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Prisoners' Coping and Use of Family Support, and Impact of the Visiting Experience for Families

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Prisoners' Coping and Use of Family Support, and

Impact of the Visiting Experience for Families

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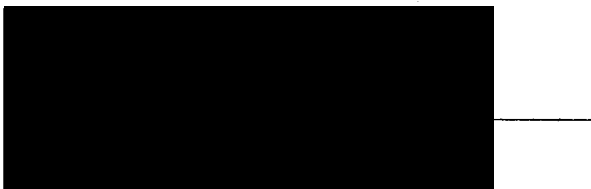
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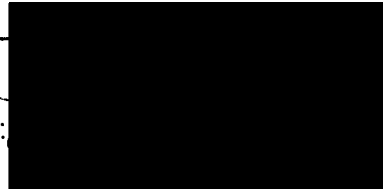
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Structure of Thesis

This thesis has been prepared as two separate manuscripts, in accordance with the

Instructions for Authors for the journal, *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of*

Criminology, which now follows the general style described in the Publication

Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed). The first manuscript is

a literature review, and the second reports a qualitative exploratory study. Each

manuscript has its own title page, running head, abstract, and references, and each

manuscript is numbered separately, followed by appendices to the thesis not

normally included in a journal manuscript. In accordance with the journal's

publication requirements, spelling conforms to the Macquarie Dictionary. For

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Male Prisoners' Coping, Social Support and Family

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Abstract

This review was focussed on three areas (1) theoretical concepts of stress, coping

and social support; (2) explanations for the patterns of prisoners' perceptions of

their support-seeking behavior; and (3) the impact on families providing support.

Prisoners' patterns of support seeking in the prison environment appear more

consistent with hierarchical organisations than the domestication model of unit

management. For stressful, uncontrollable situations, emotional support is

sought from families, who are difficult to access. The family obligation to

provide the free service of support to prisoners has implications for prison

management and policy. Priorities for future research are (1) the impact of

incarceration and supportive interactions on families, both materially and

psychologically, that currently serves to frustrate the supportive process, and (2)

a comparison study of female prisoners and male family visitors.

Male prisoners' coping, social support and family

The transition to prison and prison life can be stressful for prisoners, and for their families. How a prisoner copes with the stresses of imprisonment and adapts to prison life depends on a number of variables. Recent research conducted at Edith Cowan University (ECU) has focussed on officers' perceptions of prisoners' help-seeking behaviour (Dear, Beers, Dastyar, Hall, Kordanovski, & Pritchard, 2002), prisoners' willingness to seek formal sources of support (e.g., prison officers) (Hobbs & Dear, 2000), and prisoners' evaluations of available sources of support (formal and informal) (Hobbs, 2000; Hobbs & Dear, 2000). How prisoners' families cope with the stresses of having a family member imprisoned however, has been largely ignored within prison discourses. This is surprising, as the literature indicates that families are an important source of support for prisoners (Brodsky, 1975: Hobbs, 2000; Homer, 1979).

The purpose of this review is to critically evaluate the literature on male prisoners and their families, in order to gain a better understanding of the family's capacity to provide support, of the difficulties they face, and the type of support they provide for prisoners. The aims of the present paper are: (a) to explore the literature for theoretical concepts of stress, coping and social support pertaining to prisoners and their families, (b) to examine to what extent the pattern of prisoners' perceptions of their support-seeking behaviour fits with the unit management model utilised in prisons, and (c) to draw attention to the ethical dilemma for professionals in the field, inherent in reinforcing the obligation for families to provide the free labour of material and emotional care to prisoners. Social support is discussed from an ecological perspective in order

to examine the supportive interactions between the prisoner and the family, in

relation to the prison environment, within the wider socio-political context.

Theoretical concepts of social support, stress and coping

What is social support ?

The term *social support* denotes a broad class of phenomena and appears

to be ill-defined as a construct within the social support literature (Veiel &

Baumann, 1992). Coping theory conceptualizes social support as coping

assistance in the management of stress (Thoits, 1986; Winnubst & Schabracq,

1998). In Lieberman's (1986) view, the term *social support* has become an

"overly inclusive... conceptual morass... absen(t) of a unitary knowledge area" (p.

461) requiring disaggregation into a number of component parts. Indeed, the

term 'social support' has been plausibly said to "denote an area of research rather

than observable and/or definable empirical phenomena" (Veiel &

Baumann,1992, p. 275). As the different approaches adopted by researchers

indicate that conceptual, construct, and epistemological issues are "yet to be

resolved" (Veiel & Baumann,1992, p.313), can researchers reasonably expect to

rely on the introspective self report of respondents' assumptions of what is meant

by *social support* (Lieberman, 1986)?

Social support is conceptualised in general terms as resources for health

and well-being, and as the important health-protective effects of macrolevel

societal factors, such as adequate finances, good nutrition, medical services and

meaningful employment (Heller, Swindle, & Dusenbury, 1986). At the

mesolevel, it is widely held that social support networks, or social

embeddedness, mediate or buffer the impact of stress on psychological well-

being (Bailey, Wolfe, & Wolfe, 1994), such that social support has been seized

upon by mental health professionals as the exemplar of psychosocial assets or resources (Heller, et al., 1986). In subjective terms, at the microlevel, social support is about how relationships and interactions are perceived by the receiver and the donor. That is, social support is individual and interactive (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983).

Consistent with Lieberman's (1986) view, Veiel and Baumann (1992) argue that conceptions of social support should further distinguish between social embeddedness, potential support, enacted support, perceived support, and crisis support. For example, supportive transactions during a major life event or stress are regarded as crisis support, and differ from general every day social support that facilitates social embeddedness and social network structures (Barrera, 1986). Going to prison is a major life event that may require crisis support for the prisoner and his family.

Measuring social support

Measures of social support focus on environmental or individual characteristics. For example, the Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) developed by Sarason et al. (1983) measures high or low social support by the number of available supportive relationships, and perceived satisfaction with the support. It is inferred that the more people we have available for support, the better we will be at coping. Such measures are very general, making it difficult to link support to outcomes (Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986). They do not take into account the cost: benefit ratio of maintaining many social relationships, or indications that too much social support, or support which is too intense, may threaten an individual's autonomy, a principle understood within welfare discourses (Aungles, 1994; Lehman et al., 1986; Robertson, Elder, Skinner, & Conger,

1991; Winnubst & Schabracq, 1998). The focus on lack of support as maladaptive denies individual lifestyle choices, varying standards of social involvement, and situational circumstances in the context of people's lives (Coyne & Delongis, 1986).

While social support has been established as an effective coping mechanism or a buffer of stress associated with being in prison (Hobbs, 2000; Hobbs & Dear, 2000, 2001), the question for researchers is: what type of social support is most likely to aid adjustment to prison life and ameliorate the effects of stress? For example, Hobbs (2000) considers that simply maintaining connections that provide social interaction will be psychologically beneficial to prisoners' ability to cope. However, some people prefer to cope by themselves whether or not social interactions or helping relationships are available (Hobbs, 2000; Lieberman, 1986).

As the general concept of being supportive comes without instruction about specifically *how* to be supportive, people often make attempts that are perceived as unhelpful by the recipient (Lehman, et al., 1986). It is a well-known phenomenon that well-intentioned support that is a mismatch between the individual's needs and the support offered, can be highly distressing (Winnubst & Schabracq, 1998)

Negative Aspects of Social Support

The negative impact of providing support in stressful situations has implications for both families and prisoners. Crisis support interactions, while having essential supportive qualities, may also be negatively influenced by the stress the supportive person is experiencing (Barrera, 1986). Providing crisis support to family members and close friends can be time consuming, stressful,

and have a detrimental effect on the psychological health of the caregiver, particularly if the caregiver is a woman (Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986; Robertson et al., 1991; Rook, 1992). Aungles (1994) noted that, in practice, family support equals care by women. Rook (1992) argues that vulnerability to stressful life events increases when emotional distress is experienced indirectly through intimate relationships with loved ones. In addition, the reciprocal nature of social support, which implies indebtedness, and overinvolvement in close relationships such as family and marriage, can be a burden (Coyne & DeLongis, 1986; Robertson et al., 1991). Negative or unsupportive social interactions have been found in several studies to have stronger implications for mental health and psychiatric morbidity than positive interactions (Lehman et al., 1986).

Perceptions of support may differ between receiver and donor. For example, in the reciprocal relationship between a prisoner and his partner, if the supporter does not share the receiver's experience of the nature, severity, and duration of the distress, their misconceptions and assumptions may cause them to underestimate the depth of the distress (Lehman et al.,1986). Discouraging open discussion and encouraging quick recovery from a life crisis is likely to be perceived as inappropriate and unhelpful (Lehman et al., 1986). The support provider is also likely to be unhelpful if he or she is made to feel anxious or threatened by the plight of the support recipient (Heller, Swindle, & Dusenbury, 1986). That is, displays of distress by either the prisoner or his partner, may impede the supportive process. The negative impact of stressful supportive interactions may partly account for the attrition rate of prisoners' marital relationships that is especially high after the second year of imprisonment (Carlson & Cervera, 1992; Hobbs, 2000; Howard, 2000).

How do prisoners cope?

Coping style and locus of control are personality variables considered to be major factors in the relation between stressful events and adaptational outcomes (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, and Gruen, 1986). Within the theory of psychological stress and coping, as developed by Lazarus and colleagues, coping is conceptualised as having two major functions: *emotion-focused coping*, for regulating stressful emotions; and *problem-focused coping*, for altering the stressful person-environment relation (Folkman et. al, 1986). Within this model, coping is defined as "the person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the person's resources" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984b, cited in Folkman et. al, 1986, p. 993).

Coping with imprisonment involves adapting to the prison environment and prison life. The particular types of stresses experienced by prisoners in the prison environment, and the material, familial and social losses resulting from incarceration, may challenge the usual coping mechanisms that have been developed and employed to cope with stresses outside the prison. Individual responses and coping behaviours may be seen as adaptive or maladaptive responses to the interaction between personal and environmental factors in a stressful situation (Zamble & Proporino, 1988). For example, two individuals facing a long prison sentence in the same environment will respond in different ways to the restrictions, deprivations, and lack of control (Zamble & Proporino, 1988). Zamble and Proporino (1988) identified a range of coping modes used by prisoners within the prison context, which generally remained unchanged over time. Most prevalent coping mode used was reactive problem-oriented, followed

by avoidance and escape. Social support was ranked around sixth (Zamble & Proporino, 1988).

Research has shown that prisoners experiencing a greater degree of coping difficulty however, have been associated with maladaptive coping behaviours such as aggression, self-harm, and suicide to relieve or escape from unavoidable psychological distress (Dear et al., 1998, 2001; Toch, 1992,). Dear et al. (1998) found self-harmers reported fewer available sources of support, and that self-harm was frequently precipitated by isolation from family.

Locus of Control and the Stress Buffering Effects of Social Support

Locus of control is a personality variable found to interact with coping style and the stress-buffering effects of social support. It determines the extent to which life chances are regarded as being under one's control, in contrast to being externally, or fatalistically determined (Folkman, Lazarus, Gruen, & DeLongis, 1986). Zamble and Proporino (1988) observed that a prisoner who attributes the lack of control to his own inadequacy is likely to become depressed, apathetic, and withdrawn. On the other hand, they also found that a prisoner who attributes the lack of control to others' abusive behaviour is more likely to become resentful, angry, and rebellious, resulting in a confrontive coping style. Both of these coping styles are likely to be maladaptive in a prison environment.

In the context of prison life where previous coping style and locus of control may be redundant, the impact of perceived social support on adjustment is likely to be amplified. According to Sarason, Levine, Basham, and Sarason (1983), when altering the stressful person-environment relation is mostly beyond an individual's control, the emphasis is likely to be on emotion-focused coping, for regulating stressful emotions, rather than problem-focused coping.

patterns are then examined for best fit to the domestication model of unit

management in prisons, compared to support patterns in organisations.

Different Sources of Support and Domain Specific Effects

To further understand support-seeking behaviour in prison we can look to

patterns of behaviour outside the prison that are maintained in the prison setting.

For example, in marital relationships, the wife is the primary source of emotional

social support for the husband, while extended family and friends are the primary

source of emotional social support for the wife (Robertson, Elder, Skinner, &

Conger, 1991; Aungles, 1994). Lin, Woelfel, and Light (1985) found depression

was negatively related to emotional supports, such as lover/spouse and relatives

with whom the person has strong ties. Hart's (1995) study of gender differences

in social support among inmates indicates that men are more likely to seek

practical support than emotional support. Both men and women seek emotional

support from women (Hart, 1995; Larson & Nelson, 1984; Robertson et al.,

1991).

Cauce and Sargeant (1992) further differentiated the domain specific

context of support sources. In their study with adolescents in the college

environment, they investigated a number of supportive interactions with their

families (family support), other students (peer support), and institutional staff

such as teachers (institutional support). They found family support to be

positively related to general, peer, and physical competence, and buffered the

effects of negative events. Peer support related positively with peer competence

and anxiety and negatively with academic competence and adjustment.

Institutional support was only related positively with competence in the setting,

and only buffered effects of negative events in conjunction with internal locus of

control for successes (Cauce & Sargeant, 1992). These results for institutional

support would seem to limit the usefulness for such support in the prison setting

to the less restricted prisoners engaged in satisfying work, for whom instrumental

action or informational supports are the most appropriate problem-focussed

strategy (Cutrona, 1990).

Unit Management - Domestication Culture and Social Support

Various attempts to domesticise control in prisons arose out of a need to

civilise the brutal masculinities of prison life. The Unit Management

(domestication) model adopted and developed within some prison systems

(including the Western Australian prison system) seeks to encourage relationship

building between prisoners and staff (Smith & Fenton, 1978). Women staff were

appointed to men's prisons, and small units of management were designed

around communal domesticity supervised by a small team of prison officers

(Aungles, 1994). According to Smith and Fenton (1978) the objectives of this

model include enhancing the institutional environment, and better utilising staff

resources in identifying those prisoners experiencing problems and providing

appropriate supports. Aungles' (1994) critique of the domestication of prisons, is

that it "constitutes prison life as a paternalistic family structure perpetually

reconstituting a stream of adolescents", where "penality, productivity, and

domesticity are interwoven" (p. 102-103).

The type and source of social support that prisoners seek when

experiencing problems has been the focus of recent research conducted at Edith

Cowan University (ECU). Hobbs and Dear (2000) measured prisoners'

perceptions of prison officers as sources of support by a rating of willingness to

approach officers about a range of problems for practical help or emotional

support. The prisoners reported they would rarely seek support from prison

officers, except for practical help relating to legal proceedings, or problems

related to placement within the prison system. Prisoners were least likely to

approach officers for help or support related to interpersonal or family problems.

A follow-up study of officer's perceptions of prisoners' support seeking

behaviour was largely consistent with Hobbs and Dear's findings (Dear et al.,

2002). These results accord with the coping and social support theories

discussed above, but not with the unit management objectives of utilising staff

resources for emotional support.

However, the problems were not ranked in terms of importance to the

prisoner for their wellbeing. According to Zamble and Proporino (1988),

missing family or friends is the most common problem for prisoners. This is

consistent with Dear, Thomson, Hall and Howells' (1998) study of prisoners who

had self-harmed in the past 2 days. They found that 19.7% of self-harm prisoners

reported being isolated from family in the past week as their greatest stressor.

Further research by Hobbs (2000) examined prisoners' perceptions of the

informal sources of support (e.g., family and friends, other prisoners) and formal

support sources (e.g., professional support services, peer support prisoners,

prison officers). Social support was defined as "any form of assistance that may

be sought from or provided by another person or persons in order to meet one's

needs" (Hobbs, 2000, p. 4). From this broad definition, Hobbs found that family

support is a critical component of prisoners' coping resources. Family members

were rated as providing the highest quality and most effective support, and were

the most often used source of social support and assistance. This result could be

explained by Hobbs' (2000) Perceived Quality of Support (PQS) measure that

combined items relating to problem-focused coping *and* emotion-focused coping. As five of the nine items on the scale relate to understanding, care, listening, feelings, and emotional help, it is likely that prisoners associated these items more with attachment relationships such as family or partners (required for emotion-focussed coping), than with officers (occasionally required for informational support).

Further explanation could be that the ECU studies represent an overly inclusive use of the term social support, which masks the interaction between domain specific support seeking, prevalence or importance of types of problems experienced by prisoners, and optimal match between problems and available sources of support. Preference for family support found by Hobbs (2000) could represent the positive relationship of family support to general, peer, and physical competence, and buffering effects for negative events for prisoners found in domain specific interactions by Cauce and Sargeant (1992). That is, prisoner's perceptions of their support seeking behaviour do not accord with the domestication objectives of the unit management model developed for prisons, which seeks to utilise prison staff for prisoners' emotional coping needs.

Unit Management - Organisational Culture and Social Support

Once domain specific needs and optimal match between stress and support are considered (Cauce & Sargeant, 1992; Cutrona, 1990), the ECU findings in the prison environment appear to be more consistent with organisational support patterns. In a review of prison culture literature, Judy Jones (cited in Aungles, 1994, p.115) argues that the routine experience of prison culture does not provide sufficient informal support for emotional life. Although bonds between inmates do form from routine interactions and sharing

a cell in prison, many prisoners prefer to support the prison maxim of 'do your

own time' (Hobbs, 2000, p. 14; Toch, 1992). Peer support or mateship,

according to Jones, is not necessarily a viable option, as other prisoners may be

disliked, lack common interests, or are avoided, as cohesiveness among groups

of prisoners is manipulated and actively inhibited by prison administration.

From prisoners' own accounts, the hierarchies of power and the pervasiveness of

violence, "especially as they operate through the drug trade run by both

prisoners and prison officers" means that self-preservation involves not engaging

in self-disclosure with others inside the prison (Aungles, 1994, p.115). Rather,

as Hobbs observes, prisoners seem to have associates or aquaintances in the

prison environment, which is consistent with interactions in hierarchical

organisations.

Prison can be seen as having an organisational culture with repetitive,

mechanical and hierarchical characteristics. In their comprehensive review of

the literature on communication, social support, stress and organisations,

Winnubst and Schabracq (1992) assert that organisational regimes with these

characteristics cause a higher degree of alienation, compared to organic style, or

professional organisations. Winnubst and Schabracq (1992) consider the two best

known organisational structures to be those conceptualised by Mintzberg's:

"machine (mechanical) bureaucracy and the professional (organic) organisation"

(p. 92). The professional organisation is a participatory system, characterised by

creativity and autonomy, where the superior is more of a colleague who helps

and advises. For the machine bureaucracy, emphasis is on utilitarian exchange,

where instructions and decisions are aimed at maintaining predictable rituals,

and support systems will be ruled by superiors. Informational and instrumental

help, and esteem support are the types of support usually sought, but may not be

seen as 'support' (Winnubst & Schabracq, 1992), consistent with the findings by

Hobbs and Dear (2000).

For men within hierarchical organisations, emotional support is not likely

to be sought from people above them on the hierarchy, but from women down

the hierarchy and from their attachment relationships or intimate partners

(Winnubst & Schabracq, 1992). By combining theoretical concepts of coping,

and the theories about support patterns within organisations discussed here, with

the results of the ECU studies, it is possible to explain the ambiguities created by

the expectation for prisoners to approach officers for emotional support. It is

reasoned that male prisoners are likely to separate the sphere or domain of prison

(work, organisation) and the sphere of home (wife, family) and therefore employ

different coping mechanisms requiring differing types of social support for each

domain, rather than prefer or choose one over another.

From this literature, it is concluded that sources of support sought are

likely to differ according to type of support required, type of problem or stress

experienced, locus of control of the prisoner, controllability of the situation, and

culture of the organisation. For those prisoners experiencing distress, family

support is likely to be of most importance for emotion-focussed coping.

However, anecdotally prisoners report difficulty accessing family support.

Families of prisoners

Importance of Family Support of Prisoners

The importance of prisoners maintaining close family ties has been

acknowledged in the literature for over 40 years (Homer, 1979) and is still being

reported today (Pogrebin, Dodge, & Katsampes, 2001). Homer's review of

studies about inmate-family ties indicated that the role played by the prisoner's family was one of the most potent and practical tools available in the rehabilitation process for prisoners. The recidivism rate was consistently found to be lowest among those prisoners with regular family visitors than any other group, and prisoners with more family-social ties have had the fewest parole failures (Homer, 1979). Homer's article cites 50 years of prior research with the consensus that there is a strong positive relationship between strength of family-social bonds and parole success.

Impact on Families Having a Family Member in Prison

Despite the convergence of the articles reviewed by Homer (1979) and their evidence of the value close family ties and support have, not only for the prisoner, but for the prison system, and the community, the problems of the family as a result of its member's incarceration are largely ignored (Homer, 1979). An earlier article by Weintraub (1976) drew attention to the need for focus on delivery of services to families of prisoners, identifying four specific crisis points for the family of an individual passing through the criminal justice system: arrest and arraignment, sentencing, incarceration, and pre/post release. Needs identified included urgent information about rules and regulations governing visiting, writing, packages, location of institution, how to travel there, requirements for bail, details about a defence attorney, time and place of court appearance, information about transfer, and provision of money to the prisoner (Weintraub, 1976). Towards release date, information about the parole process, date of release, and rehabilitation or reintegration of the prisoner into the family and society are important to the family (Weintraub, 1976).

For the family themselves, the practical need for financial assistance, for welfare benefits, work, housing, and assistance with outstanding bills, were identified. Recommendations were made about an integrated approach to supply of information and service provision by agencies within and outside the departments of corrections (Weintraub, 1976). Psychological aspects of adjustment such as the need to redefine the family unit, and communication and continuation of the children's relationship with the incarcerated parent were also emphasised, for which community volunteer agencies were recommended as service providers. However, Weintraub's acknowledgment that the family needs assistance in order to "redefine itself in the absence of the incarcerated member in such a way as to still include him"(p. 30) points to an ecological perspective in which the social support of the prisoner and the family are seen to be embedded within the wider social context of the community, as well as within the corrections system. Weintraub argues that departments of corrections tend to formulate programs only with regard to the inmate in their care, and they therefore fail to recognise that the problems of the family are also the problems of the inmate.

More recently, Pogrebin et al. (2001) examined the collateral costs associated with short-term incarceration for effects on the inmates and their families. Both emotional costs and financial consequences for families whose financial provider is in jail were reported. Emotional costs discussed include loss of intimate relationships caused by the separation and absence of the prisoner, the shame or stigma associated with having a loved one in prison, and reduced (if not complete loss) of contact (Pogrebin et al., 2001).

Financial consequences for the family's economic survival may occur as a "domino effect" (Pogrebin et al., 2001, p. 70). That is, one thing follows another, resulting from loss of income, such as being evicted from their home, children forced to move schools, and goods being repossessed (Pogrebin et al., 2001). Pogrebin et al. argue that the collateral consequences of incarceration for misdemeanours associated with poverty, such as non-payment of fines, and inability to make bail, are extreme and disproportionate for the inmate, the family, and the community. As a result of these experiences, the aggregated effect concluded for the majority of visiting family members was the perception of themselves as victims of the criminal justice system (Pogrebin, et al., 2001), rather than a valuable resource. Given that problems for prisoners during the early postrelease phase were related to readjustment into the family and community, Pogrebin, et al. suggested that researchers "should focus on the perceived and actual positive and negative effects on family situations and relationships during and after a spouse's incarceration in jail" (p. 70).

To do this, it would seem prudent to investigate specific problems from the perspective of the prisoner's family, to explore what difficulties experienced by families impact on their ability to provide this valuable support service to prisoners, and what support they in turn seek or need. Only by identifying the difficulties faced by families themselves can services and programs be directed where they are most needed.

The Family Perspective

While major difficulties persist for families of prisoners, there have been attempts in recent years to give voice to the families themselves both within the North American and Australian contexts. In North America, the Florida House

The Obligation to Provide the Labour of Care

By combining the above studies with feminist social discourses about the

costs to women who support a family member in prison, an ethical dilemma

emerges for professionals and policy makers in the field, about reinforcing the

obligation for women to provide the labour of care. That is, are the benefits of

providing the support to prisoners worth more than the social, financial and

psychological costs to the women? Does reinforcing their family obligations

cause harm?

In Australia, an historical report published by Aungles (1994), included

a comprehensive review of government research during the 1980's that

examined the way domesticity could be used to reduce the level of recidivism.

As with the American studies, continuing family contact was seen as important

in neutralising the institutionalisation process for prisoners, and to contribute to

the goal of rehabilitation. For example, a report was published in 1983 by the

New South Wales Department of Corrective Services (DCS) (cited in Aungles,

1994, p. 112), about families of prisoners, in response to the 1979 Royal

Commission into the brutality and inhumane conditions of prisons in New South

Wales. The DCS report formally recognised that

> "visiting and maintaining family contact (was) incorporated into
>
> the punishment system to relieve the tensions and stresses of the
>
> masculinity of total institutionalisation and to reduce the costs that
>
> those stresses incur"(Aungles, 1994, p. 112).

The extent to which wives adopted a "functional or dysfunctional

method of coping" with the stresses of the impact of imprisonment categorised

women as either "distant or close" in their relationships with the prisoner

(Aungles, 1994, p.105). That is, "functional" women were those who could be identified as contributing to the neutralisation of the institutionalising process, and maintenance of family relationships.

However, while recommendations arising from this report included improving the frequency and conditions of visits, Aungles (1994) highlights the major burdens borne by women living day by day in the "impossible middle ground" of the especially contradictory "intersection of penality and domesticity". Factors that serve to frustrate the work of material and emotional maintainence of the prisoner, such as (1) insufficient visits, (2) inadequate information about family members during periods of family crisis or illness, and (3) the frequent reworkings of a variety of contradictory sets of administrative rules between prisons, are regarded as intrinsic features of the "ambivalence of domesticity" in prisons (Aungles, 1994, p. 146).

Importantly, Aungles (1994) challenged the assumptions about women's obligation to care and provide for prisoners by investigating the impact on families of the complexities of the economic and emotional aspects of this support service to prisoners and the legal-penal system. She interviewed 38 women who had provided this support during the 1980's. Aungles (1994) describes the material costs to women of the caring work of maintaining contact with prisoners, from a position of powerlessness, within the complex and contradictory conditions of the legal-penal system and welfare bureaucracies. She observes that the importance of maintaining contact with the family outside for the health and wellbeing of prisoners is at once both evident and yet invisible.

Apart from the costs to families discussed elsewhere regarding loss of the prisoners' income, six material aspects of caring work were identified from the interviews: (1) economic contribution to the state by maintaining the wellbeing of prisoners; (2) economic costs to women themselves associated with travelling, visiting, and provisioning; (3) economic costs of providing money, telephone calls, and provisions to the prisoner; (4) costs to women in their time and availibility; (5) mediating and negotiating work, and (6) the double burden of caring for prisoners and their children (Aungles, 1994). Other difficulties reported by the women were bureaucratic delays experienced as an arrogance toward them, as if their time was of no account, and the frustration of visiting arrangements made through one staff member, being cancelled by another (Aungles, 1994).

Consistent with theories of negative aspects of social support discussed earlier, the women reported significant stress and physical illness resulting from responsibilities not only for the men in prison, but for other family responsibilities relating to children's adjustment, stigmatisation, and social isolation (Aungles, 1994). Combined with the immense financial problems due to loss of income, and often, the home, the burden of care for women is often overwhelming (Aungles, 1994).

Furthermore, Jones (cited by Aungles, 1994) argues that the masculine values of emotional toughness and power in the prison environment increases men's emotional dependence upon families. In particular, wives and girlfriends become the focus of an intense need for attachment and identity, whose duty it is to provide nurturance to the prisoner, often interpreted by the women as "selfishness" (Jones, cited by Aungles, 1994, p.116). The relationship may be

better understood from analyses of the nexus of aged care and dependency, which show how the carer is exposed to emotional blackmail, the only form of control the dependent, cared for person can exert (Aungles, 1994). This need for attachment is also understood from Cutrona's (1990) perspective of optimal social support matching, discussed above, in the event of loss of intimate relationships. As Hobbs' (2000) preferred quality of support (PQS) measure was made up primarily of items consistent with feelings of attachment, it is not surprising that family were perceived by prisoners as providing the highest quality and most effective support.

Rather than simply maintaining connections that provide social interaction that are psychologically beneficial to prisoners' ability to cope, as considered by Hobbs (2000), Aungles' (1994) comprehensive idiographic study reveals women as locked into the family obligation to provide the labour of material and emotional care to their prisoner partners and sons, while struggling to maintain their own worth. They are alternatively rendered invisible then significant in the penal discourses, while they reconstitute the personality of the prisoner within contradictory and oppressive conditions. That is, women are at once valued and devalued.

Conclusion

Summary, Limitations, and Future Directions

This review highlighted the need to better understand the support seeking patterns of male prisoners and the impact of incarceration on their families who support them. Inherent in the reciprocal nature of the supportive process is the interactional effect of the negative impact of the stresses and problems of the family, which are also the problems of the prisoner.

By reviewing theoretical concepts of stress, coping and social support, an attempt was made to demonstrate that the prisoner is likely to seek an optimal match according to his perception of his need in the domain, assessing the type and level of stress or problem being experienced, the controllability of the situation, and evaluation of the sources of support available to him. For example, in uncontrollable situations which negatively impact on the individual, emotional support from attachment relationships (or an equalising sense of control over another) is most beneficial (or adaptive) for coping. The inability to achieve an appropriate match could result in distress and maladaptive coping behaviours.

The implication for prison management is that prisoners' support seeking patterns within the prison environment appear to be a better fit with interactions in hierarchical, mechanical organisations, than with the domestication objectives of the unit management model. That is, it was reasoned that prisoners maintain enduring patterns of interaction when seeking support, by separating the domain of prisons (as work, organisation, superiors, colleagues, acquaintances) from the domain of home (as intimate attachments, family, partner).

This review also highlighted the need to better understand the negative impact of incarceration from the perspective of the prisoner's family, and the support systems required by them. The collateral costs, both materially and for the psychological health of the family, can be overwhelming. The issues raised pose an ethical dilemma for professionals in the field, about the domestication policy in prisons, which imposes the obligation for families, and in particular, women, to provide a free service of support and care within the complexities and ambiguity of control in the prison environment, that serve to frustrate the supportive process.

If the increasing costs of incarceration are to be reduced through the provision of support, it would be useful for future researchers, policy makers, and legislators to adopt an ecological view to a collateral cost-benefit approach to longitudinal needs assessment, for both the prisoner and his family. From here, Cutrona's (1990) optimal match model could inform support provision. A multimodal, collaborative systems assessment would combine these factors to inform development of policy guidelines for practice and service delivery. A paradigm shift is needed to view the prisoner and his family as embedded, not only in the penal system, but also within the wider context of society.

While a heterogeneous population is not implied, possible cultural and language differences could inform future research direction. Because of the positive skew of males in the prisoner population, and family visitors in the literature tend to be females, this review was limited to discussion of the dominant populations. A comparison study of female prisoners and male family visitors would reveal to what extent the support seeking patterns identified here, the enduring domain specific interaction patterns, and the obligation to provide

support to the prisoner are gender specific. While there is likely to be a degree of

speculation and anecdotal evidence for possible outcomes, the lack of literature

in this area points to a need for exploratory research to inform future directions

of scientific inquiry.

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Abstract

Research on prisoners' support seeking behaviour indicates that while prisoners prefer family support, they have difficulty accessing it. Qualitative data were collected to explore what frustrates and facilitates the provision of support to a family member in prison. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 women and 2 men, who regularly visit a family member in a Western Australian maximum security prison. Thematic analysis of the data indicated that providing support was facilitated by visitors having familiarity with the system, adequate resources, and adaptive coping strategies. Providing support was frustrated by visitors' difficulties with the prison environment, insufficient resources, and multiple stresses associated with incarceration. The hidden labour and hidden costs to women mask the contradictions and incompatibility of the domestic and public spheres that are at the nexus between the carer role and dependence of the prisoner, and the prison. The obligation for women to provide this free labour of care, reinforced by the domestication model of unit management, has ethical implications for policy and professionals in the field about the rights and roles of prison visitors, opening the topic to further research.

Family Provision of Social Support to Male Prisoners:

Impact of the Visiting Experience

Adapting to imprisonment and prison life can be stressful for prisoners and

their families. The literature indicates that families are an important source of

support for prisoners (Brodsky, 1975: Hobbs & Dear, 2000; Homer, 1979). How

prisoners cope with the stresses of imprisonment, adapt to prison life, and their

patterns of support seeking behaviour, have been the focus of recent research

conducted at Edith Cowan University (ECU). In particular, Hobbs (2000) sought

prisoners' evaluations of available sources of support (formal and informal) and

found that family members were rated as providing the highest quality and most

effective support, and were the most often used source of social support and

assistance. However, anecdotal reports suggest that prisoners experience difficulty

accessing families for support. How prisoners' families cope, the impact of the

stresses of having a family member imprisoned, the type of support that families

provide and need, and the barriers they face in providing support to the prisoner

have been largely ignored within prison discourses.

What is Social Support?

Coping theory conceptualizes social support as coping assistance in the

management of stress (Thoits,1986; Winnubst & Schabracq, 1998). According to

Lieberman (1986, p. 461) "the term *social support* appears to be overly inclusive...

absent of a unitary knowledge area...requiring disaggregation into a number of

component parts". In their extensive review of the social support literature, Veiel

and Baumann (1992) concluded that the different approaches adopted by researchers

indicate that conceptual, construct, and epistemological issues are "yet to be

resolved" (p. 313). Therefore, Lieberman (1986) argues, can researchers reasonably expect to rely on the introspective self-report of respondents' assumptions of what is meant by social support?

For this study, social support is discussed from an ecological perspective, in order to examine the supportive interactions between the prisoner and the family, in relation to the prison environment, within the wider socio-political context. Macrolevel supports are societal factors for general health and well-being, such as adequate finances, good nutrition, medical services and meaningful employment (Heller, Swindle, & Dusenbury, 1982). At the mesolevel, it is widely held that social support networks, or social embeddedness, mediate or buffer the impact of stress on psychological well-being (Bailey, Wolfe, & Wolfe, 1994). In subjective terms, at the microlevel, social support is about how relationships and interactions are perceived as supportive by the receiver and the donor (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983)

While social support has been seized upon by mental health professionals as the exemplar of psychosocial assets or resources for health and wellbeing (Heller et al., 1982), it is apparent from the literature that social support can also have a negative impact on either or both the provider or the receiver. For example, supportive transactions during a major life event or stress are regarded as crisis support, and differ to general every day social support (Barrera, 1986; Veiel & Baumann,1992). Going to prison is a major life event that may require crisis support for the prisoner and his family.

Negative Aspects of Social Support

The negative impact of providing support in stressful situations has implications for both families and prisoners. Providing crisis support to family

most potent and practical tools available in the rehabilitation process, not only for the prisoner, but for the prisons, departments of corrections, and the wider community (Aungles, 1994; FHRJC, 1998; Homer, 1979). Despite this, previous research about prisoners and social support has been guided by concerns about the prisoner and has led to gaps in understanding the carer role and experiences of families (Aungles, 1994; Jones, 2002). Unless the problems of the family are also considered the problems of the prisoner, the problems of the family as a result of its member's incarceration are largely ignored (Aungles, 1994; Homer, 1979; Pogrebin, Dodge, & Katsampes, 2001; Weintraub, 1976).

From a feminist perspective, Aungles (1994) challenged the assumption within the dominant penal discourse that it is women's obligation to provide the free labour of care to male prisoners. She argued that while women are regarded only as a resource, subjugated to the objectives of the legal-penal system, their caregiving labour is invisible. That is, women's roles are at once valued and devalued (Aungles, 1994; Yeatman, 1986). Furthermore, Aungles argued that "these invisible social laws... mask or marginalise the contradictions of the interdependence and incompatibility between domestic and public life" (p. 243).

Discourses about visiting and visiting conditions for women's prisons focus on visits from children, often omitting mention of male family visitors (Larson & Nelson, 1984; Lott, 1994). Whether men feel obligated to visit and support their female family member in prison is largely unknown, and beyond the scope of this paper. Supportive relationships for female prisoners are more likely to be with other women, from inside and outside the prison (Hart, 1995; Larson & Nelson, 1984). Anecdotally, men are less likely to visit.

Family: Problems associated with providing the labour of support to the prisoner

By combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches employed in the penal, criminological, and feminist discourses, and the psychological social support theoretical concepts, a binocular view of the problems faced by families of prisoners can be conceptualised as potentially occurring in three domains: (1) The legal-penal system, (2) the families' circumstances, and (3) psychological factors. Inherent in the literature is the assumption that "family" refers to the traditional nuclear model of a female spouse and children, and "prisoner" as the male, former breadwinner.

The legal-penal system. Weintraub (1976) identified four specific crisis points: arrest and arraignment, sentencing, incarceration, and pre/post release. The need was for urgent information about rules and regulations governing visiting, writing, packages, location of institution, how to travel there, transfer, legal requirements, and provision of money to the prisoner (Weintraub, 1976). Information about parole, release, and rehabilitation of the prisoner are also important to the family (Weintraub, 1976). Aungles (1994) argues that many systemic frustrations are hidden ways women are incorporated into the field of punishment and control. For example, lack of privacy, bureaucratic delays, and visiting arrangements being arbitrarily cancelled by prison staff, were experienced as arrogance towards women visitors.

The Florida House of Representatives Justice Council (FHRJC,1998) collected self-report survey data from 286 prisoners' families in the United States, about the practical and systemic factors that influenced family contact with prisoners. The barriers found that impact on the frequency and continuity of family contact were still largely consistent with the earlier studies. The purpose of the study was to increase family contact in order to reduce the rising costs of

incarceration. Recommendations from the report resulted in a number of reforms to visiting conditions in prisons.

Family circumstances. Financial consequences for the family's economic survival may occur as a "domino effect". That is, one thing follows another, resulting from loss of income, such as being evicted from their home, children forced to move schools, and goods being repossessed (Pogrebin et al., 2001, p. 70). The practical need for financial assistance, for social security benefits, work, housing, and assistance with outstanding bills, was identified as requiring service by agencies within and outside the departments of corrections (Weintraub, 1976). In addition to the above, further costs were the practical loss of a partner and alternative child carer, and the material costs of provisioning the prisoner with money for spending and telephone calls (Aungles, 1994).

Psychological aspects. Weintraub (1976) acknowledged psychological adjustments such as the need for the family unit to "redefine itself in the absence of the incarcerated member in such a way as to still include him"(p. 30). Communication and continuation of the children's relationship with the incarcerated parent (Weintraub,1976), and the stress suffered by children of having a parent in prison were also emphasised (Pogrebin et al., 2001).

Aungles (1994) used a qualitative approach to conduct an idiographic study of 38 women who provided the free labour of care to prisoners in New South Wales in the 1980's. In addition to the above stresses, the women reported psychological and health costs of the obligation to care. Significant stress and physical illness also resulted from the women's responsibilities relating to children's adjustment, stigmatisation, social isolation, and the immense financial problems and collateral losses consistent with Pogrebin et al's (2001) research. Other emotional costs were

fears about the life and physical health of their partners and sons, and the loss of intimate relationships caused by the absence of the prisoner from the family (Aungles, 1994; Pogrebin et al., 2001).

Current reforms such as improved conditions for family visits within the prison environment are important. However, from the ecological perspective of the family as embedded in the community, as well as in the penal system, these reforms fail to ameliorate the impact of the collateral costs, discussed above, to the social existence of the family. From a feminist perspective, Aungles' (1994) social policy analysis considers that the hidden labour and hidden costs to women, located at the "nexus between caring and dependence of the prisoner... results in economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural domination" (p. 243).

The Current Study

Diverse methods of inquiry employed in the literature, such as quantitative empirical data derived from structured questionnaires combined with qualitative semi-structured interview data, are useful for developing in-depth analysis and exploration of person-environment social interactions (Wicker, 1989). As the penal discourses examined above utilised a quantitative approach focussing on the prisoner's perspective within the penal system, the present study employed a qualitative approach similar to Aungles' (1994) social analysis of women visitors in New South Wales prisons. The aim of this study was to explore families' experiences of visiting a male prisoner in a maximum security prison, from their own phenomenology. Specifically, I aimed to examine the families' perspective and experiences in relation to what facilitates and what frustrates them in providing support to a family member in prison. Two substantive domains, *negative impact on visitor*, and *positive impact on visitor* structured a framework of inquiry in the three

domains identified as potentially impacting on the visitor's capacity to provide support: (1) the legal-penal system, (2) visitor's life circumstances, and (3) psychological factors. The purpose of the research was to add to the assertoric knowledge about family provision of social support to prisoners, which could have implications for corrections and social policy, and the wellbeing of prisoners and their families.

Method

Research Design

The research was conducted as a naturalistic inquiry using Patton's (1980) inductive qualitative design strategy. This methodological paradigm employed semi-structured interviews to explore participants' perceptions of what frustrates and what facilitates their efforts to provide support to family members who are in prison.

Participants

The participants were 10 female and 2 male non-indigenous adults ranging in age from 26 to 81 years who were visiting a male family member in a maximum security prison. Seven of the participants were in the 26-35 age range. The participants were recruited as a purposeful sample of clients of the Visitors' Centre at the prison on the basis that they were regular visitors at the prison and identified as 'family' to the prisoner they visit and therefore likely to provide rich data (Patton, 1980). While the small sample of males is indicative of the higher proportion of female visitors, their similar, or differing experiences where considered of interest. Both of the male visitors were accompanied by their female partners.

Permission was gained for staff at the Visitors' Centre to assist with recruiting participants. Following a meeting with staff at the centre, at which copies

of participant information were made available, a number of contact names and visit times were provided to the researcher. Also, a recruitment flier was displayed at the centre, inviting volunteers who matched the criteria to participate in the research, or to make general inquiries, by contacting the names and phone numbers provided. On expressions of interest, appointment times were made for interviews. Six participants were recruited by approaching them face to face while at the visiting centre for a visit.

Five of the women are mothers of the prisoner they were visiting, and five identified as a spouse, partner, or girlfriend. Four of the women also cared for children under age 16 years. One of the males is the father of a prisoner and the other is an extended family member. All participants visited at least once per month, with five participants visiting once per week or more. Six said they would like to visit more frequently. Six of the participants travelled to the prison by car, three travelled by bus, and travel data were not collected for the other three. Five of the participants said their family member in prison would live with them after release. Saturation was deemed to be reached after 12 participants were interviewed as there were no new themes emerging for the three domains (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Care was taken to treat participants in accordance with the Ethical Principles of the Australian Psychological Society at each stage of the research process.

A similar number of the indigenous population participated in a parallel study being conducted by a fellow researcher (Williamson, 2002). However, it is recognised that neither group is homogeneous, as there could be a variety of ethnic, cultural, language, and socio-economic backgrounds in each group.

Instruments

An open response semi-structured interview schedule was developed to guide the framework of the interview. Prompts were generated which would explore the three domains (i.e., legal-penal system, family circumstances, and psychological aspects). Prior to interviewing, the research questions were reviewed by two researchers, one experienced in qualitative research, and the other experienced in the field of criminology, to assess face validity and clarity of questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A general open-ended question was added to the beginning of the interview schedule to elicit the experiences most salient to the participant. After the first (pilot) interview and further engagement in the literature, further open-ended questions to elicit information about the support needs for the participant, and suggestions for change, were added to close the interview.

The interview questions opened with: "Could you please tell me about your experiences of visiting your family member in prison?". The other main open-ended questions were: "What things make it difficult for you to provide support to your family member in prison?", and, "What are the things that help you to provide support?". A funnelling technique was employed by the researcher (Smith, 1995). That is, questions began broadly, using prompts to probe for more specific information in the three domains (Smith, 1995). For example, "Could you tell me more about how that affected you", or, "Could you tell me more about the sniffer dogs". A tape recorder was used to record the interviews.

Procedure

All respondents were given information about the study, advised that their participation was voluntary, and that they could discontinue at any time. Those who agreed to participate read and signed a consent form prior to being interviewed, and

basic demographics data were collected. Ten of the interviews were conducted in

the privacy of the office at the visitors' centre, prior to or after a visit. Two of the

participants were, at their request, interviewed in their own home.

To achieve the active involvement of participants in the co-construction of

data about their visiting experiences (Reinharz, 1992), the questions followed an

iterative, unstructured format, guided by the participant's narrative (Smith, 1995).

Skilled open-ended questioning allows the participant to answer in his or her own

words rather than choosing from a set of prescribed options (Reinharz, 1992). This

approach gives the researcher the opportunity to gain an understanding of the

participant's experiences in relation to the environment, from his or her own

phenomenology (Smith, 1995). It can facilitate a sense of connectedness, and

validate and authenticate personal experience within research (Edwards, 1993).

Interviews lasted from 20 to 40 minutes and averaged 30 minutes. On

completion, the tape recorder was turned off. Participants were de-briefed, given

the opportunity to ask further questions, and thanked for their participation. Notes

were made by the researcher for reflection about issues raised during conversation

after the interview. Saturation for the data was deemed to be reached after 12

participants were interviewed as there were no new themes emerging from the last 3

interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

One of the participants became distressed during her interview, which

followed a visit with her husband in the prison. After gaining permission from the

participant, the researcher consulted staff of the visitors' centre. While the

participant waited, a brief meeting was held with two staff members and the

researcher present. After discussion and consulting client records, the senior staff

member counselled the participant, agreed a verbal contract for follow up action,

and referred the participant to specialist services outside of the visitors' centre.

Upon follow up to the visitors' centre, the researcher was assured that the

participant was being followed up by centre staff. Interviews were transcribed

verbatim, ensuring authenticity of the data, and the tapes were erased.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis and data reduction involved organising data into

manageable chunks within a framework (Patton, 1990). An idiographic analysis of

each transcript was conducted, examining and analysing the data in detail before

moving to the next one. Each transcript was re-read and the data were highlighted

and colour-coded according to the three domain framework: (1) legal-penal system

issues, (2) family circumstances, and (3) psychological aspects that impact on the

visitor (Wicker, 1989).

An inductive analysis (Patton, 1980), starting from these specific

observations then builds towards general patterns (Jennings & Scovholt, 1999). Key

sentence fragments, or whole sentences, that illustrate those specific observations

(items) considered most important to the way the participant feels, thinks, or behaves

in the context of support provision to the prisoner, were taken from the transcripts

(Davison & Neale, 2001; Smith, 1995). Codes were used to mark the transcript

number and line location (Reddin, 1999). These codes and items, together with

selected text, were entered into columns onto a matrix similar to Miles and

Huberman's (1994) method of qualitative data analysis, and ordered in rows by

interview number. The domain framework was further divided into the substantive

domains of *positive* and *negative* impact for each of the three domain areas of

inquiry (Wicker, 1989). A total of 106 category columns containing a number of

items each were generated from a line by line analysis of the 12 transcripts. The

items were then organised into progressively more meaningful and broader categories, which collapsed or clustered into 61 categories in columns across the domains.

The latter stages of the inductive analysis procedure was a collaborative process in which the researcher, and a senior psychologist (familiar with the area of study, the visitors' centre, and the prison), contributed to the analysis of the data for validity of contextual authenticity (Jennings & Scovholt, 1999). A number of interpretive changes resulted. The 61 categories were sorted into different groupings until 25 main themes that fitted into the structured framework, were collapsed into 6 higher-order themes across the three domains, organised according to the two substantive domains: (1) *Negative impact on visitor* and (2) *Positive impact on visitor*.

Approximately two and a half months after the initial interviews, a follow-up interview was conducted by phone with two participants who could be contacted. Other participants were unable to be contacted due to the need for privacy and confidentiality which precluded the earlier gathering of contact numbers. The follow-up interviews focussed on validating and refining interpretations derived from the analysis (Jennings & Scovholt, 1999). The respondents were asked to comment on or evaluate how the extracted themes fit with their experience, and were invited to add any further information. This process resulted in confirmation and further support for the interpretations with minor modifications.

Findings and interpretation

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of people visiting a male family member in a maximum security prison. Interview data were used to explore what frustrates (negatively impacts) and what facilitates

(positively impacts) the process of providing support to the prisoner. Several themes emerged from the participants' narratives. Twenty-five main themes that fit into six higher-order themes, organised according to the two substantive domains, are reported. Table 1 contains the 13 themes for negative impact on the visitor, and Table 2 contains the 12 themes for positive impact on the visitor, in three domains: (1) Legal-penal system, (2) family circumstances, and (3) psychological factors. Next, selected quotes from the participants' raw data have been used to illustrate these themes. The researcher's interpretations of these data were informed by the literature pertaining to prisoners, their families and theoretical concepts of social support.

An additional theme that could not be properly captured within the two substantive domains also emerged. That theme is of a psychosocial nature and was labelled *obligation to care*. This theme reflects a paradox, on one hand compelling or motivating individuals to visit and provide support for the family member in prison, while at the same time creating emotional or psychological conflict or distress within or about the carer role.

Negative Impact on Visitor

Factors that frustrate the support providing process are described first. There is some evidence that these negative impacts either decrease with time or the visitor stops coming, particularly if the visitor is a female partner of the prisoner (Howard, 2000).

Legal-penal system: Difficulties with the prison environment. Themes feeding into this area were largely consistent with the literature discussed earlier. These included (1) insufficient knowledge and understanding of prison rules and

regulations, which seem to shift, (2) the complexity and responsibility of the prisoner's legal issues, (3) surveillance and lack of privacy, (4) conflict with staff, (5) poor visiting conditions for children, and (6) difficulties relating to restrictive access to the prisoner.

Even though at least three of the women revealed that they were either qualified professionals or undertaking tertiary studies, these issues were at times, overwhelming, and negatively impacted on the family emotionally and materially. For example, according to the wife of one inmate, experiencing problems with rules:

It's hard sometimes learning about the rules about prison. It wasn't

really fully explained why we weren't able to tell him somebody had

died. You never really understand what the rules are. It's sort of this

vague...I don't really know what's happening here. For me on the

outside...who can I talk to about this? How do I work it out so that I

know when the parole is up?

Systematic restrictions preventing communication in the event of family illness (prisoner, the visitor, and other family members), were a common cause of distress for some participants, while others reported increased access when the prisoner was hospitalised. Restrictive times for visiting, buses, and phone calls, which suit the prison system, create difficulties for participants who work. As one participant put it,

It's all so hard, like they can't ring – their phone ring doesn't start till

9.30 and it stops at 6.30 at night and when you're at work that's a ...

you know what I mean? It's only for 10 minutes at a time...he'll ring

me up and I'll like be, okay, I've got to sort this out and I'm like on the

phone for the next two hours trying to sort it out.

And another participant,

Sometimes it's hard. The bus only comes up here on a Tuesday and a

Thursday in the week, and I work so that's quite impossible to get from

work up here by quarter past four.

Particularly stressful for several of the participants in the current study was

the lack of privacy and no contact with the prisoner that resulted from surveillance

and security procedures at the prison, that seemed to them to be arbitrary,

unpredictable, and out of the visitor's control. The lack of privacy and the

surveillance were experienced as criminalisation by association (Aungles, 1994).

Participants felt they were "looked down on" as if it is "our fault that somebody else

tries to do something", "as though you're the one who has done something wrong as

well". One felt they were being treated "like they treat the prisoners".

Most of the visitors complained about "no contact" visits. Sometimes

contact was denied by officers for running late for a visit. It was generally described

as "upsetting", particularly if previously told they would have contact, and therefore

it was experienced as a form of punishment, manipulation and control. For example,

(I said to them) I already organised (a contact visit). They said to me,

"Tell your son that he's got to have a test or otherwise a penalised

visit", so I told him that, and he's on punishment for two months, non-

contact.

This quote illustrates the visit as the nexus of the contradiction experienced

by visitors, where punishment of the prisoner is also meted out as punishment of the

visitor, while at the same time the visitor is being asked to play the role of

gatekeeper of the prisoner's behaviour (Aungles, 1994; Lott, 1994). On this

occasion, the visitor failed in the role of gatekeeper, and received the punishment of

no contact to facilitate prison control over the prisoner. Use of visitors as a means of

control of prisoners was also evident in the following perception of an elderly

mother who was strip searched:

> Once here I've been strip searched. They said, oh well, she must have
>
> drawn attention to herself, but I didn't... he'd just done that anger
>
> management course, and I think they were checking him out more than
>
> me to see what his reaction to stripping his mother was. That's the
>
> only thing that I can think of, but it was very very embarrassing. I had
>
> to lift my big breasts, and I had to lift my breasts up so the camera
>
> could look down underneath, and part my hair, and I had to shake all
>
> my underclothes out so that I had nothing hidden in my underclothes.
>
> It was pretty embarrassing

This raises questions about the role of prison visiting within corrections

policy, as either a privilege (which can be taken away from the prisoner and the

visitor), a right (for the prisoner and family wellbeing), a service to the penal system

(family providing social support), or a means of punishment, manipulation and

control that infringes on the rights of the visitors, and devalues them. Two visitors

reported false detection of illegal substances by the sniffer dogs that had a profound

effect on their lives. To have the sniffer dogs "sit on you" meant either no visit or a

non-contact visit, so extensive rituals took place each week before a visit for one

visitor to prevent this event. Her story is significant and informative:

> The biggest impact on me, and just me, not the rest of the family
>
> members, is those stupid dogs. They always sit on me and I don't
>
> know why. I do (have dogs at home) but they, the dog handlers and
>
> security, like the superintendent's security, have said no, it's not your

dogs. I've got a son on Ritalin, where one has told me, yes that they do sniff out Ritalin, and others have said, no they don't. I work with people... who take medication ... and even though I don't administer them they say that... the residue is on their hands and that if they touch me it'll be on my clothes. That is the big biggest impact of actually visiting it's (those dogs). I've got letters from my doctors to say what medications anybody in the household is on.

Even the first time, I offered to be strip searched, but they wouldn't do it. They refused to do it and we had to have a non contact visit... I'd say at least once a month they sit on me, at *least*... because I spoke to the officer the next day and he was really good. I have been one of the lucky ones. Now (laughing), I'll go across and the dogs will be there and I'll have a non contact visit!

We leave home at eleven this morning. At ten o'clock we take turns jumping in the shower; I get the clothes off the line; I iron them while the kids are showering; then I jump in the shower and we all get dressed, and once you're dressed you go outside so you're not near the dogs. You're not near anything, that's how ridiculous it's got. And then during the week, I come straight from work so I can't do all that. I had a visit Thursday of this week and on Wednesday and Thursday I had a really bad migraine. I suffer them like strokes. I go all paralysed. Thursday I couldn't take anything because I was so scared that if I took something when I came down the dogs might be there. I've had all that (doctors certificates). I've put all that in and they still don't, so that is the biggest impact this whole thing in regards to

I don't really have that many friends and all I've got, well basically my

life is my dad, and he's still recovering from his assault, and I'm more

worried about if he's alright. He lives by himself, but I make sure that

he's alright everyday. I'm basically doing everything on my own and

the kids are with me all the time. I don't have like time out by myself

you know.

From an ecological point of view, this participant can be seen to lack

supports at each of the macro, meso, and micro levels described earlier, which has a

significant detrimental effect on her health and wellbeing.

Psychological: Stresses associated with incarceration. Themes identified in

this area were: (1) difficulty coping with visiting and absence of the prisoner; (2)

negative impact on visitor's health and emotional wellbeing; (3) selfless focus on

prisoner's care; and (4) a sense of powerlessness, grief, anxiety, frustration, and

anger.

As Robertson et al. (1991) remarked, caregiving can be time-consuming, and

stressful. The emotional distress transmitted through intimate relationships (Rook,

1992), vulnerability to stressful life events from self-sacrifice and caretaking others,

and the negative effects of overinvolvement in close relationships (Coyne &

DeLongis, 1986), discussed in the introduction of the present study, is best expressed

by this participant, in her own words,

I'm like this all the time (teary, scared). (I've got) red eyes. I'm at a

point now where I'm making myself sick, I'm not eating properly, I

feel lazy all the time, tired. We need him at home. It's sort of like my

life is on hold at the moment and the only hope that the children and I

have got, is the appeal. I said to (husband) if he doesn't come home

that's the end of me, you know, I don't think I could bear to go on. I

get suicidal thoughts and he knows that. I'm in shock still.

This, and another account also illustrate Heller et al.'s (1986) assertion that

the support provider is likely to be unhelpful if she is made to feel anxious or

threatened by the plight of the support recipient:

I get too upset, I sit there crying and he hates seeing me crying, so, well

I can't help it. I can't be any more than what I'm being. I just can't

make it better.

The following account also represents the selflessness and acceptance of

blame that not only absolves the prisoner of accountability of his own actions, but

the emotional control that is at the nexus of the interdependence between carer and

receiver that maintains the intimate attachment (Aungles, 1994).

When it happened, me and him were sort of like in a bit of a rough

patch, and I sort of like understand because when he got in the car (of

the women he assaulted) he thought it was me. He was that depressed

over me and he started drinking and he got these trips and took them.

A mother who had been visiting for a number of years, initially had difficulty

coping with the stress of visiting and the negative impact on her health and

emotional wellbeing. However, she was aware that her distress would be unhelpful

to her son:

Well, when he was first in this time, I used to feel sick. I used to get

stomach ache, and I'd have the runs and that when I knew that it was

time for a trip and visit, but you get used to it. Yes, and I couldn't let

him see that it was upsetting me as he would've been upset, and yes it

was very hard , very, very hard, and especially when I knew how long

he would be in for.

In accordance with Rook's (1992) findings of higher risk for women, the

detrimental emotional impact in the early stages of incarceration were described by

eight of the women, but not by either of the male visitors. Two women described

themselves as "quite scared", another two as "nervous coming here", and "teary all

the time", also, "listening to his problems and knowing there wasn't anything I could

do to help him". Other women were "angry in the beginning", it was "devastating to

start off with", "very, very emotional", "hard to forgive", but then, "worry that he

was going to end up committing suicide or something like that". Most of these

emotions reflect the powerlessness of the situation for the women, the grief, anxiety,

and stressful nature of the supportive relationship with the prisoner, and the urgent

need for appropriate supports for the caregiver, if the supportive interaction is to

have a positive effect on the prisoner and his family. Indeed, no negative impact

data were recorded for the two males (who were both accompanied on their visit by

female partners) for the legal-penal system, the visitors circumstances or

psychological domains.

Positive Impact on Visitor

The higher-order themes that were evident from the data as having a positive

impact on the supportive interaction and visiting experience were: familiarity with

the system, adequate resources, and adaptive coping strategies. Some of the

experiences that visitors described as helpful to the supportive interaction, can be

identified as coming from a combination of macro, meso, and micro level supports

referred to in the introduction.

Legal-Penal system: Familiarity with the system, staff, rules. Themes fitting here were: (1) knowing the rules, (2) benefits of visitor centre services, (3) positive interactions with staff, (4) prior experience of prison system, and (5) prison events and programs that include family members. The data revealed that time, positive experiences, and familiarity with the prison environment were facilitative for the visitors. Having some extra help made a difference:

> One of the most helpful people, I find, is the guy who use to work in
>
> the prison system. Now he's a policeman on the outside. Just having a
>
> social chat with him, he gave us lots of info about how the system sort
>
> of works.

For one participant, knowing all the officers combined with her partner getting along with some officers "like old mates" meant they were "treated like family". It was comforting for families to have contact with the prisoner: "I'm a lady that's never had non contact visits so that's been rather good too, that we've always been able to hug one another." For one woman, "I'm used to it because I used to be in here", and another, "because I knew the system, you know, I've been able to talk to security about issues". While one visitor with experience of more open style prisons in the north west compared Casuarina Prison unfavourably, another found that this prison compared favourably to other prisons: "I've found no real hassles here. When I come it's quite a pleasant place to come and visit considering some of the other prisons around".

Various aspects of the service provided by the visitors' centre and staff were highly praised by nine participants. Childcare was important for the partners with small children, and use of the toilet. Also mentioned were emergency relief for outstanding bills, clothes donated for use, "heaps of support", letting "the boys know

that we're not coming so they don't worry" when the car breaks down, referral

services, etc. The extra care taken with an elderly visitor demonstrates the impact

personal orientation can have: "The lady from the Outcare went with me and she

went right into the prison visiting room, and after that you could go out there

everyday. I was okay then."

Those participants who were parents of the prisoner, or who had been

visiting for several years were also more likely to have a favourable impression of

prison staff. Staff were described as "pleasant", "very nice", and "wonderful",

although with some reservations in relation to the prisoners:

> Mostly you find that the officers are very nice to you when you're
>
> visiting. Whether they're nice to the prisoners or not, well that's a
>
> different matter, but they're usually pretty nice. You'll get one or two
>
> that's not.

One of the women recognised that the relationship with staff had reciprocal

effects:

> I've always found the officers to be, you know if you treat them nice
>
> they'll treat you nice. If you want to bad mouth them then watch out,
>
> you'll suffer - which is life though, isn't it?

The experience for long term visitors also seemed to be more positive the

more involved, or embedded, the prisoner and his family's engagement was with

prison events and programs. These included celebratory events for special occasions

which included the children (e.g., children's Christmas party), courses and work

reported as enjoyable and meaningful for the prisoner (e.g., computer and small

business courses), and the anger management program. Being kept busy meant that

"he's just got no time to get down really, as he said there's not enough hours in the

day, and that sounds silly when you're in prison, doesn't it?" When "not locked

away all day" "he's coping well... and seems to enjoy doing that". The benefits can

be seen to produce positive reciprocal support interactions between the prisoner and

visitor. For example, a mother and son shared and developed a love of books

together, recommending and reading the same books for discussion at visits.

Another mother described the mutual benefit derived from the anger management

course:

> He's taught me a lot too, yes. When he did the anger management
>
> course and all that, there was a lot of things that I learnt from that,
>
> because he sent me all the papers out. Yes, that you don't let anybody
>
> sit on you sort of business, and you speak your mind. If you don't like
>
> anything you tell people you don't like it, and I was one that would just
>
> go along with anything anybody said, you know. Yes, so that helped a
>
> lot. It's helped us both. I met the girls that were doing that course too.
>
> They were nice to me. Yeah they were lovely girls and they thought so
>
> highly of him.

From these accounts, macro supports for the prisoners, such as education and

personal development, can be seen to produce a social embeddedness, or meso level

support, which includes the family, thereby enhancing the reciprocal supportive

interaction (micro level support) .

Visitor's circumstances: Adequate resources. Themes in this area indicate

that it is visitors who have (1) the ability to travel to the prison, (2) flexible work, or

are not working, and (3) support networks, that facilitate being able to visit their

family member in prison. Those visitors with appropriate material and emotional

resources, such as having a car or a regular lift to the prison, childcare, family

support, and supportive friendships developed outside or with other visitors,

appeared to have adapted best over the long term. Reduced or manageable family

responsibilities, flexible supervisors, compatible work arrangements, or being

retired, were also facilitative. That is, the visitor needs a range of resources and

supports.

Psychological: Adaptive coping strategies. Themes relating to how the

visitor feels, thinks, and behaves to reduce the negative impact of the visiting

process, or to facilitate coping, include (1) positive affective or attachment feelings

for the prisoner, (2) cognitive behavioural adjustments (e.g., accepting security

procedures, ignoring surveillance, denial), (3) developing adaptive communication

strategies and (4) reciprocal supportive interactions with the prisoner. In the prison

environment where neither the visitor or the prisoner can exert much control over

particular types of stress being experienced by the other, one adaptive

communication strategy developed was to discourage open discussion and

complaining. This strategy was evident with the current sample:

> (Providing support) it comes in very, very easy now. As I said, he
>
> doesn't complain very much now. Most of the listening now is about
>
> work he's doing, so it's good listening now. He's not complaining all
>
> the time you know. He's never been in any trouble in the prison.

Another parent was also convinced that the prisoner was not experiencing

distress, stating that only prisoners who misbehave can expect to get into trouble

from the prison officers and, "I think it's wonderful what they (prison officers) do.

They're (prisoners) very lucky to be able to have visitors really aren't they?"

Another prefers not to have his doubts confirmed: "He seems to be alright. I've

often wondered whether it's just he's putting on a brave face, or that they're very

good to him". Whether these are misconceptions and assumptions that

underestimate the prisoner's distress, as Lehman et al. (1986) suggest, is unknown.

In response to lack of privacy, and to make the most of the visit, deeper issues are

avoided:

> We give each other emotional support, but only like little everyday
>
> things. We haven't really gone into the deep issues, and look at ways
>
> to handle things. When he comes out I think we will talk about all that.
>
> Before he came in we talked about it all but I know my coping
>
> mechanism is to just shut off and process things.

> Others developed better communication during imprisonment. A visitor who

reported that her husband was classified as a psychopath, and is serving an indefinite

sentence said that she "will come until the day he gets out". She feels she "can talk

to him about certain things, where before (she) couldn't. We just didn't have that

communication". Another spouse discourages "putting up a front", encouraging

discussion of problems about staff, and expressing the feelings and anger with her

that he cannot in prison. This visitor is available for her husband to call many times

a day. Sometimes however, she needs a break, takes the phone off the hook, and

goes for a walk. Her acceptance of her carer role, and selfless commitment to his

wellbeing is apparent.

> Accepting the rules and security measures, as a matter of routine, helped the

visitors cope and went a long way toward reducing stress, as expressed by this

mother, "I've got so used to it, it's just like you take a shower every day". Ongoing

embarrassment and psychological conflict after being strip searched, was best

avoided this way for an elderly mother: "Oh well, didn't worry me after that.

They've got to do those sort of things if they want to stop drugs coming in".

In spite of the crimes the prisoners have committed, and the difficulties and high levels of stress experienced by many of the visitors, it is love for the prisoner, and not wanting the children to grow up without him, that keeps them coming. Rather than the feelings changing, or becoming less, for most there is forgiveness, and for some, the relationship becomes stronger. These visitors "love coming", "look forward to the visits", and "want to be with him".

Obligation to Care

The social support framework was useful for unpacking the positive and negative impacts of the visiting experiences and supportive interactions in the context of wider social and structural factors in the prison environment. However, upon reflection, the superimposed theme that emerged from re-reading the transcripts, and stepping back for a wider view, revealed the almost invisible paradox contained in participants' sense of obligation to care for the prisoner. On the one hand, the sense of obligation related to the family role motivates individuals to visit and provide support to the family member in prison, while at the same time it creates emotional distress and psychological conflict for the carer. For example, a mother who visits every week:

> Well it had a bad impact on me to start with, but then I thought, well
>
> I'm his mother, and it doesn't really matter what he's done. You've
>
> got to stand by the kids you know. But the other members of the family
>
> didn't take it so well, and he'd ring some of them up but they never
>
> come and visit. His father comes on his birthday every year; that's the
>
> only time.

The ambivalence of the carer role and it's intersection with the welfare state in controlling women's roles within the family is well understood within feminist

Another staunch, long-term visitor was also ambivalent: "I have mixed feelings about him coming home, you know feeling settled down, and if he'll be able to do anything (and I don't really have room for him and a computer)". For the men in the study, who visited with their spouses, said they just "do their bit", and "it's not difficult, not at all really. We've supported him all along and that's it…well, it's just, he's just family commitment". A father's greatest coping difficulty was coming to understand how his son could commit an act he himself would not do. Overall, the obligation to care for the prisoner can be seen to be motivated or reinforced by combinations of love, guilt, family and social pressure, gender role expectations and duty, as well as the pressure from within the prison system where visiting is structurally reinforced.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of families visiting a male family member in a maximum security prison, in order to investigate what frustrates and what facilitates them in providing support to the prisoner. The purpose of the research was to increase understanding about family provision of social support to prisoners that could have implications for corrections and social policy, and the wellbeing of prisoners and their families. The data indicate that difficulties with the prison environment, insufficient resources, and stresses associated with incarceration negatively impacted on visitors capacity to provide support to prisoners, particularly in the early stages. Their capacity to provide support was facilitated by familiarity with, or acceptance of the system, staff, and rules, adequate resources, and adaptive coping strategies, which seem to develop over time.

Hobbs (2000) considered that simply maintaining connections that provide social interactions are psychologically beneficial to prisoners' ability to cope. In

contrast, the findings reported here provide valuable insight into the hidden labour and hidden costs to women who provide social support to prisoners that, argues Aungles (1994), mask the "contradictions of the interdependence and incompatibility between domestic and public life" (p. 243).

Incarceration results in losses at multiple levels of the families' support systems. Providing support to a prisoner is time consuming and stressful, requiring the family to make a number of adjustments and sacrifices. If the family has insufficient resources to cope with the collateral losses and multiple stresses, the inability to adjust to the impact of negative events in the visiting process of providing support, is likely to result in psychological distress and somatic illness, and may result in the family visits discontinuing. To increase the positive effect of the supportive interaction for the prisoner and his family, negative events in the context of prison visiting, such as practices within security procedures which serve to devalue and distress the family, and could infringe on their rights, need to be investigated further and reduced. It can be seen from the data reported here that macro, meso, and micro level supports are required, not only for the prisoner, but also for his family. It is hypothesised that those who have strong intimate attachments to the prisoner, and feel a sense of obligation to provide care to him, even at their own physical, circumstantial, and psychological expense, maintain consistent support to prisoners.

The visitors who perceived that the prison experience has rehabilitated the prisoner over time, through education and personal development, tended to be those who have positive reciprocal support interactions with the prisoner. Family who visit prisoners who do not complain, but provide reciprocal support, comfort, and regular contact for the visitor, tended to report the most positive visits. To what

extent this strategy is beneficial to the prisoner's coping will depend on the type of support he needs from the visitor.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of the current study point to future directions for research about families of prisoners. First, qualitative research relies on self-report data that could be influenced by a number of factors. This is remedied by limiting theory-based interpretations to assertoric knowledge accumulated for formulation of hypotheses and for future direction of further scientific inquiry. Other limitations are discussed below.

The sample population. The sample for the study was limited to a group of people who are currently able to provide support to their family member in prison, and did not include children. Difficulties that impact on families who discontinue visiting is important for prisoners who are experiencing distress, and who lack familial supports. While it is likely that there are other reasons why families discontinue visiting than those reported here, it would be difficult to access such a sample. Members of the Australian indigenous population, who were sampled for a parallel study (Williamson, 2002) were omitted from this study.

Range of inquiry. The range of inquiry was limited to visiting the prison. Although the participants' narratives included additional rich data about their lives, future research needs to extend the current study to the wider context of women's psychosocial, circumstantial, and financial existence beyond visiting in the prison environment. While it is clear from the data reported that the families provide support by way of social interaction, as reported by Hobbs (2000), it is also evident that they provide a range of practical and financial supports, as well as assuming multilevel maintenance of the family existence outside the prison. If the increasing

costs of incarceration are to be reduced through the provision of support, it would be useful for future researchers, policy makers, and legislators to adopt an ecological view to a collateral cost-benefit approach to longitudinal needs assessment, for both the prisoner and his family. From here, a multimodal, collaborative systems assessment would combine these factors to inform development of policy guidelines for practice and service delivery of the optimal match of support provision. A paradigm shift is needed to view the prisoner and his family as embedded, not only in the penal system, but also within the wider context of society.

Historical context. An historical account of earlier recommendations in the literature that have led to improvements in conditions for visitors, in the social and penal systems, was beyond the scope of this paper. An historical account would contextualise current conditions and document to what extent prison policy, service delivery, visiting conditions, and the lived experiences of the prisoners' families, are in step with current social policy, and the prevailing world view of women's rights, roles, and obligations in our society.

Gender differences. As there is a gap in the literature about the support role of male family members to female prisoners, the current study was limited to investigating support to male prisoners. A comparative study would be useful to investigate whether it is primarily women who feel obligated to provide the labour of material and emotional support to family members in prison. That is, it is hypothesised that the free labour of caregiving to prisoners is divided along traditional gender lines, at the expense of women's wellbeing, thereby presenting an ethical dilemma for professionals and policy makers in the field of criminology where this obligation is reinforced under the current domestication model of unit management.

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Table 1

Themes Relating to Negative Impact on Prison Visitors

Domain	Themes
Prison system	Difficulties with prison environment
	Insufficient knowledge of rules and regulations
	Overwhelming legal issues for prisoner
	Surveillance and lack of privacy
	Conflict with staff
	Poor visiting conditions for children
	Restrictive access to prisoner
Circumstances	Insufficient resources
	Material costs in time and money
	Isolation and lack of support
	Multiple responsibilities
Psychological	Stresses associated with incarceration
	Coping with visiting and absence of prisoner
	Impact on visitors health and emotional wellbeing
	Selfless focus on prisoner's care
	Grief, anxiety, frustration, anger, and sense of powerlessness

Table 2

Themes Relating to Positive Impact on Prison Visitors

Domain	Themes
Prison system	Familiarity with the system, staff, and rules
	Knowing the rules
	Benefits of visitor centre services and staff
	Positive interactions with prison staff
	Prior experience of prison system
	Prison events and programs
Circumstances	Adequate resources
	Ability to travel to the prison
	Flexible work or no work commitments
	Support networks
Psychological	Adaptive coping strategies
	Maintaining affectional attachment with prisoner
	Cognitive behavioural adjustments
	Developing communication strategies
	Reciprocal supportive interactions with prisoner

Thesis Appendices

Appendix A

Interview schedule: Family and friends of prisoners: Barriers to providing support

Question 1   Could you please tell me about your experiences of visiting your
                      family member in prison?

Question 2   Can you tell me (more) about what it is like for you providing
                      support to your son/partner/spouse (family member in prison)?

Question 3   What makes it difficult for you to provide support ?

Question 4   What enables or helps you to provide support ?

General Prompts: Please tell me about as many things as you can think of.
                      Can you tell me more about that?

Note: The general prompts above will be used to encourage the participant to expand on the following topics
within the three domains as or if they arise in the participant's narrative. For example, "Can you tell me more about
the prison/getting here/the effect on your relationship"

Domains:

---

(1)   Practical, prison system, correction policy

---

1. about the prison?
2. about getting here?
3. about the visitors centre?
4. about facilities?
5. about corrections policy or rules?

---

(2)   The Visitor's Circumstances

---

1. about your circumstances?
2. about getting here?
3. about other commitments that impact?

---

(3)   The Visitor: Psychological

---

1. about you and how you cope with visiting/providing support?
2. about how you think your family member copes in prison?
3. about your feelings toward the prisoner?
4. about the impact of incarceration on your relationship?
5. about the impact on you and/or the family having a member in prison?
6. about the type of contact allowed?
7. about the feelings you get when you come here?

Additional, or closure questions

1. What sort of changes would you suggest?
2. What would help you?
3. What type of support do you need to continue coming?
4. What would help your family member in prison?
5. What are the main reasons you continue to visit, despite all of the difficulties you have spoken about today? (if appropriate)

Appendix B

Edith Cowan University,
School of Psychology, 100 Joondalup Drive Joondalup, 6027

Invitation
to
Volunteer Research Participants

**who attend the Outcare Visitors' Centre
and who have a family member in
Casuarina Prison**

People from a range of backgrounds are invited to participate in a
research project for which we are conducting interviews.

We are a research team from Edith Cowan University doing a study
about the experiences of people attempting to provide emotional support
to a family member they are visiting in prison.

When: A time that suits you, before or after your visit.

Where: We will be conducting interviews at the Outcare Centre in a
private office.

How long: Approximately 30 minutes, maybe longer if you wish.

Confidentiality: Your name or anything that will identify you will _not_ be used.

(Outcare is supporting this research, but what you say remains confidential to the university
researchers.)

Contact:
For further information, to make a time to speak to one of the researchers, or to
arrange your interview, please phone: (or speak to Angela)

Greg   Project Supervisor   Phone: (08) 9400 5052
Kate   Researcher   Phone: (mobile number was inserted here)
Lois   Researcher   Phone: (mobile number was inserted here)

(Tear off phone numbers for each of the researchers were inserted here)

Appendix C

Participant information

A research team from **Edith Cowan University** is doing a study into the difficulties prison visitors face when they are attempting to provide emotional support to the prisoner who they are visiting. They want to interview people who are visiting a family member in Casuarina. The interview should take about 20 minutes, but if you want to talk for longer than that then you can. In the interview you will simply be asked to describe all of the things that make it difficult for family members to provide support to the prisoner who they are visiting and all the things that are helpful in providing support. **Outcare is supporting this research, but what you say remains confidential to the university researchers.**

Confidentiality:

No one who is interviewed will be identified in that report or in any other report that is published. You will not be required to tell the interviewer your name. If in the interview you happen to mention that name of the person you are visiting in prison, then the interviewer will wipe this name from the records and it will not be written down anywhere. **The interviews will be tape recorded, but the researcher will wipe these tapes as soon as the interview has been transcribed (typed out). The transcript of the interview will not contain any names or identifying information.**
The researchers at the university will write a report on their findings from the study and this report will be made available to Outcare, the participants and any other interested parties.

Voluntary participation:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate you can change your mind at any time, even during the interview (simply indicate to the interviewer that you do not wish to answer any further questions). **Your access to services at the centre or to visits (or to any service provided by Outcare and the Department of Justice) will not be affected in any way by participating or declining to participate.**

Feedback:

The findings from the study will be reported to Outcare at the end of the study. A copy of this report can be made available to any participant who requests one. You can do this by contacting the research supervisor at the address below, or by asking any staff member at the visitors' centre.

Contact for further information:
Greg Dear, School of Psychology, Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive Joondalup, 6027. Phone: (08) 9400 5052.
If you have any concerns about the project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact Dr Craig Speelman (Head of School of Psychology) on 9400 5552.

Appendix D

CONSENT FORM

(signed consent to be obtained by interviewer prior to interview commencing).

I (the participant) have read (or had read to me) the **Participant Information Sheet** and any questions that I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time.

I understand that the interview will be tape-recorded but that the tape will be erased as soon as the recorded interview has been transcribed (typed out).

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided that I am not identifiable.

Participant (initial only if signature might identify you)   **Date**

Appendix E

Demographic Data of Visitor

Q1.   What is your relationship to the inmate you visit?

Parent	Spouse	Ex-partner
Child	Partner	Other family member
Sibling	Friend/Non-family	Other

Q2.   Gender?

Male	Female

Q3.   How old are you?

18-25	26-35	36-45
46-55	56-70 +	

Q4.   How often do you visit your family member/friend in prison?

Once a week	Once a month	Twice a month
Occasionally	Several times a year	Other

Q4(a). Would you like to visit more frequently?

Yes	No

Q5.   Will your family member in prison live with you upon release?

Yes	No	Don't know

Q6.   Does your family member in prison have young children (under 18)?

Yes	No

Q6(a). If yes, how many does he have?

1 child	2 children	3 or more

Q6 (b) How many children do you care for?

1	2	3 or more

Q7.   How long does it take you to travel to the prison?

< 1 hr	1-2 hrs	3+ hrs
Details		

Q8.   Do you own a car?   Yes   No

Appendix F

	Prison System		Circumstances		Psychological	
	Positive	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Negative**
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Familiarity with prison, staff, rules	Difficulties with prison environment	Adequate resources	Insufficient resources	Adaptive coping stategies	Stresses associated with incarceration
Interview 1	I know all the officers so we're treated like family	This is our first year no children's Xmas party	If I didn't have my mum it would be hard, very hard	There are weeks I haven't got pension money to get here	Some days I just put the phone off the hook and just be by myself	When you've done it for years it gets hard. you need a mental break.
Interview 2	He gave us lots of info about how the system works	It's hard sometimes learning about the rules about prison				You get scared, you're oh so nervous coming here
Interview 3	Visitor centre staff let the boys know if we break down	Officer..just walks up and down and stares at you	It's been a lot easier since (other visitor) brings me		He doesn't complain very much now. At least I know where he is	I used to feel sick and get the runs. I worried he would commit suicide
Interview 4	The lady from Outcare went with me. I was ok then.		We ring each other with problems	I've paid debts, lawyers, and exhausted all my money	We send each other jokes	Anyone who's got complaints are the ones who misbehave
Interview 5		He was in the infirmery 9 days, no calls, no visits		Spend an hour there, that's your day gone	The fact that I love him and that our r/ship is stronger	
Interview 6	It wasn't new to me...I worked in the prison system	The sniffer dogs are the biggest impact of visiting	Work is (close), good for my mid week visits	No privacy. Share visits with his/my children, in laws	My coping mechanism is just to shut off, and make the most of it	Why doesn't somebody give without me having to ask
Interview 7	I'm used to it. I used to be in ... for a couple of years		All the other visitors that go in you get to know		We don't have any quams, I just do my bit	
Interview 8	It's quite pleasant considering some of the other prisons.	The bus only Tues & Thurs in the week, impossible	(Charity group) have been very supportive	I don't really have anybody for support	I think it is important they know there is someone there	I was nervous the first time
Interview 9	People who work here (Outcare) are lovely	First they told me no contact, rang next day they said yes, drove here then no	I've got a lot of support, very very supportive family	I haven't got money to help him	They're looked after pretty well I think	All I did was cry. I shouldn't have because my son couldnt help me
Interview 10	I've had some assistance from the prison here	I feel like they are treating me like the prisoners	Friends, family, that's all you've got really	I'm basically doing everything on my own	I still love him. I want to be with him, have more kids	I get scared, not sleeping, in shock, depressed, suicidal
Interview 11	Anyone we've met down there are wonderful	Not being allowed to take in little things	Very convenient by car down the freeway		We think the world of him really	Devasting to start off with, but used to it now
Interview 12		Don't know anything about any other facilities	I'm retired. Plus wife and family support		It's not difficult, he's just family commitment	

Sample Data Matrix

Date sent: **Fri, 01 Mar 2002 10:24:10**
To: **g.dear@cowan.edu.au**
From: **Peter Sirr <PeterSirr@outcare.com.au>**
Subject: **Re: research on prisoners' families/visitors**

Yep, post it to me Greg

Cheers, Peter

At 08:51 1/03/02 +0800, you wrote:
>Peter,
>
>I have attached it to this e-mail but I suspect that the same thing
>will happen again. Some people have found that if you open the
>second e-mail in Word rather than as an e-mail then it will work.
>
>If it doesn't work then I can fax it to you, although there are about
> 15 pages, so normal post might be the go if the attachment doesn't
>work. We are currently moving to a different e-mail package due o
>this problem.
>
>Greg.
>
>
>
>
>Date sent: Fri, 01 Mar 2002 08:49:56
>To: g.dear@cowan.edu.au
>From: Peter Sirr <PeterSirr@outcare.com.au>
>Subject: Re: research on prisoners' families/visitors
>
>> Hi Greg,
>>
>> Please resend the attachment, it turned up as a strangely coded
>> second email. Re Aboriginal researchers- its hard to advise you as
>> either way there are losses and gains. We have faciltated this
>> sort of thing before and its never appeared to be much of an issue
>> who does it, but who really knows in the end!!
>>
>> It might help me once I see the outline / proposal etc
>>
>> Cheers, Peter
>>
>>
>> benifits and At 18:11 28/02/02 +0800, you wrote:
>> >Peter,
>> >
>> >I apologise for the huge gap between my last e-mail in which I
>> >thanked you for your expression of support for this project and
>> >this e-mail in which I outline the details of the project.
>> >
>> >The attached Word document contains the ethics application and
>> >proposal for the study. I have two 4th-year students to work on
>> >the project with me (the limited funding that I securred did not
>> >extend to employing research assistants for the task, plus these
>> >students are keen to do research in this area).
>> >
>> >Please look at the proposal and let me know if what I have
>> >proposed is in line with what you are able to support. You will
>> >notice that I have proposed that staff of the visits centre will
>> >assist with recruiting participants. I hope that I have
>> >understood your comments re this in the way that you intended.
>> >
>> >The attached proposal has been approved, but any changes that you
>> >require will of course be made. Any other suggestions for making
>> >the project more feasible, or more acceptable within your context
>> >would also be appreciated. The students need to submit their own
>> >proposals by March 18. Any changes that you require will be
>> >incorporated into their proposals. If we haven't recieved your
>> >feedback in time for that then their proposals will essentially
>> >reflect the basic proposal that is attached here, but any changes
>> >that you require can still be made subsequent to them having
>> >submitted their proposals (we simply need to advise the ethics

>> >committee of those changes and that they were made in order to
>> >comply with the requirements of Outcare).
>> >
>> >I haven't sent this through to the DOJ as yet. While the study
>> >doesn't require their approval, I want to inform them of it as a
>> >matter of courtesy but also so that the prison admin at Casuarina
>> >can be informed (not that I would leave that to the bods in head
>> >office, I will tell Jim Shilo and Dave Hide myself) and then the
>> >visits officers will be able to know about it in case any of the
>> >prisoners hear about it and want to know what is going on.
>> >
>> >I am also considering employing an Aboriginal interviewer to do
>> >the interviews with Aboriginal visitors. What are your thoughts
>> >on this? As a rule it is better to do this, but sometimes you end
>> >up with a situation when the interviewer and the interviewee can't
>> >discuss the required topics for cultural reasons. Do you think
>> >that there is a need to have an Aboriginal interviewer?
>> >
>> >Many thanks for this,
>> >Greg.
>> >
>> >Greg E Dear
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>> >Edith Cowan University
>> >Joondalup Campus
>> >100 Joondalup Drive
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