

## University of Montana ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &  
Professional Papers

Graduate School

---


2019

# State Regulated Relationships: Mothers' Experiences of Partner Incarceration

Hannah Brianne Fields  
*The University Of Montana*

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Community-Based Research Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [Place and Environment Commons](#), [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), [Rural Sociology Commons](#), [Social Control, Law, Crime, and Deviance Commons](#), [Sociology of Culture Commons](#), and the [Theory, Knowledge and Science Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Fields, Hannah Brianne, "State Regulated Relationships: Mothers' Experiences of Partner Incarceration" (2019). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 11405.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/11405>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

STATE REGULATED RELATIONSHIPS: MOTHERS' EXPERIENCES OF PARTNER  
INCARCERATION

By

HANNAH BRIANNE FIELDS

Bachelor of Arts, University of Montana, Missoula, MT, 2016

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Arts  
Sociology, Inequality and Social Justice and Criminology

The University of Montana  
Missoula, Montana

May 2019

Approved by:

Scott Whittenburg, Dean of The Graduate School  
Graduate School

Dr. Celia Winkler, Chair  
Sociology

Dr. Jackson Bunch  
Sociology

Dr. Laurie Walker  
Social Work

Dr. Jana Staton  
Counselor Education

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
INTRODUCTION .....	1
LITERATURE .....	2
Mass Incarceration .....	2
Families .....	3
Children .....	4
Maintaining Family Relationships .....	6
Significant Partners .....	7
Mothers .....	12
Montana .....	12
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	14
RESEARCH METHODS .....	16
Population of Interest .....	17
Recruitment .....	18
Interviews .....	21
Data Analysis.....	21
Ethical Considerations.....	22
FINDINGS .....	22
Visitation and Caring .....	23
Barriers to visiting .....	26
Reduced visitation days .....	26
Reduced visitation days: carlines and overcrowded spaces .....	27
Reduced visitation days: misaligned social expectations and visitor tension .....	29
Reduced visitation days: travel and waiting times .....	30
Navigating barriers: reduced visitation days .....	32
Dress code regulations .....	35
Dress code regulations: a regulation of the space .....	35
Dress code regulations: misaligned social expectations and tension with Correctional Officers .....	36
Dress code regulations: being denied entry results in time lost .....	41
Navigating barriers: dress code .....	42
Phone Calls and Caring .....	44
Barriers to phone conversations .....	48
Phone Calls: Cannot call him at the prison .....	48
Phone calls: no privacy and a preoccupation with the phone .....	52
Phone calls: limited time for conversations .....	54
Navigating barriers: phone calls .....	56
A Constant Barrier to Caring: Expenses .....	59
The expense of visiting .....	59

The expense of phone calls .....	61
Navigating the expenses of visitation and phone calls .....	62
DISCUSSION .....	64
CONCLUSION .....	71
REFERENCES .....	74
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE .....	77
APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY .....	78
APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT FLYER .....	79
APPENDIX D: MONTANA STATE PRISON DRESS CODE REGULATIONS .....	80

State Regulated Relationships: Mothers' Experiences of Partner Incarceration.

Chairperson: Celia Winkler

The effects of incarceration on families have been studied in-depth, but little research evaluates the effects on women parenting children after the incarceration of their romantic partner. This research evaluates how mothers manage to keep their families intact throughout the duration of their partner's incarceration. I approached this question using a geography theory of care developed by Sophie Bowlby and Linda McKie. This theory states that the quality of care is dependent on the space in which it is provided, the social expectations within the caring environment, and the amount of time required to provide or receive care. Using this theoretical framework, I investigated how these mothers manage to care for their incarcerated partners, children, and themselves throughout their partner's incarceration. To answer this question, I conducted nine in-depth, qualitative interviews with women experiencing partner incarceration across the state of Montana. Findings suggest that these women provide care for their partners, children, and self through visiting and sharing phone calls with their incarcerated loved ones. However, they also face significant barriers to providing this care, such as prison regulations and the financial cost of maintaining contact with incarcerated people. While I expected women to navigate these barriers by utilizing resources within their communities, I actually found that these women receive little support from their communities, and instead develop their own strategies for navigating barriers to providing and receiving care. This research uncovers the common barriers mothers in Montana confront when attempting to provide care for their families during partner incarceration. Eliminating these barriers has the potential to encourage family unity and, according to prior research, reduce an incarcerated person's risk of recidivism.

## INTRODUCTION

Incarceration does not affect just the incarcerated person; friends and family left behind must reorganize their lives without a loved one. The effects of incarceration on families have been studied in-depth, but little research evaluates the effects on women parenting children (mothers) after the incarceration of their male partners. Men experience incarceration at a higher rate, so evaluating how mothers then manage the incarceration of their romantic partners is necessary, as mothers often become the main care providers for the children, the incarcerated partners, and themselves. Considering the known adverse effects of incarceration on families and children, it is important to understand how mothers preserve these relationships, and ways to better support them. Further, supporting mothers in keeping their families unified has the potential to reduce the incarcerated person's risk of recidivism (Bales and Mears 2008; Duwe and Clark 2013; Mowen and Visser 2016). In fact, research suggests that increasing an incarcerated person's contact with their community through visitation, in particular, can significantly reduce their likelihood of recidivism (Bales and Mears 2008; Mowen and Visser 2016). To best support families facing paternal incarceration, it is imperative to look to the mothers undertaking the majority of the work, and gain a better understanding of their lived experiences. This study aims to understand how these mothers keep their families intact throughout partner incarceration. To do this, I address the following two questions:

1. How do mothers provide care for their incarcerated partner, children, and themselves throughout the duration of the incarceration?

2. How do mothers navigate barriers to providing care for their incarcerated partner, children, and themselves throughout the duration of the incarceration?

To better understand these phenomenon, I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with mothers experiencing partner incarceration in Montana. With interviews, I assessed the mothers' experiences providing care for their children, incarcerated partners, and themselves using the Caringscapes/Carescape theoretical framework (Bowlby 2011). The findings suggest that these mothers provide a substantial amount of care for their family through visiting and phoning their incarcerated partner in the prison. However, mothers are also faced with multiple barriers to providing care in these ways. The most salient obstacles identified by participants were the incarceration institution's regulations and the expenses involved in providing care for the incarcerated loved ones. My findings also suggest that these mothers were resourceful and strategized multiple ways to navigating the barriers to caring for their partners. While these strategies were useful to these mothers, they still reported significant challenges to maintaining caring relationships with their incarcerated loved ones and children.

## LITERATURE

### *Mass Incarceration*

In the United States, approximately 1.5 million people are incarcerated for an extended amount of time within a prison. An additional 727,000 people are serving their shorter sentence in a correctional or jail facility. While incarceration rates have been slowly decreasing since 2013, the number of people incarcerated today is still four times higher than the 1970's (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2016). The cost of incarceration has quadrupled as well, spiking to 38.8 billion taxpayer dollars each year (Henrichson and Delaney 2012). Further, an inmate's

reentry to civilian society has proven to be challenging. In 2018, the Bureau of Justice Statistics released a report stating that 83% of previously incarcerated people were rearrested within 9 years of their release. Incarceration has multiple unexpected effects, especially on the communities and families incarcerated people are removed from.

### *Families*

The sudden removal of the incarcerated family member has unique effects on remaining members of the family. Family members endure consequences related to incarceration ranging from economic, emotional, and social stressors (Arditti et al. 2003; Arditti 2012; Braman 2004; DeHart et al. 2018; Murphey and Cooper 2015), as well as navigating the regulatory world of the prison system.

Financially, incarceration often removes a source of income from the home. Moreover, families most likely to experience the incarceration of a family member tend to already live in poverty (Murphey and Cooper 2015). In multiple studies, Arditti found the incarceration of a parent placed families in a vulnerable economic state. The author found that 60% of caregivers reported being in a “much worse” financial situation after the incarceration, 52% reported being dependent on social welfare, and 29% reported living on an income of \$5,000 dollars over the course of a year (Arditti et al. 2003). Arditti discovered that remaining family members often maintained multiple jobs in order to cover the cost of legal fees, send money to the incarcerated member, and manage the cost of living for the family (Arditti 2012). Other research has illuminated similar findings, with one family of four reportedly living on \$450.00 dollars a month. Some family members report receiving help from extended family when possible, and even selling personal items in order to make ends meet (DeHart et al. 2018). The



financial impact of incarceration limits the family's economic resources, sending them into a deeper state of poverty.

The incarceration of a family member can be hard to emotionally navigate. While the family may experience trauma from the removal and forced separation of their family member, the community often fails to sympathize due to the stigmatization of incarceration. "There are no casseroles brought to the house for the 'prison widow' and her children" (Arditti 2012:112). In fear of becoming ostracized, families often debate informing their friends or peers about the incarceration (Arditti 2012; Braman 2004; DeHart et al. 2018). Further, family members experience heightened rates of stress. The stress is frequently related to concern for the incarcerated family member and the emotional state of the remaining family members (Braman 2004; DeHart et al. 2018). The emotional effects of incarceration appear to further isolate members of a family from their community.

### *Children*

The growth of incarceration has resulted in children acutely experiencing the collateral consequences of parental incarceration. One in 14 children in America experience parental incarceration and currently, an estimated 5 million children have experienced the incarceration of a residential parent at some point in their lives (Murphey and Cooper 2015). Children of incarcerated parents are subject to an array of adverse consequences, ranging from economic disadvantages, behavioral issues, and emotional challenges (Kautz 2017; Mears and Siennick 2016; Murphey and Cooper 2015; Rakt et al. 2012; Nehsmith and Ruhland 2008; Wakefield and Wildeman 2018; Wildeman 2014) . Parental incarceration is considered one of the ten adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and has the potential to negatively impact a child's physical and

mental health throughout their life course. In fact, research suggests that children who experience parental incarceration are five times more likely to experience other additional ACES when compared to children who have never experienced parental incarceration (Turney 2018).

Children are at a serious financial disadvantage. The family's loss of a source of income limits a child's access to a stable economic future. Children of incarcerated parents are 33% less likely to attain the same level of education as children whose parents have not been incarcerated. The lower levels of education attainment follow children into adulthood, resulting in few well-paying job opportunities and lower reported earnings (Mears and Siennick 2016). Furthermore, paternal incarceration increases a child's risk of homelessness by 90% (Wildeman 2014). Economic pitfalls such as these leave children experiencing parental incarceration steps behind children whose parents have not been incarcerated, with little support in regaining ground.

Children of incarcerated parents are more likely to participate in criminal behavior. The National Longitudinal Adolescent to Adult Health data exposed that children who experience parental incarceration are 26% more likely than children without incarcerated parents to participate in criminal acts (Mears and Siennick 2016). Further, illicit drug use is more common in children experiencing parental incarceration (Mears and Siennick 2016; Murray et al. 2015).

Parental incarceration is emotionally disruptive for children. Some research discusses the notion of ambiguous loss. Children who experience parental incarceration may struggle to conceptually grasp why the parent has been removed, what the incarcerated parent's role is during the imprisonment, and if they can trust the incarcerated parent again (Arditti 2012;

Kautz 2017; Nehsmith and Ruhland 2008). Often, children with an incarcerated parent experience social stigmatization from their community and peers (Arditti 2012; Kautz 2017). Antisocial and aggressive behavior is subject to develop in children after the incarceration of a parent (Murray 2014). Further, research has found that children of incarcerated parents report experiencing depression at a 14% higher rate than children whose parents have not been incarcerated (Mears and Siennick 2016).

### *Maintaining Familial Relationships*

Incarceration of a family member affects relationships with the incarcerated and their family, as well as relationships between the family members. The prison system's forced separation of inmates and their family members limits relationship quality and growth. Braman's (2004) ethnographic observation of a family managing paternal incarceration revealed exactly that. The incarcerated father's eldest child, who was once very close to her father, became distant and disconnected from him. The middle child, who experienced the incarceration of his father at a young age didn't have an opportunity to develop a deep relationship with his father, and the youngest child was born while the father was incarcerated. Other studies suggest similar results. A young woman who experienced maternal incarceration didn't even want to be identified as the woman's daughter after the incarceration. Her mother's incarceration had completely destroyed the relationship, and she did not want to have any connection to her. Other participants who had experienced parental incarceration noted the dissolution of trust and the need for the incarcerated parent to rebuild trust in order to maintain the relationship. Some participants expressed feeling the incarceration of their parent had left them with multiple unanswered questions, which acted as a wedge in the

relationship, creating space between the child and parent (Kautz 2017). Further, the incarcerated often expressed feeling a need to protect their family from information that would make them worry. This led the incarcerated to withhold information about their daily lives and emotions while in prison. Inmates reported completely losing familial relationships as a result of their incarceration (DeHart et al. 2018).

Remaining caregivers face multiple challenges navigating relationships with the children and other family members related to the incarcerated person. The caregivers witness the children's emotional and behavioral responses to the incarceration of their parent. Parents identified their children's adverse emotional reaction to the incarceration of the co-parent as the most challenging aspect of the situation, trumping their own financial and emotional struggles (Turnovic et al. 2012). Added challenges arise from extended family member's disapproval of the relationship with the incarcerated being. Multiple studies noted a lack of family support, and an inability to discuss the incarceration with extended family due to a dissatisfaction with the incarcerated person (DeHart et al. 2018; Braman 2004; Turnovic et al. 2012). The consequences of incarceration seep into multiple aspects of the family life, creating complex circumstances for those involved.

### *Significant Partners*

Romantic relationships between incarcerated people and people who are not incarcerated meet multiple barriers to success. Most notable is the restriction and regulation of intimate activities such as hugging, kissing, and intercourse. Arguably as significant is the limited time the incarcerated spend with their significant partner. Maintaining a relationship with someone

who is incarcerated has proven to be emotionally and economically challenging (Comfort 2003; Comfort 2008; Fishman 1990).

The incarceration of a romantic partner has economic costs that go beyond the potential loss of income. Women spend large sums of money just to stay in contact with their incarcerated partner through visits, sending packages to the inmate and talking on the phone.

Most prisons are located in rural areas, away from the city's eye (Christian 2005), making trips to the prison a full day journey, if not an overnight endeavor for most visitors. The cost of gas, food, potential lodging, and time away from work add up quickly. While some visitors have vehicles or friends to carpool with, others might utilize bus or shuttle services to access the prison. In New York State, a bus service takes visitors to and from the prisons that surround the city. An adult ticket is forty dollars and children are half price. A single trip to and from the prisons takes a minimum of 24 hours. In addition to the cost of tickets, patrons of the shuttle often pay for meals and snacks along the way. The shuttle service is beneficial to many, but time consuming and exhausting (Christian 2005). Further, visitors often bring costly packaged food and goods for the incarcerated person (Comfort 2008; Christian 2005). Visitors of the prison expend their time and money each time they make the journey to see their loved one.

Women commonly send packages to their incarcerated partner. These packages often provide the prisoners with necessities not available at the prison (Comfort 2008). Women visiting San Quentin reported spending anywhere between 70-300 dollars on a single package for the inmate (Comfort 2008). In addition to packages, women reported giving their partner a monthly allowance for their commissary canteen ranging from 20-300 dollars (Comfort 2008).

Maintaining contact with inmates via telephone calls appears to be the most reasonable and accessible method of communication. However, research suggests phone conversations are incredibly expensive (Braman 2004; Comfort 2008; Fishman 1990). Women maintaining contact with their loved ones have reported monthly phone bills exceeding 200 dollars a month (Braman 2004; Comfort 2008). Often, the women feel guilty denying a collect call, and eventually block all collect callers. Women have also reported having their phone service disconnected due to unpaid bills (Braman 2004). Correctional systems around the U.S. enter contracts with telephone companies such as Global Tel Link which provide the penal system with a percentage of the profits made from the telephone calls. In order to meet the contract demands and make money, the telephone companies charge a much higher rate for each phone call (Kukurowski 2012). The monopolization of phone services at local prisons has limited another method of communication for inmates and their loved ones.

Women who experience the incarceration of an intimate partner are faced with several emotional challenges. The forced separation from their loved one is potentially lonely and traumatic (Comfort 2008; Fishman 1990; Turnovic et al. 2012). Moreover, women mourn for their partners, with feelings of guilt for the incarcerated partner's inability to participate in the "free world." Incarcerated partners often lose irrevocable opportunities, such as children's birthdays, the death of friends or family, or witnessing big life events (Comfort 2008). Also, the women take on additional responsibilities after the incarceration of their partner. For instance, women often act as the inmate's communicator, informing family and friends of the inmate's status, and managing the incarcerated person's legal situation (Fishman 1990). Grief, guilt, and social responsibilities are just some of emotional obstacles these women navigate.

Often, visiting the prison is a stressful undertaking. Women are subject to long days traveling to and from the prison, invasive strip searches, and the risk of being denied entry (Comfort 2008; Fishman 1990). For example, prisons often enforce strict dress codes with which everyone, including children, must comply in order to visit the inmate. In Montana State Prison (MSP), located in Deer Lodge Montana, spandex or leggings are forbidden unless they are covered by another item of clothing that falls six inches past the knees (Montana Department of Corrections 2018). These dress code regulations are common within the prison environment and make accessing the prison challenging, especially with a family.

The amount of time and effort expended in order to access the prison causes women distress. In order to maintain a romantic relationship, women must interact with the institution in which their loved one is held. Comfort argues that the intimate partners of the incarcerated become “quasi-inmates,” and experience “secondary prisonization” (Comfort 2008:15). Secondary prisonization, according to Comfort, is when “carceral contact profoundly transforms women’s intimate and social lives through its regulation of their conduct, physical appearances, agendas, sexual relations and fantasies, and speech both at and away from the correctional facility” (2008:14). This secondary prisonization has the potential to seriously affect women’s mental health, as they feel the repercussions of the significant partner’s punishment, even though they themselves never committed a crime. Women report feelings of stigmatization from both their communities, and the people within the prison (Comfort 2008; Fishman 1990). The women take on excess stress and perceived judgment in order to maintain engagement with their significant partner.

After the incarceration of a romantic partner, methods of communication and intimacy change. Women with incarcerated partners in San Quentin rely heavily on writing letters. These letters are the main and least expensive form of communication. And although they will be read by Correctional Officers before their intimate partner, couples still use the letters as a way to express their intimate feelings for their partner (Comfort 2008). Fishman notes that letters act as a way for the wives of the incarcerated to adapt to the new circumstances of their marriage and remain connected to their loved one (1990).

Another method of intimate expression is exchanging gifts. Inmates offer their partners art they created, or items from commissary, purchased after many hours of labor. The women provide basic, yet highly appreciated, essentials such as underwear, blankets and most importantly, food (Comfort 2008). Many women spend time and energy buying properly packaged food that meets prison regulations. During visiting hours, the food is a gift that the men look forward to, and the women enjoy providing (Comfort 2008).

While it isn't permitted, many couples express intimacy during visiting hours. Each prison has different rules and regulations, but most restrict intimate touch. At San Quentin, couples are allowed to share a closed mouth kiss and hug as a greeting, hold hands during the extent of their stay, and share another closed mouth kiss and hug upon departure. If a couple is caught participating in sexual acts during visiting hours, the inmate risks being placed in solitary confinement as punishment (Comfort 2008). Although it is risky, wives and significant partners report having sexual intercourse in the visiting room. The visiting room provides little privacy, and women expressed feeling embarrassed and conflicted about participating in a public sexual act (Comfort 2008; Fishman 1990). Also, there is an increased diagnosis of infectious diseases



such as HIV within the prison population (Comfort et al. 2005). The secretive sexual activities do not provide time for the application of safe sex practices. Conjugal visits, viewed as a privilege, are only provided to inmates who are married and well behaved. During the conjugal visit, the couple spends a few nights together, cooks together, and enjoys one another's presence without direct surveillance (Comfort 2008). However, in most cases, when a couple experiences incarceration they have to re-work the ways in which they express their admiration for one another.

### *Mothers*

While much research has evaluated the effects of incarceration on families and children, less research investigates its effects on significant partners. Comfort (2008) and Fishman (1990) have taken big steps toward understanding the experiences of wives and intimate partners, but neither have focused on mothers, precisely. Considering that 90% of children experiencing paternal incarceration are cared for by their mother, it is necessary to better understand how these mothers manage intimate partner incarceration (Rutgers University 2016). Additionally, these mothers hold a unique position, managing the incarceration of their partner, acting as a single parent, and negotiating their situation within a patriarchal society. To protect families and children from the adverse effects of parental incarceration, a deeper understanding of the mother's experience is necessary.

### *Montana*

Research that evaluates the effects of incarceration on families, children, and intimate partners often takes place in states that have dramatically different demographics than Montana. For example, the state's size, population, public resources, and number of state

prisons are often quite different. San Quentin penitentiary, located just outside of San Francisco, is one of thirty state prisons for males in California. San Quentin penitentiary's population is just over 4,000 inmates (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation 2018). Montana, slightly smaller than California, hosts two male prisons, MSP and Crossroads Correctional facility. Montana State Prison holds 1,500 male inmates and is located in the southwest corner of the state (Montana Department of Corrections 2018). Crossroads Correctional Facility, a private prison, is in Shelby Montana, located in the Northwest Montana.

Montana is defined as a rural state. Rural communities tend to provide lower wages and fewer jobs leaving a substantial amount of the population living in poverty. Further, people who reside in rural areas often must travel to a nearby town to receive certain resources, such as health care or affordable food (Foutz et al. 2017). The rural nature of Montana may impact mothers as they attempt to manage their partner's incarceration.

These state characteristics have the potential to affect prisoners and their families quite differently. Montanans who experience the incarceration of a family member are subject to traveling long distances in order to visit the incarcerated person. Montana does not have developed transportation services, and with limited public transportation, mothers must have access to a vehicle and travel to the prison independently. The relatively small population at MSP could affect a mother's autonomy and engagement with the prison facility staff. Further, Deer Lodge is a rural town and does not offer as many employment opportunities as an urban city. The limited resources potentially inhibit mothers from relocating to be near their incarcerated loved one. Montana's geographic landscape, prison population, and resources set the state apart from other researched locations such as California, Vermont, or New York

(Comfort 2008; Fishman 1990; Christian 2005). With little information about a mother's experience of intimate partner incarceration paired with Montana's unique characteristics, this project aims to investigate: How do mothers manage to keep their family intact throughout the duration of their partner's incarceration?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In trying to understand the experience of mothers dealing with significant partner incarceration, I will use a theory that evaluates the process of caring for and about others. This theory, Caringscapes/Carescape, developed by Sophie Bowlby and Linda McKie, conceptualizes the multidimensional nature of caring, acknowledging the interwoven roles of space and time when providing or receiving care (Bowlby 2011).

The Caringscapes/Carescape theory recognizes Caringscapes as the "terrain of care" that care providers must navigate in order to meet the needs of the people they are caring for (Bowlby 2011:2110). Carescapes refer to the resources available, such as social support or public transportation, which shape the terrain that the care provider must navigate.

The Caringscapes/Carescape theory revolves around informal care, or care that is not transactional (Bowlby 2011). Care, according to Bowlby and McKie, can be defined as:

[P]hysical and emotional labor on behalf of some other/s. Caring includes both 'caring for'--as in physical 'tending' and caring actions on behalf of another--and 'caring about'--in the sense of emotional concern about the well-being of another. (2011:2102)

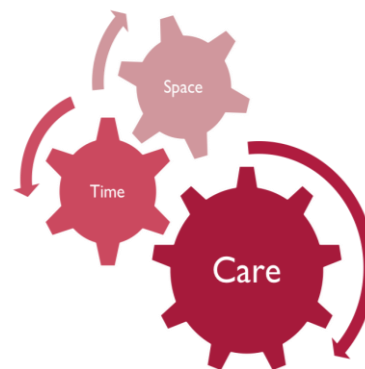


Figure 1: Visual representation of the relationships between space, time, and care.

The Caringscapes/Carescape theory recognizes the relationship between temporal and spatial environments, and the effect that this relationship has on the efficacy of care. Essentially, space, the physical location in which care takes place, has an effect on the care provided and received (Bowlby 2011). For instance, providing or receiving care within the comfort of a home is often much different than care provided or received in a busy visiting room at a state prison. Further, the theory acknowledges the limitations of care when someone is confined to a space due to disability or, in this case, incarceration. When one half of a caregiving partnership is confined, it changes the care dynamic, limiting the people able to give care. Space also references distance. If a mother lives three hours away from her incarcerated partner, the distance affects her ability to visit often, and provide care as a partner. Space, a significant factor in care is contingent upon time.

Bowlby and McKie argue that care cannot be thoroughly studied without reference to time. Time is defined in a quantitative and qualitative manner. There is the actual time, chronologically, that it takes to provide care. For instance, it takes calculable time to visit a significant partner in prison, especially if the prison is many miles away.

Time is also conceptualized in a more abstract manner. Bowlby and McKie also define time in terms of dominant social and cultural ideologies. The way social groups or communities think about their world shapes the ways in which they support care providers. For example, caring is often gendered. In the U.S. culture women tend to be recognized as the main care providers, and caring tends to be conceptualized as a feminine activity. While this gendered concept of caring is still observable today, it was more prominent and rigidly enforced in the past. Therefore, a man acting as a main care provider for children in today's time period would

be treated much differently than a man acting as children's main care provider in 1970. The characteristics of time periods shape the way men experience caring, and their ability to provide certain kinds of care.

Time is also conceptualized in terms of dominant social ideologies within the space in which care is being provided. A small town in Montana may provide different perspectives and levels of support to a family experiencing incarceration than a city like San Francisco. For instance, Montana residents may hold different expectations related to employment, social and familial relations, and economics. Resources act as another aspect of time. A mother's socioeconomic status affects her ability to obtain sufficient child care, choose her work schedule, and provide her children with adequate personal care and attention. Access is also a concept of the Caringscapes/Carescape theory. Social and cultural ideologies also inform the way people experience life events. When a mother experiences intimate partner incarceration, she may not have access to friends and family for support, due to the stigma of incarceration. Without access to these resources, the ability to provide adequate care may be thwarted (Bowlby 2011).

In relation to this project, the Caringscapes/Carescape theory will help me better understand and describe how these women navigate the various "terrains of care" for their incarcerated partners, and their children. Further, I am interested in how the Carescape affects the mother's ability to provide her intended care.

## RESEARCH METHODS

I conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with women who were parenting children while also maintaining a romantic relationship with a male incarcerated in Montana.

Qualitative interviews were an effective method for assessing this topic of interest for multiple reasons. Qualitative interviews allowed women to describe their experiences of partner incarceration in their own words and acknowledge the aspects most integral to them. Each woman's narrative highlighted the spectrum of experiencing partner incarceration, dependent on their race, socio-economic status, family dynamic, or personal values and qualitative methods allowed for these complexities to be identified. Finally, partner incarceration is to some, a sensitive subject, and by listening to and interacting with participants in a compassionate way, I was able to build trust with participants, and increase their sense of security and willingness to disclose information (Flick 2007).

#### *Population of Interest*

For this study, I sought participants who met specific criteria. First, I planned to conduct interviews with participants who had a romantic partner currently incarcerated in MSP. This criterion was put in place to encourage a vivid recollection of their recent experiences and to assess one institution, in particular. For this study, I only interviewed mothers who were parent of at least one minor child. It was not necessary that the children be biological children of the incarcerated parent. Additionally, mothers who were parenting from a distance, or had children who were not living with them also meet the criteria of this study. The parenting aspect was essential to capture the complexity of the impact parental incarceration has on families, and including women who parent from a distance also provided insight to these challenges. Finally, all women interviewed were required to have been in the romantic relationship with their partner prior to his incarceration. This element of the criteria was important for assessing the women's experience of suddenly having their relationship with

their partner become regulated by the incarceration institutions. All participants must have been 18 years or older.

### *Recruitment*

I recruited participants using four main strategies: collaborating with local organizations, distributing flyers (see appendix C), recruiting participants through Facebook and Craigslist, and snowball sampling. Potential participants were offered a 25-dollar Visa gift card as compensation for their participation.

I attempted to connect to potential participants through collaboration with organizations that work with incarcerated people or their families. For example, with an email list provided by a local re-entry organization, I emailed the details of my study to churches, parenting organizations, parole officers, and various activist groups interested in the impacts of incarceration. While these emails resulted in some communication, I was not able to connect to any participants via community collaboration. Interestingly, many of these organizations reported that they were not connected with the population of interest because they only worked with incarcerated people. I also attempted to collaborate with MSP in distributing flyers, but ultimately, the institution declined to participate.

I distributed flyers throughout the Missoula and Deer Lodge communities. I displayed flyers at local organizations that people experiencing partner incarceration might frequent, such as hotels, restaurants, gas stations, grocery stores, health clinics, parenting organizations, food banks, and shelters. I hoped to distribute flyers at the prisons, but learned that distributing flyers on prison grounds was not an option, as I do not have authorization to access the prison facilities. The flyers that I shared with various organizations and displayed throughout Missoula

and Deer Lodge did not yield any participants. However, I was able to connect to three participants by distributing flyers, in person, at a MSP visitor waiting area, located off prison grounds. I visited this location five times between September 2018 and January 2019 and distributed flyers directly to visitors.

I connected with the majority of participants using the online platforms. I created a Facebook page that outlined the details of my study and displayed a flyer describing the population of interest. My research Facebook page was viewable to the public, therefore I refused to add any potential participants as friends, as that would breach confidentiality. I also protected confidentiality by only communicating using direct messaging, which is private and not observable to the public. With this platform, I reached out to groups or organizations that were associated with incarceration. At times, I was able to reach out to individual women who met the criteria of my study. When reaching out to these organizations, groups, and people, I would describe my study, share a flyer, and ask them to contact me if they were interested or knew anyone who might be interested in the study.

I also connected to participants through recruitment on Craigslist. When recruiting participants via Craigslist, I would post my flyer in the “General Community” section of each town and city listed on Craigslist, across Montana. I provided my email and research phone number for potential participants to contact me if interested.

I connected with only one participant using snowball sampling. Many of the women I interviewed reported not knowing others experiencing partner incarceration. Some women knew others experiencing partner incarceration, but they were without children, or they did not feel comfortable participating in the study. Below is a table that represents participant’s



reported demographics (see appendix B):

Question	Response	Frequency
<b>What is your age?</b>	25	1
	31	1
	34	1
	36	1
	37	1
	39	1
	42	1
	45	1
	55	1
<b>What is the highest level of education you have completed, or the highest degree you have received?</b>	Less than a high school degree	0
	High school degree or equivalent (G.E.D.)	2
	Some college but no degree	3
	Associates degree	2
	Bachelor's degree	2
	Graduate Degree	0
<b>What was the combined earned income of your household last year?</b>	\$0 - \$10,000	1
	\$10,001 - \$20,000	2
	\$20,001 - \$30,000	2
	\$30,001 - \$40,000	3
	\$40,001 - \$50,000	1
	\$50,001 - \$60,000	0
	\$60,001 - \$70,000	0
	\$70,001 - \$80,000	0
	\$80,001 - \$90,000	0
	\$90,001 - \$100,000	0
\$100,001 or more	0	
<b>What is your race identification?</b>	Asian	0
	Black or African American	0
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	2
	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0
	White	7
	Multiple Races	0
	Other race. Please specify	0

### *Interviews*

I conducted nine in-depth interviews with women throughout the state of Montana. I had planned to collect 10-12 interviews, but the sensitive topic made finding participants especially challenging. Moreover, my initial intention to only interview women with a romantic partner incarcerated in MSP was unsuccessful. After speaking with a few participants, it became evident that incarcerated people are often transferred to other facilities throughout the state of Montana during their incarceration. Upon learning this, I shifted the criteria of the study to include romantic partners incarcerated in Crossroad Correctional Facility, the private prison in Shelby, and any pre-release center within the state. Interviews were conducted in private space such as the participant's home, a library, or a location of their choosing. The nine interviews were each at least 60 minutes in length. I audio recorded each interview with a digital recorder. Each interview was then transcribed, resulting in approximately 250 pages of transcripts.

### *Data Analysis*

I performed the data coding and analysis using a qualitative software called Dedoose. I coded the data using the Caringscapes/Carescape theoretical framework, assessing each transcript for themes associated with providing or receiving care, and barriers to doing so (Bowlby 2011). To ensure inclusivity, I also coded all re-occurring and salient themes outside of the Caringscapes/Carescape theoretical framework. After coding two interviews, I met with a committee member and completed a test of inter-rater reliability to increase and validate the reliability of my coding process (Gibbs 2007). We were able to reach 100 percent agreement, and I continued coding the remaining seven transcripts. Once the initial coding of all transcripts

was complete, I re-coded the data, collapsing codes that were describing the same phenomenon, re-defining codes that were vague, and re-grouping themes into codes and sub-codes for organizational purposes. Each code was defined with detail with rules for inclusion and exclusion, to ensure consistency. My systematic approach to coding, re-coding, and organizing and defining codes resulted in a reproducible code map for study replication (Gibbs 2007). When finished, 300 codes and sub-codes had been created.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of interest, each participant was promised confidentiality. Before starting an interview, I ensured the participant that any and all information that could expose their identity would be removed from the transcripts and final document. I then explained each section of the consent form, ensuring that participants understood the purpose of the study and their ability to withdraw from the study at any point in time. Participants were informed of the minimal risk involved in participating in the study, as recounting their partner's incarceration could result in experiencing intense emotions. Before audio recording the discussion, I informed the participant that the audio recording would be deleted once the interview transcription was complete, and I then asked the participant for verbal consent to begin recording the interview.

### FINDINGS

Findings from this study suggest that women provide and receive care with their incarcerated partners in two salient ways, visitation and phone conversations. However, these women reported experiencing several barriers to participating in these methods of care. While I anticipated that women would navigate these barriers by utilizing resources within their

communities, I instead found that these women are independently resourceful, and develop ways to navigate the barriers to providing care through visitation and phone calls on their own.

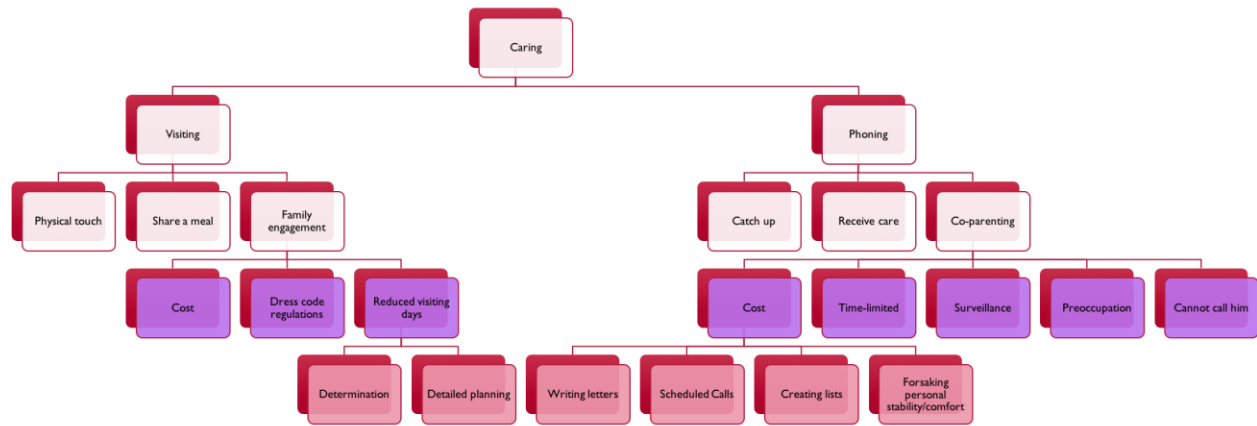


Figure 2: Visual representation of findings. Care along with types of care provided are located in rows 2-3. Barriers to providing care are listed in row 4, and the strategies to navigating the barriers are located in the 5<sup>th</sup> row.

### Visitation and Caring

Visitation is one of the ways that women are able to provide and receive care with their partner. This is a type of care that women are not able to experience while talking on the phone or writing and reading letters. Of the nine participants interviewed, seven participants had visited their partner at the prison facility, with six reporting visiting multiple times a month. These participants acknowledged visiting as an important and unique way to provide and receive care. Women who visited frequently and those who visited less often all reported a similar caring experience while visiting. Women described a variety of ways that they participated in a caring relationship with their partners during visitation, including being able to

share physical touch with their partners and to engage as a family with their partners and children.

This physical presence was especially valued by a participant who hadn't visited or seen her partner in two years, since his initial incarceration. She described her reaction to visiting her partner for the first time after so long, "Actually being able to touch and hug him, and knowing that he is still there? You know? You almost lose that contact. You're almost like, 'it's a fantasy'." She endured the time without visits, but it wasn't until she visited that she realized how important being in her partner's physical presence actually was. This woman's revelation emphasizes the challenges of providing care with limited physical interaction. Women who visited every weekend expressed a similar desire for physical contact with their partners. One woman stated, "Well, because a relationship is not all physical, some of it is mental and emotional. But, when you get that chance to have the physical part, even if it is fifteen seconds total, that's still better than nothing." Being in the physical presence of their partner, experiencing touch, is an important element of the caring relationship that keeps women coming back to the incarceration facility.

Some women identify visiting as a chance to express care as a family, engaging with their partner while in the presence of their children. Although the opportunity to engage as a family is of utmost importance, women mentioned that they do not enjoy exposing their children to the facility and this presents an ethical dilemma. When discussing this ethical dilemma, a participant explained her dedication to visiting, because, "Kids *need* both parents. And I feel sorry for the kids who don't [have both parents]. At least in some way. At least in some way he gets his dad's influence." Visiting as a family is a way that women ensure their

child maintains a bond with their partner, but family visitations also provide space to interact simultaneously, as a unit. Here, a woman described a routine visiting activity where their child is able to feel connected and direct the interaction, “And we will walk laps around the visitation room, all holding hands, you know, with Daddy in the middle. And sometimes [my child] wants to be in the middle, surrounded by both of us.” Women utilize visiting as a time to participate in family activities and cultivate close relationships between their children and their incarcerated parent.

Finally, visiting is a time when women can share a “meal” with their partner by purchasing items from the facility’s vending machines. Montana State Prison, similar to other incarceration institutions, does not allow visitors to bring food into the facility. So, if visitors choose to eat, they must purchase their food from the vending machines. While women continuously mentioned their dissatisfaction with the selection and price of vending machine treats, the opportunity to provide and share these items with their partner is a significant element of the caring relationship. In fact, women value this type of caring so much that they exert extra effort to provide this care by always budgeting for the cost of vending, and meeting the facility’s regulations, bringing only one dollar bills or change to visitation (\*\$20 dollars max per “adult”). A participant described the worrying thoughts that run through her mind as she is traveling to the prison, with money for vending being a top concern:

Oh my gosh, I forgot to get \$1 bills. I forgot to get \$1 bills for the vending. Oh my gosh, I don't have any cash on me. We're not going be able to have vending. And it's just constantly stress.

Women also recognize that their partners do not have access to these types of treats during incarceration, and the women appear to enjoy pampering their partner when they can. One

woman, laughing and appearing somewhat baffled, described her husband's new-found love for chocolate, "He hates chocolate in real life. He hates chocolate. There? He can't get enough chocolate. It's weird." Although vending treats might not be an ideal "meal," sharing this food is still an important element when visiting the prison.

*Barriers to visiting.*

While visiting is valuable to all participants interviewed, there are numerous barriers to entering the prison that each visitor must navigate. The most salient obstacles that women reported were the decrease in visitation days, from four days a week to two days a week, and prison dress code regulations. Both of these barriers directly impact the space in which the women provide and receive care. The barriers also affect the social expectations within the given setting, and the time women are allotted to participate in caring relationships with their partners. An additional barrier that women consistently referenced was the expense of visiting. Women deploy various strategies to navigate these barriers and continue to participate in a caring interaction with their partner at visitation. Most participants spoke about MSP when discussing visiting, as visiting was rare at the Crossroads Correctional Facility in Shelby, due to distance. Therefore, the following observations about barriers to visiting are directly related to MSP.

*Reduced visitation days.*

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017, MSP officially reduced visiting days from four days per week (Thursday – Sunday) to two days (Saturday and Sunday). The prison maintains that this reduction in visitation days is a temporary solution for a shortage in staff members (Montana Department of Corrections). The reduction in visitation days has created a series of unexpected consequences

that impact the quality of visitation. According to the women I spoke with, the reduced visiting days resulted in uncomfortable waiting spaces, tension between visitors, and longer wait times. These consequences have made visiting a more extensive and time-consuming process.

*Reduced visitation days: car lines and overcrowded spaces.*

The reduction in visitation days specifically impacts people who visit the prison. The implementation of this policy is inflexible, and directly related to the confinement of the visitor's loved ones. Due to the decrease in days, the number of visitors on Saturday and Sunday has increased because "all those people that would go for four days are now condensed trying to go in two days." The increase in visitors has resulted in an overcrowding of spaces, specifically the intake room and visitation rooms within the prison facility. When asked how the prison could improve the experience of visiting, a participant laughed and then replied, "Well, not shove everybody into a room like sardines." She was referring to the intake room, where visitors wait to be processed by Correctional Officers, which she described being about the size of one and a half cars. When speaking with participants, it became clear that navigating the crowd of visitors after the decrease in visiting days had become a stressful and somewhat burdensome event, impacting their experience of visiting their partner.

Each visiting unit at the prison facility has a specific number of tables (one table per family), and limited space. The decrease in days paired with an increase in visitors has heightened the probability that visiting rooms reach capacity. When a room reaches capacity, the Correctional Officers cannot admit any more visitors. Multiple participants mentioned being temporarily denied entry to the visitation because the room had met capacity, which impacted their emotional state, along with the quality of their visit with their incarcerated loved one.



As an attempt to manage the number of visitors, the prison directed visitors to wait in a car line along a road near prison grounds. Visitors line their cars up alongside this road and wait for the Correctional Officers to come escort them onto the grounds as a caravan of vehicles, where they can then begin the procedure of being processed and admitted to the facility for visitation. If visitors choose not to wait in the car line, they risk being turned away, and could miss half of their visiting time. One participant was late traveling to the prison because of poor weather conditions. She described the experience with frustration,

We rolled in to the guard shack at Montana State Prison, it was 2:28, and visitation starts at 2:30. And the caravan had already gone in. I came in at 2:28, and the guard, because I wasn't with the caravan, he sent me back. We lost two-and-a half hours of visiting time.

Depending on the Correctional Officer at the entry gate of the prison parking lot, or the number of visitors that day, waiting in the car line is a somewhat necessary way to secure a spot within the visitation room.

The location of the car line does not have any facilities, such as bathrooms or a source of water. Visitors are expected to wait in the car line without access to these facilities, which can be challenging, especially if they wait for an extended amount of time. During an interview, one participant informed me that her child had become sick with food poisoning the previous night. On the spot, she strategized a way to manage the car line without a bathroom, "Okay, we are going to run up to... I guess Safeway... and get, like a coffee can, in case he has to go potty, or something... so that we can be in that line?" Her uncertainty was reflective of the circumstances. She had contemplated skipping visiting altogether, and traveling over one hundred miles back home a day early, but decided to stay instead. She justified her decision,

Whatever life throws at us, we will navigate that system and he's going to have food poisoning whether he is in the car or visiting with dad. And that's part of parenting, is being there when they are sick.

These women are continuously considering how their children are impacted by spaces like the car line. The lack of facilities near the car line pose extra challenges for visitors, and this participant's dialogue provides insight to the simple events that can become much more complex due to the space that visitors are expected to wait.

In addition to a lack of facilities, the experience of waiting in the car line can fluctuate dramatically depending on the season. The location of the car line is without trees and structures, and in the heat of the summer, there is no source of shade. Visitors have to depend on their vehicle's air conditioners in order to fight the heat while waiting in the car line. Likewise, during the winter season, visitors must depend on their heater to avoid being cold. Considering the price of gasoline, some visitors may not have the resources to keep their vehicle running while waiting for the caravan. Moreover, some visitor's heaters or air conditioners may not work at all. The space that visitors are expected to wait before visiting is uncomfortable and lacks basic facilities, which introduces more problems for visitors to navigate.

*Reduced visitation days: misaligned social expectations and visitor tension.*

Visitors' behavior while at the prison facility is somewhat unconventional. According to a few participants I spoke with, tension between visitors sometimes occurs because visitors are essentially "competing" for one of the few tables in the visiting room. When I asked a participant about her thoughts of visitation quality, she started with this:

It's disgusting. It really is. First of all, when you go in line, it's almost like a prison riot waiting to happen, because people are like, "oh you cut in line." It's like you are dealing with grade schoolers. Because the tension and the anxiety of people wanting to see the person that they drove all of this distance to see.

Visitors know that they could lose half of their visit if the visitation room reaches capacity before they are processed by Correctional Officers, so they take offense when they feel that another visitor has cut them or decreased their chances of being admitted to the facility. So much so, one participant reported other visitors mistreating an elderly visitor, "You've got people literally *physically* blocking an elderly grandma out of the doorway because they didn't want her to quote-unquote cut." In a sense, visitors become pitted against one another, with the common goal, gaining entry to the facility. The tension between visitors is another challenge women must endure in order to spend time with their loved one.

*Reduced visitation days: travel and waiting times.*

The prison's decision to implement a car line has increased the amount of time visitors wait to visit the prison. Visiting a partner takes at least a full day, if not the weekend. First, women must travel to the prison. Some of the women I spoke with lived within fifty miles of the prison, but most lived at least one-hundred miles away. After making the trek, women are now expected to wait in the car line. Once the caravan has escorted women to the prison, they are processed and undergo a series of security checks that can take upwards of an hour. When processing is complete, visiting begins. The reduction in visitation days has incorporated an additional waiting period, the car line. Because of the car line, women are expected to start traveling to the prison sooner and wait for visitation longer.

Women know that if they are in the front of the car line, they should not be turned away. A common sentiment can be expressed with one participant's statement, "You want to get there as soon as you can because it is basically first come, first serve." So, many visitors arrive hours early in order to secure a table in the visitation room. Two of the women I interviewed mentioned getting to the car line by 11:00 AM in order to secure a spot, increasing the amount of time that they wait to visit their partner by three and a half hours. Some women stay in Deer Lodge for the weekend and visit on both Saturday and Sunday to justify the effort they exert in getting to the prison. When considering traveling to the prison, and waiting earlier, for longer, visiting begins to dominate the day, if not the weekend.

We get up at about 6:00 in the morning, and hit the road at about 6:30. But I always want to get there early, so I get a good spot in line, and try and get into our [hotel] room.

The amount of time that women spend trying to line up in the car line, and ensure access to the facility requires a lot of effort and sacrifice and acts as an additional barrier to visitation. One participant refused to wait in the car line for an extended amount of time, as she did not like the fact that her young child would have to sit for so long.

I try *not* to sit in that huge car line. Because most of the time... well that's him sitting in the room and him sitting in the car... I can let him run around in the car, but it's not the same as running around.

In order to get to the car line, and also reduce the amount of time that her child has to sit, she arrives just before the Correctional Officers lead the caravan to the facility, and chances being turned away because of her spot in the back of the line. This mother is trying to balance the

needs of her child, her partner, and herself simultaneously. Visiting is important, but she wants to ensure that her child is receiving the play that he needs, so she risks being turned away.

Each visiting unit at the prison facility has a specific number of tables and limited space. The decrease in days paired with an increase in visitors has heightened the probability that visiting rooms reach capacity. When a visiting room reaches capacity, the remaining visitors are asked to wait an additional two hours before visiting their loved one, or visitors are asked to leave the visiting room early to allow space for others. When I asked a participant to describe a day visiting the prison, being turned away due to capacity was a substantial element of her narrative.

If they turn people away, they say 'come back at five o'clock.' They cut the visit in half and at five o'clock they go in and they say, 'okay everyone, you have to leave because there are other people who want to have visits now too.' So, if nobody else is there, then you get to visit for four hours. But if there is more than six families worth of people... then you get kicked out.

Women exert a tremendous amount of effort to reach the prison in time, yet sometimes women still have to wait an additional two hours just to visit their partner for half of the allotted time. Moreover, women cannot predict when or if they will be turned away because of room capacity. One participant described her efforts paired with the uncertainty she feels right before she gets processed by Correctional Officers, "At this point, I've already been sitting on the property for two and a half hours and they may or may not kick me out at five." The reduction in visiting days has created another barrier, the potential for a visit being cut in half.

*Navigating barriers: reduced visitation days.*

Reduced visiting days create a series of problems for visitors, but the women I spoke with described some ways that they navigate these barriers and continue to visit with their partners.

When interviewing participants, it became evident that they were determined to continue visiting, refusing to let the regulations of the prison keep them away from their partners. The women are determined to visit because they recognize that visiting is a critical way to provide care. Women use this determination to motivate themselves, along with their children, and to plan diligently to avoid any issues that could keep them from visiting. This determination to care for their partner acts as a resource for enduring the consequences of reduced visiting days.

Determination is a strong motivator for some of the women I spoke with. This determination manifests in a variety of ways. One woman is determined to visit her partner because she believes that her partner and children need the care provided through visits in order to stay unified. When I asked her if she felt pressure to visit, she stated, “Absolutely. I feel pressure from him. I feel pressure from me. I feel pressure from the girls.” She is determined to keep her family connected during this incarceration to ensure that her partner does not feel as isolated as he easily could. Another woman who visits every week for the entire weekend, described how she stays motivated to continue visiting the prison, and how she encourages her son to stay motivated too.

[We were] directly objecting to the Department of Corrections executive director, with Senators on the line. We are just trying to be advocates against the suppressive system. So, you’ve got to look at the value of that. What [child] is down there, you know, pounding pavement and witnessing all this happen?

This Native American woman is motivated to support and advocate for her husband’s freedom, especially because she is adamant that he was wrongly incarcerated. She recognizes that visiting every weekend can become tiresome, especially for her kid, but she wants him to be involved, and understand that this is about more than spending weekends visiting the prison.

She wants her son to understand the complex history that is involved in their case, and how race has and continues to impact his risk of incarceration.

It's difficult to help him realize that the good guys and the bad guys aren't necessarily the cops and robbers that you would imagine. I said, there's good cops and there's bad cops. In this particular situation, it's so vital that he understand that we do eventually get justice and get this shit worked out. Because, he's... desperate to *believe* that the police are going to be there for him. And *I* am desperate to not allow that assumption happen in his played reality. Because, I mean look at him, he is a healthy Native American boy, who's very well versed in American history and in social justice, and his lived experience is not that police are the good guys.

To her, continuously visiting the prison and fighting her husband's conviction is in a sense fighting for her own son's freedom and safety from the incarceration system. Continuing this fight is a way she provides care for her son and her partner, who is unable to participate as directly. This reality is highly motivational and keeps her determined to navigate the barriers to visiting.

Determination also fuels women to plan their trips, and ensure that they gain access to the visitation room. "We're militant in order to make sure that the visitation happens." Through careful organization and detailed planning, women are able to care for their incarcerated partners. In fact, some women plan their trips to the prison with precision, down to the unexpected stop to pee.

I have to leave four hours early. So, if I want to be there by one... 12 9 8 7... is that right? Well, it's three hours but I want to get gas. I want to get money. And I want to make sure I get there on time, and... if I have to stop and pee... I don't know.

These women have learned from experience, being two minutes late can be the difference between visiting for four hours, or just two. So, in order to avoid this issue, the women I spoke with make sure that they will be on time, or better yet, early. But, this planning goes beyond time, women also prepare for long waits with a stash of food for the whole family. One

participant described the ways she cuts time, and costs, by packing food for the trip, “I always have a basket that I keep the food in, so that's what we eat out of, so we're not spending extra money eating out, and that kind of stuff.” The energy women put into planning their trip to the prison is crucial in gaining access to the facility, caring for their children and themselves along the way, and caring for their incarcerated loved one.

*Dress code regulations.*

In addition to the barrier of reduced visitation days, participants identified a second salient obstacle to visiting, the dress code regulations. Montana State Prison enforces strict dress code regulations all visitors must meet in order to enter the institution (see appendix D). These dress code regulations are provided for public view at the official Montana Government website (Montana Department of Corrections). According to participants, the Correctional Officers’ use of discretion when assessing visitor’s dress results in an arbitrary application of the regulations. These women stated that Correctional Officers have expectations of dress that are unrealistic, and intentionally difficult to meet. In fact, all six women who visited the Deer Lodge facility regularly reported that they were denied entry to the facility due to their attire on at least one occasion. The dress code regulations impact the space in which they are implemented, the facility tends to enforce social expectations regarding dress that are misaligned with the visitor’s perspectives, creating tension, and the regulations often impact the time women spend providing and receiving care.

*Dress code regulations: a regulation of the space.*

The prison facility has a variety of rules and regulations, most non-negotiable, and enforcement of the regulations only occurs in this space. In the context of dress code



regulations, the space, MSP, had minimal effects on caring, however, the prison's dress code regulations greatly impacted women's experiences of the social expectations surrounding their dress, and the time they were able to participate in a caring relationship with their partners.

*Dress code regulations: misaligned social expectations and tension with Correctional Officers.*

Prior to being admitted to the visitation room, visitors must clear all screening protocols conducted by the facility's Correctional Officers. The screening protocols usually include a physical pat down of the body, scanning the body with a metal detector, and assessing attire for dress code violations. Participants frequently reported feeling frustrated and powerless by the dress code screening process. When asked why, women commonly mentioned the outdated and gendered nature of the dress code regulations, with much discretion in the hands of Correctional Officers. Because of vague regulations such as no "spandex, form-fitting, or excessively baggy tops/shirts or bottoms/pants" (Montana Department of Corrections), Correctional Officers use their personal judgment when assessing visitors' dress. Women stated that Correctional Officers tended to apply the dress code regulations inconsistently. These dress code challenges act as barriers to visitation, as women are sometimes denied entry to the facility, or impacted emotionally by their interactions with the Correctional Officers.

Some of the women described the dress code regulations as outdated and more traditional than the standard style of dress outside of the prison facility. The outdated nature of the dress code regulations seems to decrease the women's respect for the regulations, along with their ability to take them seriously. One participant laughed while recounted one of the dress code regulations.

That's just not how people dress. Their dress code is archaic. If you wear a dress, it has to be eight inches *below* your knee. Who the fuck wears a dress that is eight inches below? Nobody! [Laughs] I'm not a Hutterite. No-this is not real life anymore, people.

Even this participant who, compared to others, expressed less animosity for the incarceration system, could not rationalize the prison's adherence to such dated expectations. It appears that the dress code regulation's disjuncture with current cultural expectations render them laughable and illegitimate.

The dress code regulations are also gendered, with expectations that specifically target the female body. For example, the dress code regulations state that women must wear a bra when visiting, but if a woman's bra is exposed to the public, she is in violation of the regulations. One participant mentioned, "you're damned if you do, and you're damned if you don't", as women are not able to remove the visible bra in order to gain access to the facility. During an interview, one woman described her teenage daughter being turned away because her sports bra was peeking out of the top of her shirt, by the nape of her neck. "Like this much of her sports bra. They jumped her about that. She ended up just pushing her bra straps down around her shoulders." Some participants believe that just by dressing in a feminine fashion, they will be denied entry to the facility. One regulation states that all shirts must hang within two inches of the notch in the front of the neck. While not clearly stated, this appears to be a regulation in place to eliminate the exposure of female cleavage during visitation. Here, a participant described a specific Correctional Officer's expectations.

If a female has on a female shirt--not a cleavage shirt, just a female blouse, you're not allowed to get in. She wants a crew neck, man, like, heavy 50/50 percent cotton shirts. This shirt, that is not showing cleavage. It's probably four inches below my neck? It's going to get denied today. There is *nothing* obscene about it. It's a three-quarter inch

shirt. And I'm expecting to be turned [away] or to have to put on a man's t-shirt above it.

The sexualization of breasts and bras creates an additional hurdle for women trying to gain access to the facility. The actual dress code regulations are misaligned with the social norms and expectations outside of the prison, but women suggest that the Correctional Officers' enforcement of these regulations further increases the disconnect between these two spaces.

Women suggested that Correctional Officers enforce their expectations of dress with methods that are disrespectful. Women often dread their interactions with Correctional Officers because of the way that they are treated during the process. During the interviews, all six regular visitors described Correctional Officers as being disrespectful. Women stated that being disrespected by a Correctional Officer is a common occurrence and somewhat expected. They frequently mentioned that Correctional Officer's critiques of their attire paired with a "rude" tone of voice left them feeling criminalized, lesser-than, and concerned for how their incarcerated loved ones are treated. One participant empathized with the Correctional Officers, while also describing how she feels unjustly criminalized.

I understand that they probably work with challenging personalities all day long, and I get that, because I do too. But I'm not a criminal. I am not disrespectful to them. I've done nothing wrong. I am there to lend love and support to my loved one.

Not all participants were as understanding. Another participant, who visits weekly, became agitated when describing her relationship with the Correctional Officers. It became clear that she loathed interacting with the Correctional Officers, and her ability to empathize had been diminished by the disrespectful treatment she had continuously received. When I asked her why she feels so disrespected, she responded:

Just the way that you're treated like you're lesser or lower, you were treated like an inmate or just a piece of shit. I started being rude back. I did. I was so rude. But the way these people treat or talk to people, "You can't do that," or "You can't wear that," I don't know for somebody that has feelings, it makes a person like me mad.

This participant was at her wit's end, and after unsuccessfully trying to create a positive relationship with the Correctional Officers, she resorted to being rude back.

Initially, when the women first visited the prison, they were surprised by the disrespectful ways that they were treated by the Correctional Officers. When it became obvious that this treatment was customary, women started to imagine the treatment their incarcerated loved ones experienced as "deserving" targets.

It makes me sad for the inmates that are in there, because if she's treating me that way ... I have no criminal history. None. I don't even know that I have a speeding ticket on my record anymore. But to be treated like that ... I didn't do anything. If you're treating me like that, how are you treating my husband? That's terrifying.

Being personally disrespected is an issue, but these women also believed that their partners were being treated worse by Correctional Officers, further deteriorating the visitor-Correctional Officer relationship. Considering that women must interact with Correctional Officers in order to visit the prison, the negative visitor-Correctional Officer relationship makes visiting more frustrating.

Women also feel that the dress code regulations serve little to no purpose, other than providing Correctional Officers an opportunity to embarrass visitors and exert their power and control. For example, some women mentioned intentionally layering shirts, as the top shirt was somewhat transparent or light in color, and still being denied entry by a Correctional officer.

One day I had a shirt on, it was a little bit see-through but I had something under it also, so I wore two shirts, being scolded for something like that, which is just plain silly because it was just the outer layer of my shirt.

Being scolded for dress feels, for an adult woman is demeaning, especially when the regulation seems pointless. Moreover, sometimes, when women try to negotiate with the Correctional Officers, they are assessed in a more intrusive manner.

[My child] likes to pull on my neck, so it [my shirt] kind of just pulled down. And I said, no, it just-he pulled on it. And they're like, "inches" and they pulled out the ruler. And I said, I have another shirt, hold on.

The experience of having one's neckline measured with a ruler, in front of a line of visitors, is reminiscent of a teenager's skirt being measured in high school. These women are just trying to visit with their loved one, and they feel that the Correctional Officers are intentionally making this process difficult, for purposes unrelated to safety and order. Whether or not this is true, this belief negatively impacts visitor and Correctional Officer relations, as the women do not view the Correctional Officer's expectations as reasonable.

In addition to experiencing a disrespectful and somewhat petty application of the dress code regulations, some women reported being reprimanded in a way that was specific to their gender. One participant described accessing the visiting room, visiting for three hours, and having her name called over an intercom at the end of the visit. She anxiously approached the Correctional Officers, concerned that it might be bad news about family, and instead, a Correctional Officer stated, "We were able to see a little bit of cleavage when you were visiting." By which she responded, "Shouldn't that have been addressed before I came in, rather than scare the heck out of me in front of all of these people?" To her, it seemed incomprehensible that the Correctional Officers would need to address this issue, considering

that they had let her into the facility initially, and she was on her way out anyway. Another participant experienced similar treatment when a Correctional Officer did not approve of her dress, even though she had already been admitted by another Officer. The participant recounted the Correctional Officer's statements, "They let you in here like that? You weren't wearing a jacket covering that up? You don't have a jacket you could put on over that?" The participant reported she was wearing a light pink shirt, layered, with a tank top underneath. It is surprising that this type of dress would warrant these comments and reactions from the Correctional Officers. On the outside, these women do not expect this treatment from professionals, but at the prison, it is a habitual event.

Participants stated that the Correctional officer's enforcement of the dress code regulations often left them feeling powerless and frustrated, negatively impacting their experience of visiting. Correctional Officers act as the gatekeepers to the visitation room, and interacting with them is unavoidable. When the visitor-Correctional Officer relationship becomes strained, women fear losing visitation access due to a personal vendetta or a dress code violation, as both lead to less time for visiting their partner.

*Dress code regulations: being denied entry results in time lost.*

Violating the dress code increases the amount of effort that women work to provide or receive care and simultaneously decreases the amount of time that they are able to provide and receive care with their partner. When women are denied entry to the facility, they lose their place in the visiting line, and they are expected to find clothing that meets the dress code expectations before they are granted access to the visitation room.

When visitors are in violation of the dress code, Correctional Officers often tell them to go to the local gas station or second-hand store and buy new clothing. However, these stores are over four miles away from the facility, and by the time visitors return, the visiting room could be at capacity. One participant emphasized the urgency she felt when she was asked to find alternative clothing, “I ran in, grabbed a t-shirt, threw three dollars at the lady and ran out.” Women do not want to miss a minute of the visitation time they could potentially share with their partner, so when they miss half of the visit due to room capacity, it can be devastating.

A regular visitor, who stays for the weekend, recounted her most recent dress code violation, “Last time I got kicked out, I left my bag at the hotel, so I had to leave and go to the hotel, and I missed out on two hours of visiting.” When this occurs, women must wait until the visitation session is half-way through and other visitors have chosen to leave or were asked to leave in order to make space for visitors who hadn’t visited yet. Because of the dress code violation, the women become emotionally distressed, and they wait an additional two hours before they are admitted into the facility.

#### *Navigating barriers: dress code*

While the dress code regulations can create barriers for visitors, the women I spoke with discovered resources for navigating these difficulties. Women most commonly reported using two resources when being denied entry to the facility. First, women plan for having their attire classified as in violation of the dress code, and second, women help other visitors meet the dress code regulations.

Women recognize that it is common, although unpredictable, to be denied entry because of dress code violations, and assessment is dependent on the Correctional Officer's discretionary judgment, so, women who visit regularly plan to be denied, and keep extra clothing in their car, just in case. One woman who had only been denied once explained, "That's why I always keep shirts in my car. Even spare *pants* in my car [laughs]. My pants don't have holes, but just in case they, you know? Of course, I always have spare clothes for [my child] too." Women know that their attire could be acceptable to one Correctional Officer, and denied by another, so they plan accordingly and pack extra clothes to ensure that they only have to make a quick trip to the car if the latter occurs.

Women who have visited often, and know the routine well, mentioned assisting other visitors in meeting the dress code. Both women who reported helping others treated this behavior as their duty or obligation, a method for combating the power dynamic presented by the Correctional Officers. One participant, who described herself as a "prison mama," explained how being personally turned away was challenging, but witnessing new visitors and children being turned away made her seriously upset; so much so, she decided to do something about it, and help other visitors meet the dress code regulations.

I'm pulling this lady's shirt up and rubber banding it so it will come up higher. You're always trying to tell somebody that trick or something, or another lady is walking out crying because of her shirt. I started carrying extra shirts. It's just ridiculous that they have to make it so difficult on people. It sucks.

This participant reported visiting every day, on every weekend. Her ability to visit often made her especially compassionate for other visitors, who aren't able to make the trek as often.

Another woman with a comparable visiting schedule expressed a similar sadness when



witnessing other families be turned away for dress code violations. Here, she describes consoling a child when she is asked to leave her kitty-cat headband behind.

She had to part with her cat ears and put them in the drawer, and she was worried that they wouldn't be there when she got back, and I said "they'll be there. No one's going to take your cat ears." Because they would have lost their place, and lost their visit if they had to walk it all the way to the car. Just little things like that that kids don't understand, that could be really traumatizing.

It seems that once women are able to dial in their routine and meet all the expectations of the dress code regulations, they use their extra energy to support other visitors in accessing the visitation room.

Visiting is an important way that women provide and receive care, as a family, or on an individual level. Barriers to visitation, such as reduced visiting days and dress code, create a series of challenges for these women.

#### *Phone Calls and Caring*

Having conversations on the telephone is another significant way women provide and receive care with their incarcerated loved ones. Phone conversations can occur daily and require much less effort than visiting the prison. Of the nine women I interviewed, all reported speaking to their partner on the phone on a regular basis. Seven participants reported speaking with their partner on the phone at least once a day, and the remaining two reported speaking a few times throughout the week. Phone calls are a unique way of providing and receiving care as they are somewhat instantaneous, and can happen daily if desired.

Each facility has specific rules surrounding using the communal telephones. These phones are located in a common area within the prison, and they are available for use for a

specific time period. For example, MSP turns the phones on at 6:00 am and turns them off at 8:30 pm (Montana Department of Corrections). During the busy times throughout the day, a line forms with incarcerated people waiting to make a phone call. Making phone calls costs money and incarcerated people can either call someone collect, or they can use a prepaid account that is somewhat cheaper. At MSP, a thirty-minute phone call will cost approximately \$4.29 (Montana Department of Corrections). I was unable to uncover the cost of phone calls at Crossroads Correctional Facility, but some participants whose partners have been in both facilities suggest that phone calls at Crossroads Correctional Facility are more expensive. At MSP, incarcerated people can use the phones for thirty minutes before their call is terminated. At Crossroads Correctional Facility, incarcerated people can use the phones for only fifteen minutes before their phone call is terminated. At both facilities, incarcerated people can make additional phone calls after they get back into the waiting line, allowing other people a turn on the communal phones. Both MSP and Crossroads Correctional Facility allow incarcerated people to make calls, but incarcerated people are not allowed to receive calls, a common regulation within incarceration facilities. All phone conversations are monitored by the prison officials.

Women commonly identified phone calls as an opportunity to “catch up”, or share the details of their daily lives. Similar to the conversations one might have in a long-distance relationship, these phone conversations are a method for staying connected and somewhat involved in each other’s everyday lives. Sometimes, women consider the content shared during the conversation boring:

It’s pretty boring. It’s just like, how are you today? And he is like ‘oh I’m just doing time.’ [laughs]. There is not a lot for him to report on his end, but, just telling him

regular...when you come home from work, and you're like hey, how's your day?' or what did you do today? or, if you're upset about something, you vent. Just regular... checking in.

But women still value the opportunity to tell their partner about their day, and somewhat normalize their relationship. Occasionally, the phone calls are not boring at all, "We didn't talk very much last night. But other nights, I'll be like, 'call me back!' and he will hang up and *get back in line and call me back.*" After a thirty-minute conversation, this couple still wants to talk. So, he waits in the phone line again, for the next available spot and they spend the money to have two thirty-minute phone conversations, where they can share the details about their day. Feeling connected, and providing care through phone conversations is worth the extra wait and money. Whether exciting or mundane, phone calls are an opportunity for women to stay connected with their partner.

Women also receive care from their incarcerated partners during phone calls. Several women mentioned receiving extra phone calls, or multiple phone calls a day when they were having a hard time, "If he thinks I'm having trouble that day, he'll call a couple times a day, just to make sure I'm doing okay." Because women aren't able to call their partners, their partners make sure to call them and console them however possible. They want to support them the best way that they can, so they call again, and check in on the women's emotional state.

Phone conversations also act as an opportunity for these couples to co-parent, and provide care for the children. Phone conversations are an opportunity for women to keep their partners updated on the child's daily activities and keep them involved in the parenting process. One participant emphasized how telephone calls play a crucial role in keeping her partner involved,

Absolutely. 100%. And that's where the accountability and the daily phone calls come in to play. It's like, well what happened today and how's baby doing? We want to make sure that our child has a sense of two parents. And not this bullshit, absent, quote-unquote... member.

For this mother, ensuring that her partner is as involved as possible is the best way to care for her child and protect him from the collateral consequences of paternal incarceration. She uses phone calls to battle the statistic, and generate resiliency during a very trying time.

Women often consult their partner when determining the best method for punishing their child, too. One woman, committed to co-parenting, described how this commitment helps her stand her ground and follow through with her and her partner's parenting agreement.

If he does something that he knows he is not supposed to do or gets caught for something. He's like 'don't tell dad.' You know, because he has that respect, and he knows that there's going to be a follow through.

Sharing phone calls with the incarcerated parent is crucial in providing the removed parent with details about the child's behavior, and ensuring their participation in decisions regarding appropriate punishments. Additionally, the children are aware of the co-parenting, encouraging an ongoing relationship between the child and the incarcerated parent.

During some phone calls, women will hand the phone off to their children, and allow the children to have conversations with their parent. Despite the time constraints, women want their children and partner to have that time to connect. One woman described her toddler's adaptation to phone conversations with his father. "He's actually pretty used to the phone call thing now. So, he'll go around on the phone, he knows it's dad and he will talk to him. He might not make any sense, but he is talking to him." Her child is able to express himself to his father, and his father is able to hear his child's baby babble develop, an experience many parents

adore. Another woman shared a similar story. Her young child uses phone conversations with her father to learn about his favorite color, and share what she has learned.

I just give her the phone, and let her ramble on about what she's been doing. She's very smart. She does her ABCs, one two three. She can read and do math, and so she does that with him. She'll be like, 'Hey Dad, what's two plus two?' She says, 'I already know what it is, it's four.' Before he even has a chance to answer. It's good for her. The other day, she said, 'Well, what's your favorite color? Well, what's your second favorite color? Well, my favorite color is ...' She just talks about anything to him. But it helps her, so she doesn't feel so ... it's hard on her.

When children are able to have phone conversations with their parent, they know that they are still there, even if they aren't in the same space with them. Plus, phone conversations are an opportunity for the children and their incarcerated parent to provide and receive care with each other. These conversations help children remain connected with their parent throughout the incarceration and they are an important element of keeping the family unified.

#### *Barriers to phone conversations.*

Phone conversations were a significant element of caring for each participant I spoke with. But, similar to visitation, these women face some challenges to sharing phone conversations. Women mentioned barriers related to the incarceration facility's regulations regarding phone calls, the lack of privacy involved in sharing phone calls, tension in the women's personal lives due to their preoccupation with their phones, and the time women spend waiting for and sharing phone conversations with their incarcerated loved one.

#### *Phone Calls: Cannot call him at the prison.*

The inability to call incarcerated people posed a significant challenge for the women I spoke with and each person acknowledged this struggle at some point during the interview. According to the participants, being able to call their partner anytime would be convenient, but

there are also critical times when women wish to contact their partner and they can't. For instance, women mentioned needing help making time-sensitive decisions about the children or wanting to call when they are concerned about their partner because they haven't heard from them in some time. The confinement of their partners within facilities that do not allow incarcerated people to accept phone calls creates this challenging circumstance.

Some women I spoke with detailed specific instances when they wished they could call their partner in prison and receive suggestions for an immediate issue with the children. Raising children is a difficult task, especially when the other parent is not accessible. One woman described a time when her young child became very sick.

She had appendicitis during this time. I couldn't ask him, "Hey, what do you think? Where should I take her? What should I do?" I couldn't ask him all that. I had to decide myself. I had to go through all that. Go and take her to Miles City, and then drive her all the way here to have the surgery, and then stay with her for two weeks, because it had ruptured and then became infected.

Having a sick child is stressful, and women expressed serious distress about their inability to reach out to their partner at times like these. One woman, whose partner became incarcerated when their first child was an infant, described a similar experience when I asked her what it is like not being able to call. She replied, "Yeah, really hard. Especially with a kid, because... everything is important. It's like, our kid gets sick and... Can't call him." Phone calls are a way that these women can keep their partners active in the parenting process, but when an emergency occurs, calling their partner is not available and the women must make the decisions on their own. The inability for women to call their partners when necessary is very frustrating and puts a lot of pressure and stress on these mothers.

Sometimes, women expect a call from their partner but they don't receive one. This could be for a variety of reasons. For instance, one woman described missing calls from her partner because he works a full day, "Because he is out there before they turn the phones on and he doesn't come in until after they turn the phones off. So, he couldn't even call me if he wanted to." This woman knows that during the summer her partner will have a harder time getting back to the phones in time to call, due to his long days working out on the prison ranch. This understanding eases some of the tension, but she still wishes to speak with her partner. Here she described how it makes her feel when she doesn't hear from him, "He is my person that I *need* to talk to every day. I need to connect with him and feel that connection, and so when I don't have that connection, I feel myself starting to...um... just not feeling like myself." When partners do not call, women might have some idea as to why, but it still leaves them feeling without a connection to their partner.

Some women were not so certain about why their partner didn't call. One woman described missing daily calls for some time. She had no idea as to why her partner had not called, and she was afraid that he could be sick, or even worse, dead. She finally called the prison to find that her partner had been put in solitary confinement, "[They] put him in the hole for a month. So, I didn't get a call for a month and I finally had to call and find out what was going on." Not only was she unaware of why her partner wasn't calling, but she was also never notified that he had been put in solitary confinement. She had to reach out to the prison in order to receive this information. While receiving the information may have relieved some stress, she is still unable to speak with her partner. She knows that experiencing solitary confinement is intensely painful, and to some, inhumane. Knowing that her loved one is

experiencing this form of punishment, and not being able to call and care for him is disturbing.

Prison regulations like these create a barrier to communication that some women must endure.

Another reason that women do not hear from their partners when expected is because their partner was transferred to another facility. Three women I spoke with described their partner being transferred from MSP to Crossroads Correctional Facility. Some of the women I spoke with said they had no idea that their partner was transferred to Crossroads Correctional Facility, "Just out of nowhere, they're like, 'Welp, you're going to Shelby. Surprise!'" In fact, one woman's partner stopped calling for some time. Eventually, she called the prison to discover that he had been transferred to Crossroads Correctional Facility. "I was devastated when he [was transferred] ... I didn't hear from him. I'm like, "What's going on?" So, I finally called the prison and said, I haven't heard from him is everything okay? And they told me that he got transferred to Shelby." The sudden drop off in communication is devastating. Women have an assortment of worrying thoughts, and the only way that they are able to figure out why their partner isn't calling is by contacting the prison. Transfers are a prison practice that act as a barrier to communication and affect these women's emotional well-being greatly, impacting their ability to care for their partners, and at times, self-soothe and care for themselves.

When women's partners randomly stop calling and they aren't able to participate in a caring relationship with them, women experience high levels of anxiety and stress. These emotions impact these women's abilities to be present within their daily lives. For instance, some women described how the stress can impact her interactions with others, "I just find myself being short. I'll get short with [my] poor child over there. Just being a little more on edge. I need that person to talk to, decompress and... process through some things



sometimes...” Similarly, another woman described how missed calls can impact her sleep, mood, and activities,

You sit and worry, you have sleepless nights. It's a horrible feeling. Or when it makes me upset, my attitude probably changes with the kids. Or I'm in bed all day or I don't want to cook dinner, it affects everybody in your household.

Understandably, worry begins to take over, and distracts these women, impacting their daily routine and interactions with others. The inability to care for their partners seeps into the other elements of their lives, and can sometimes impact their ability to fully care for themselves and their other loved ones.

*Phone calls: no privacy and a preoccupation with the phone.*

Privacy is somewhat illusive when maintaining a relationship with someone who is incarcerated. Although sharing phone conversations appears to be an important element of caring with an incarcerated loved one, women commonly mentioned the odd experience of having their conversations surveilled by prison officials. According to some participants, intimacy is somewhat stilted when privacy is nonexistent. After asking a participant what it is like communicating via telephone, she began her response by highlighting the lack of privacy, “It's a little difficult, because you always know somebody's listening, so you can't say the things that you would normally say.” She reassured me that she and her partner weren't saying anything “bad”, but their ability to speak intimately and freely was impacted by their awareness that their phone conversations are recorded. I asked one woman if she and her partner expressed intimacy during phone conversations, and she replied, “You don't. Because you can't say anything or do anything on the phone. Because they record it, and if they find out, [he] goes in the hole. So, it's very strict.” Not only do women find the surveillance of their conversations

to be irregular, but they also fear repercussions. The lack of privacy is unconventional, and women do their best to adapt to the new circumstances imposed by the prison.

Phone conversations are one of the only ways that women can maintain instantaneous contact with their partners, and women often expressed how this can leave them preoccupied with their phones. This preoccupation is somewhat misaligned with the cultural norms within their social networks and can create some tension or misunderstanding. Because women cannot call their partners, they avoid missing a call, as they know it could be their only opportunity to speak with their partner that day, or for a few days. Sometimes, this behavior interrupts their interactions with others. One woman who commonly shares phone conversations with her partner in the evening described this conundrum.

Because if he calls me during dinner time, I take the phone call. It's not ideal, I don't want to get up and walk away, because it is just [my child] and I sitting here at the dinner table. I'll get up and walk away and take the phone call and I will be on the phone for sometimes up to thirty minutes. Because that might be the only time that I get to call, or talk to him in 48 hours, you know? So that's kinda sucky.

She feels torn between sharing a phone conversation with her partner, and sitting with her son to enjoy dinner. Her inability to call her partner back once dinner is finished has caused her to be preoccupied with her phone when she would rather not. This preoccupation is strange for her too, "Last night, I sat down to dinner with [my child] and I was like, 'I got to go.' After five minutes. I just wanted to eat my dinner with two hands, and I didn't feel like talking."

Sometimes speaking on the phone limits these women's mobility and comfort within their own environment. These phone calls can be untimely and distracting, yet they are an important element of the caring relationship.

Women also described instances when their family became noticeably annoyed with them because of their preoccupation with their phones. During an interview, one woman described how this preoccupation made her mother feel, "Throughout the whole thing I could tell that my mom was frustrated with [the] phone calls. You get a phone call and you put everything else on hold like, 'Just a minute.'" This woman's partner was incarcerated for years, and she acknowledges that her need to answer phone calls was an issue for her mother. She is also aware of the fact that she still gives these phone calls precedence, and is willing to momentarily step away from her current activities in order to speak with her incarcerated loved one. This decision can make the people around her feel that their time together is not a priority. The women's lack of ability to call their partners makes them desperate to accept the calls when they occur, which is unconventional, and creates some internal and social conflicts.

*Phone calls: limited time for conversations.*

Women expressed a consistent frustration with the time they have spent waiting. Because these women are not able to call their partner, they must wait for their partner to call them. Sometimes it is just simply waiting to check in.

In general, it's hard. Because on my crappy days at work, I want to go home and I want to just... vent to that person that's there. But we don't have that. So, I have to wait till he calls, or wait till I get a letter...

Waiting for the phone call gets old, and often, by the time that their partner is able to call, the women have self-soothed, and moved past their need to vent, or be cared for by their partner. Similar to all relationships, there are times when the phone calls shared with an incarcerated loved one involve conflict.

It just goes sour. So, there are some conversations or phone calls where you have a minute left and the conversation ends a way you didn't want it to. It ruins the day or the night. Then you have to wait for the next phone call.

Other than being able to call their loved one back, women have to wait for the next time their loved one is able to call them, which can drag on and feel terrible, especially when the couple wants to apologize. Finally, when an expected call never comes, women are forced to wait, again, sometimes for days.

When you don't get that call and you worry. Because there's certain times or so many [missed] phone calls and you're like, 'Okay what happened? What happened? Something happened,' and you're just waiting and waiting for someone to call you. It's the most horrible feeling.

Waiting for phone calls is exhausting, and sometimes impacts these women's daily lives negatively. The time women spend waiting for their partner's call is a barrier to communicating with and caring for their partner. Occasionally these women spend more time waiting for phone calls than actually sharing them, due to the limited time allotment.

The time that women are actually able to spend speaking with their partner is limited. At MSP, phone conversations can last up to thirty minutes, and at Crossroads Correctional Facility, they can last fifteen. Sometimes, this can be enough time for the women to speak with their partners, but women also mentioned wanting more time to speak, so they can allow the children to converse, or discuss extensive topics, such as their partner's legal case. The limited amount of time for phone conversations cuts into the time that women are able to provide and receive care with their partner.

During one interview, a woman described how speaking on the phone as a family is challenging, "I can't really put him on speaker phone because then he can't hear. So, it's like, either [my child] gets to talk to him, or he gets to talk to me. This woman faces a complicated

reality, because she wants to encourage and foster a relationship for her son and husband, but she also needs to speak with him, and stay connected. With an incarcerated loved one at Crossroads Correctional Facility, one woman described skipping speaking with her partner, and allowing her daughter to share the whole fifteen-minute phone conversation with him, “She talks to him sometimes, instead of me talking that day.” Fifteen minutes is just not enough time for two people to connect during their conversations with the incarcerated parent.

The limited amount of time provided for phone conversations can disappear quickly, especially if the couple is discussing the legal case. One woman described managing her partner’s legal case as the main objective during their phone calls. She described his usual engagement during phone calls, “You need to call the courts. You need to do this.” She continued and explained their dynamic, “It’s just another list of errands to do. I have [the] resources, everything he needs, so it’s just what our phone calls are based on.” Sometimes, the legal case can take up so much of the conversation, it seems that its all the couple is able to discuss, leaving little time for sharing intimate conversations and providing care for one another.

*Navigating barriers: phone calls.*

While discussing barriers to phone conversations with the participants interviewed, it became clear these women utilize specific resources for navigating the various barriers to having phone conversations with their partner. In order to manage the challenges of not being able to call their partner or having limited time to speak with their partner, women schedule phone calls with their partner, create lists of important information to discuss during the phone conversations, and write their loved one letters.

One way that women cope with the absence of phone calls is through creating a calling schedule with their partner. Some of the women I spoke with mentioned scheduling calls with their partners, around their partner's work schedules or classes. Creating these schedules helps women remain calm when they do not receive a call, or they are able to view the missed call as a sign that something significant may have occurred.

For the most part, if he can't call me for whatever reason, he does try to call me as soon as he can, like, the next morning or he'll just let me know. And he lets me know what his schedule is like, so then I kind of have an idea.

Discussing these schedules creates a baseline of understanding and allows couples to support each other as needed. The incarcerated men know that their partner will worry if they do not call as scheduled, and the women know that their partner will do their best to call as expected. Scheduling phone calls helps women manage the challenges surrounding their inability to call their loved one while incarcerated.

Because phone calls are time-limited, women use writing as a resource for communicating what they wish during the short phone conversations, while also staying within the specific time allotment. One participant described how she managed to remember and include important topics during their phone conversations, "I would even have my little list of stuff written down that I needed to tell [him]. And it's frustrating because you're trying to get all this stuff in in this amount of time." Even though she still struggled to fit in all of the information she wanted to discuss, creating a list helped her stay focused, and discuss the most important points before the call was terminated. Creating lists is a way that some women make the most of the limited time they have to speak with their partners on the phone.

Sometimes women want to call their loved one and care for them by expressing their strong emotions of love or admiration. To navigate the inability to call and share their immediate emotions, they write these feelings in a letter for their partner. With letters, women are able to express their feelings at the present moment.

It is typically like, I am having some feelings that I want to share with him, and I can't just pick up the phone and call him and tell him. And I can't text him, so that is my only outlet. Is to just write it down on paper.

Writing letters is a way that women can express their immediate emotions with their partner when they are unable to make a phone call. Although, one woman mentioned still calling or texting her partner when she felt a longing to connect with him. "I'll text his phone, even though I have his phone. Yeah, or call and listen to his voicemail." Even though her partner will not receive these messages for some time, she still feels a sense of connection when she sends them. These forms of immediate expression help women ease the pain that comes with not being able to provide care for their partners when they wish.

Another woman uses letters to create detailed accounts of their infant son's "firsts": "I can honestly say my husband has read all of his firsts. I would write about them and try to [include] as much detail. Because he missed everything. But he still was able to experience it in some form?" The limited phone conversations do not provide an opportunity for elaborate detail, so this woman uses letters to create the detail, saving their limited time during phone conversations for other pressing topics. Writing her partner detailed letters about their son's development is a way to keep her partner and son connected. By maintaining this connection, she is caring for her family as a whole.

*A Constant Barrier to Caring: Expenses*

Each woman I interviewed identified the expenses related to their partner's incarceration as a barrier to providing and receiving care. Most women reported experiencing serious financial strain when their partner became incarcerated, which resulted in exacerbated financial consequences throughout the duration of the incarceration. A few women were not as financially impacted by the initial incarceration, but reported experiencing financial challenges by the expenses posed during their partner's incarceration. Expenses commonly identified were the cost of visiting their partner at the prison and the cost of phone conversations.

*The expense of visiting.*

Visiting the prison can be a highly expensive endeavor, even if you live nearby. Three of the women I spoke with lived within fifty miles of the prison, and although they recognized that traveling to the prison was still costly, they were most concerned with the time that visiting required. When I asked one of the women what it cost to visit the prison, she responded, "Well it cost the entire day, which time is money. So, I'd drive to Deer Lodge and back, which is 40 some miles." While she might not spend a significant amount of money on gas or hotels, she dedicated a full day of her time, bi-weekly to traveling to and from the prison for five years. To her, the cost of visiting was worthwhile because she was able to provide and receive care with her partner.

Women who live farther away from the prison described a different experience and greater cost. Visiting the prison is usually an overnight endeavor, racking up the costs of gas, food, and hotels. Two participants who live over 100 miles away described spending the weekends in Deer Lodge when they visit. For these women, making the trip to Deer Lodge and back home again is more than a day trip, and they opt to stay the weekend, visit on both days, and make



the most out of their trip. One woman cited the cost of a hotel, “That room is about 68 dollars a night”, and the other participant said her weekend trip costs “Probably close to 200 [dollars]”. She continued to describe the financial impact, “That trip ... at 200 [dollars] every other week, that's 400 [dollars] a month. And now I'm a single mom again.” The cost of visiting compounds the pre-existing costs of having a romantic partner incarcerated. Even after budgeting, and cutting costs as best they can, these women still spend a substantial amount of money in order to visit the prison and participate in providing and receiving care with their partner.

The increase in distance from the prison tends to lead to an increase in the cost of visiting the prison. One woman cited spending “about 500 or 600 [dollars]” on a weekend trip to the Crossroads Correctional Facility. It was her first and only trip in over two years, and although she wanted to visit more often, the cost was too significant. As previously mentioned, very few women visited Crossroads Correctional Facility due to the location of the prison. One participant, who reported visiting MSP weekly, reduced her visits considerably when her partner was transferred to Crossroads Correctional Facility.

But when he was that far, it was just too far away... for me. It's pretty much, when I did go visit, I was waking up at 4 AM and I would get there at ten. And then, leave there at five, and I'd be back by like ten.

She went from visiting once a week to visiting only twice over an entire summer. Because Crossroads Correctional Facility is so far away, women must spend extra time and money in visiting their partner, so much so, that the trip isn't feasible. The cost of visiting keeps some women from visiting and caring for their partner as much as they would like.

Some of these families were experiencing financial strain prior to their partner's incarceration, and the incarceration destroyed their financial stability. Visitation isn't even an

option if you do not have a vehicle or a ride to the prison. One participant reported never visiting her partner because, “I really haven’t had a vehicle to go see him.” This woman also described experiencing a stint of homelessness after her partner’s incarceration, “She kicked us out on the streets for [a] whole month of hungry and cold and... she gave me like three days to pack everything up and get out of there.” When I interviewed this woman, she and her children were housed and she was working more than usual to recover from the initial incarceration. Visitation was not a possibility for her. In fact, it appeared to be a financial challenge for many of the women. The cost of visiting the prison impacts these women’s ability to visit the prison and maintain a caring relationship with their incarcerated partner.

*The expense of phone calls.*

According to the women I spoke with, sharing phone calls with incarcerated people is very expensive. Some of these women were already struggling to pay existing bills, and calling their incarcerated loved ones was an additional bill that these women take on. Because phone conversations are an integral part of providing and receiving care, they are highly valued and worth the cost, but sometimes the cost can get out of hand. One woman described the variation in costs, depending on the facility. Before her partner was sent to MSP, he was incarcerated in a local jail, “The month he was there we spent \$800 [dollars on phone calls].” These women identify sharing phone calls with their partners as an important way to care, but the cost is significant, and the women must limit their calls in order to maintain a sense of financial stability. But it is hard for some of the women to refuse a call from their partner, or cut the conversations short,

Gosh babe, I thought we were cutting these phone calls in half. Then he's calling six times a day instead of two times a day and gosh, I thought we were going to stop this, we were going to slow down a little bit.

Women are conflicted by their partner's desire to connect via telephone and the cost that comes with sharing time on the phone. One woman explained her budget for phone calls, followed by the actual amount of money that she often spends, "We try to put 50 [dollars] on the books each month. A lot of times it costs 100 [dollars], just to be able to talk to him." These women are working hard to keep the costs of phone conversations down, but they struggle to meet their own expectations because they value caring for their loved one during telephone conversations.

*Navigating the expenses of visitation and phone calls.*

Although the expenses of visiting and phoning the prison are substantial, women identified some ways that they navigate these costs and continue to care for their incarcerated loved ones. Women reported making financial sacrifices surrounding their food, shelter, bills, and credit to ensure their ability to stay connected with their incarcerated loved ones.

One woman described cutting costs related to the food she and her family eat, in order to save money. She and her family try not to eat out at restaurants when they visit the prison, and instead, she packs enough food for everyone. In addition, she reported shopping for affordable food for visiting the prison and for eating at home, "Yeah, we eat a lot of Cup-a-Soup there and here." But sometimes, the affordable food just isn't enough, "Last time [we visited], my daughter and I went to Four B's for breakfast, because we just needed something with substance, instead of Cup-a-Soup." This woman sacrifices luxuries like eating out at restaurants

or buying expensive food in order to save enough money for visiting the prison and caring for her incarcerated loved one.

Another participant shared a similar experience. This woman and her son travel over one-hundred miles to the prison and usually stay the entire weekend. In order to continue visiting the prison, she cuts the costs of hotels by sleeping in the car when the weather permits,

At times, we were sleeping in the car because I didn't have the funding to pay for the hotel. We have a little SUV and heater. So, we just make a giant pillow palace in the SUV, put down the seats, and that's for the weeks that we can't afford the hotel. That's going to change because it's snow season, and it's harder to keep the car warm, so we're trying to opt more for the hotels.

When finances are tight, this woman sacrifices their night in the hotel so they can continue to visit and care as a family.

Some women reported postponing the payment of a specific bill in order to pay for the visiting and phone expenses. While these women recognize this isn't an ideal solution, maintaining contact with their incarcerated loved ones is of utmost importance. While discussing the deterioration of her finances, a participant described anxiously waiting for her tax refund, so she could continue to visit her partner. She has never missed a visit, and she is determined to maintain that status, "Between now and then, I don't know how I'll make it, but I'll make it. I skip the electric bill sometimes." Another woman described making the same decision in order to share phone calls with her partner, "There [are] times when I put phone calls before I put bills, just so that we can be able to have communication and it's difficult." These women do not like skipping a bill in order to manage the expenses linked to communicating with their incarcerated partners, but maintaining contact and caring for their partner is more important.

Another participant described relying on credit cards to make ends meet. "I used a credit card for Christmas, we've used credit cards for the phones and the video [calls]. It got to be so ridiculous." The incarceration impacted her finances intensely, and she used credit cards to maintain contact with her partner and to take care of her family during his incarceration. She too was dissatisfied with this method, and she described how relying on credit cards was misaligned with her beliefs. "My mom has taught me, my mom is so good about everything, that I have gotten that way and tried to do [the same]. I've gotten out of debt and I like to pay things on time, and I don't like to have late charges and this and that." But the expense of the incarceration and maintaining contact with her partner was too great, and she ultimately resorted to using credit cards for managing the costs. Understandably, these women value maintaining a caring relationship with their partner, and they are willing to make specific financial sacrifices in order to do so.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study demonstrate that incarceration poses numerous challenges to the families of incarcerated people in Montana. The women who participated in this study described multiple barriers to maintaining a caring relationship with their incarcerated partner. Similar to what the Caringscapes/Carescape theory suggests, time, space, and social expectations play a large role in caring relationships (Bolwby 2011). In the context of this study, the prisons imposed regulations that inhibited and created barriers within the time, space, and social expectation components of care. The most salient barriers women described were the consequences of regulations imposed by the prisons. For example, prison regulations, such as MSP's decision to reduce the visitation days, and the dress code that they enforce, have

resulted in women waiting to visit their partners in uncomfortable conditions for extended amounts of time, and tense relationships between women and Correctional Officers. The incarceration institutions' regulations surrounding the incarcerated person's access to the phones, the limited time provided to speak with their families, the inability to receive calls, and the surveillance of all calls shared have impacted these women's abilities to communicate with their partners in an authentic way. And finally, the cost of visiting, phoning, and maintaining a relationship with someone who is incarcerated is high, and limits these women's abilities to provide and receive care through visiting and phoning, while also weakening their financial stability throughout their everyday lives. Families that were experiencing serious financial strain before the incarceration are completely financially devastated by their partner's incarceration, and their ability to provide and receive care through visitation or phoning is constrained.

Women also reported experiencing a significant secondary consequence, emotional distress, which resulted from enduring the regulations imposed by the prison. The emotional distress was distracting and impacted the women's abilities to provide care for themselves and their families. Due to their partner's incarceration, these women are forced to manage a relationship that is regulated by the prison, and these regulations tend to have substantial impacts on their daily lives.

The women within this study described experiencing a phenomenon similar to Comfort's theory of "secondary prisonization" (2008). Their decision to maintain relationships with their loved ones throughout incarceration has resulted in both the women and their partners being regulated and controlled by the incarceration institutions. Comfort argues that women who

maintain relationships with incarcerated people become “quasi-inmates”, who are forced to change their lifestyles in a way that is similar to their incarcerated loved-ones’ lifestyles while in prison (2008:15-16). For example, when visiting MSP, women must ensure that their attire meets the Correctional Officer’s expectations since failure to do so results in no visitation with their partners. Multiple women described their interactions with Correctional Officers akin to those of a Correctional Officer and an inmate, as disrespectful and adverse. The women felt punished and criminalized for visiting their partners in prison. However, Comfort argues that secondary prisonization goes beyond the boundaries of the incarceration facilities, and seeps into the women’s personal lives, in their own homes, where the women’s communications with their partners are also regulated (2008:16). The findings of this study validate this assertion, as women often mentioned adapting their communication style because of the prisons’ surveillance of phone conversations. Women are not able to express intimacy as they choose, as they fear being penalized, and losing the opportunity to provide or receive any care with their partner. The prisons’ regulations of intimacy via phone or letter communication acts as another barrier to providing and receiving care with an incarcerated loved one.

Secondary prisonization is unavoidable if these women wish to maintain a caring relationship with their partner. These women chose to endure this reality, and by maintaining a determined attitude, they were able to strategize methods for avoiding the barriers presented by the incarceration institutions’ regulations. During interviews with these women, it became clear that all of the women were determined to keep their family intact throughout the duration of their partner’s incarceration. Women constantly referenced the fact that they “aren’t going anywhere,” and their partner can depend on them through thick and thin. This

determination to care and maintain the relationship seemed to provide these women with energy to continue interacting with the incarceration system.

The findings demonstrate the women's resourcefulness in staying connected with their partners. Meticulous planning was a strategy that women commonly referenced. These women pre-planned all of their interactions with the incarceration system, as they knew that navigating obstacles as they surfaced was usually unsuccessful. Some women even planned for other visitors, acting as a "prison mama," and packing spare items or sharing useful information in order to help others navigate the barriers to caring for their loved ones. Finally, women surrendered their own comfort and security in order to ensure their ability to provide and receive care with their partner. Ranging from forsaking their quality of food and shelter to their financial stability and credit, the relationships with their incarcerated partners were worth the losses. Although these strategies can somewhat ease the consequences of secondary prisonization, the barriers to providing and receiving care with their incarcerated partners are still significant.

Other communities have acknowledged the common barriers visitors face when interacting with the incarceration system, and have provided resources that assist the visitors in navigating the regulations involved in visiting the prison (Christian 2005; McKay et al. 2016). In a qualitative study investigating the process of visiting prisons, Christian came across a non-profit organization, dedicated to helping visitors navigate the prison's rules and regulations, located on prison grounds (2005). The non-profit was dedicated to making visiting easier for all visitors by acknowledging barriers similar to the ones identified in my findings.



The organization in Christian's study provided a space for visitors of the prison to wait prior to visiting. Christian acknowledges the importance of this space; like Montana, many prisons do not provide visitors a comfortable space sheltered from the weather (2005). Montana's weather is unpredictably extreme, and providing a warm or cool space for visitors to comfortably wait would be immensely valuable to the prison visitors. Moreover, the non-profit cultivated a family friendly zone, providing a children's area, restrooms, a television, a dining area, and comfortable chairs (2005). Visitors of Montana prisons could benefit from these resources, especially visitors of MSP. Visitors wait in the car line, a space lacking the bare essentials--shelter and bathrooms. Providing a space with entertainment and comfort could help these families relax, and minimize some of the stress that comes with waiting for visitation. Implementing an organization similar to the one referenced in Christian's (2005) article could assist Montana visitors in providing and receiving care with their loved ones.

An organization similar to the one described in Christian's article could also reduce the amount of time that Montana visitors spend attempting to gain access to the incarceration facility. Christian reported that the staff who work at the non-profit will assist visitors in understanding the prison's regulations. For example, staff will help visitors fill out the paperwork necessary for visiting (2005). A participant in my study reported waiting months to visit, as she was overwhelmed by the paperwork process, and she didn't know who to inquire with regarding her confusion. Having someone who has a fine-tuned understanding of the paperwork requirements could expedite this process greatly. According to Christian's observations, the non-profit organization's staff also assists visitors in learning about the expectations of the facility, such as dress code regulations and what visitors can bring into the

prison (2005). During one of my visits to the car line, a visitor pulled up to the line and waved me over to her car. She assumed I was an employee of the prison, there to help her understand the process of visiting. She told me that it was “her first time,” as she tugged at her clothes, and mentioned that she tried to dress in a way that met the regulations posted on the government website. It was obvious that she was anxious about her visit and unsure of what to expect. A non-profit organization like the one described in Christian’s (2005) article would be a tremendous resource for visitors, easing the anxiety involved in visiting the prison, and decreasing the number of visitors turned away for being in violation of the dress code. Creating an organization equipped to support visitors in these ways could decrease the time that visitors spend trying to meet the expectations of the incarceration facilities, and encourage visitors to keep engaging with the incarceration systems.

The non-profit organization could also benefit visitors by shifting the social expectations that surround visiting the prison. Christian reported that the staff members at the non-profit organization had built rapport with the visitors, and fostered a trusting relationship (2005). Most of the women within my study recounted negative relationships with Correctional Officers or Prison Officials and feeling criminalized by interactions with them. Implementing a non-profit organization in Montana could counter-balance these feelings of judgment, by just creating a space of support. Moreover, Christian reported that the non-profit provided an environment where visitors could connect with and confide in one another (2005). The participants from my study reported very few connections with other families experiencing incarceration. If Montana visitors had a resource similar to this non-profit, they would be able to use the time waiting to connect with other visitors at the organization, increasing social

support. An organization built for supporting visitors in Montana could increase the social awareness of incarceration while also minimizing the feelings of shame and isolation, and encourage visitors to keep visiting. A non-profit similar to the one described in Christian's (2005) article could improve women's abilities to visit with their incarcerated loved ones and maintain a caring relationship.

This non-profit organization also attempts to reduce the cost of visiting the prison for visitors. Christian reported that the organization will sometimes provide meals and coffee to the visitors, free of charge. The organization also provides a kitchen where visitors can cook food that they have packed for the trip, and skip eating out at restaurants (2005). Providing these resources is a small, but significant way that the organization helps visitors manage the expenses of visiting the prison.

Developing an organization that could improve Montana women's experiences of visiting the prison could also increase visitation, which would strengthen social ties with the incarcerated partner, and reduce their potential for recidivism. Studies suggest that an incarcerated person's likelihood to recidivate is reduced substantially when they receive visits from family and friends during their incarceration (Bales and Mears 2008; Mowen and Visher 2016). In fact, Bales and Mears found that incarcerated people who were visited frequently were even less likely to recidivate than incarcerated people who were visited on occasion (2008). Visitation cultivates a sense of belonging and connection to the outside world for incarcerated people. Plus, when an individual experiences multiple incarcerations, it is damaging to the families and communities that they are removed from (McKay et al. 2016).

Supporting and encouraging visitation is one of the ways that we can reduce recidivism and strengthen the families and communities experiencing incarceration.

Implementing this non-profit organization in Montana would only solve a fraction of the issues women face when experiencing partner incarceration. There are still systemic issues related to partner incarceration that need to be specifically addressed. This proposed organization should not be viewed as the only solution to partner incarceration, and instead, it should be viewed as an opportunity to provide prison visitors a resource that eases and encourages the process of visiting.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study highlight the experience of partner incarceration in Montana, narrated by the people who are often forgotten; the women who love and maintain contact with the incarcerated person. This study provides insight into the consequences of prison regulations on the people who attempt to maintain caring relationships with incarcerated people. Simple barriers, such as reduced visitation days or time-limited phone calls, posed serious challenges to the women maintaining contact with an incarcerated person. While I expected women to utilize resources within their communities for navigating these barriers to providing care, I instead found that these women strategized and navigated a lot of the barriers to providing care on their own. It is evident that the Montana public needs to dedicate more time and energy to providing these women with resources that would assist them in staying connected to their incarcerated loved ones, and remove some of the burdens these women experience in navigating barriers. Doing so would benefit the communities and families that are

experiencing the incarceration of loved ones throughout Montana by encouraging connection and removing stigma.

While this study provided insightful information concerning a population somewhat ignored, there are multiple limitations that need to be addressed in future research. The most prominent limitation was the small sample size. Increasing the sample size would have enabled me to reach saturation and develop a more holistic perspective of the population of interest. A larger sample size would have included more perspectives on having loved ones incarcerated at other facilities, such as Crossroads Correctional Facility. Because sampling proved to be challenging with this population, future research should implement creative recruitment strategies, or extend the time allotted for recruitment.

Another limitation is the scope of the study, which is focused on the heterosexual experience of family and paternal incarceration. Future research should evaluate the experience of male and female partner incarceration for those in same-sex relationships. While researching mothers evaluated the element of providing care for children as well, research should also investigate partner incarceration that does not involve children, as those relationships are just as valuable and also require support.

Future research should encourage and seek collaboration with the incarceration institutions to obtain a full perspective, and urge active change within the institutions themselves. I was not able to collaborate with the incarceration institutions within this study for various reasons. Collaborating with these institutions could have increased my sample size significantly, and provided an opportunity for dialogue with the institutions regarding best practices and solutions for common issues.

The sampling procedures within my study were also limited. Due to the sensitive subject matter, most contact with participants was made as the result of a flyer on Craigslist or Facebook. These methods for contacting participants have the potential to miss a substantial subset of the population, such as people who do not have access to the internet. Moreover, I contacted some participants at the MSP car line. Because the car line is located off prison grounds, I was able to access visitors and potential participants in person. Crossroads Correctional Facility does not have a car line located off of the premises, so I was unable to contact visitors of that facility in the same manner. This discrepancy in sampling strategies increased my contact with women whose partners were incarcerated in MSP, impacting the narrative provided. Future studies should sample both facilities equally to gain a more representative understanding of partner incarceration in Montana.

## REFERENCES

- Arditti, Joyce. 2012. *Parental incarceration and the family: Psychological and Social Effects of Imprisonment on Children, Parents, and Caregivers*. New York: New York University Press.
- Arditti, Joyce A., Jennifer Lambert-Shute, and Karen Joest. 2003. "Saturday Morning at the Jail: Implications of Incarceration for Families and Children." *Family Relations* 52(3): 195-204.
- Bales, William D., and Daniel P. Mears. 2008. "Inmate Social Ties and the Transition to Society: Does Visitation Reduce Recidivism?" *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 45(3): 287-321.
- Bowlby, Sophie. 2011. "Recognizing the Time-Space Dimensions of Care: Caringscapes and Carescapes." *Environment and Planning, A* (44): 2102-2118.
- Braman, Donald. 2004. "Families and the Moral Economy of Incarceration." *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 23(1-2):27-50.
- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. 2018. "Population Reports." Retrieved May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018 ([https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Reports\\_Research/Offender\\_Information\\_Services\\_Branch/Population\\_Reports.html](https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Reports_Research/Offender_Information_Services_Branch/Population_Reports.html)).
- Christian, Johnna. 2005. "Riding the Bus: Barriers to Prison Visitation and Family Management Strategies." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 21(1):31-48.
- Comfort, Megan L. 2008. *Doing Time Together Love and Family in the Shadow of the Prison*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Comfort, Megan L. 2003. "In the Tube at San Quentin: The "Secondary Prisonization" of Women Visiting Inmates." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 32(1):77.
- Comfort, Megan L., Olga Grinstead, Kathleen McCartney, Philippe Bourgois, and Kelly Knight. 2005. "You Can't do Nothing in this Damn Place: Sex and Intimacy Among Couples with an Incarcerated Male Partner." *Journal of Sex Research* 42(1):3-12.
- DeHart, Dana., Cheri Shapiro, and Stephanie Clone. 2018. "The Pill Line is Longer than the Chow Line: The Impact of Incarceration on Prisoners and their Families." *The Prison Journal* 98(2):188-212.
- Duwe, Grant, and Valerie Clark. 2013. "Blessed be the Social Tie that Binds: The Effects of Prison Visitation on Offender Recidivism." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 24(3):271-296.

Fishman, Laura T. (1990) *Women at the Wall: A Study of Prisoner's Wives Doing Time on the Outside*. New York. State University of New York Press.

Flick, Uwe. 2007. *Designing Qualitative Research*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Foutz, Julia., Samantha Artiga, and Rachel Garfield. (2017). "The Role of Medicaid in Rural America." *The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Issue Brief*. Retrieved on June 20, 2019 (<https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/the-role-of-medicaid-in-rural-america/>)

Gibbs, Graham. 2007. *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

Henrichson, Christian., and Ruth Delaney. 2012. "The Price of Prisons: What Incarceration Costs Taxpayers." *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 25(1):68-80.

Kaeble, Danielle., and Mary Cowhig. 2016. Bureau of Justice Statistics. "Correctional Populations in the United States." Retrieved June 20, 2019 (<https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6226>).

Kautz, Sarah. 2017. "Adolescent Adaptation to Parental Incarceration." *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 34(6):557-572.

Kukurowski, Drew. 2012. "The Price to Call Home: State-Sanctioned Monopolization in the Prison Phone Industry." Retrieved June 20, 2019 (<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/report.html>)

Mears, Daniel P., and Sonja E. Siennick. 2016. "Young Adult Outcomes and the Life-Course Penalties of Parental Incarceration." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 53(1):3-35.

Montana Department of Corrections. 2018. Montana State Prison. Retrieved June 20, 2019 (<https://cor.mt.gov/Adult/MSP>).

Mowen, Thomas J., and Christy A. Visher. 2016. "Changing the Ties that Bind. How Incarceration Impacts Family Relationships." *Criminology and Public Policy* 15(2): 503-528.

Murphey, David., and Mae P. Cooper. 2015. "Parents Behind Bars; What Happens to Their Children?" *Child Trends*. (<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/parents-behind-bars-what-happens-to-their-children>)

Murray, Joseph. 2014. Effects of parental incarceration on children: Cross-National Comparative Studies. *American Psychological Association*.



- Nesmith, Ande, and Ebony Ruhland. 2008. "Children of Incarcerated Parents: Challenges and Resiliency, in their Own Words." *Children and Youth Services Review* 30(10):1119-1130.
- Rakt, Marieke V. D., Joseph Murray, and Paul Nieuwbeerta. 2012. "The Long-Term Effects of Paternal Imprisonment on Criminal Trajectories of Children." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49(1):81-108.
- Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. 2016. "Children and Families of the Incarcerated Fact Sheet." *The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated*. Retrieved April 20, 2018. (<https://nrccfi.camden.rutgers.edu/resources/fact-sheets/>)
- McKay, Tasseli., Megan L. Comfort, Christine Lindquist, and Anupa Bir. 2016. "If Family Matters: Supporting Family Relationships during Incarceration and Reentry." *Criminology and Public Policy* 15(2): 529-542.
- Turney, Kristin. 2018. "Adverse Childhood Experiences Among Children of Incarcerated Parents." *Children and Youth Services Review* 89: 218-225.
- Turanovic, Jillian J., Nancy Rodriguez., and Travis C. Pratt. 2012. "The Collateral Consequences of Incarceration Revisited: A Qualitative Analysis of the Effects on Caregivers of Children of Incarcerated Parents." *Criminology* 50(4):913-959.
- Wakefield, Sara., and Christopher Wildeman. 2018. "How Parental Incarceration Harms Children and What to do About it." *National Council on Family Relations*. Retrieved June 20, 2019 ([https://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/How%20Parental%20Incarceration%20Harms%20Children%20NCFR%20Policy\\_Exec%20Summary\\_Jan.%202018.pdf](https://www.ncfr.org/sites/default/files/2018-01/How%20Parental%20Incarceration%20Harms%20Children%20NCFR%20Policy_Exec%20Summary_Jan.%202018.pdf)).
- Wildeman, Christopher. 2014. "Parental Incarceration, Child Homelessness, and the Invisible Consequences of Mass Imprisonment." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 651(1):74-96.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. How do you connect with your partner (i.e. phone calls, visits, letters)?
  - a. What is it like?
  - b. How often?
  - c. What does it cost?
  - d. Do you get along with correctional staff?
2. What is it like parenting without your partner?
  - a. How has parenting changed?
  - b. Has your relationship with your child(ren) been affected?
3. What do your children know about your partner's incarceration?
  - a. How has the incarceration affected your child(ren)?
    - i. Has the incarceration affected their school work?
    - ii. Has the incarceration affected their social life?
4. What, if any, impacts has this incarceration had on your social life?
  - a. What kind of support do your friends provide?
  - b. Have you received support from unexpected sources?
5. What are your experiences with extended family after your partner's incarceration?
  - a. How does your family support you through this experience?
  - b. Has the incarceration impacted your relationships?
6. How has the community reacted to your partner's incarceration?
  - a. Do you receive support from the community?
    - i. How/What?
7. How has this incarceration impacted your finances?
  - a. Has your work schedule changed?
8. What are the most challenging aspects of maintaining this relationship with \_\_\_\_?
  - a. How do you express intimacy or show love for your partner?
  - b. How does your partner express intimacy or show love for you?
  - c. Are there any concerns you have for your partner's health/safety?
9. Are there any aspects of your relationship that have changed for the better?
  - a. What do you look forward to once your partner returns home?

APPENDIX B: DEMOGRAPHICS SURVEY

**What is your age?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?**

- Less than a high school degree.
- High school degree or equivalent (G.E.D.)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate degree

**What was the combined earned income of your household last year?**

- \$0 – \$10,000
- \$10,001 – \$20,000
- \$20,001 - \$30,000
- \$30,001- \$40,000
- \$40,001- \$50,000
- \$50,001- \$60,000
- \$60,001- \$70,000
- \$70,001- \$80,000
- \$80,001-\$ 90,000
- \$90,001- \$100,000
- \$100,001 or more

**What is your race identification?**

- Asian
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Multiple races
- Other race. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

# Participants needed for study



Are you maintaining a romantic relationship with someone who is incarcerated?

Who is eligible?

Women who:

- are 18 years or older
- have one or more minor children age 17 or younger
- are in a romantic relationship with someone incarcerated at Deer Lodge state prison, Crossroads Correctional facility, or any pre-release center in Montana.

*The goal of this study is to learn about mothers' experience maintaining a romantic relationship with an incarcerated person while also caring for their children.*

If you're interested in participating in an interview (approximately 60-90 minutes long), please call! Participants will be compensated with a \$25.00 gift card to an organization of their choosing.

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

---

[Item]

[Contact Info]

## APPENDIX D: DEER LODGE STATE PRISON DRESS CODE REGULATIONS

### **MSP VISITOR DRESS CODE & VISITING RULES AND REGULATIONS As approved by Warden Leroy Kirkegard effective date 4/15/2015**

**Dress Code** (*these dress codes apply equally to females and males over five years old*) Visitors should dress and maintain their personal hygiene in a manner that is not distracting, disturbing, provocative, or offensive to other visitors, inmates, and/or staff. All clothing must be clean and in good repair (no holes, tears, etc.) the Visiting and/or Visiting Entrance Officer will make decisions in this matter. If the visitor disputes the decision of the Visiting or Visiting Entrance Officer, it will be referred to the Shift Commander. If the Shift Commander determines an individual's clothing or hygiene isn't appropriate, the visitor will be asked to leave. The visitor will not be allowed to cover or mask the problem in question and proceed with the visit. He or she must leave. Because MSP is an adult male facility; female visitors are required to dress in a conservative manner so as not to offend other visitors, staff, or the inmates. Visitors are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is polite and respectful to other visitors, staff, and inmates. Violations of this may result in being denied entry or early termination of the visit. Repeated violations of these conduct guidelines may result in a suspension or total revocation of the visitor's visitation privileges. Montana State Prison will not tolerate disrespectful or aggressive behavior to include loud, threatening, abusive, or profane language; verbal or physical aggressions toward staff members, offenders, or visitors; inappropriate physical contact; or improper use or abuse of state property.

Visitors wearing the following items/types of clothing will not be allowed into the facility:

1. Spandex, form fitting, or excessively baggy tops/shirts or bottoms/pants (normally identified with gang dress).
2. Shorts or cut-offs.
3. Transparent tops, skirts, or pants. Undergarments must not be visible through the clothing.
4. Clothing without the proper undergarments (bra, slip, and underwear). Female visitors must wear a bra at all times (sport, regular or strapless). Bras with metal under wires will not clear metal detection devices, and will necessitate an intrusive clothed body search to verify the source of the metal causing the alert.
5. Sleeveless tops. Tops, shirts or blouses, must be worn with a bra, and 'tank' type tops are not allowed as an outer garment. Tops must be long enough that no skin is exposed when arms are raised overhead. Necklines must not be lower than 2 inches below the notch of the neck.
6. Dresses or skirts as follows: a) without a slip underneath; b) without a hem at least 6 inches lower than the knee when standing; c) with slits extending above the knee; and d) with

button-up or snap-up front, back, or wrap around (these dresses may be worn only if sewn shut).

7. Dress that, taken as a whole, resembles inmate-issued clothing (dark blue, tan, orange scrub type pants or tops).
8. Any clothing that, taken as a whole, resembles staff uniforms (grey tops/bottoms, medical scrub clothing).
9. Camouflage clothing.
10. Flip-flops slippers and steel-toed boots or shoes. Open toed shoes are allowed. Socks of some type must be worn at all times (short socks, women's nylon "footies," etc.) for sanitation purposes.
11. Shoes that have hidden compartments, pockets, or zippered pockets.
12. Clothing items with designs that are profane or derogatory.
13. Clothing with designs that promote illegal drugs, alcohol, or sexual behavior.
14. Clothing that is obviously soiled or has holes/tears large enough to be deemed a distraction.
15. Sunglasses (unless they are prescription). Visitors are cautioned to refrain from wearing metal items underneath their clothing, as any metal item will not clear the metal detection devices, and will necessitate an intrusive clothed body search to verify the source of the metal causing the alert. Visitors must hang their coats, vests, hats, scarves on the coat hangers in the visiting room foyers, and are not allowed to remove clothing items they wear into a visiting room. Jackets/coats with hoods must be hung up inside the visiting room.

---

/s/ Leroy Kirkegard MSP Warden

4/15/2015 Effective Date

---

MSP 3.3.8, Inmate Visiting

Attachment D (page 1 of 2)