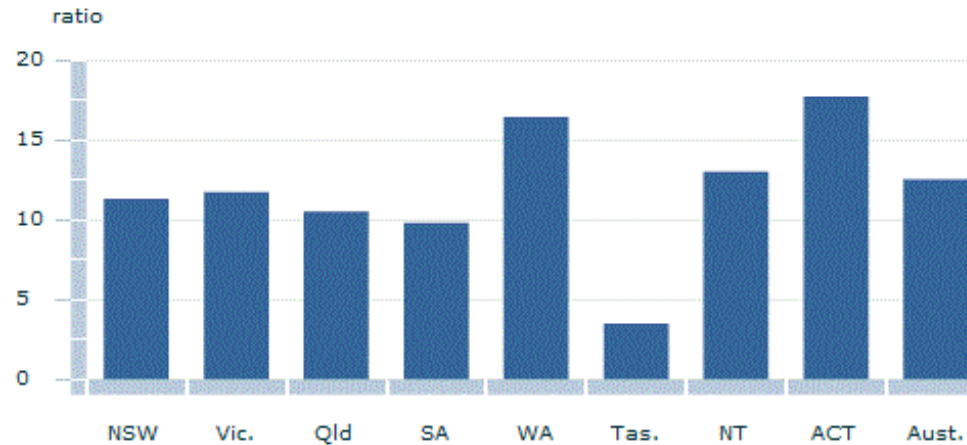
Incarcerated Samples as Vulnerable?



Incarcerated
Samples as
Vulnerable

RATIO OF INDIGENOUS TO NON-INDIGENOUS AGE STANDARDISED IMPRISONMENT RATE(a), states & territories

2016



Ratio

Controls

2006 2008 2010 2012 2014 2016

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Australian Bureau of Statistics

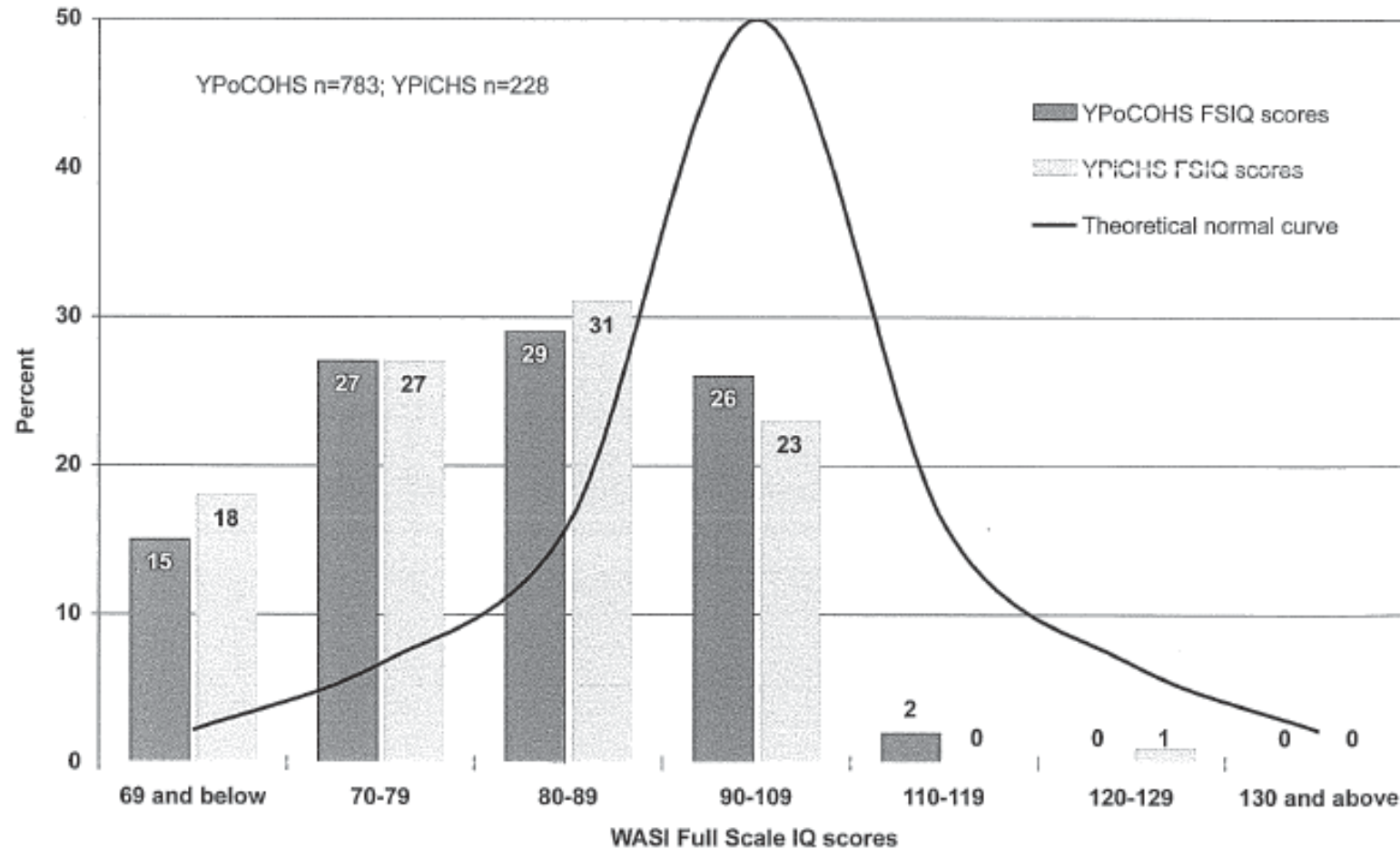
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Footnote(s): (a) The ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to non-Indigenous imprisonment rates is calculated by dividing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rate by the non-Indigenous rate.

Source(s): Prisoners in Australia

NSW Young Offenders on Community Orders (Kenny & Nelson, 2008)

Figure 6.2 WASI Full Scale IQ scores for community orders and custody samples (%)



Young Offenders on Community Orders

Table 6.2 Educational history (%)

Educational history*	Males		Females		Total	
	Community ^a	Custody ^b	Community ^a	Custody ^b	Community ^a	Custody ^b
Mean age left school (years) ¹	15.0	14.5	14.5	14.6	14.9	14.5
Not attending school ¹	82	81	84	83	82	82
- left school before Year 7 ¹¹	2	1	1	0	2	1
- left school in Year 7 ¹¹	7	16	6	20	7	16
- left school in Year 8 ¹¹	15	24	16	33	15	25
- left school in Year 9 ¹¹	31	34	43	20	32	33
- left school in Year 10 ¹¹	30	16	27	27	30	17
- left school in Year 11 ¹¹	11	8	4	0	10	7
- left school in Year 12 ¹¹	5	1	3	0	5	1
Skip/skipped school regularly ¹	59	n/r	69	n/r	60	n/r
Suspended from school ¹	90	90	85	100	89	91
History of special education ¹	37	39	32	50	36	40

a (i) Males=673, Females=118, Total=791; (ii) M=551, F=97, T=648; b M=156-209; F=12-18; T=168-227;

¹ Special school or class, tutorial centre, or alternative community based program; *[YPiCHS: before custody]

Prevalence of Mental Disorders NSW Prisoners

Table 1. Twelve month ICD-10 diagnoses of major mental disorders for reception and sentenced prisoners in NSW

Diagnosis	Receptions						Sentenced						Total [§] (n = 1487)						
	Men (n = 756)			Women (n = 165)			Total	p-value	Men (n = 458)			Women (n = 108)			Total	p-value	n	%	95% CI
	n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI			n	%	95% CI	n	%	95% CI					
Psychosis	81	10.7	8.6–13.2	25	15.2	10.3–21.8	11.5	0.13	19	4.2	2.6–6.6	6	5.7	2.3–12.5	4.5	0.7	131	8.9	7.5–10.5
Affective disorder																			
Depression [†]	121	16.0	13.5–18.9	39	23.6	17.5–30.1	17.4	0.02	43	9.5	7.0–12.7	15	14.4	8.6–23.0	10.4	0.2	218	14.8	13.1–16.7
Dysthymia	54	7.2	5.5–9.4	16	9.7	5.8–15.5	7.7	0.35	17	3.8	2.3–6.1	6	5.8	2.4–12.7	4.2	0.5	93	6.4	5.2–7.8
Manic episode [‡]	21	2.8	1.8–4.3	13	7.9	4.5–13.4	3.7	0.003	6	1.3	0.5–3.0	2	1.9	0.3–7.4	1.4	1.0	42	2.8	2.0–3.8
Total affective disorder	158	21.1	18.3–24.2	56	33.9	26.8–41.7	23.4	0.000	55	12.4	9.6–15.9	21	20.4	13.4–29.7	13.9	0.05	290	19.9	17.9–22.1
Anxiety disorder																			
PTSD	164	21.7	18.9–24.9	72	43.6	36.0–51.5	25.6	0.000	73	16.2	13.0–20.0	46	43.8	34.3–53.8	21.4	0.000	355	24.0	21.9–26.3
GAD	101	13.4	11.1–16.1	37	22.4	16.4–29.7	15.0	0.004	56	12.4	9.6–15.9	16	15.2	9.2–23.8	12.9	0.54	210	14.2	12.5–16.1
Panic disorder	55	7.3	5.6–9.5	28	17.0	11.8–23.8	9.0	0.000	31	6.9	4.8–9.7	17	16.2	10.0–25.0	8.6	0.004	131	8.9	7.5–10.5
Agoraphobia	23	3.0	2.0–4.6	5	3.0	1.1–7.3	3.0	0.8	9	2.0	1.0–3.9	6	5.7	2.3–12.5	2.7	0.07	43	2.9	2.1–3.9
OCD	20	2.7	1.7–4.2	4	2.4	0.8–6.5	2.7	0.95	7	1.6	0.7–3.4	2	2	0.4–7.7	1.7	0.88	33	2.3	1.6–3.3
Social phobia	11	1.5	0.8–2.7	1	0.6	0.03–3.8	1.3	0.59	4	0.9	0.3–2.4	1	1.0	0.1–6.0	0.9	0.63	17	1.2	0.7–1.9
Total anxiety disorder	250	33.9	30.5–37.5	92	55.8	47.9–63.5	37.9	0.000	126	28.4	24.2–32.9	56	54.4	44.3–64.2	33.3	0.000	524	36.2	33.7–38.7
Any disorder (above)	314	42.0	38.4–45.6	102	61.8	53.9–69.2	45.6	0.000	147	33.0	28.7–37.6	61	59.2	49.1–68.7	37.9	0.000	624	42.7	40.1–45.3

[†]Includes mild, moderate and severe depression; [‡]Includes mania, hypomania, and bipolar affective disorder; [§]totals may not add up due to missing data for certain diagnostic groups; PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder; GAD, generalized anxiety disorder; OCD, obsessive-compulsive disorder

Research merit and integrity

- Justifiable by its potential benefit.
- Designed to ensure that respect for the participants is not compromised.
- Disseminating and communicating results – contribute to public knowledge and understanding.

Justice and Beneficence

- Process of recruiting participants is fair, and no exploitation of participants in the conduct of research.
- Likely benefit of research, must justify any risks of harm or discomfort to participants.
- Design research to minimise risk of harm or discomfort.
- Clarify the potential benefits and risks.
- Welfare of the participants in the research context.

Risk and Benefit

- Potential for harm, discomfort, or inconvenience.
- Psychological harms.
- Legal harms.
- Benefits – Gains in knowledge, insight and understanding.
Improved social welfare and individual wellbeing.
- Managing risks.

The Fundamental Characteristics and Functional Underpinnings of Juvenile Offending

- Semi-structured interviews with juvenile offenders to identify underlying functions for offending and other problematic behaviour.
- Exploration of sensitive areas, and potential areas for distress, for example self-harm, child abuse history, offending.
- Inform young person and parent/legal guardian of sensitive areas.
- Protocol for addressing the emergence of historical trauma.
- Harm to potential researcher.

Respect

- Recognition of human being intrinsic value.
- Respect privacy, confidentiality and cultural sensitivities.
- Capacity to make own decisions.
- Where diminished capacity – involve where possible and provide protection – e.g., children.

General Requirements for Consent

- Voluntary choice based on sufficient information and adequate understanding.
- Consent may need to be renegotiated or confirmed from time to time.
- No person should be subject to coercion or pressure.
- Reimburse the costs.
- Where others need to be involved.
- Those who decline, suffer no disadvantage as a result of their decision.

Ethical Considerations Specific to Participants

- Women who are pregnant and the human foetus.
- Children and young people.
- People in dependent or unequal relationships.
- People highly dependent on medical care who may be unable to give consent.
- People with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, or a mental illness.
- People who may be involved in illegal activities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- People in other countries.

Children and Young People

Particular ethical concerns:

- Capacity to understand what the research entails, and whether their consent is sufficient.
- Possible coercion by parents, peers, researchers or others – Youth Justice and detention centre staff.
- Conflicting values and interests of parents and children.

Children and Young People

- Age appropriate explanatory statement.
- Research in familiar setting.
- Preliminary session to assuage capacity to participate in interview, establish rapport.
- Use of visual resources.
- Establish “ground rules.”
- Questions to clarify understanding of research.
- Right to withdraw anytime.

People in Dependent or Unequal Relationships

- Unequal status and position of authority.
- Prisoners vulnerable to being over-researched.
- Potential to invite support person.
- No negative consequences – whether participate or not.
- Challenge of Privacy.

People with a Cognitive Impairment, an Intellectual Disability, or a Mental Illness

Consider how condition affects:

- Determine person's capacity.
- Who will make the decision.
- Criteria used in making decision.
- Process for reviewing.

People who may be Involved in Illegal Activities

May discover information regarding illegal activity.

Legal implications may include:

- Statutory obligation to disclose information revealed.
- Legal orders that compel disclosure by a researcher.

Explain to participants:

- Likelihood of discovery and any legal obligation for the researcher.
- Extent to which kept confidential, and response to any legal obligations or orders to disclose.

Legal Harms

- All participants informed inquiry regarding previous offending.
- No identifying details recorded with data.
- Identifying details stored separately.
- Alpha-numeric codes to match data over time.
- Upon completion of data collection, all identifying details destroyed.
- Specifics about past offending not asked, including dates, locations, people/victims.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Respect for and value of culture and language diversity.

Six core values

- Reciprocity
- Respect
- Equality
- Responsibility
- Survival and protection
- Spirit and integrity.

Researching Incarcerated Samples

- Why conduct research with incarcerated samples?
- The vulnerability of incarcerated samples.
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