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The Experiences of Canadian Children of Prisoners

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Declaration of Authorship

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Abstract

Long hidden from academic scrutiny, children of prisoners have recently become the subjects of much academic study, through a variety of disciplines and methods. However many issues within this topic remain under-examined. This study aimed to explore two such issues: the self-reported experiences of children of prisoners, and children in the Canadian context. This thesis analyses the results of qualitative interviews with children aged 6-17 who currently have a parent in prison (N=22).

Employing a 'sociology of childhood' framework, this project seeks to centre the voice of children themselves, privileging their own views and meaning-making. These data are supplemented with other findings to provide context to children's narratives, including: interviews with these children's caregivers in the community (N=12); interviews with a variety of key informants; observations gathered during extensive recruitment efforts with families of prisoners; and reviews of existing policy documents and service provision specific to parental incarceration.

The thesis begins with a review of the existing literature, followed by a description of the methods used in the present study. The analysis then begins in Chapter 4 with a discussion of the context of these children's lives, with a particular focus on poverty. Moving to the data from children themselves, Chapters 5 and 6 explore children's inner lives and immediate relationships, specifically their emotions about parental incarceration and relationships with their parents. Chapters 7 and 8 pull back to reveal children's interactions with their communities, and Chapter 9 widens the lens further to explore their experiences within the social policy context. Through a variety of empirical findings and by telling the story of parental incarceration in Canada from a critical and child-centred perspective, this thesis contributes to the scholarly understanding of parental incarceration.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Figures: Images, Tables and Graphs

Terms and Abbreviations Used

Parental incarceration	The situation of a child having a parent *currently* incarcerated in any custody setting. The word 'parent' is here used to describe any person that the child describes as being their parent or playing a parenting role, regardless of genetic link.
Child	In this document: Any person under the age of 18
Prison (prisoner)	In this document: Any criminal custody setting, including remand and sentenced settings, including jails, prisons, and penitentiaries. Psychiatric and immigration custody settings are not included. (Any current resident of a prison, thus defined)
Caregiver	In this document: the child's primary, day-to-day caregiver with whom they live, usually their parent
CCRA	Corrections and Conditional Release Act
CFCN	Canadian Families and Corrections Network, a national NGO
FEAT	Fostering, Empowering, and Advocating Together, a Toronto area NGO
JHS	John Howard Society, a national NGO
OACAS	Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; an umbrella organisation for child welfare agencies in Ontario
COPE	Children of Prisoners Europe; a European NGO, formerly known as 'EuroCHIPS'
CSC	Correctional Service of Canada, the federal government agency that administers the federal prison and parole service
MCSCS	Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Ontario provincial government Ministry responsible for the provincial prison service
PFV	Private Family Visits; the 'conjugal visit' process available to CSC prisoners
CD	Commissioner's Directive; Formal policy and interpretation of the CCRA by the Commissioner (head) of the CSC
CSDD	Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development

Chapter 1 | Introduction

Amy is 14. I asked where we should talk and she invites me into her room, walls plastered with pictures cut from magazines. She presents as older than her years – thoughtful, sensible and with little of the giddiness or dramatic effect I'd expect from a young teenager. She is funny and laughs easily but seems to be working on cultivating a dry sense of humour, underscoring sentences with a raised eyebrow and a wave of the hand. Amy wants to be a "social worker or those people that, like, take pictures of pregnant ladies bellies.[1]"

Amy's father lives in a Canadian maximum security prison and has been incarcerated since she was a baby. She has only ever known him to live within prison walls. Amy's mother moved them to live in the city where the prison is located when she was younger. For as long as she can remember, they have visited her father twice or more weekly, including regular weekend overnight 'conjugal' visits. Amy's mother speaks to him daily by phone. Amy has a younger, school-aged sister - in prison slang, a 'trailer-baby,' conceived in the trailer homes available for weekend visits. Amy has several half siblings, her father's other children, also school-aged. Having a father in prison is just part of Amy's life. She says, "I've never really got to compare it with other— something else, so I guess it's kinda normal." Amy's mother was incarcerated at one point in her younger childhood, which Amy found to be much more disruptive and difficult than her father's incarceration. She explains that this was due to it being unexpected:

> Because it's [father's incarceration is] always-- Like, for my entire life, it's
> just been like that, like. But with my mom, it kind of like, 'well you were
> here one day and now you're not and I don't know when you're gonna be
> here now.'

Despite the years that have passed, Amy still expresses this insecurity in the present tense, as if her mother's presence in her life continues to be precarious.

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[1] All names of participants are pseudonyms. Appendix 1 outlines the transcription notation conventions used throughout this document.

Amy's father's incarceration is 'normal' to her, but that does not mean unproblematic. Unlike most of her peers, Amy has a father who is absent from most of the day-to-day experiences of her life and the spaces that she occupies outside of prison visits.

> Yeah the worst part that, like, you don't get to have those, like, experiences. And people are like, 'oh me and my dad,' Or like, father, there's, like, father-daughter dances, like, at school, whatever, and stuff like that. Or, like, Father's Day when it's like, 'you guys could do this and they could come here.' Or it's like, 'do your parents want to come on this trip, like a dad or something?' And I'm like, 'no, no, he doesn't wanna do that.'

Further, identifying parental incarceration as 'normal' in her own life also does not mean that Amy is not acutely aware that her parental incarceration is not average among her peers. This aspect of her life can be challenging to talk about, reconcile and manage, socially:

> I guess when, like, your parent is, like, in, like, prison it's weird because, like, you-- When you're, like, at school it's like, 'what do your parents do?' or, well, it's like I don't-- You don't really know how to react to situations sometimes and it's difficult like that.

Having an atypical family situation and standing out for this reason amongst her peers is not something Amy takes any pleasure in. Describing the negotiation she undertakes when deciding whether to disclose this information to friends, she says:

> I'm thinking, 'do I like this person enough to tell them or trust them?' Because, like, when I tell, Like, when I've told certain people that's, like, 'oh what the hell' [both laugh] Or it's like, 'oh, like, I'm sorry' And I don't like that, when people [say] 'oh I'm sorry.' I don't care if you're sorry for me, it's fine.

> *Oh interesting. So what is it, the pity? You're not down for that?*

> I'm not a big fan of-- No, like, it's, it's been like a whole life thing I don't- It doesn't make me that upset, I guess. So it's not really a big deal when people ask me. It's more, like, if I trust them enough to tell them and stuff like that, so.

Amy does not speak openly about her father being in prison. She rarely tells friends and says she would never tell teachers, sports coaches, or a doctor that her dad is in prison. The reaction of the listener is her concern in keeping this part of her life a secret. Specifically

she is wary of being pitied, scoffed at, or disbelieved. Parental incarceration is not what Amy wants to be known or stand out for. When asked about any negative reactions she has experienced, Amy responded:

> Uhm. I don't— Not really. I told someone once and they, like, made a joke about it which I didn't really like. And I was like, 'that's a little rude' and whatever. And I was like 'oh, ok then.' Then they're like, 'oh, like, I'm sorry I didn't mean to offend you.' And, like, of course it offends me a little when you say things like that. So I've never really had like negative rea-- They've always been like, 'oh I'm sorry, that must be hard for you' or something. Or they're all, like, 'oh you're lying to me, like, that's a joke. You're not, that's— you're not being for real'. And I'm, 'no I'm serious.' Like, so yeah.

Recently, Amy's approach to her father has changed. She has stopped visiting him with her mother and younger sister, and no longer has as close a relationship. When first asked about not visiting, she explains,

> As I got older— Like, I didn't understand when I was little. But, like, I guess I just, I don't know, I just didn't wanna go, I didn't like it. […] As I've gotten older I got, I had, like, more stuff to do and I was, like, I won't talk to you cause I'm cooler than that.

Perhaps the greater distance in their relationship is simply a product of average teenaged independence and rebellion; Amy is as much a teenager as she is a child of prisoner. However, the physical implications of her father's incarceration changes the dynamics of average teenager independence-seeking. When asked whether there was anything positive about having her father inside, Amy reported "Uhm.. I don't get, like, punished a whole lot [laughs]. Like, I do but, like, if he doesn't like something it's kinda like, 'well you don't get a say cause you're not here so ha ha ha ha'."

But as our conversation progressed, a further element emerged. In speaking about her father's parenting role, Amy revealed that she had recently found out the reason for her father's incarceration: conviction for serious violent offences:

> When I was little I didn't know why, like, I didn't understand. Like, I got, like, he was in prison 'cause bad stuff like that. But I never really understood or grasped it, like, completely. And, like, lately it's kinda been, like, I get that. Like I understand now, and I'm not, like, happy with it,

obviously. And that made me mad so I just didn't talk to him, because that was my way of doing that. 'Cause he couldn't make me talk to him 'cause he can't, like, he can't make me pick up my phone.

It seems that the combination of average teenage behaviour, his physical distance, and her feelings about his crimes have caused her to stop visiting or communicating with him almost entirely. She has the capacity to very effectively create distance from him as she is now rarely physically close to him and for him to parent her requires her active consent; she can simply refuse to participate in visits and phone calls. Amy's mother reported:

[Amy] didn't go back [to visits] 'cause she says he criticises her or whatever. Like, he likes to put his input in a bit, like, [about] her weight or what she should do, and what she should eat, and look at him. And… and, and she says, like, 'good you're in prison, you have nothing better to do with your time' or whatever, like. […] I don't think— She just, she doesn't think he has the right to say anything about

Amy has the agency, unlike her peers, to entirely choose the extent of her contact with him, and she currently chooses to have very little. But this is not without consequence, and she later betrays the guilt she feels about their lack of communication. Considering the difference between her situation and that of someone whose father has died, she decides that the situations are similar but fundamentally different:

They don't get, they don't get the option [to visit]. And I think I'm just snotty and rude and I just tell him 'no, I'm not going to see you because, well, whatever'. So, like, I feel like that makes me feel bad because some kids don't get to see their parents just because, like, they can't. Because they're, like, passed away or something. And that's, like, that sometimes makes me feel like I'm taking it for granted 'cause I have the option.

Despite her guilt, Amy continues to experiment with rejecting her father. After our interview Amy draws a quick family portrait for me while I chat with her mom. When she emerges from her room, she watches me carefully as she hands over the drawing - she has included only her sister, mother and herself. I thank her, and we seem to be daring each other to respond.

"I left out my dad," she says.

Figure 1.1: Family portrait by Amy, 14

The issue of children who have a parent in prison raises some uncomfortable questions. Few would think of children as accountable for the sins of their parent, yet parental incarceration appears to be treated as a shameful secret. Parents hide it from children, children of prisoners are rarely discussed in policy, and children like Amy seem to know implicitly to keep this a tightly-held secret from everyone in their lives. While prison sentences may seem to 'disappear' people from society, prisoners are not invisible to the people that love them; prisoners may continue to have a meaningful and daily impact on families left behind. Despite being incarcerated for 15 years, Amy's father has a dynamic, impactful and everyday presence in her life: he continues to be her biological parent and a partner to her mother; he has input into family decisions and his interests considered in family decision-making; he represents a missing income and physical co-parent; and his progress through the justice system is a source of ongoing worry, fear, sadness, hope and anticipation.

Fewer still would think that children should be held accountable for their parent's crime, yet it appears that parental incarceration can have direct and indirect negative effects on children, some effects of which may be moderated by prison policies. Families are a 'collateral consequence' of mass incarceration and each decision we make about the carceral system affects them (Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999). While they are legally innocent, children may be drawn into the carceral system as quasi-inmates (Comfort 2009), subject to its regulations and affected by its policies. It may deplete their financial and other resources, at times extensively. The issue of children of prisoners also lays bare the profoundly disproportionate impact of the criminal justice system on marginalised people such as those living in poverty, like Amy's family. Children of prisoners face, before their parent ever enters the prison, a deeply skewed burden of social risks.

This thesis is the product of a research study about children of prisoners which seeks to shed light on parental incarceration, with a focus on children's own experiences. I interviewed a small sample of children of prisoners in Ontario, Canada, including Amy, their caregivers and a variety of key informants, seeking to answer the research question: how do Canadian children experience parental incarceration? I begin my efforts to answer

this question by reviewing the existing literature. While few research studies have asked children directly about their experiences of parental incarceration, much can be learned from past empirical work with partners of prisoners, prisoners themselves, quantitative research examining parental incarceration, and children's experience of similar issues. Chapter 2 is a review of these literatures and others in order to ground the present study in what is already known about children of prisoners and identify the gaps in this literature. The third chapter describes the Methodology with which I approached the present study, including a discussion of my extensive and challenging recruitment efforts. Interviewing children and seeking to discuss criminal justice system involvement meant that I faced a variety of challenging ethical and recruitment issues, which are discussed, as are issues of reflexivity and research ethics.

Chapter 4 turns to the study's empirical findings with a discussion of the context of these children's lives, examining the ways in which I found them to be similar and different from other children, with a focus on poverty and insecurity. In Chapter 5, the analysis of children's self-reported experience begins with a look at children's lives in tightest focus, in a discussion of children's grief about the loss of their parent to incarceration, and their responses to these emotions. Chapter 6 widens the lens to explore children within their immediate family, focusing on secrets kept from children, family roles and their experience of prison-based-parenting. The next chapter widens the lens again with an examination of children's lives in the spaces they inhabit outside the home, focusing on children's secrecy about parental incarceration with peers and school. Chapter 8 explores children's experiences of the prison itself through visits and phone calls. In Chapter 9, children's experience of parental incarceration at a structural level of the functioning of the criminal justice system is discussed, with particular attention to the invisibility of children of prisoners within the Canadian penal system. The thesis concludes with a review of the key findings and contributions of the present study, and a discussion of the implications of these findings for criminal justice policy.

Certain themes thread throughout the document, from the narrowest to the widest view. The first is a sense of uncertainty, from children facing the ambiguous grief over a parent

who is neither present nor lost, to families attempting to navigate prison regulations that feel confusing and arbitrary. Another is invisibility, such as the secrecy and fear that surrounds a parent's imprisonment, the enigmatic role that families play in maintaining prisoners' wellbeing, and the absence of programming and policy referring to prisoners' children.

One example of this invisibility is the lack of children's voices in the extant literature. The burgeoning literature about children of prisoners has included much examination of their outcomes and characteristics, but little of their own views. There is a tendency in some branches of criminology and social policy, particularly with a focus on youth, to take an actuarial approach to understanding a subject, identifying and managing the risks of criminal behaviour. The present project takes a different view; using a 'sociology of childhood' approach, children are constructed not as 'unfinished products' whose success or failure rests on whether they will end up offending. I have sought to view children and youth as competent social actors and centre their present opinions and well-being in the project. It is for this reason that the research question concerns children's self-reported experiences and that I have avoided focus on psychological outcomes.

However, privileging children's own voices and views can necessarily be challenging, particularly with research involving young children and with policy topics that may be abstract, complex and only indirectly visible to children. Indeed, many of the empirical findings and arguments that are constructed in this document relating to structural issues such as poverty and penal ideology are only peripherally based in children's self-reported experiences. Therefore, I have at times had to include children's voices more deliberately, simply to retain this emphasis, such as using Amy's story to open the thesis and Lucas' to close it.

Near the beginning of my fieldwork, I used a question with a child participant that was unplanned but highly successful: what advice would you give to someone in your class if they found out their parent was about to go to prison? This question, perhaps because it eased children into thinking about their own needs, feelings and coping mechanisms

without being asked directly, yielded valuable insights into the ways that children themselves cope with parental incarceration. I have placed these pieces of advice throughout the document as one way to centre their voices, even in discussions of challenging policy issues. Children of prisoners throughout this project appeared surprised, wary and even delighted that someone would ask for their opinion; I am profoundly grateful that they would trust me with their stories and hope that I have done them justice.

Chapter 2 | Literature review

> To date the effects of parental incarceration on children have been almost
> entirely neglected in academic research, public policy and media
> coverage. In an era of mass imprisonment there is a great need for a major
> investigation into how parental incarceration affects children's lives.
>
> (Murray & Farrington 2008a: 288)

Prison rates have escalated dramatically in Canada and other Western democracies in the last three decades (Garland 2001), but only relatively recently have the 'collateral consequences' of this trend begun to be explored by researchers in earnest. One of these consequences, the impact on children of prisoners, had been understudied and researchers commonly note its neglect and invisibility (Murray 2006; Lengyel 2006). Hagen and Dinovitzer (1999: 122) wrote that "The impact of the imprisonment of parents on children... may be the least understood and most consequential implication of the high reliance on incarceration in America."

Children's absence from the discussion is not a function of the scale of their involvement; researchers have begun to develop estimates of the substantial numbers of children who have a parent in prison. For example, in America, 2.3% of all minor children are believed to have a currently incarcerated parent, easily outnumbering prisoners themselves (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). In addition, these children appear to reflect, if not amplify, the disproportionate rates of incarceration of poor and racialized people (Juristat 2009; Wildeman 2009). Children's absence from the discussion is also not a function of parental incarceration being a benign experience. Research is beginning to disentangle the many variables related to parental incarceration, and finding that it is associated with a number of direct and indirect negative outcomes for children, and may independently cause anti-social behaviour.

This chapter will review the academic literature about children of prisoners, beginning with the existing empirical research. Three broad areas of research are reviewed: first, I explore what is known about the scope of parental incarceration; second, the quantitative research into the behavioural and mental health outcomes that are associated with parental incarceration is reviewed, including the efforts to disentangle the causal, correlative, and covariate relationships between variables and risk factors; and third, the qualitative research around children's experiences of parental incarceration is explored. This latter discussion emphasises the distinction between research into children's experiences that seeks children's views directly, from that which draws conclusions about their experiences using other data.

Next, two theoretical perspectives will be reviewed, which will form a conceptual framework for this thesis: the 'new' sociologies of childhood, an approach which privileges children's own voice in attempts to understand their lives, reflecting the reflexive and constructivist turn seen in sociology and other disciplines; and critical criminology, which not dissimilarly views crime and criminal justice systems through a constructivist lens. Finally, I review gaps in the research literature, including the dearth of Canadian data on this topic, with a focus on the gaps that the present research project seeks to address.

In what follows, the term 'parental incarceration' will be used to describe the situation of a child, currently under age 18, who has a parent currently detained in any custodial setting (including local jails, state/provincial prisons, remand settings as well as federal penitentiaries). The experiences of those over the age of 18 and those with a parent in other types of secure settings (such as psychiatric institutions or immigration holds) are not discussed. The term "children' is used broadly, in place of "children and youth', for ease of reading, as the term 'prison' is used to refer to any custodial setting.

Demographic Characteristics

The question of which children are affected by parental incarceration is an important starting point. The scope of parental incarceration is not well understood and an important

research question in its own right. In Canada, as in many countries, information is not routinely collected about the parental status of prisoners; parenting status is only included ad hoc in the case notes of prisoners' files, if at all. Data from a survey in one Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) male prison found that 53% of prisoners were parents and each had an average of 2.1 children (Withers and Folsom, 2007)[2]. My own crude estimate is that there are around 16,000 children of prisoners in Ontario.[3] Nothing is known with any confidence about their characteristics such as age, race and who cares for them (Bayes, 2002; Cunningham and Baker, 2003).

In the United States, inmate surveys have estimated that 52% of state inmates and 63% of federal inmates have minor children, which total 1.7 million children or 2.3% of American children (Glaze and Maraschuk, 2008). Over half of prisoners in the US have minor children (Mumola, 2003) and this rate appears to be similar in Canada (Withers and Folsom 2007). Given that the vast majority of prisoners are between the ages of 18-45, the likelihood of being a parent is high (Juristat 2009). Parental incarceration is also disproportionately experienced by racialized groups as they tend to be overrepresented in penal populations (Tonry, 1997; Glaze and Maraschuk, 2008). In Canada, Aboriginal and Black people are overrepresented compared to rates in the general population (Juristat 2015; Statistics Canada 2007).

In fact, some marginalising factors are exaggerated in children of prisoners. Wildeman's (2009) demographic study in the United States found that racial disparities were even more pronounced in children of prisoners, with black children born in 1990 having a one in four chance of having had a parent in prison by age 14, in comparison to one in 25 white children (Wildeman 2009: 276). When he accounted for the intersection of socio-economic

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[2] Withers and Folsom (2007) go on to suggest that there are around 350,000 Canadian children impacted by parental incarceration annually, however this number is based on a number of problematic assumptions (as noted in the following footnote) and relies not on the total Canadian incarceration rate (38,000) but the annual rate of admission to custody (358,350), which represents a very high number of duplicated subjects.

[3] On any given day, there are 38,000 adults in custody, federally and provincially, in Canada (Dauvergne 2012). If a number of problematic assumptions are made, including that the Withers and Folsom (2007) findings around prisoner fertility are valid, that incarcerated women have the same fertility rates as men, that provincially prisoners have similar fertility to federal prisoners, then it can be roughly estimated that there are 20,064 parents in Canadian custody and they have 42,134 children. The population of Canada in 2012 was 34,400,000 and of Ontario 13,323,000, representing 39% of the federal population (Statistics Canada 2012). If the assumption is made that Ontarians have incarceration and fertility rates that reflect the broader country, a very crude estimate can be made that there are around 16,000 children of prisoners in Ontario.

status by looking only at those children born to parents who had not completed high school, he found that an astonishing 51% of black children born in 1990 had experienced parental incarceration by age 14.

Data from the UK, US and Canada indicate that prisoners are also disproportionately affected by high rates of poverty, illiteracy, low educational attainment, mental health concerns compared with the general population (Juristat 2009; Glaze and Maraschuk, 2008) and it appears that children of prisoners face a variety of related family risk factors such as poverty, parental unemployment and parental substance abuse (Murray and Farrington, 2005; Social Exclusion Unit 2002).

Outcomes of Children of Prisoners

In addition to these efforts to understand who children of prisoners are, quantitative researchers have focused on these children's behavioural and mental health outcomes. Indeed, most empirical research about children of prisoners has sought to determine the behavioural and mental health outcomes that they are more likely to exhibit, and in particular their likelihood of engaging in criminal behaviour themselves. There has also been a focus on disentangling the many mediating, moderating and otherwise related variables at play.

Children's antisocial behaviour

The primary dependent variable examined by quantitative researchers has been children's antisocial behaviour. David Farrington pioneered the study of intergenerational transmission of crime in the UK through the use of an existing longitudinal study into the outcomes of a large sample of boys born in the 1950s, the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development (CSDD). Farrington (2000) used the CSDD to show that parental incarceration was a strong predictor of a child's own incarceration as an adult. Murray and Farrington (2005) have also used the CSDD to show that boys who were separated from a parent due to incarceration were significantly more likely to show antisocial outcomes and more likely to be incarcerated than boys whose fathers had been separated for other reasons. It is noted that the term 'anti-social behaviour' is used in these CSDD studies to

describe a range of behaviours that 'violate societal norms' but do not necessarily involve criminal activity; it includes behaviour like persistent lying (Murray et al. 2009: 10). Indeed, there is inconsistency in the definition of this independent variable across research into the outcomes of children of prisoners, and others have applied related concepts of externalising symptoms, delinquency, or the child's risk of criminal justice system involvement or incarceration. The result is that more serious outcomes, such as children becoming themselves incarcerated, may be overstated in interpretations if studies that use broader definitions are included.

In a recent study, Aaron and Dallaire (2010: 1481) used an existing data set of a large sample of American children to examine risks of delinquency as it related to parental incarceration after controlling for family risk factors. The authors showed that parental incarceration predicted delinquent behaviour of children and their siblings, controlling for risk factors in the child's family, such as poverty, conflict, victimisation and substance abuse. However, current parental incarceration was not as strong a predictor of child delinquency as the combination of family victimisation and family conflict, though it is noted that recent parental incarceration appears to itself predict family conflict (Aaron and Dallaire 2010).

Perhaps the most important work to date on parental incarceration is a rigorous systemic review of the quantitative research related to both antisocial behaviour and mental health outcomes, conducted recently by Murray et al. (2009). Under the auspices of the Campbell Collaboration, Murray and colleagues located 16 methodologically rigorous studies of the impact of parental incarceration, mainly from the US[4]. The results of their meta-analysis showed that the average association between parental incarceration and children's antisocial behaviour outcomes was large and significant, although there was considerable heterogeneity in effect size. Likely due to the smaller sample size, an analysis of the impact of a series of possible moderators, such as gender of incarcerated parent, child's caregiving arrangements, or characteristics of the child, showed no significance. The authors concluded that parental incarceration is an independent risk factor for later

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[4] The search criteria included that studies were presented in English. The included studies were all from the US, aside from two from Sweden and one each from: the Netherlands, UK, Australia, and Denmark. No academic data exists on the outcomes of Canadian children of prisoners (discussed below)

antisocial behaviour and that it is likely that having a parent in prison has harmful effects (Murray et al 2009). Interestingly, these results were not replicated when similar studies were conducted in Sweden and the Netherlands. In both of these countries, initial research suggested that parental incarceration predicts children's own criminality; however, when parental criminality was controlled for, the effect disappeared (Murray et al., 2007; Besemer et al., 2011). Murray et al. (2007) hypothesise that the more comprehensive welfare states in these social democratic countries serve to mitigate the independent risk of parental incarceration. This raises the intriguing possibility that interventions, and social development in particular, can modify the negative outcomes associated with parental incarceration.

It is important to note at this point that Canada, the location of the present study, is a liberal welfare state, a broad category shared with the US and UK (Esping-Andersen 1990). It has a similar incarceration rate to the UK, and a broadly similar criminal justice policy trajectory to the UK (Juristat 2009; further discussed below). The existing research reviewed in this chapter is heavily skewed towards American data, and to a lesser extent data from the UK, however these are likely to be generally relevant to the Canadian context given these similar social policy and criminal justice conditions.

Research has also attempted to parse out which elements of parental incarceration are responsible for the effect on antisocial behaviour outcomes. For example, witnessing a parent's arrest or being exposed to their criminality is associated with increased behavioural concerns and emotional maladjustment (Dallaire and Wilson 2010) and Farrington et al (2009) used the CSDD to show strong association between parental criminality and children's later delinquency. That said, it appears that this latter effect is mediated by parenting style, which may be amenable to program interventions (Hairston 2002).

Moderate Effect Size

Finally, a note is warranted here around the reporting of the effect size of parental incarceration on children's later criminality. A glance at some of the responses by media

and charities to the issue of children of prisoners suggests that they are at high risk of engaging in criminal behaviour:

> Children with a parent in prison are… three times more likely to be involved in offending. Sixty five per cent of boys with a convicted father will go on to offend themselves. [Barnardos 2016 (UK)]
>
> These children often deal with lowered self-esteem, truancy, and are four times more likely than other children to be in conflict with the law themselves [Torontoist 2015 (Canada)]
>
> Children of incarcerated parents are six times more likely to end up incarcerated themselves [ABC 2015 (US)]
>
> The troubling statistic that children of incarcerated parents are seven times more likely to become incarcerated [Big Brothers Big Sisters 2016 (US)]

However these figures, particularly that children of prisoners are many times more likely than other children to come into conflict with the law, are not accurate representations of the empirical literature. Murray and Farrington (2008) note that the "six times more likely" statistic is, in particular, frequently used in the lay and even academic literature, but is not based in any empirical finding. The existing research does suggest that children of prisoners are more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour, however the rate is around double that of their peers (Murray et al 2009). Further, as noted above, 'anti-social behaviour' is used to refer to a range of externalising behaviours and not necessarily behaviours that result in criminal charges, including issues such as persistent lying (Murray et al 2009).

One source of this misinterpretation in Canada (as in the 'Torontoist' article noted above) appears to be the Withers and Folsom (2007) exploratory study, which is one of the only sources of Canadian data on incarcerated parents and an important source of data on children visiting prison. In regard to criminality of children of prisoners, however, the authors use a problematic technique to produce an estimate of the propensity for criminality: they compare the self-report of 500 federally incarcerated prisoners of whether their children have had contact with the justice system, with national rates of conviction of 18 year olds, and conclude that children of prisoners in general are "two to four times more

likely to be in conflict with the law" than other Canadian children. There are several validity and other methodological concerns with drawing this conclusion, such as a lack of statistical power, the reliability of using the report of parents who, the same study indicates, are likely to have very limited contact with their children, and the sampling of federal prisoners only. In the UK, several publications by Barnardos (2016) state that 65% of boys with a convicted father will go on to offend, which is at times attributed to a Social Exclusion Unit (2002) report. However that report does not give this 65% figure, nor any mention of another source of it, but does refer to the 1991 UK Prisoner Survey which, in turn, found that 45% reported having had a parent with a criminal conviction compared to the national average of 15%, a very different finding.

A 'correlation does not mean causation' problem may also be at work. As discussed, parental incarceration may co-occur with a variety of risk factors associated with negative outcomes, such as: poverty; entry into the child welfare system; parental criminality and witnessing a parent's arrest; low educational attainment by a parent; suddenly being cared for by a lone parent; and parental substance use and mental health concerns, as well as their own pre-existing mental health and behavioural concerns (Glaze and Maruschak 2008; Phillips et al. 2006; Farrington et al. 2009; Dallaire and Wilson 2010; Mumola 2000; Social Exclusion Unit 2002). When parental criminality and children's existing behavioural concerns are controlled for, the effect size of parental incarceration on later antisocial behaviour is not very dramatic: Murray et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis of 40 studies found that the independent effect of parental incarceration is a 10% increase risk of antisocial behaviour in children of incarcerated parents. Several factors have a higher effect size for anti-social behaviour in children, such as family victimization and conflict, or parental criminality (Aaron and Dallaire 2010). In terms of other negative impacts of parental incarceration, the above meta-analysis concludes that while some studies "have suggested that there are multiple types of adverse effects of parental incarceration on children, taking all evidence into account, the only outcome that remains associated with parental incarceration after adjustment for covariates is children's antisocial behavior." (Murray et al. 2012: 191).

Well-intentioned campaigners for children's rights are the source of some of these dramatic figures, and may be invested in emphasising the harms faced by children of prisoners. For example, one uses the following quote in its materials:

> Parental incarceration [is] the greatest threat to child well-being in the US
>
> [The Osborne Association 2016[5]]

However charities' clients may not benefit from overstating their risk of delinquency; overstating of the criminogenic effect of parental incarceration may pathologize children of prisoners, constructing them as being likely to commit crime, inadvertently further stigmatising this vulnerable group.

Negative mental health outcomes

Another dependent variable examined is mental health concerns, or 'internalising symptoms' such as depression and anxiety. Murray and Farrington (2008) combined the UK CSDD with public criminal record data on children's parents to examine children's mental health outcomes. They found that parental incarceration during a child's first 10 years predicted internalizing problems from age 14 to 48, and that internalizing problems and anti-social behaviour co-occurred. This study controlled for risk factors including parental criminality, and used control groups of children who had been separated from parents for other reasons, those with parents incarcerated before their birth, and children who had not been separated from their parents.

The systemic review by Murray et al. (2009) described above also analysed studies of mental health outcomes. In the five studies that also included children's mental health as a dependent variable, three showed a significant association and the average odds ratio was large. The authors conclude that an independent causal effect of parental incarceration on mental health outcomes could not be established.

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[5] This quote is widely used in this (seemingly excellent) organisation's materials, and attributed to 'human rights advocates' speaking at the 2004 World's Child Prize ceremony. Another online source gives the quote as "Mass incarceration is the greatest threat to child well-being in the US today" but I have been unable to trace the names of the speakers.

Pathways to Negative Outcomes

Despite the narrow scope and modest size of the independent effect of parental incarceration on negative outcomes in children, there is much academic interest in clarifying this issue. As the population of children of prisoners is very heterogenous in their experiences, researchers query whether this is hiding a stronger and broader causal effect for certain subgroups of these children, and that certain mediating or moderating factors are protective or damaging for some children. However disentangling the many associated variables and their contribution to the path of some children of prisoners to negative outcomes is an ongoing research challenge.

Researchers have examined the impact of parental incarceration on outcomes for families, including financial and caregiving instability, which can impact children's well-being. Studies have shown possible associations between parental arrest and changes to family structure, both short and long-term financial consequences and resulting poverty, transience and instability (Phillips et al. 2006: 679-682). Not surprisingly, US research indicates parental incarceration is associated with entry into the foster care system and it appears that many children of incarcerated parents, particularly mothers, may be subsequently cared for by grandmothers (Glaze and Maruschak 2008; Caddle and Crisp 1997; Arditti et al. 2003). Phillips et al. (2006) found, using the US Great Smoky Mountains longitudinal study, that parental contact with the criminal justice system was significantly associated with a child's likelihood of experiencing poverty and family instability, such as moves, divorce, school changes, even when controlling for the pre-existing conditions of parents, such as mental health concerns and substance abuse. However, this study also found that parental criminal justice system involvement was not independently associated with abusive or problematic parenting.

Arditti et al.'s (2003) work from the US also suggests that the incarceration of a parent may have a dramatic negative effect on the financial well-being of families and be associated with an increased reliance on income support. Caregivers reported that their health had declined since the admission of the incarcerated parent and virtually all expressed the opinion that the incarceration had created problems for their family. Indeed,

though families of prisoners are more likely to be poor, the experience of having a partner in prison is associated with an increase in financial stress and going onto public assistance (Geller et al. 2011; Sugie 2012). However Dallaire et al. (2015a) have more recently used modelling with a US dataset of children of incarcerated mothers to separate and examine the incarceration-specific risk factors (such as witnessing a mother's arrest, moving schools as a result) and environmental risks (such as poverty and low educational achievement). They found that the former risk factors predicted internalising and externalising outcomes in children while the effect of the latter were negligible; they underscore the need to further research the separate stressors involved in parental incarceration and the ways that each may contribute or combine to harm children.

While there exists a developing body of research into prisoners' partners on the 'outside' and the impact of incarceration on family life, only a few studies examine the ways in which having a partner in prison may impact the parenting practice of the caregiver, and the effect of this impact, in turn, on children. There is intriguing evidence to suggest that this caregiver stress may be a mediating factor which contributes to the negative outcomes seen in some children of prisoners. Caregivers to children of prisoners, almost all women and mainly the mother or grandmother (based on US data; Glaze and Maruschak 2008) may face a variety of dramatic and sudden stressors. If the now-incarcerated parent was playing a caregiving role, then the incarceration may have meant a loss of income and co-parenting support, as discussed and the caregiver may use much time, money and other resources in attempting to navigate aspects of the jail system such as locating a partner, arranging visits and sending money inside (Arditti et al 2003; Comfort 2009; Hannam 2011; Miller et al 2013). Wildeman et al (2012) found that paternal incarceration was independently associated with depression and poorer mental health of mothers. Not surprisingly, then, Turney (2014) found that paternal incarceration was associated with maternal neglect and harsh parenting, and suggests that financial and emotional stressors associated with a partner's incarceration are the mediating factors. Miller et al.'s (2013) study suggests there is an association between caregiver experiences and reactions to having a partner in prison, and their children's negative outcomes.

Researchers have also explored child contact with their incarcerated parents. Hairston (2002), one of the first scholars to examine parental incarceration, found a number of benefits to prisoners of policies that promote positive parenting and family ties during incarceration. However, research into the effects of prison visiting as it relates to children's outcomes is less clear, suggesting consistent positive outcomes for incarcerated parents, but mixed outcomes for children (Poehlmann et al. 2010). While Boswell (2002) found that that most of her child subjects wished for more contact, they echoed their parents' preference for the more 'normalized' and longer visits available in certain prisons. Poehlmann et al.'s (2010) comprehensive review of this literature, mainly smaller scale, qualitative studies, found the research showed positive outcomes for children when the visit occurred as part of an intervention, but that more visits with incarcerated parents in non 'child-friendly' visitation environments may be associated with attachment concerns, more attention problems and behavioural problems, as reported by teachers. Lack of contact with an incarcerated parent may be associated with feelings of alienation from the parent and more school dropout, while the more letters received by a child from a parent may be associated with less depression and somatic complaints.

Future directions for the study of outcomes

Research into parental incarceration is still in its relative infancy and thus suffers limitations from a lack of conceptual and methodological rigour (Phillips et al., 2006: 680). Lengyel (2006: 674) has suggested that this newly emerging field has tolerated a lack of serious critical examination and developed a narrow frame of reference because the results (namely that parental incarceration is harmful to children and causes in them a variety of negative outcomes) are intuitive, plausible and consistent with common theoretical perspectives. Arditti et al. (2003: 201) suggest a more practical reason, namely that research into prisons and prisoners is particularly complex and necessarily characterised by a 'best-effort' approach.

The quantitative study of impact and outcomes of parental incarceration demands an extremely high methodological standard, namely longitudinal studies using validated tools,

adequate controls, measures of a variety of possible moderators and the capacity to measure within-individual change (Murray et al. 2009). This 'gold standard' of research is needed to tease apart this complex issue and detect what is likely a modest effect size within a tangle of covariates. However, few large-sample longitudinal studies of children and their adult outcomes exist due to the expense, foresight and stability required to undertake and maintain such a project. All of the longitudinal studies of this topic have re-purposed existing research with the addition of data from other sources (Murray et al. 2009). Further, the quantitative research that exists on this topic also suffers from being based mainly on small and non-representative samples (Aaron and Dallaire 2010; Phillips et al. 2006). Given the heterogeneity of the population of children of prisoners, only large sample sizes are likely to allow for detection of anything but very large effect sizes and thus virtually all lack statistically significant findings and external validity. Perhaps because of the scarcity of significant findings, it appears that this field is prone to citing research which has no statistical power for external validity as evidence about the broader population.

 An example is the 2003 study by Arditti and colleagues that has been cited several times above. This research is an excellent questionnaire-based study which was expressly qualitative; the authors themselves draw attention to the lack of external validity in the research. They had the following major findings: their sample tended to be at economic risk before the incarceration of the parent and those who were more economically vulnerable became even more financially strained after incarceration for a number of reasons; parenting strain and emotional stress were very commonly reported; and most reported that the incarceration has 'created problems' for the family.

This study is cited extensively in subsequent literature which is well-justified, however at times these citations inappropriately suggest that it had a variety of additional findings and is broadly generalisable. For example, it is the primary citation provided for the following sentences: "Children of incarcerated parents are at risk for developing ... school problems" (in Schlafer et al. 2009); "While in prison, the geographic distance of fathers from their children, problems with visitation scheduling and procedures, and inhospitable visiting rooms make visitation traumatic for prisoners and their children" (in Swisher and

Waller 2008); and, "Incarcerated individuals tend to differ from the general population along several dimensions, including increased history of ... illegal drug use" (in Modecki and Wilson 2009).

The effect of parental incarceration as an independent predictor or risk factor is also particularly difficult to study in a rigorous manner due to the number of factors that overlap, confound and mediate the outcomes of these children. Firstly, there is a high risk that studies are examining not the effects of parental incarceration but another factor that co-occurs. Children of incarcerated parents are more likely to live in environments with many risk factors for poor outcomes, however few quantitative studies adequately control for the variety of factors that may have a tangle of associative, predictive and causal effects on one another and thus may be observing the effects of multiple risk factors and unobserved heterogeneity (Aaron and Dallaire, 2010: 1471). Murray et al's (2009) systemic review reported that most studies of parental incarceration lacked controls for such basic and important covariates as family poverty, children's own pre-existing mental health concerns and parental criminality. In terms of suitable controls and consequent questions of validity, scholars argue that the existing research is underdeveloped (for example, Phillips et al., 2006)

The literature also suffers from an underdeveloped examination of the moderators of the effects of parental incarceration, including possible protective factors, such as interventions, and dynamic or static factors (such as parental employment or gender, respectively). One parental factor that could be expected to mediate the experiences and outcomes of children is the previous caregiving role played by the parent who is incarcerated, which is unfortunately commonly neglected (Murray et al., 2009). Mediating factors studied in the context of children's varying within-family outcomes after divorce provide many interesting findings that are worthy of study in relation to parental incarceration. For example, the support that children receive from friends and the ways that individual children interpret events such as parental conflict both appear to be factors that may mediate their outcomes (Dunn et al, 2001).

In one scathing journal article, a group of researchers called for the rejection of the findings of all existing research into parental incarceration, arguing that researchers in the

field were conducting useless and invalid research due to not properly accounting for the instability or lack of relationships between prisoners and their children prior to incarceration (Johnston, 2006; Lengyel, 2006). An NGO-based researcher, Johnston (2006: 711) wrote of the existing research: "They discuss this population as if most of the parents were not estranged from their children, as if most of the children had not been without their parents much of their lives, and as if many of the families were not in disarray and dissolution." An important point is raised about the particularly tumultuous nature of marginalized people's lives and the need to account for caregiving status. However I note that there is evidence to the contrary, such as research conducted in Canada which suggested that more than half of prisoners who were parents had resided with their children prior to incarceration (Withers and Folsom, 2007).

Similarly, a significant criticism of the existing research is the narrow scope of subjects studied, which may cause the research to fail to uncover important variables that might assist in our understanding or blur the findings that we do have. Much of the longitudinal research which is widely cited is conducted mainly on white boys from Western countries with fathers in prison, such as the CSDD (Murray and Farrington 2008a: 287), though some do include girls in their target group (see ibid: 34-43) and some high-quality studies of mothers in prison have been completed (for example, Stanton 1980; Caddle and Crisp 1997). However the need to examine the impact of gender on the effects of parental incarceration is echoed by a variety of researchers in their discussions of the gaps in the literature (for example Murray and Farrington 2008a: 288). Given the highly racialized prisoner population noted earlier, there is also a strong need to explore the relationship between race and the outcomes or experiences of these children.

Finally, researchers note the need to expand the scope of outcomes which are examined, beyond later criminality and specific mental health outcomes (see Murray et al. 2009). Other possible outcomes might include academic success or concerns, future substance abuse, psychiatric concerns beyond internalizing symptoms, psychological factors such as modes of coping or quality of relationships, and the future parenting practices of these children. While filling these gaps is far beyond the scope of the present study, a review of

the quantitative literature into the outcomes of children of prisoners demands attention to the need for further and more methodologically rigorous quantitative research.

Children's Experience of Parental Incarceration

Self Reports

The previous sections have focused on the apparent or likely impact of parental incarceration on children in terms of effects and outcomes, however just as important for understanding parental incarceration is the question of children's experience of parental incarceration. While not unrelated, outcomes and experiences differ in that the latter concerns the self-reported views, perceptions and opinions of children and tend to concern current issues as opposed to future eventualities.

The practical and ethical challenges to academic researchers, as well as the relative novelty of asking children about their views and perceptions, have likely contributed to the fact that there are only a small number of academic studies which have explored children's self-reported experiences of parental incarceration. I located the following academic studies in English, all of which are cited above: a subsection of Boswell's larger 2002 study of paternal incarceration which consisted of interviews with 17 UK children, at home or in prison waiting rooms; Nesmith and Ruhland's (2008) interviews with 34 US children; a Northern Irish study including focus groups, of which 14 participants were children (Moore et al 2011); and Saunders' (2016) Australian study of children's contact with incarcerated parents. Other sources include a 2008 doctoral thesis which included interviews with children (Flynn, 2008), and quotes from Danish research with children (Christensen 1999) included in the English analysis in Scharff-Smith and Jacobsen's (2011) book chapter. Related is a study by Dallaire and Wilson (2010) which explored children's psychosocial adjustment to a parent's criminal activity and arrest (though not incarceration), by interviewing incarcerated parents about their children's exposure to these elements and then the children themselves, about maladjustment in the child.

Further research into children's own experiences of parental incarceration has, however, begun to emerge. A pan-European project named COPING, coordinated by the umbrella

charitable organisation Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE (formerly EUROCHIPS)), is in the process of conducting research in six countries, through local partner organisations. Findings have very recently begun to be published (Oliver et al. 2016) and a recently completed PhD thesis is based on these interviews in Northern England (Manby 2015).

Indeed, researchers in the area of parental incarceration often raise the need for studies which ask children directly about their experiences (for example, Poehlmann et al. 2010; Dallaire and Wilson 2010; Johnston 2006); writes one, "the vast majority of studies have garnered information about children from adult sources, largely based on behavioural observations with little if any emphasis on the feelings, thoughts, and ideas formulated by the children themselves." (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008: 1119).

To supplement this very thin academic literature base, the grey literature provides several interesting findings, though these must be approached with caution. There exist several small-scale studies conducted by charities (such as Hall 2000; Brown et al. 2001; Katz 2002a; Loureiro 2010; a Canadian example is Cunningham and Baker 2003) and a journalist (Bernstein, 2007) which have undertaken explorations of children's experiences of having a parent in prison. One such report from Scotland found that grandmothers played a significant caregiving and supportive role to their respondents and that the level of negative impact on the child (as perceived by the interviewer) appeared strongly associated with whether the child had been residing with the caregiver prior to incarceration (Loureiro 2010)). Another charity project from the UK concluded that children's voices were not properly heard in the decision-making that affected them, visiting systems did not prioritise the well-being of the children, children faced stigma in their communities, and that the decision not to tell a child that their parent had been incarcerated led to frightening and harmful situations (Katz, 2002a[6] ; Katz 2002b).

While these grey literature sources present interesting findings, it is noteworthy that they are methodologically less rigorous, for example relying on very small sample sizes, problematic interview questions, or inconsistent methodology, and they are not academically peer reviewed. That said, these studies are extremely useful for the pointing

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[6] I have been unable to locate this primary source itself, only mention of it in an article by Katz (2002b).

to areas for future academic research attention. Writes one scholar in his review of Bernstein (2007)'s book:

> The fact that a journalist's investigations can contribute so many ideas on issues that clearly lack a solid evidence base is provocative. [Her book] challenges criminologists to bring the best of scientific methods to an important and growing issue.

> (Murray 2005: 773)

Taken together, these academic and grey-literature studies of children's first-hand accounts of the experience of parental incarceration raise a number of interesting themes. A most obvious theme is simply negative emotions. Boswell (2002) found children reported distress and feelings of sadness, and other studies found children reporting fear, such as being frightened during house raids and arrests (Hall 2000; Scharff-Smith and Jacobsen 2011; Bernstein 2007), as well as anger and disappointment (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008). In one study, children also reported a variety of coping mechanisms and sources of resiliency such as family and friends, sports and recreation, or faith-based activities (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008).

Stigma and secrecy is another, unsurprising theme. Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) found that every participant in their study of 34 children and youth of prisoners reported concerns and confusion about whether to disclose to friends and teachers that they have a parent in prison. They presented as keenly aware of the risks and negative associations that this information holds and reported a desire for privacy. Another study found children expressing a desire to keep parental incarceration a secret from others and fear that others knowing would lead to bad consequences (Boswell 2002). Interestingly, a few youth in one study reported positive experiences such as a new friendship and feelings of solidarity which resulted from finding another youth with a parent in prison after disclosing (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008). These studies, as well as other sources of information (discussed below), consistently describe children's anger and frustration if they have been lied to about a parent being incarcerated (Loureiro 2010; Katz 2002a).

Another theme raised by children is strong feelings about the prison and larger criminal justice system. Children spoke of the perception that the system was unfair to their parent (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008) as well as their own desire to be heard in the criminal justice system, such as the court (Loureiro 2010; Katz 2002a). A repeated issue raised was the stress, anxiety and even humiliation of visiting a parent in prison (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008; Hall, 2000; Brown 2001; Scharff-Smith and Jacobsen 2011). In Nesmith and Ruhland's (2008) study, some children reported many frightening images of what prison was like for their parent (including living in a cave, people screaming, everyone being unhappy), though others reported positive, benign images. Awareness, worry or even responsibility for adult needs is noted in two studies. Children in these studies speak of feeling guilty and self-blaming (Boswell 2002; Nesmith and Ruhland 2008), as well as taking on responsibilities or worrying as a result of being keenly aware of both their caregiving parents' stressors and practical needs (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008).

Finally, a broad theme concerns family structure and caregiving. Children spoke of preferring that their father was home, wishing for more contact, and looking forward to having him home (Boswell 2002), and of the disruption and challenges in their relationship with their parent after release (Hall, 2000; Scharff-Smith and Jacobsen 2011). Flynn's (2008) study of teens with a mother in prison raised particular issues of dissatisfaction around the insecure care and living arrangements they faced as a result of parental incarceration. This finding is complemented by the suggestion of another study that children who had previously been living with the incarcerated parent reported particularly negative perceptions of parental incarceration (Loureiro 2010). Somewhat related are the points raised by children about confusion and conflicted emotions related to negotiating allegiances between their parents or attempts by the caregiver to control or prevent their relationship with the incarcerated parent (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008).

While not a study of experience, related evidence comes from a study by Dallaire and Wilson (2010) of the impact of exposure to parental arrest using validated tools to measure self-reported maladjustment and emotional well-being. The study found that witnessing a parent's arrest was associated with lower scores on self-reported emotional regulation skill tests, and higher anxiety/depression as well as emotional difficulty scores.

Evidence from family members

While the evidence from children themselves about their own experience of parental incarceration is somewhat modest, a body of research does exist around the views, perceptions and experiences of the partners of prisoners. This data provides important insights into the likely themes of children's experience of parental incarceration, both by asking caregivers what they observe or perceive their children to be experiencing, or through their reports of their own experiences, which are likely to have some consistency with the experiences of their children. Several studies have asked caregivers about their observations and perception of their children's response or adjustment to parental incarceration (Fritsch and Burkhead,1981; Lowenstein 1986, Caddle and Crisp 1997; Tudball 2000; Arditti et al. 2003, Poehlmann 2005). Indeed, given this larger number of academic studies, the empirical basis for what is known about children's experiences is based more on interviews with caregivers than children themselves (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008; Johnston, 2006; Myers et al. 1999: 21).

Themes that consistently emerge are observations or perceptions by caregivers that their child is experiencing grief and distress (Arditti et al. 2003), disruptive or otherwise problematic externalising behaviour (Caddle and Crisp 1997; Tudball 2000), behavioural regression such as bed-wetting (Arditti et al. 2003, Myers et al. 1999; Caddle and Crisp 1997; Shaw 1992), depression (including becoming withdrawn and problems eating or sleeping) (Caddle and Crisp 1997; Arditti et al. 2003; Shaw 1992), irritability (Arditti et al 2003), and feelings of shame, isolation and desire to keep the parental incarceration secret (Tudball 2000; Myers et al. 1999). Dallaire and Wilson's (2010) study of the experience of parental arrest found that parents reported children having strong emotional reactions to witnessing their arrest, including being scared, frantic, confused and crying. A survey of Danish police officers similarly found that 47% had experienced children crying during the arrest of a parent, and 44% had experienced children appearing frightened of police officers (Scharff-Smith and Jacobsen 2011).

Studies of the experiences of partners of prisoners also point to possible experiences of children of prisoners. Beginning with Pauline Morris in the 1960s, researchers have explored the lives of prisoners' families through approaches such as surveys (Morris 1965),

interviews in prison visiting rooms (Arditti et al. 2003), ethnographies (Comfort 2009) and examination of quantitative data (Glaze and Maraschak 2008). Notwithstanding that these studies vary in their focus, the themes that emerge in participants' narratives include similar feelings of shock and grief (Condry 2007); experience of shame and stigma, through association with or 'contamination' by the offender (Condry 2007; Nesmith and Ruhland 2008; Cunningham 2001; Lowenstein 1986); social isolation (Arditti et al. 2003; Condry 2007; Smith et al. 2003); humiliation and frustration at their treatment by prison staff and facilities during visits and at the lack of information they receive (Comfort 2009; Hairston 2002; Morris 1965); and parenting strain and stress (Arditti et al. 2003; Morris 1965).

However, ambivalence and positive themes also emerge. Comfort (2009) found, in her ethnography of wives and girlfriends of prisoners, that for some, their partner's incarceration was a respite from the chaos and insecurity that he otherwise fostered upon their lives. Some of her informants reported enjoying the financial stability and independence they had while "their man" was in prison Likewise, a third of respondents in Arditti et al.'s (2003) study expressed the opinion that the incarceration had had some positive effects, and had 'solved problems' for them. Of these, most pointed to the incapacitation and specific deterrence value they perceived the incarceration to have. Informants described relief that their loved one was safe(r) in prison than he would have been on the streets and that he was getting drug treatment, and that visits in prison had positive aspects such as facilitating more positive or enjoyable communication than before his incarceration (Arditti et al. 2003; Comfort 2009).

Similar experiences

Given the thin research base, the findings of research into other topics may raise interesting hypotheses or issues that might fruitfully be explored in relation to parental incarceration. In this vein, some scholars of child development studying children of prisoners have combined their findings from caregivers or other sources, theoretical perspective and readings of the literature to hypothesise about these children's experience in general.

Writers echo many of the themes described in the empirical findings, suggesting that children experience stress and distress (Dallaire and Wilson 2010; Johnston 1995); fear and bewilderment at the arrest process (Dallaire and Wilson 2010; Marshall 2008; Myers et al. 1999); feelings of guilt and worry (Rosenberg 2009; Myers et al. 1999); conflict between relief and feelings of worry or insecurity (Loureiro 2010); loss and grief similar to bereavement (Robertson 2007); anger, distrust and fear associated with being lied to about a parent being in prison (Robertson 2007; Ayre et al. 2006; Poehlmann 2005) and parental arrest as a traumatic experience (Loureiro 2010; Dallaire and Wilson 2010; Johnston 1995). Arditti (2012) in particular has employed theories of bereavement to provide insight to the experiences of children of prisoners, including childhood grief (Crenshaw and Lee 2011), disenfranchised grief (Doka 1989) and ambiguous loss (Boss 1999).

The experiences and outcomes of children who have 'lost' a parent to incarceration would seem to be quite unique, and parallels made to other types of loss requiring caution. That said, empirical findings from children who have experienced divorce or the death of a parent may provide interesting insights. Research shows that parental death is a traumatic life event to which is associated severe stress, negative health effects, and even increased mortality risks (Rostila and Saarela 2011; Mairer and Lachman 2000). It is suggested that death of a parent during childhood is associated with negative emotional and behavioural outcomes and challenges coping strategies because it is unexpected, disrupts relationships with the attachment figure or because material support may be reduced, all issues that would appear to arise in parental incarceration.

Similar to parental incarceration, the impact of divorce on children is complex and affected by a range of entangled factors, including family conflict, changes in family income and structure, moves, and parental mental health concerns (Dunn 2004). Suddenly being cared for by a lone mother is associated with a drop in living standards, instability and changes associated with emotional distress (Smart 2006). Given that prisoners appear more likely to have complex family networks and the intact and stable nuclear family is less likely to have existed prior to their incarceration (Hairston 2002: 3), the literature on the effects on, and experiences of, children in relation to family structure and change is particularly relevant. This includes findings of much variation in outcomes between siblings, raising

questions about which within-family differences factors might lead to vulnerability to or protection from the effects of divorce (Dunn 2004).

Research into children's perceptions and views on other topics may also provide insight into how they might experience parental incarceration. Studies have qualitatively explored children's perceptions of a variety of transitions, spaces and states, and some themes appear common and likely relevant to the experience of parental incarceration. For example, studies into children's experience of divorce and other family transitions have highlighted the gulf between parents' and children's perceptions about how well an event or transition has been explained (Dunn et al. 2001; Smart 2002), as well as children's desire to be heard and resentment at poor communication by their caregivers (Pryor and Rodgers 2001; Dunn et al. 2001; Smart 2002). Similarly, research into children's experience of school suggests that children use a variety of strategies of resistance in an environment that tends to be inflexible, authoritarian, rule-driven (Boocock and Scott 2005).

Interventions

The relative lack of data about children of prisoners, and specifically the cause of their elevated negative outcomes has led to challenges for service providers in the community. With a (perhaps newfound) recognition of children of prisoners and the desire to respond to and support their welfare needs, but limited empirical evidence about the extent or nature of the impact of parental incarceration nor about evaluated interventions, the best clinical response to working with these children is unclear (Eddy et al 2008; Kjellstrand et al 2012).

Nonetheless, services that aim to support children of prisoners have begun to be developed, such as transportation programs, mentoring, counselling, and visiting centres. Children of prisoners have been historically neglected by policy makers and service providers and face a variety of challenges. There is a tendency to assume both that some intervention, even if not evidence-based, is better than none, and that if practice is borne from a desire to help it will be helpful. Unfortunately, the history of the caring professions shows that these modes

of reasoning do not always lead to beneficial practice (Munro 1999; Gambrill 2006; Lilienfeld 2007).

More specifically, targeting services to children of prisoners because they are 'at risk' of future criminal behaviour may have unintended negative consequences if this affects their self-concept or if minor delinquency is more likely to be captured by official labelling processes (Farrington and Murray 2014). The current actuarial, risk analysis-focused social policy environment may perpetuate a notion that children at risk of delinquency must be identified and 'risk managed' to avoid later criminality (Kemshall 2008; Simon and Feeley 2003; Hannah-Moffat 2016). There is strong evidence that this can be tremendously counter-productive, with early contact with welfare services disinhibiting desistance. A better-supported strategy is to conduct bespoke clinical assessment of a child's specific experiences related to parental incarceration that may place them at risk of emotional harm (e.g. seeing a parent arrested) and ways that these stressors may be impacting their functioning (Dallaire et al 2015a).

Theoretical Perspectives

The study of parental incarceration has thus far straddled a range of disciplines; researchers from a variety of fields have expanded their focus to include children of prisoners, including criminology, sociology, social work, child and family studies, developmental psychology, and public health. However, as the issue is still relatively new to academic study, there is a need to expand the conceptual bases from which new research is grounded. This section presents two such concepts, the 'new' sociology of childhood and critical criminology, as being highly relevant and capable of providing new insights into this topic. They will provide the theoretical scaffolding for the present project. The chapter then moves on to briefly examine several concepts and theoretical ideas, outside of the frame of parental incarceration, which may contribute to a more nuanced interpretation.

Hearing Children's Voices: the 'New' Sociologies of Childhood

The existing research on children of prisoners is virtually all conducted from traditional developmental psychology perspectives, using the discipline's primary theories and approaches as the foundation from which to design research and interpret results. This is not surprising; the study of children has long been the domain of developmental psychology. With their focus on identifying universalisms in children's progressive acquiring of competencies, researchers such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner formulated influential models of normal development with predictive value, many of which are valuable for understanding the impact of parental incarceration (Hogan 2005). Seminal studies from researchers such as Dallaire, Arditti, Poehlmann and Murray which are cited here and in the following chapters all take a developmental psychology perspective as a starting point. Specific theories, such as attachment theory, are invoked by many researchers as children of prisoners may face separation and disruption in primary caregiving relationships, factors which are salient to the theory (Poehlmann et al. 2010).

The 'new sociology of childhood,' offers an alternative or even competing theoretical perspective, which developed out of the broader critical and social constructivist theorising that rejects traditional psychology and other positivist approaches (Hogan 2005) and has been somewhat of a paradigm shift in sociology and children's studies in the 1990s (Boocock and Scott 2005). It argues that a 'hard' science, quantitative approach creates an impoverished perspective that falsely seeks a 'true child" and neglects the context of children's lives. Instead, this approach favours research involving qualitative data collection, interpretation and reflexivity, does not seek to control for environment or context, and positions children as expert agents of their lives (Hogan 2005: 24). Childhood is constructed as important and worthy of study in its own right, rather than as the unfinished process of becoming an adult.

While the distinction between these approaches is not as binary as this short summary suggests,[7] the existing research on parental incarceration suffers from having been examined quite narrowly from the perspective of developmental psychology. This is evident by the lack of research which centres child subjects, asks them about parental incarceration directly, or which critically examines the systemic factors and social locations to which parental incarceration is inextricably tied. Taking into account this need, I propose to use a sociologies of childhood approach as the conceptual framework for the present research. I seek to critically consider the construction of children and childhood in this project, from design through to analysis, and to privilege children's voice throughout.

This approach would ostensibly seem to present practical difficulties as children think and speak differently from adults and are thought to be less reliable in the veracity and completeness of their description. However the focus in the present study, given this commitment to privileging children's voice, *is* children's own views, regardless of whether they are dependable accounts in a positivist sense. Further, children may be more capable than assumed; various studies that have used developmentally-appropriate methodologies have found that children are much more competent in providing details about, for example, family roles and rules or experienced events, than parents and professionals might expect (Hogan 2005: 34; Boocock and Scott 2005; Dunn 2004).

The interest in researching children's experience - their views, perceptions and stories - meets both epistemological and practical goals. In terms of the social science research goal of better understanding the social world, the views of children have begun to be recognised as an important 'piece of the puzzle.' Sociologist William Corsaro (2005: 119) is often cited as arguing that "children are the best sources for understanding childhood". While children were in the past viewed as immature, incompetent and unreliable informants, they have begun to be recognised as having a unique, valid perspective on their worlds (Boocock and Scott 2005; Hogan 2005; Smart 2002). As early as 1992, a researcher noted that existing scholarship on childhood "does not focus directly on such children's

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[7] While espousing a critical approach, Hogan (2005: 37) argues that the criticism of traditional developmental psychology is unfair; social context and ecology were indeed taken into account by the field's most prominent researchers and in fact the two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

experiences but relies heavily on mothers' perceptions of what they believe or fear to be the case for their dependent children, and as such is empirically unsound" (Woodrow 1992: 29).

There are many reasons why parents may not be the best sources of information about their children's lives, such as the conscious or unconscious biases and interests that may influence their responses (Myers et al. 1999: 21). For example, in the research reviewed above which asks questions about children's experience of parental incarceration by asking caregivers, I found no example of a parent reporting a positive impact. However, it seems unlikely that every child feels negative about every aspect of having a parent in prison, particularly given that qualitative research has shed light on complex ways in which incarceration of a partner may be both a negative experience but lead to some relief, independence and hope (Comfort 2009; Arditti et al. 2003). Children of prisoners are a heterogeneous group, with some showing resilience and positive outcomes despite the poor prognosis for the group (Dallaire and Wilson 2010). Asking children directly may raise positive aspects and indicate possible protective factors that make some children's experience of parental incarceration less negative.

Another example which suggests that perceptions and experiences of parents and children can be inconsistent is the apparent dissonance between many parents' decision to lie to their children about where their incarcerated parent lives and the strong feelings of many children that they have the right to know the truth. Indeed, it appears that a significant number of caregivers of children of prisoners, and prisoners, believe it better to not tell their child where their parent is or tell them a lie about the parent being away at work (Ayre et al., 2006; Hairston 2002; Caddle and Crisp 1997; Poehlmann 2005).

The shift to exploring children's own perspective also meets the demands of critical and social constructivist approaches that we think critically and reflexively about how we understand social categories. Boocock and Scott (2005) note that asking children about their experience allows us to explore average children's everyday lives, invites us to think critically about what a 'good' or 'average' childhood is like and demands that we see children as social actors who are shaped by and also shape the social world. Smart (2004: 497) writes: "adding children's perspectives into the policy debate does not provide

answers, but it does expand how we conceptualise the issue... Children's voices add another register to the debates."

This academic interest in researching children's views was preceded by a corresponding movement within the international human rights field to hear and respect children's opinions and to place their best interests firmly on the policy agenda. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its interpretation have made enhancing the focus on children's perspectives a central principle (Hogan 2005; Lagoutte 2011). For example, the Convention states that children's best interests must be a primary consideration in "all actions" that concern them (Article 3) and includes the right of children to express their views in decision-making that affects them (Article 12). The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has interpreted these Articles to mean that the best interests of the child must be considered when decisions are made about an incarcerated parents' detention and placement (Lagoutte 2011: 34), however the extent to which this is applied is unclear.

There is growing interest by the international human rights community in the plight of children of prisoners, as evidenced by the CRCs annual Day of General Discussion in Fall 2011 being given to the topic of children of prisoners. The Convention contains several articles that are particularly relevant to children of prisoners, namely those that speak to the right to have direct and frequent contact with parents from whom they are separated (Article 9) and to enjoy the right to family life (Article 8). While not absolute rights (in that the child's best interest, as assessed by professionals, is primary), these have been detailed and expanded by the EU Charter to mean that children have the right to frequent, direct contact with their incarcerated parents and that security restrictions cannot justify the limiting of this right beyond an acceptable minimum level of contact (Lagoutte 2011). However, as with many rights instruments, the meaningfulness of these Convention and Charter rights to individual children is far from clear; children are likely to have limited awareness of their rights or remedy mechanisms, and thus little capacity to claim their rights (Lagoutte 2011). Regardless, the movement to recognise children's voices and perspectives, within both academic and international human rights communities, has great relevance to the study of parental incarceration. Further study of children's self-reported

experience of parental incarceration appears both timely and vital to informing theory and practice.

Critical Criminology

Critical criminology takes a constructivist and critical perspective to the study of criminalisation and the criminal justice system, in social, economic and historical contexts. This approach has been particularly concerned with the movement towards increased penal severity and expanded penal systems in recent years in the West, with theorists like David Garland (2001) linking these to the rise of neo-liberalism within the major social, cultural, economic and political changes of late modernity. With the trend that neoliberalism has fostered of actuarialism and managerialism, privileging short-term output, performance measures and privatisation, scholars argue that so too have prison services begun to focus on risk and containment (Hannah-Moffatt 2015). Some argue that earlier moral or philosophical goals, which ranged from moral penitence to rehabilitation, have been abandoned (Garland 1990; Wacquant, 2009). The lack of development of any comprehensive services to children of prisoners in Canada (Bayes, 2002) may be less surprising when viewed from this perspective.

The critical criminology lens also allows a more sophisticated analysis of the ways in which the criminal justice system affects and treats families of prisoners. For example, the increasing punitivism of prisoners' treatment, which may be indirectly experienced by prisoners' families in the security measures they face when visiting, can be better understood as a structural issue rather than the pragmatic way as it is often presented by prison services. For example, in her celebrated (and controversial) ethnography, Alice Goffman (2014) argues that the lives of young, black people living in an impoverished Philadelphia neighbourhood are shaped and directed by a punitive and racist criminal justice system and so, in turn, are their families and communities. Garland (2001), Simon (2007), and Newburn (2003) point to the increasing politicisation of crime since the late 1970s, to the extent that crime, insecurity and "toughness" are now the currency of election rhetoric, political discourse, and governance. Wacquant (2009) calls this "law and order

pornography" in which the criminal justice system is sensationalised and spun into a lurid, shallow spectacle.

Governmentality is a theory employed by critical criminologists (as well as other disciplines) which has strong relevance to studying the relationship between the state and those labelled 'criminals.' Foucault's (1975) theory provides valuable insights into modes of power, rule and governance, and describes state government and other governing systems (from individual self-government to broad institutions) as concerned primarily with controlling, regulating and managing people, or, as Foucault's main interest: people being made into 'subjects' (McKee 2009). Though there are criticisms of governmentality[8], it may prove useful to the study of parental incarceration, such as examining resistance or compliance to 'mentalities of rule', and the ways in which families of prisoners may have been acculturated and constituted as 'subjects' of the prison services through their visits and other encounters.

A variety of related critical approaches may also assist in providing insight into the power and meaning-making processes involved in the experiences that children have of parental incarceration. Socio-legal studies, which examines the law in critical and constructivist ways, locating the law, legal institutions and the concept of justice within a social context, and studying ways in which these structure the social world may also have some relevance to parental incarceration (Collier 2005). This approach may be applicable to this topic insofar as it opens the door to exploring whether sentencing decisions could take into account children's voices, or the role that the law plays in maintaining the negative outcomes of children of prisoners (Hillyard 2002: 654).

Constructivist approaches also have a parallel in human rights perspective, in the latter's focus on the ways that rights and rights-bearers are constructed (Dean 2002). International human rights instruments and domestic rights legislation would seem to guarantee the rights of children of prisoners to the services, systems and structures that would meet their particular needs. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, for example, speaks

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8 Some criticise the Foucauldian focus on constructivism and relativism, as these were popularised at the very time when there was a need for absolute concepts to challenge emerging neoliberalism (Hillyard 2002: 655; O'Malley 1997). Later adaptations of Governmentality have sought to correct such as Stenson's 'realist governmentality' and Jock Yonge's 'left realism'.

directly and indirectly to the rights of those with parents in prison (UNCRC, 1989: articles 3, 9, 18). The rights protected in domestic instruments such as Canada's constitution privilege civil and political rights, as is the pattern internationally in terms of implementation and funding (Dean 2002). Indeed a criticism of the human rights approach is that liberal individual rights models tend to seek rights in a way that is reconciled and balanced by other interests such as capitalist economies and institutional stability (Crenshaw 2002: 1347). Further, in her work on custody and access cases, Smart (2004) argues that an exclusive focus on rights and outcomes can overshadow the concept of recognising and asking children. That said, social and cultural rights are undoubtedly pertinent to parental incarceration as education, health, poverty-alleviation and social programs are the clearest mitigating factors to the risk for later criminality (Lescheid et al. 2006).

Related to human rights scholarship is theory that makes sense of the structural inequality of groups labelled excluded, marginalised, minority, equity-seeking and oppressed. This area of critical theory is likely to yield useful insights when applied to parental incarceration for several reasons, the most glaring of which is that prisons in the West replicate and indeed exaggerate the marginalization of many historically oppressed groups. From different vantage points, theorists have re-framed the debate about equity and equality, such as feminist scholars focusing on the gendered issues such as the cost and value of care (Nussbaum 2001), subaltern/post-colonial scholars who might here focus on relationship of Canada's prison system to its colonialist nation-building past, theorists who view class and poverty as the underlying cause of all inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009: 185-6), and critical race scholars who have exposed the ways in which racism continues to be systemically reproduced through our institutions, discourses and laws (Crenshaw 2002). Angela Davis (2003: 22-39), for example, takes the view that the "prison industrial complex," as is termed the broad mass of industries that comprise and sustain US prisons, is a contemporary expression of racism and notes the many parallels between US slavery and the development of the modern prison.

Feminist analyses of welfare states appear particularly pertinent to the topic of parental incarceration. Analysis of formal and informal care work by women has contributed to

understanding the limitations of liberal concepts of 'equal rights' and the ways in which women are constructed as second class citizens, relegated to the private sphere (Lister 1990). There is a clear link to be drawn to the care work that the caregivers of children of prisoners, most of them women, perform 'on the outside.' This perspective encourages examination of the ways in which welfare citizenship of prisoners and their families are constructed. Research suggests women partners of prisoners play significant and sacrificial caregiving roles to prisoners and that these women suffer significant financial burdens as a result (Comfort 2009; Arditti et al. 2003). The removal of larger and larger swathes of parent-aged men with penal expansion can only add to the unpaid caregiving responsibilities of women, and the gendered experience of parental incarceration given the increased likelihood of a single mother caregiver.

Stigma

Another theoretical approach that has been applied to the study of families of prisoners is that the classic sociological concept of stigma. The history of marking certain community members as 'others', whether literally or figuratively, is long and cruel; from the rags and lesions of lepers in the Bible, to the search for marks on suspected "witches," to the Nazi tattooing of Jewish bodies in WWII, the practice of applying or recognising stigmatising marks on those labelled deviant is longstanding (Goffman 1963*)*. It is widely assumed that families of prisoners are stigmatised, that stigmatisation affects their lived experience, and that stigma contributes to the negative outcomes associated with parental incarceration (Hannem 2010).

Sociologist Goffman set out the classic definition, typology and discussion of stigma in his seminal 1963 book, defining stigma as "the phenomenon whereby an individual with an attribute which is deeply discredited by his/her society is rejected as a result of the attribute. Stigma is a process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity." (1963). As a reflection of the relationship between an attribute (the 'mark') and the negative characteristic (the 'stereotype'), it is the social response to the attribute which constructs this "spoiled identity" of stigmatisation. The concept of stigma has been very

widely employed to examine a range of experiences and attributes that can marginalise, from "urinary incontinence to exotic dancing to leprosy" (Link & Phelan, 2001: 363)

There are a variety of critiques of this concept, for example, Goffman's original work is criticised as being overly individualised and lacking in recognition of power (Link and Phelan 2001; Hannem and Buckert 2012; Holley et al. 2012), critiques often grounded in Foucault's work, which was contemporary. Link and Phelan (2001: 364) present a new definition of stigma, on which the present thesis will rely; stigma occurs when "elements of labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination co-occur in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold." The concept of stigma has been further developed to differentiate between structural and interpersonal stigma, and to include the transference of the 'mark' to others, a process Goffman (1963) called 'courtesy stigma' and is highly relevant to research with prisoners' families.

Gaps and Limitations in the Extant Literature

As discussed above, the empirical study of children of prisoners is in its relative infancy and thus a variety of limitations exist in the literature. In terms of the quantitative literature, there is a need for greater methodological rigour, study of a broader range of subjects and the comprehensive inclusion of a wider range of variables, all of which will allow the 'tangle' of related factors to be teased apart. However, as also noted, these particular gaps are beyond the scope of the present project to address.

This section will focus on another set of needs in the existing literature, which the present study will seek to address. First, there is a lack of attention to children's self-reported experiences of parental incarceration; secondly, I argue that there are several conceptual limitations in the existing literature and a need to expand the ways in which this topic is studied; finally, there is a clear need for Canadian data.

Children's voices

A notable gap in the existing research is study which seeks explanations from children about their own experiences, opinions or perceptions. Including children's voices has been identified by a variety of scholars as the "key next step in this line of research" (Poehlmann et al. 2010: 595; Johnston 2006). However, the marked paucity of children's voices in this research persist despite the dramatic rise in academic attention to the topic in recent years. In a review of a recent influential book on parental incarceration, one reviewer adds the following criticism to an otherwise positive review:

> Yet, rather curiously given the subject of the book, the actual words of children themselves are not given nearly as much prominence as I had expected from this chapter. Instead, the views of non-incarcerated parents or other caregivers are often provided in addition to more quantitative data and so, whilst this chapter is interesting, the overall tendency is to allow adults to 'speak for' or 'about' children, rather than allowing the children free reign to speak for themselves. Therefore, I cannot help but think that an opportunity was missed to reveal something about how children 'make sense' of parental incarceration.
> (Henley 2014: 921)

As discussed above, research data on parental incarceration that originates from interviews with children themselves is very limited. Very few academic studies include children's voices or uses their self-reports as data, and all of those located were reviewed above. This leads to a problematic situation in academic discussions of children's experience of parental incarceration. First, the grey literature is often used as the main source, a literature consisting of research by charities which represent varying methodological rigour and lack of peer review. Second, a variety of data from other sources is presented as reflecting children's experiences; a striking example is van Nijnatten's (1998; emphasis added) book entitled "Detention and Development: *Perspectives of children of prisoners*" which in fact includes no original or even secondary data that originates from children themselves.

The lack of academic research appears to be due to a variety of factors. That most of what the research tells us about children is based in adults' reports is understandable given the positivist, 'truth-seeking' goals of research into childhood until recently (Hogan 2005).

Further, there are significant recruitment and other methodological challenges involved in conducting research with children, and some may see the ethical challenges as prohibitive. For example, one writer explains that drawings were analysed because "ethical considerations required finding a medium for [children of prisoners] to express their feelings and talk about their experiences without asking them direct questions" (Sacerdote 2011: 166)

However researchers have increasingly begun to stress the importance of understanding children's own views and perspectives (Dunn 2004). Research data with children is emerging, including the results of a pan-European project named COPING which is currently conducting research with children in six countries and has begun to publish results (Oliver et al 2016). This is certainly fitting with the reflexivity stressed in social constructivist approaches, such as the new sociology of childhood. Here, subjects' stories, perspectives and lived realities are privileged, which aids the richness, diversity, complexity and context that this inductive approach seeks.

This desire to place subjects at the centre of the research project can also be seen as an emancipatory project, and in this sense an interesting parallel may be drawn from standpoint feminism, the 'second wave' feminist approach to disrupting patriarchal discourses using women's own narratives and experiences. This perspective sought, for example in the context of experiencing violence, to centre women's own experiences (as opposed to being viewed in relation to men) and empower women as experts in defining and framing their own realities (Moore, 2008: 52). While standpoint theory was criticised by later feminist scholars,[9] the value and importance of this approach in the progression of feminist research is clear. The push to centre children and their narratives, and to consider the issue "beyond the interests and concerns of adults" (Smart, 2004) may be similarly valuable.

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[9] Standpoint feminism is criticised for several reasons, such as its reliance on the idea of common experiences, and it lack of attention to racialization and the heterogeneity and power differences between women

The definition of parental incarceration

Existing research has made vast and unhelpful generalisations by presenting 'parental incarceration' as a singular concept, where the issue is far more complex, consisting of a number of variables that perhaps should not be conflated. The main point of confusion appears to be whether parental incarceration is the single event of a parent moving from the community to prison, or rather it is the situation of having a parent living in prison, or both. In the 16 studies reviewed in Murray et al.'s (2009: 34) systemic review, for example, children who are born with a parent already in prison are excluded in nine of the studies, implying that the former definition is the most salient. However, having a parent arrested by police in front of a child but then returned after a short stay in a police holding cell is never included in studies of parental incarceration as all include only convicted parents.

Parental incarceration could feasibly include, or not, any of the following elements in addition to having a parent be absent at some point: witnessing a parent being arrested; having a parent suddenly depart; attending or being aware of a parent's court process; being aware that a parent is in prison; visiting a parent in prison; having others be aware that one's parent is in prison. When explored individually, it is difficult to find the factors that are necessary for the term to be applied. For example, if a toddler has a parent in prison but is unaware of this fact (for example, is told that someone else is his or her father), has never visited and was not present to witness the parents' arrest, a question is raised about whether his experience should be included under the term parental incarceration. The intuitive answer may be no, but this toddler would be eligible for inclusion in all of the studies reviewed thus far. The issue of whether biological ties or caregiving confer the status of 'parent' for the purpose of studying this issue similarly requires examination.

Privileging of quantitative methodologies

Another challenge in the parental incarceration research is the unhelpful privileging of quantitative, longitudinal studies to 'seek truth' about children of prisoners . This may also be expected as the few researchers in this field come largely from the discipline of

developmental psychology, which is based in positivist traditions of seeking to find homogeneity by measuring and assessing children (Greene and Hogan 2005), and criminology, which is similarly based in positivist traditions of seeking to uncover the causes (and cures) of crime within people (Smart, 1990). Critiquing this approach, Smart (1990: 73) writes, "Here is revealed the faith in the totalizing theory, the 'master' narrative which will eventually – when sufficient scales have fallen from our eyes or sufficient connections have been made to allow us to see things for what they really are." Beyond an epistemological critique is a more pragmatic concern that traditional approaches are simply poor at their goal of 'discovering' homogeneities, outcomes and causes in matters of human behaviour.

Complex and poorly-understood issues therefore demand a method that has the potential to capture richness and depth, value socio-cultural contexts, human diversity and reflexivity, and to question positivist assumptions; namely a qualitative approach (Mason, 2006). This view argues that statistics "obliterate individuality" while qualitative methodologies can value the diversity of human beings with agency and capacity for self-reflection (Green and Hill, 2005). Parental incarceration is certainly a complex issue and one which would benefit from rich, thick description and attention to context to unpack and explicate the dimensions of the concept. At this early stage of the research in this area, inductive and exploratory approaches which do not seek to reduce complexity are also useful to generating hypotheses and identifying promising directions.

Lack of Canadian data

Rigorous and academic research into parental incarceration of Canadian children is virtually non-existent (Bayes, 2002; McCormick 2014). There is limited grey literature in this area, however, in the form of four small-scale, non-academic reports on Canadian children of incarcerated parents. The first is a 2002 report by a Canadian charity, the Elizabeth Fry Society, which discusses the challenges faced by children of incarcerated parents, noting the need for further study and recognition of this group of children (Bayes, 2002). The second is an exploratory study published jointly by the Elizabeth Fry Society

and The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System, which reviewed the literature and provided context and anecdotes using interviews with currently or recently incarcerated mothers and seven children and youth (Cunningham and Baker, 2003). Third, a recent research report summarises the existing information about children of prisoners, the Canadian context and notes the need for further Canadian study (McCormick et al. 2014).

Finally, the federal government published a research report in 2007, written jointly by a CSC researcher and a small Canadian charity named Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN) (an agency with which I collaborated for the present study) (Withers and Folsom, 2007). This study involved a survey of over 500 federally sentenced men and found that 75% of fathers had ever received a visit from their children and that 9% of the prisoners with a child under 18 had at least one child who had been in conflict with the law. On the related topic of families of prisoners a single Canadian academic study exists: a qualitative study of the stigma experienced by the Canadian families of male prisoners (Hannem, 2010).

The need for Canadian research into parental incarceration is not only for the benefit of Canadians. Building a rich resource of international comparative data enables examination of the impact of state criminal justice policies and broader social policy approaches on the experiences and impacts of parental incarceration. The existing literature on children of prisoners suffers from being highly reliant on US and, to a lesser extent, UK data, both countries which have a classically liberal model of social welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990), and have exhibited the politicisation of criminal justice and dramatic increases in incarceration rates in the late 20th century (Garland 2001; Newburn 2003). Canadian social and criminal justice policy corresponds to the UK and US in these elements, and is similar to the UK in its incarceration rates (where the US has much higher rates than both the UK and Canada, and indeed virtually all countries) (Juristat 2015). In this way, building evidence from Canada could allow evaluation of claims around the impact of social policy approaches on the experience of parental incarceration.

Conclusion

This literature review has presented picture of a research body with many gaps and limitations, though much newfound interest, emerging findings and opportunities for future research. As shown, existing research into parental incarceration falls broadly into three categories. The first asks which children are captured by parental incarceration, and broadly finds that children of prisoners reflect a range of marginalizing experiences. The second, largest body of empirical work concerns the outcomes of children of prisoners, and there is sufficient evidence to conclude that parental incarceration independently causes some, modest rise in the likelihood of externalising behaviour. Moreover, it appears likely that having a parent in prison is problematic for children's well-being and development. However, it is difficult to draw any further generalisable conclusions from the research; there are a variety of methodological and conceptual concerns in the current research, still in its infancy, and further study is required to tease apart the tangle of associated variables.

As in other areas of research, there appears to be a privileging of quantitative over qualitative methodologies in the examination of parental incarceration. A range of qualitative studies exist, which paint a picture of families of prisoners as prone to experiencing stressors, instabilities, fears, stigmas and social risks. Children's experience of having a parent in prison has been understood primarily through the reports of their caregivers and others, as only a handful of academic studies have included asking children directly about their experiences. Another gap in the literature relevant to the present study is the dearth of research into parental incarceration in Canada. Two theoretical literatures were introduced which will form the conceptual framework for the present study, the sociology of childhood, with its privileging of children's own voices, and critical criminology, which examines the ways in which crime, criminals and the criminal justice system are constructed.

These literatures and research gaps point to a research question which the present thesis takes up: how do Canadian children experience parental incarceration? The coming chapter describes the methods I used to seek an answer to this question, which is followed by the findings of my study.

Chapter 3 | Methods

Much research could usefully be undertaken to explore parental incarceration, particularly in Canada. In this national context little demographic information is known and one could usefully ask - Who are these children? How do their lives look different or similar to other children? How widespread is this experience? Who cares for these children? Are their outcomes different from their peers? The approach taken in the present study addresses another need: to simply ask children themselves about their experiences of parental incarceration.

I conducted interviews with children who had a parent in prison (N=22) and supplemented this primary data with interviews with these children's caregivers in the community (N=12), interviews with a variety of key informants, and reviews of existing policy documents and service provision specific to parental incarceration. These supplementary sources of information allowed me to explore the policy context of these children's lives.

My research sought to explore the experiences of children who have a parent in prison, thus setting to one side questions about impact, effects and outcome. In taking this approach, I committed to placing children themselves – their opinions, meaning-making and truths – at the centre of the research, and taking a 'sociology of the child' approach, as described in the previous chapter. The focus was thus on children's self-reported experiences as the target itself, not as a method of seeking any realist truth but rather a constructivist understanding interested in meaning-making itself. The opinions and information about my child subjects' lives was supplemented with information from their caregiver, but this was used to provide additional context, not as a way of verifying their child's responses.

Conceptually centring the child's own voice in the research demanded that I ask children directly about their experience, and qualitative interviews with children who have a parent in prison are therefore my primary data. My choice of method does not suggest that other forms of research are not required on this topic; on the contrary, there is a need for many

angles of study, including even basic data on the numbers of children affected. Ethnography or participant observation would seem a highly useful approach if part of the concern of the project is the lived experience and contextual fabric of families' lives. However, given the extraordinary difficulty I faced in finding families at all (much less attempting to meet with them repeatedly) as well as the isolated nature of many of these families (meaning that there are few spaces in which families come together aside from prison visiting rooms, which were inaccessible to me), this approach was impossible. In the course of my field work, a setting for participant observation emerged fortuitously, in the form of the bus I rode with prisoners to the institutions as a volunteer.

As will be discussed below, I faced profound challenges in recruiting participants, and some aspects of the original research design were waylaid by efforts to simply complete the basic requirements of the study. For example, I had intended to interview children twice in order to deepen my understanding, check issues that were not initially clear, and to allow for a level of comfort and rapport to build and improve communication. It became immediately clear that I would have enough difficulty achieving a single interview that plans for a second interview were abandoned. Likewise, an initial plan to propose a survey inside an Ontario prison as a secondary source of data proved unfeasible as I had difficulty securing the support of institutions to simply post a flyer in a public area of the prison.

Fieldwork Site

I began fieldwork in October 2011 upon arriving in Canada and completed this work in Summer 2013. I lived throughout this time in Toronto, Ontario, where I reside normally, and travelled to my interviews by car, bus or train. I chose to stay in Ontario because I have a range of contacts with service agencies and key informants in Toronto, Kingston and Ottawa, due to my past employment at an Ontario criminal justice reform charity. An exception to this was a field work trip I took to the east coast of Canada, in order to visit two of the three "hospitality houses" still in operation in Canada (the other is in British Columbia). These houses are run by charities and offer low-cost accommodation to prison visitors.

Canada incarcerates 118 people per 100,000 adult population, a rate that is slightly lower than the UK, much lower than the United States and higher than Scandinavian countries (Juristat 2015). As in most jurisdictions, the prisons in Ontario serve a variety of purposes. At the time of my fieldwork, there were 12 custodial institutions operated by an agency of federal government, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), which hold people who have been sentenced by criminal courts to a custodial sentence of two years or more. These are known as federal penitentiaries. After sentencing, prisoners are transferred to an Assessment Unit, currently located at the Joyceville Institution in Kingston (though until recently located at the Millhaven Institution). Prisoners remain at the maximum-security Assessment Unit for a period of several months while their security classification is determined by CSC staff. They are then transferred to a 'mother institution' where they will remain until they are transferred again or released. Penitentiaries are organised under three broad settings: minimum, medium and maximum security. These generally relate to the freedom of movement that a prisoner has inside the institution and the types of work and activities they have the possibility of engaging in. In Canada, the vast majority of prisoners, remand and sentenced, spend less than one month in prison (Juristat 2015).

Figure 3.1: Time served by adult offenders released from sentenced custody and remand, from Canadian prisons
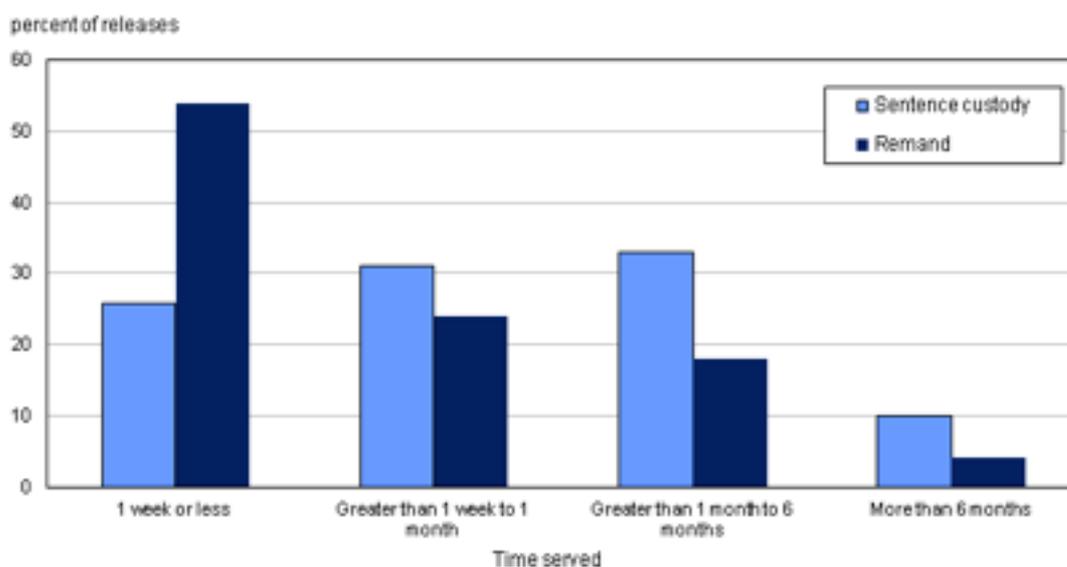
[Reproduced from Juristat 2015]

At the time of my fieldwork, there were 12 federal institutions in Ontario, which had an average capacity of 331 prisoners (Appendix 2). Nine of these institutions are located in the medium-sized southern Ontario city of Kingston (Appendix 3). Two broad types of custodial setting are administered by the provincial government. When someone is charged with a crime and neither released by police on their own recognizance on the spot nor granted bail, they are incarcerated on remand as they await trial or sentencing. In smaller communities, the initial period of remand may occur in smaller local jails, but most remand prisoners are held in large centralised prisons. Prisoners wait weeks, months or sometimes years for the completion of their criminal case. They are all operated at a maximum security level[10] such that in Ontario, remand prisoners generally spend most of their days inside their cell or a combination of their cells and their range or 'pod' (common area for a group of a dozen or two dozen cells), with a 30 minute period of 'yard time' in which they can enter an outdoor area.

Certain provincial prisons also house prisoners who have been given a custodial sentence of 'two years less a day' or less. These prisoners are generally housed in different wings of provincial institutions that mainly house remand prisoners and may be in a lower security setting such that they can move about the wing and work (though provincial inmates cannot earn money) or attend programming if any is offered. In Ontario, the remand prisoners account for 63% of the total population of incarcerated people (Dauvergne 2012), and much has been written about this high rate of remand (Spurr 2013). There are 26 provincial prisons located throughout Ontario. They range in size from a capacity of 23 to 1,550 (Appendix 2). In terms of family contact possibilities and experiences for families of prisoners, remand settings are very different. The information below was collected by me

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[10] This practice of placing people in maximum-security settings by default and at the remand level is a controversial one, and prohibited by the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

during many tours of Ontario federal prisons during this research and my past employment, and conversations with prisoners' families.

In federal prisons, which all but one of the incarcerated parents of my participant children lived in, visiting is generally "open," meaning that there is no glass partition between prisoners and visitors. The freedom of prisoners during the visits varies to some extent depending on the security classification of the institution; in minimum and medium security settings, prisoners and visitors can often go into an outside area, can sit freely around the visiting area, and can hold hands or engage in some limited physical touch. In some maximum security settings, or in lower security settings if the prisoners and their visitor have been placed on "preferred seating" due to misbehaviour or security concerns, prisoners must stay in a certain seat to be observed by the Correctional Officer station. In maximum and some medium security settings, there are often microphones in or above the table so conversation can be monitored. In all institutions, visits may also be "closed", meaning that the prisoner and visitor meet in a booth behind glass and using a telephone handset, if security concerns are identified.

Figure 3.2: Visiting area at Mountain Institution medium-security CSC prison (CSC 2014c)

In provincial prisons, almost all visits are closed, as reflective of their default maximum security classification. In one new prison, the newly opened Toronto South Detention Centre, all visits occur by video. In this system, also used in another new Detention Centre in Edmonton, visitors arrive at the institution and are brought into a booth in the prison lobby. The prisoner enters a similar booth on the range and the visit is conducted through a video camera and screen, similar to a Skype video chat. As one would expect, strong opposition to exclusive video visiting has been voiced (Rabuy and Wagner 2015); some of the benefits of visiting are lost while the challenges to families (such as transportation costs) remain.

Federal prisons offer Private Family Visits (PFVs), which are two day, three night visits in a home-like environment, often called conjugal visits in other jurisdictions. Family members, including children, can visit a prisoner this way; they need not be biologically related or married, but must prove a history of regular visiting and a meaningful relationship. The institution assesses the safety of PFV application (for example, a history of family violence is an exclusion criterion). These weekends are spent cooking food and eating meals together, playing games or watching TV, suntanning, having sex, and talking. I was told by a key informant that some older prisoners without family visitors take PFVs on their own, simply to get a few days "away" from the prison environment. PFVs are held in small bungalows or trailer homes (they are often called "trailer visits" by families) located within the walls of the prison, which include a kitchen, beds and bedding, a TV and often children's play items. PFVs seem to be universally appreciated; families, in the present study, eagerly sought PFVs or looked forward to the next, and studies inside institutions have found them to be highly supported by staff as they are perceived to improve institutional behaviour and are associated with lower rates of subsequent readmission (and likely used as an incentive that is incorporated in behaviour management techniques) (Derkzen et al. 2009). As is discussed, PFVs take a great deal of planning and money for visitors.

Figure 3.3: PFV 'trailer' at the recently-closed Kingston Penitentiary (CTV 2013)

Transportation to Ontario prisons is a significant issue for visitors, and particularly those without a car. Prisons, and federal prisons in particular, tend to be far from home, located in rural areas and not accessible by public transportation. All visitors to any prison in Ontario undergo security checks in an effort to prevent contraband (such as weapons and drugs) from entering the institution. These checks are ostensibly similar to an airport security check, and generally include a metal detector, as well as a physical search of bags, and an ion scanner or drug dog search in federal institutions.

Phone calls and mail are another method that prisoners and their families stay in touch. No Ontario prisoner has access to email. Prisoners have access to the telephone, which in the federal system they pay for with earned money, and in the provincial system use collect calls. The issue of the cost of phone calls was raised by every participant caregiver and will be returned to in Chapter 4.

Recruitment Efforts

The recruitment of participant families was tremendously difficult and time-consuming, causing my fieldwork to take much more time than initially expected (and what was reasonable, by any measure). The primary challenge lay in the fact that there exist very few natural connections, meeting spaces, organisations, networks or bespoke services for families with a member in prison in Ontario. The 'community' of families of prisoners generally shares only their connection to one of the prison services, of which few are fond. The only common space for families of prisoners is the visiting room at the prison, notwithstanding the many prisoners' families which never want to or can visit. I had no access to prison visiting rooms.

In this section, I will review my many, and only very minimally successful, attempts at recruitment, in support of an argument that the extremely poor response to my recruitment strategies is a finding in itself. While my attempts may have been unsuccessful for a variety of reasons, the profound nature of the lack of response suggests that systemic causes to do with the researched population itself, are at least partly responsible.

Starting my search at the prison services would seem intuitive, however this option posed many challenges. First, neither federal nor provincial prison system keeps any registry or quantifiable information about children or families of prisoners. This is the primary cause of the lack of data on the number, caregiving information or visits of children or families of prisoners. Approaching both prison services to seek any other information or support they could offer in aid in recruitment of families was also deemed untenable for the following reasons: privacy legislation would prevent me from obtaining any identifying information; any application to the prison services which sought access to prisoners for the purpose of obtaining contact information to their families was certain to fail; and, given the animosity of many families of prisoners towards the prison service holding their loved one, it would seem a futile approach to expect a response to recruitment efforts that appeared to originate from the prison

Family Orientation Program

My first approach therefore, undertaken between October 2011 and March 2012, was to seek the support of CFCN, a small national charity which provides information and certain types of support to federal prisoners and their families. This organisation runs a toll-free recorded information line for families, produces public education documents and, at the time of my field work, conducted sessions for new prisoners in the CSC Assessment Unit, a maximum security prison in which people reside upon receiving a federal sentence, where they are assessed and a security designation determined. These orientation sessions were intended to provide new prisoners with information on keeping in touch with their children and families in the community, and included an offer of having an information packet sent to a family member. In 2013, CFCN lost its CSC funding for these orientation sessions and they are no longer provided.

The value of seeking potential participants through CFCN was the relatively more representative sample of families these packages would be sent to. All new federal prisoners in the region[11] spend their first months at the Assessment Unit, regardless of their home city or town, or their type of offence, sentence or eventual security classification. It is my understanding that most prisoners had the opportunity to attend. The prisoners whose families were not sent the package were: Prisoners who chose not to attend the session; Prisoners who were deemed too disruptive, unsafe, or unwell to attend the session; or, Prisoners who attended but did not consent to the package being sent to their family (or who, perhaps, had no family to whom the package could be sent).

I first contacted this agency in summer 2011 with a request to have a flyer sent to the families that had received the orientation package, and continued negotiating with them throughout the fall of 2011 and winter of 2012, providing a formal written request and a variety of information. The agency had a change of leadership around this time, which may have accounted for the difficulty in making these arrangements, however concerns over potential risks to their clients, liability issues, and possible threats to their funding also appeared to have been at play. The Board of Directors discussed my proposal at two

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[11] That is, people sentenced to custody periods of two years or more, anywhere in Ontario.

meetings and voted to support my request, though with the disagreement of several members. In January 2012, concerns were raised by CFCN that CSC had been sent my proposal for review and had concerns over an aspect of the project. At this time confusion appeared to build about the purpose of my study along with an erroneous perception that I was seeking to interview prisoners, so I used a contact in the federal civil service to contact the prison service research branch through other means. At this point the issue was clarified and I gained assurance that the prison service had no concerns about my flyer being included in the agency's orientation package.

In the end of February 2012, my flyer (Appendix 6) began to be sent out. The staff member at the agency made the decision to send my flyer only in packages being sent to Ontario families and in which she understood there to be a child under 17 present. The agency reported that my flyer was included in 75 - 100 packages over the span of 4-6 months. The result, however, was disappointing: not a single respondent was yielded and in fact I did not receive a single phone call as a result of this recruitment strategy. In the early spring of 2012, it became clear that the orientation package flyers were not going to yield enough participants for my project, and I initiated my first contingency plan for seeking potential participants. I took a broad and varied approach, seeking simply to have my appeal for research participants seen or heard by as many Ontarians as possible. Between spring 2012 and summer 2013, I achieved my sample of 22 children and 12 families through a variety of means, as described below.

Flyers

During this time, I posted accessibly-written, bright green flyers throughout Toronto, Kingston and other cities I visited (Appendix 6). My approach was to post in any and all public spaces, so I attended at community centres, community legal clinics, service agencies, libraries, Salvation Army offices and thrift shops, as well as any public message posts I came across. I carried flyers and pins with me almost everywhere I went for the greater part of the year. I estimate that I posted (or submitted to agencies for consideration of posting) at least 300 flyers. I sought incorporated feedback on this flyer from several

sources who had worked closely with prisoners and their families to ensure that they were as attractive, accessible and welcoming as possible. The flyers each contained 7 perforated pull tabs, each with my personal cell phone number, an invitation to call or text, my website URL, and my email address.

In response to these flyers, I received fewer than five phone calls, only one of which yielded participants. The others included: a women who spoke English as a second language seeking a literacy service for her child (perhaps because my title was 'I want to hear your story!'); an ex-prisoner who wanted to tell me about having been a parent inside prison; and an elderly prisoner without children whom I had met years earlier inside a prison and who was now living in the community and sought to reconnect.

In order to reach communities to which I could not travel (though would be willing to travel for an interview), I approached three province-wide organisations to seek assistance. I approached the provincial leadership of the John Howard Society and presented to the Executive Directors of the 19 local service agencies at a conference in January 2013. This organisation provides a variety of community services to those involved in the criminal justice system, prisoners and ex-prisoners, as well as other community members. I used to work at the provincial office of this organisation. All of the Directors, who are my recent colleagues, appeared enthusiastic about my study and agreed to post my flyers in their agencies. I provided a stack of my flyers to each.

I also approached the Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, whom I knew from my previous work. This organisation provides services to criminalised women and women in prison. The Director sent an email about my research with my flyer attached to all of the 7 local service organisations in September 2012, and I also sent a package with a covering letter and flyers in February 2013. I received feedback from the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto about them posting the flyer, and indeed recruited one of my participant families from a flyer there. The Ottawa Elizabeth Fry Society also let me know that they would let staff know about my study at an upcoming meeting.

I also contacted the organising body of the province's community health centres. These centres provide primary health care as well as a variety of health promotion services in communities throughout Ontario. Centres provide some services to those who do not have a state health insurance card. I contacted the Association of Ontario Health Centres to discuss the possibility of local agencies posting my flyer, and was informed that agencies would likely be amenable and encouraged to send my requests to the agencies directly. I sent a package to the Executive Director of 26 Community Health Centres in Ontario in July 2013 with a covering letter mentioning my conversation with the provincial body, and providing information about my study, a request for them to post my flyers and several of my flyers.

Finally, I sent packages of flyers with a covering letter requesting that flyers be displayed, to all of the 33 halfway houses in Ontario. These are residential agencies which house federal prisoners after release, usually on a community sentence which includes a variety of conditions, and which provide support, monitoring, and reintegration services. They are independent of CSC and often a service of a larger agency, such as St Leonard's House or the Salvation Army. It is difficult to assess how many of these flyers were actually displayed in the receiving organisations. I cannot estimate the actual number of flyers displayed beyond a guess that the majority of these agencies posted my flyer at least once. This approach yielded, again to my surprise, next to no response and yielded no participants.

I contacted the CSC Research Branch to discuss the possibility of sending flyers to each of the 12 federal prisons and 24 parole offices, with a request that they be posted in the visiting or public areas. A Research Branch Manager indicated that as I was not seeking to undertake research about or inside the institutions, I could simply forward my request to each institution. I sent packages of flyers and a letter to each of the 12 institutions, addressed to the Warden in February 2013 (see letter, Appendix 7). The response to this letter was surprising. I received two written responses from Wardens, one indicating that they were declining to post the flyers and another suggesting that I approach the Research

Unit for approval. I contacted the CSC Research Manager and was informed that Wardens had felt discomfort participating in a study that had not been approved by the Branch. I was asked to submit supplementary information and a minimal proposal to the Branch in order to proceed with my request. Given the time constraints at this point, I did not proceed.

As I was often meeting prisoners' families and riding transportation services, I asked many if they had seen my flyer in any prison visiting areas. None had, aside from in one prison, in which the flyer hung for some time. This flyer yielded no responses. I also sent packages with flyers and a letter requesting that they be posted to each of the 24 federal parole offices in Ontario in March 2013. These requests fared somewhat better. I received one written response from a parole office director indicating that he would post the flyer and taking me up on my offer to deliver a session for staff at the completion of my research.

Finally, I did approach the provincial prison service, MSCSCS, with a request to have my flyers posted in the visiting areas of provincial prisons in February 2013. I was asked to submit a full Research Proposal to be assessed in the manner of proposals to conduct research with provincial prisoners inside their facilities. After clarifying that they had understood that my request was simply to place a straightforward recruitment flyer in the visiting areas, I declined to submit a proposal as I felt it would be an inefficient use of time and unlikely to be successful.

Angel Tree letters

The Angel Tree program, a service of Prison Fellowship International – Canada is a Toronto-based agency that also provides one of the few services specific to families of prisoners. Angel Tree provides Christmas presents to children, delivered and marked as being from fathers in prison who sign up for the service. Angel Tree also provides funding for children of prisoners to attend summer camp.

I approached this agency for a key informant interview and to seek support. The Executive Director generously wrote a letter encouraging families to participate, which were sent to

around 200 families of prisoners from the agency's database. The families were chosen based on there being children in the home who matched my age requirements, and living in the Greater Toronto area. This last requirement was a practical one, made on the basis that with limited doctoral student funds, I could only send a few hundred letters, and thus chose addresses closest to me. This recruitment approach yielded one call from a family, which became a participant family; again a very low response rate.

Website and Social Media

I also created a website for my research, under the purchased name: "www.KidsOfPrisonersStudy.com.' The site provided a landing page that I attempted to make simple and welcoming. It included a menu of information, including information about the study, an accessibly-written biography about me which included a friendly picture, a list of frequently asked questions about the study, and ethics information. I also included a section with information for families of prisoners, in which I posted a collection of seemingly useful and accessible information I had come across in my research. These included documents on talking to kids about having a parent inside, visiting information, and links to a variety of agencies and information sources. Several pages of the website can be seen in Appendix 5. The website has been live since spring 2012 and yielded no participant interviews. This was, again, a surprise, particularly because I am able to determine from site analytics that I have a small but consistent stream of visitors to the site. The most viewed sections are the landing page and the 'information for prisoners' families' sections. I have received several emails from people internationally as a result of the website, for example with suggestions.

I also made extensive attempts to attract potential participants through social media. I posted on Facebook sites of relevant groups throughout the US and Canada, providing a link to my website and asking that anyone who knew families in Canada forward my information. The Facebook sites I targeted were those which formally or informally provided advocacy, social spaces or information to prisoners' families, of which I found many based in the US and none from Canada. This approach yielded no response at all.

I also approached a popular social media site, PrisonTalk Online, which provides a forum-style opportunity for people to share information about prisons. The site is based in the US but includes a Canadian forum. It appears to be used almost exclusively by female partners of prisoners. The posts appeared to be of two main types: women seeking information about particular issues (such as the parole process or the dress code for visitors are a certain prison), and women seeking support and community around emotional issues related to being the partner of a prisoner (such as discussions of the hardships of being far away from a loved one, dealing with extended family members' concerns about their relationships, and dealing with specific issues such as being the partner of a death row inmate or a sex offending prisoner). It appeared that a community of very intimate and solidaristic support had developed between frequent users. Posts detailing weddings inside prison visiting areas, complete with blurry pictures of smiling women in white dresses hugging men in prison garb, elicited a stream of personal and uniformly positive and celebratory responses.

I spent much time initially exploring the site in order to orient myself and strike the right tone in my posts. I had found a few posts from researchers and journalists asking for information or contacts, all of which were flagged with a warning from the administrators and to which no one had responded. I decided to instead spend some months developing a presence and history on the site. I used my knowledge of the Ontario institutions' policies and community services to begin answering questions posted by members. I often posted information about transportation and accommodation options, relevant local service agencies, and visiting procedures. These seemed well received; I received some thanks from members for the information.

I then began identifying myself as having been a community worker with prisoners/ex-prisoners and currently studying prisoners' families in my posts. When I felt I had some presence, and had also achieved the 25 posts required to include website links in my posts, I posted about my research, asking that anyone with interest get in touch by email or via the website. I reposted this message again in a month's time. Though I received some

positive feedback, for example notes that my project sounded interesting, this approach also yielded not a single participant.

Child welfare agencies

Several years prior to starting my doctoral studies, I worked as a child welfare worker in the main child protection agency in Toronto. I worked there for five years, all spent conducting abuse investigations. Given this history, with whatever connections and credibility it offered, I approached child welfare agencies across the province in hopes of recruiting children of prisoners who might be in care, as well as families in the community who might have child welfare involvement. The child protection field in Ontario consists of 35 arms-length quango agencies (many known as "Children's Aid Societies" (CAS)), which are mandated, regulated, and funded by the provincial government to provide the full range of child welfare services. A province-wide member association of these agencies, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), also exists to provide advocacy and other services to member agencies, including government relations, communications, education and training (OACAS 2014).

I began by approaching several CASs around Toronto, seeking to present my research to the research manager (if one existed) or else a senior manager or the quality assurance manager. I then approached OACAS to let them know about my research and plans; they responded positively and offered to review a more formal proposal and, if successful, let individual agencies know about my research with their endorsement. I declined this offer as I had already made contact with many CASs individually and found them to be very open to collaboration. I eventually contacted every agency by email or phone.

I received welcoming responses at many agencies; however many sought information from staff and reported back that they had no children in care who had a parent in prison (that they were aware of). I met in person with a manager at one, and a staff group and supervisor at another, and I sent formal request to several agencies who expressed interest, which included my ethics material and extensive information about how I would approach

children in their care. Two agencies declined (though neither noted concerns about my research) and others explored the issue in their agency, usually sending an email out to staff asking them to get in touch with me if any had children on their foster care caseload who met my eligibility requirements, namely that the child have a parent currently in prison, be 6-17 years old and who, in the worker's judgment, would be able to safely participate. However at all but two agencies which agreed to collaborate, no children were found that met my eligibility. At one, a worker identified two siblings who could be approached, however they were currently in a crisis with parent access visits and this would have to wait. I remained in contact, however the situation deteriorated, and it later became untenable for me to approach these children. At another, two children were identified but I received no response to requests for contact with the worker.

In conclusion, my attempts to find potential participants through child welfare agencies did not yield any participants, despite a particularly extensive and time-consuming effort with this avenue.

Presence in the community

I also sought to build a presence in the community of people who might have prisoner's families as clients, as well as with the community of prisoners' families, to the very minimal extent to which such a community exists. The former community is one in which I already had friends and professional connections. My activities to this end included attending (and in 2013 presenting at) Prisoner's Justice Day event in Toronto and spending time meeting with service providers, activists and individuals present, being a guest on a local community radio station program and discussing my research[12], attending an informal meal event at a Salvation Army program in Kingston and attending a prisoners' art exhibit opening. None of these activities yielded any interviews directly, though I made or reinforced useful connections with a variety of key informants during these events.

I also attended at several agencies, often when I was posting flyers in an area, and asked to speak with any agency staff who might have clients who were families of prisoners. I

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[12] A recording of the program can be accessed at: http://www.pcrtoronto.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=79&Itemid=133&limitstart=21

would explain my study, leave them with extra flyers and ask them to let potential participants or other leads know. In one agency, I met a woman who runs a support group specifically for women partners of prisoners. I ended up interviewing her as a key informant and she referred a potential participant to me. This woman did call me and became one of my participant families.

Prison-side stakeholders

I emailed the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers to seek a key informant interview. Again, I described my research, my study's Ethics Review Board approval, my interest in seeking the viewpoint of correctional staff, and the importance I place on attaining a variety of viewpoints from anyone with insight. I asked to interview anyone at the organisation, in the modality and on the date that suited them, but received the following response:

> Thank you for contacting us. I'm afraid however we will not be able to assist you in your study.

I wrote back expressing my interest in learning any ways that I could change my proposed interview to suit their agency needs, including sending my questions in advance or receiving written responses. I also asked if the organisation had any policy regarding participating in student studies or concern around my topic. I re-sent the request a month later. I received no response to either email. Similarly, I was refused an interview with a representative of CSC. After 11 months of requests and attempts to be flexible (including sending my questions in advance, on request), I was informed that there was no one within CSC who would be interviewed on the topic of prisoners' families:

> Thank you for your inquiry regarding families of offenders. Unfortunately we are unable to accommodate your interview request at this time.

Again, I received no response to a follow up request. I note the consistency of this experience with the surprising challenges I faced in trying to have flyers posted in prison visiting rooms.

Relatively Successful Recruitment

The recruitment strategy that did eventually prove relatively successful and yield half of my sample of 23 children was working with a charitable agency, FEAT for Children (an acronym for Fostering, Empowering, Advocating, Together). One of the services of this small agency is a transportation service between Toronto and several CSC prisons, for family visitors and I volunteered for the agency (described further below) and recruited participants by distributing flyers and meeting parents during bus rides.

The other half of the participant families were recruited through other means. Three families were recruited though flyers I had posted, or which had been posted on my behalf, at service organisations throughout the province; one family was referred from a community service agency I had presented my project to; one family called me after receiving a letter from another organisation with which I had partnered; and one family was referred to me by one of my participant mothers.

Understanding Recruitment Challenges

The difficulty I faced in recruiting participants is, I suggest, a research finding in itself. While the flyering approach I used is bound to have low response rates, the extraordinary lack of response suggests some systemic causes beyond the passivity which prevents flyers from eliciting much response. I propose there are several, interrelated reasons for this. First, I learned that many caregivers decide not to tell children the truth about the whereabouts of their incarcerated father. Indeed, I met children on the FEAT bus who ostensibly thought they were visiting their father's place of work or his college. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 5 in relation to the themes of secrecy, isolation and fear

which appear to pervade the lives of families of prisoners. Certainly, if this is a widespread practice, this would substantially reduce the number of caregivers contacting me (given that none would want their children to participate). The lives of prisoners' families may also be more chaotic and transient, on the whole, given the poverty and social isolation they are more likely to experience. This may have the impact of making participation in a study less tenable (for example, being without a stable phone number or a stable home address) and lower priority than attending to day-to-day crises.

Secondly, my lack of success in attaining any interviews with CSC or correctional officers may be an extension of the secrecy and invisibility surrounding this topic. A recent article suggests that CSC has an extremely insular character, seeks to avoid any risk of criticism and resists transparency, and therefore erects barriers to external research (Watson 2015). Based on a case study of an unsuccessful attempt to conduct qualitative research within CSC institutions, Watson argues that the agency uses barriers to, and censorship of, external research to manage its reputational risk (2015). One of her stakeholder respondents stated,

> Well, that's why there isn't any research being done on federal corrections. I mean, that's the real tragedy. Except they do their own psychological research, you know, relating to their programs and that's it. You know, there's nothing else that analyses corrections and correctional policy from, with any reasonable access to the system and that, to me, is just absolutely tragic. It's really a very secret world and one that you would think they would want to encourage that kind of research by others, but they don't. They haven't for a very long time.
> [Watson 2015: 349]

Finally, I suspect that my study was the victim of less or more conscious gatekeeping by professionals who had access to potential participants. For example, the lack of response from CAS workers may have indicated a lack of knowledge that their child clients have a parent in prison (as, statistically, some must), it may have reflected a desire to shield children from the perceived risks of participating in a study, or it may have represented a

concern about allowing someone 'in' to these children's lives. A clearer example emerged with a peer-support group for partners of prisoners, whose founder I met with. While extremely forthcoming and insightful in her interview, she declined my repeated requests to attend a group meeting and seek participants, with the explanation that the group was a strictly peer-only, safe space. Certainly this was her right, and may have reflected a concern for potential risks to the group members, however I wonder if, in a field which lacks clear leadership, organised advocacy, 'official' expertise or ownership, gatekeeping may have played an implicit role in protecting leadership, expertise and ownership within the context of this group.

Study Sample

After these exhaustive efforts to secure a sample, I was able to conduct 22 interviews and achieve my primary data. At the outset of my research, I created eligibility requirements that seemed to me quite straightforward, but which I later discovered severely limited the number of participants I could locate. First, I sought children and youth between the ages of 6 and 17 (initially seeking 7-12 year olds), and did not interview adults who had experienced parental incarceration as children, in the past. A representation of the age distribution of my sample is seen in Figure 3.4.

The purpose of this requirement was primarily to further centre the 'voice of the child' in my research. By seeking the adult recollections of childhood experiences, I would be privileging the voice of adults, implying that these adults are more valuable 'tellers' than children, and choosing adults to speak on behalf of children (albeit, these adults' child selves) (Hogan 2005). More practically, recollections of past experiences are simply less reliable than descriptions of current experiences. Given that my focus was to be on experiences (that is, perceptions, opinions, and meaning-making), and less on 'plot' and episodic information, the importance of collecting present experiences was even more crucial. The word "child" is used throughout the present document to describe the child and youth participants, for simplicity.

Figure 3.4: Distribution of child participants by age
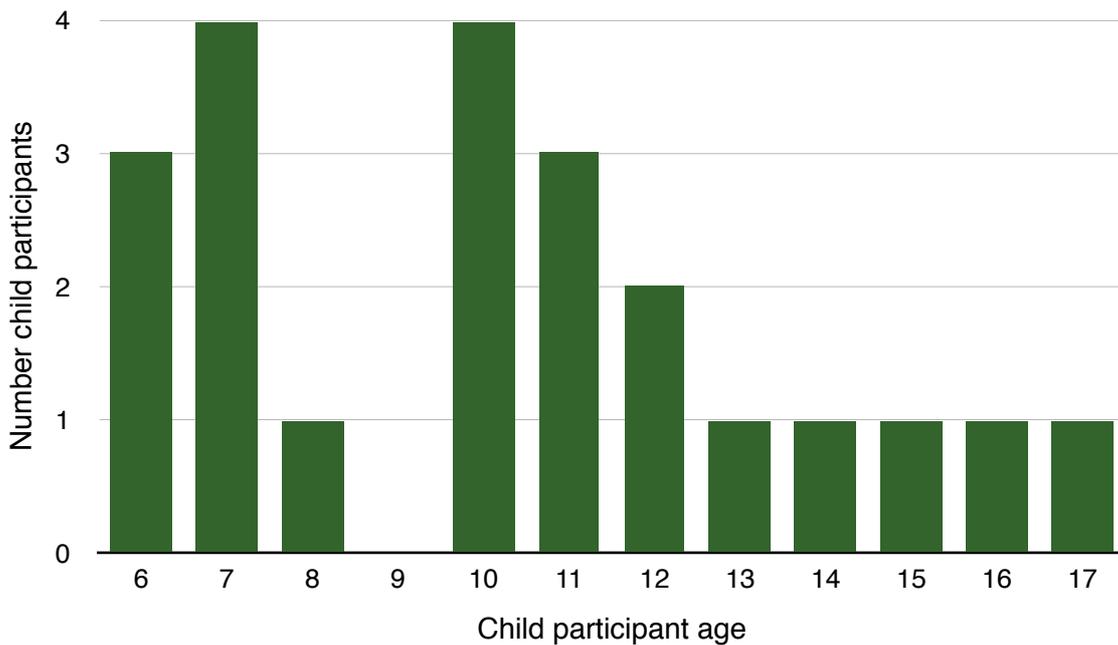
Secondly, I required that child participants have a parent who is currently in prison. The purpose of this requirement was to elicit information from children about their experience that was as unmediated as possible by issues such as the effect of events post incarceration. For example, while many families have hopes and expectations for the prisoners to come home and reintegrate successfully (for example, find work, contribute to parenting and not reoffend or return to drugs), recidivism research shows that ex-prisoners struggle when returning to communities**.** The effect of the disappointment, anger and family dissolution this may cause could have an impact on a person's telling of their experience as a child of a prisoner. Further, I required children to be able and willing to be interviewed safely. Though this issue never arose, I would not interview any child whom I, a caregiver or professional assessed to be too emotionally unwell or experiencing significant mental health concerns.

Finally, a point of natural eligibility emerged, namely that all participant children were aware that their parent was in prison. Though this was left off of my flyers and other materials, I assumed that no caregiver who chose not to tell their child that their parent was in prison would contact me to have the child interviewed about parental incarceration. I did, in fact, have several parents whom I met on the FEAT bus indicate that they would be

willing to participate, but on the condition that I not ask anything about "prison" as their child did not know, and that I use the family's term for where they went to visit (such as "daddy's work"). I declined these families, aside from one in which I knew that the child was in fact fully aware that his father was in prison (because I had heard him mention this and I had witnessed his mother discussing it in front of him on the bus repeatedly), though his mother insisted that her son did not know (discussed further in Chapter 5). As it turned out, this child was the only child in my study who refused assent, and thus the interview did not proceed.

Figure 3.5 shows a variety of characteristics of child participants. These children are listed in alphabetical order of the pseudonyms I chose for them in order that the family groupings and sibling relationships are not obvious. This decision is based on a concern that the information displayed here, combined with the size of the families and the quotes provided in the present document would be sufficient information to allow identification of the families and the prisoner. While this may seem overly cautious, the high level of fear, vulnerability and suspicion of my participant families warrant such an approach.

Figure 3.5: Child Participant Characteristics

Child	Age	Gender	Race	Full sibs	Caregiver	Relationship with incarcerated parent	Relationship before, and stability of, incarceration	Distance from home to prison
Abby	11	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Within 20km
Amy	14	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Biological father	Born while father incarcerated; never lived together	Within 20km
Ben	11	M	White	Y	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Within 20km
Darcy	10	F	Aboriginal /Black	N	Biological mother	Biological father	Lived with prior to incarceration	Over 200km
Ethan	7	M	Black	Y	Biological mother and maternal grandmother	Biological father	Lived with prior to incarceration	Over 200km
Grace	7	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Biological father	Born while father incarcerated; never lived together	Within 20km
Isaac	8	M	Black	Y	Biological mother	Biological father	Lived with prior to incarceration	Over 200km
Josh	17	M	Black/ White	N	Maternal aunt	Biological mother	Lived with prior to incarceration	Over 200km

Child	Age	Gender	Race	Full sibs	Caregiver	Relationship with incarcerated parent	Relationship before, and stability of, incarceration	Distance from home to prison
Lilly	13	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Over 200km
Lucas	12	M	Latino	N	Biological mother and maternal grandmother	Biological father	Lived with prior to incarceration	Over 200km
Max	7	M	White	N	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Within 20km
Oliver	15	M	White	Y	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Over 200km
Phoebe	10	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	No relationship before his first incarceration. Lived with during a release	Within 20km
Rob	7	M	White	Y	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	No relationship before his first incarceration. Lived with during a release	Within 20km
Samantha	16	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Over 200km
Sarah	11	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Over 200km

Child	Age	Gender	Race	Full sibs	Caregiver	Relationship with incarcerated parent	Relationship before, and stability of, incarceration	Distance from home to prison
Sierra	6	F	Black	Y	Biological mother and maternal grandmother	Biological father	Born while father incarcerated; never lived together	Over 200km
Sophia	10	F	White	Y	Biological mother	Biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Over 200km
Summer	12	F	White	N	Biological mother	Stepfather. No contact with biological father	Repeated periods of incarceration. Lived with on releases.	Within 20km
Tom	10	M	White	N	Biological mother	Biological father	Born while father incarcerated; has lived with on release	Over 200km
Will	6	M	Black	Y	Biological mother	Stepfather. *Contact with biological dad.	Lived with prior to incarceration	Over 200km
Zoe	6	F	Aboriginal	Y	Biological mother	Biological father	Lived with prior to incarceration	Over 200km

I note that these 22 children represent 12 families (and thus the 12 caregivers in the study), and the size of the families are shown in Figure 3.3. The children who were not interviewed were all excluded because of their age: in all cases but one, the not-interviewed child was under the age of 6, and in one, the 'child' was over 17.

Figure 3.6: Number of total children and children interviewed, by family
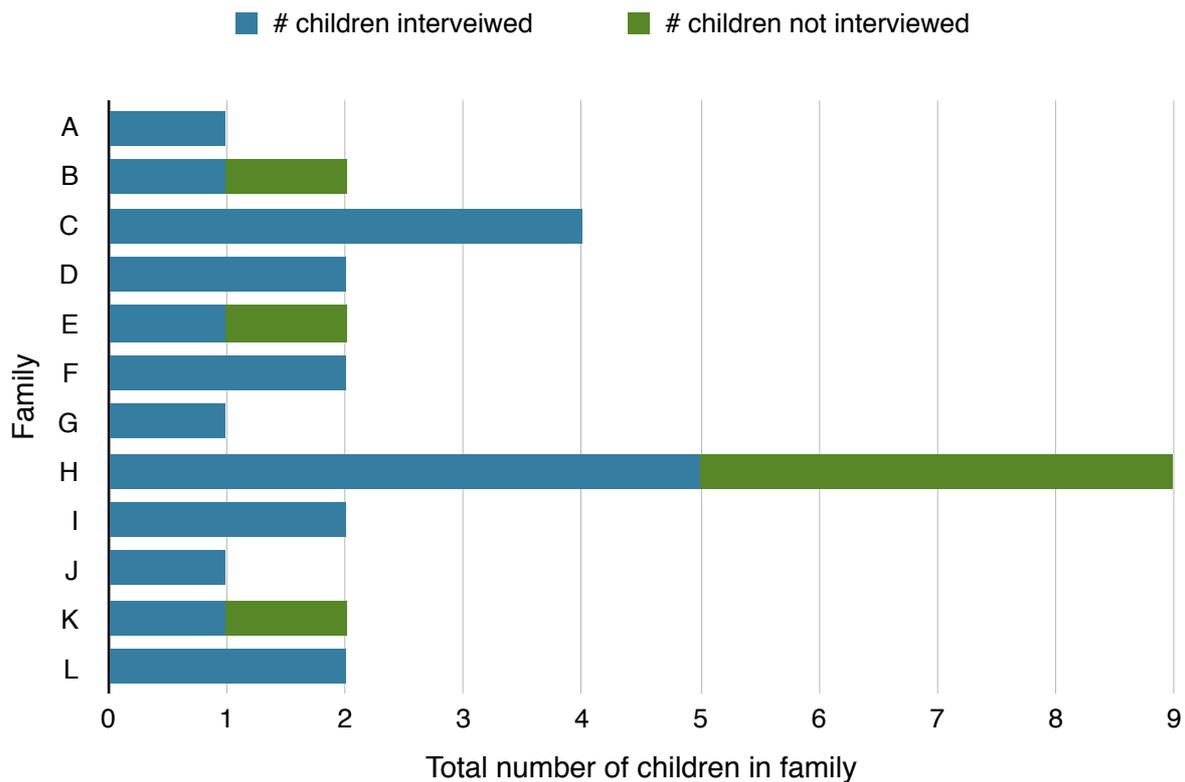
Incarcerated Parent Characteristics

An additional issue arose concerning the definition of the word 'parent.' As I was interested in children's experience of parental incarceration, as an event or process, children who had no relationship with their parent in prison before or after their incarceration would not be of benefit to the present study, regardless of the biological relationship. Likewise, an adult who played a significant caregiving role, whom the child thought of as a caregiver, who lived with the child prior to incarceration and whom the child visits in prison, but who is not a biological parent, would seem to be a 'parent' for the

purposes of this study. I therefore defined 'incarcerated parent' as a person who played a significant caregiving role prior to incarceration and/or whom the child considers a parent.

Figure 3.7: Child Participant Relationship with Incarcerated Parent

- ● Bio. parent; parenting relationship prior to incarceration
- ● Bio. parent; no relationship prior to incarceration (e.g. born while parent inside)
- ● Non-bio parent; parenting relationship prior to incarceration
- ● Non-bio parent; no relationship prior to incarceration
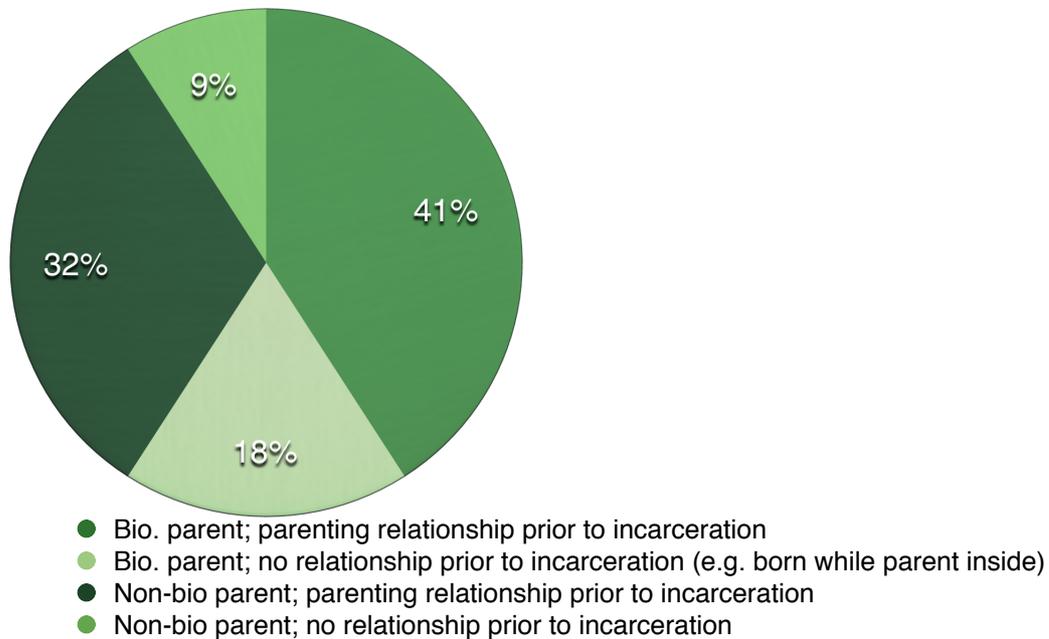
The children in this study had variety of experiences of receiving direct parenting from their now-incarcerated parent. As shown in Figures 3.5 and 3.7, three children in the sample had never lived with the incarcerated parent, in all cases because they were born after the parent was incarcerated and the sentence had continued until the point of our interview. The rest of the children had all lived with the incarcerated parent at some point prior to a period of incarceration at the point of our interview. For twelve of the children, the present period of incarceration of the parent was not the first during the child's life; these children had lived with the parent during periods of release between stints of incarceration.

Almost all of the incarcerated parents represented in the present study were held in federal prisons at the time of the data collection, and all of these federal prisoners were already in their 'mother institution' (that is, not at the initial Assessment Unit stage), many having served several years already. This was likely due to a variety of factors. Primarily, the

FEAT bus, through which I met half of my eventual sample, travels only to the federal prisons. Secondly, federal prisoners are more likely to be older than provincial prisoners due to them being further advanced in their 'criminal careers' than other prisoners (where more criminal behaviour tends to escalate in severity over time). This in turn would make them more likely to have children who are older and within my 6-17 eligibility range. Thirdly, federal prisoners have spent much more time in prison than their counterparts in other systems, having already spent time in remand during their trial and sentencing and in the Assessment Unit. Their families on the outside have concurrently spent much longer time in their roles as prisoners' families. This may, albeit speculatively, suggest that these families have had longer to both adjust to the practical and emotional impacts of partner/ parental incarceration, may have developed a level of comfort or competency around issues like visiting and phone calls, and may be less transitory than those who have more recently dealt with the crisis of the initial incarceration of a loved one (e.g. the sudden loss of income). I will also suggest that these experienced families are more likely to have told children that their parent is in prison. Indeed, I met several families who reported that they took some time after the initial incarceration to tell their child the truth. All of these possible impacts of the longer length of total incarceration would necessarily make families more likely to respond to my request for participants. The exception to my exclusively federal prison sample is one participant child who has a parent in a UK prison. Two of the incarcerated parents were released during the course of my fieldwork. All but one of the incarcerated parents in my sample were men. This holds with the profoundly gendered nature of incarceration; women in Ontario make up around 9% of the prison population (Statistics Canada 2012)

I did not ask families about the crime for which the incarcerated parent was convicted and sentenced to prison; indeed, not asking was one of the 'tag lines' on my recruitment flyer, as I felt that this would allow families who were concerned with my judging their partner or seeking to identify them to participate. However, many caregivers did end up alluding to or identifying the crimes with which their partner was charged, all of which were non-sexual violent crimes or drug offences. I was not told of or lead to suspect that any of these parents had been convicted of assaulting the child whom I interviewed.

An interesting factor that emerged was that a few of the incarcerated parents in my participant families were members of their prison's Inmate Committee. This Committee is a council for prisoners, which they themselves elect and which undertakes to represent prisoners in bringing issues to the prison administration, advocating for prisoners' rights and interests, and organising the spending of the Inmate Welfare fund. It is my understanding, from my past work, that in addition to the Inmate Committee members being popular and skilled enough to have been elected by their fellow prisoners, they tend to be more dominant prisoners who hold some power in the prisoner hierarchy due to their personalities, physical size, crimes or social connections. Committee members make up a tiny percentage of the total prison population, and thus for my sample to include more than one such prisoner is surprising. I can only guess that the Inmate Committee members have relatively more security and confidence than their peers in the prison environment, which may extend to their partner on the outside, to the extent that prisoners' families' lives may in some ways mirrored the lives of the prisoner (Comfort 2009). Committee members may also be more politically engaged or otherwise interested and experienced in working towards social change, and this may extend to their partners outside. Both of these factors could, in turn lead partners to be more likely to respond to my recruitment efforts.

Race and Class

The children in my sample were reasonably representative of the prison population itself, as would be expected. In terms of 'race,'[13] 14 of the children were white, one Aboriginal, one mixed Aboriginal and Black, two mixed white and Black, three Black, and one Hispanic. In federal prisons, Aboriginal women represent 34% of the population of incarcerated women and Aboriginal men represent 21.5% of the male prison population, while Aboriginal people make up 19.3% of the total "offender population" (including those on community supervision such as parole) (Public Safety 2012). Aboriginal adults represent around 4% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada 2011). Of the broader

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[13] I add quotes to denote an understanding of 'race' as a socially constructed category. I assessed these categories primarily through the labels used by the caregivers in the course of the interview (as race was often a topic raised, particularly by caregivers of colour) and in two families I made the assessment myself.

prison population, 62.3% self-identify as white, 8.6% as Black, 5.4% as Asian and 0.9% as Hispanic (Public Safety 2012). In the Canadian population, 13% self-identify as Asian, 2.9% as Black and 1.1% as Latin American (Statistics Canada 2013). Thus, Black child participants were slightly overrepresented in my sample and Aboriginal underrepresented, both of which may relate to my sample disproportionately capturing Greater Toronto residents.

All of the parents of these children were living in poverty or on low incomes. In one family, the caregiver was in post-secondary education and living on student loans, in four families the caregiver's income was employment income, and in seven families (17 of the children) the caregiver's income was general welfare benefits. One of the caregivers on assistance at the time of our interview later let me know that she was now working full time. I am unable to compare these findings to the population of Canadian prisoners as no information is collected from prisoners on prior income or socio-economic status (Statistics Canada 2009), however there is a substantial literature showing that the criminal justice system disproportionately captures people living in poverty (Wacquant 2009). These findings and the issue of poverty faced and exacerbated by families of prisoners is discussed at length in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.8: Income and finances of participant families

Family	Main caregiver's source of income	No. of adults in household (1 = bio. mother unless stated)	Other observed/stated financial issues or poverty indicators
1	Work: civil service	1 (lived in maternal g.mother's home; no shared finances)	Underhoused
2	Benefits	1	Subsidised housing
3	Work: office cleaner	2 (mother and maternal grandmother: (employment income))	Receives means-tested recreation assistance. Was on assistance and lost owned home after incarceration. Rental flat

4	Student loans	1	
5	General benefits	1	
6	General benefits	1	Loan issue; subsidised housing
7	General benefits	2 (maternal aunt and maternal uncle; share household finances)	Underhoused
8	Benefits	1	Appearance of significant need
9	Disability benefits	1	Loan issue
10	Work: food service	1	Subsidised housing
11	General benefits	2 (mother and maternal grandmother: (employment income))	Grandmother owns home; both contribute to mortgage
12	Disability benefits	1	Appearance of significant need; subsidised housing

My sample included six families who reside in Toronto, two from the immediate surrounding municipalities, one from a suburban area 3 hours southwest of Toronto, and three from the Kingston area. All three of the families from Kingston had moved to the city after the other parent's incarceration in a Kingston-area prison. This geographic range is strongly related to my main recruitment strategy: the FEAT bus runs from Toronto to the federal prisons, and is generally only used by families from the Greater Toronto Area.

This range is a limitation in my sample in that all (aside from the family who reside three hours from Toronto) are able to access public transportation services and have significant

social service agencies available to them with minimal travel. Around 14% of Ontarians live in rural or remote areas (Statistics Canada 2011), and will therefore have limited access to public transportation services and local services agencies, and in the case of remote or even "fly-in" communities in the north, limited internet access and extremely high costs to travel to any prison. Aboriginal Ontarians are more likely to live in rural or remote communities, and 37% of Ontario First Nations people live on reserve (Statistics Canada 2013). As noted, my lack of geographic breadth may be the reason that I do not have more Aboriginal families in my sample.

Caregiver Characteristics

There were a few notable factors in the sample of caregivers on the outside. In all of the families aside from one, the caregiver was the biological mother of all the children. In the remaining, the child's mother was in prison and the maternal aunt of the child was his current primary caregiver. This latter child did have ongoing contact with his father. This is consistent with other research with incarcerated children. A large-scale US study found that the 90% of children with incarcerated fathers live with their mothers and have not faced any change in caregiver with the incarceration of their father (Mumola 2000). Children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to live with a grandparent (53%) than their father (28%), the remainder living with another relative (26%), friends (10%) or foster care (10%)) (ibid).

In three of the families, other adults besides the primary caregiver lived in the home and played a caregiving role (in two, the maternal grandmother to the children, and in another, the maternal uncle to the child), and in one of the families, they lived temporarily in a home with another adult (the maternal grandparent to the children) who explicitly did not play a caregiving role. In the remaining eight families, the residents in the home were the children, any younger siblings under 7, and the single adult female caregiver.

In all of the families, the caregiver encouraged or allowed letter, phone or in-person contact between their child and the parent in prison. This may not be representative; many

prisoners have no contact at all with their children (Withers & Folsom 2007; Glaze and Maruschak 2008) and for some, this is a result of the caregiving parent refusing to allow or facilitate contact. It would seem likely that caregivers who have no contact with a prisoner ex-partner would also have no interest in participating in a study about parental incarceration. However, this is not to suggest that all of the participant caregivers in the sample were on consistently positive terms or in current relationships with the incarcerated parent. Of the 11 families in which the children's caregiver was their mother, two of these mothers reported that they were no longer in an active relationship with the incarcerated parent, but both saw contact between their child and the father as a positive factor for the child and one which they facilitated.

None of the participant children was currently in child welfare care. However in one family, the five children had been returned to the mother's home from foster care in the past year, and the period in care was a result of the mother being charged for criminal activities in conjunction with her partner. It is entirely unknown how many children in Canadian child protection care have a parent in prison, nor how many children are in care as a direct result of the incarceration of their primary caregiver.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews of around 45 minutes in length with child participants. These interviews were very conversational in some instances; I prompted children to expand on points that I wanted to understand better, I re-arranged questions so they flowed most appropriately with the conversation as it progressed, and I worded questions differently as it appeared to suit the cognitive level, personality and circumstances of the particular child. In this sense, the interview schedule was used more as a topic guide in many cases (Appendix 7). I also amended and integrated elements as my understanding of the subject matter improved and based on my experience with other participants, essentially using initial attempts as pilot interviews. For example, I added one question after trying it on a whim with one child in the course of our conversation, namely: "if you found out that someone in your class has a dad who was about to go to prison, what

advice would you give them?" While I would certainly have rejected this question initially as too cumbersome or cognitively complex, in practice it was one of the most fruitful of most interviews from this point on.

I sought to interview child participants alone, however did not push this issue if I suspected any discomfort at all from the child or caregiver. In most of the families, I interviewed most children alone, however in several cases, the parent was only minimally outside earshot. In one case, I interviewed a parent, grandparent and two children all together, at a fast food restaurant, as this was preferred by the parent. I found this extremely difficult, due to the noise but moreover because the children would often seem to seek implicit confirmation or permission from their caregivers, would respond to each others' answers ("No! that's not true!"), and the caregivers would prompt the children in ways I found leading and problematic. My interviews with the child's caregivers were usually held before the child's interview, and in some cases both before and after the child interview. These interviews were often very long, at 60-90 minutes. I found almost all of the mothers to have a great deal to say and seemed to seek to keep the interview going. These interviews were quite conversational and the interview schedule was a topic guide.

I included as few demographic questions as possible in caregiver interviews. For example, I usually did not ask about their source of income, self-reported racial identity or whether they were living in subsidised housing as a matter of routine. This decision was based on the extreme wariness of my caregiver participants, in general; I understood them to be extremely concerned about the potential that I would either judge them negatively or find out too much about "their business" (further discussed in terms of isolation and secrecy, in Chapter 5) and survey-style questions did not seem compatible with my efforts to make the interviews conversational and focused on their experiences and perceptions. Moreover, this information is less crucial with a small, non-representative sample. In the end, this information or opportunities to ask about it in a more conversational manner often emerged naturally in the course of the interview.

Interviews with children and caregivers were generally conducted in the family's home or a community centre, though with two families I interviewed the children and caregiver in a fast food restaurant (one of which allowed for a comfortable level of privacy but the other did not). All interviews were audio recorded. A crucial element of every interview was to build sufficient trust and comfort with participants. I found when I arrived at families' homes, often having not met them before, caregivers appeared quite nervous - smoking cigarettes, launching into rapid conversations about a banal issue or a perceived slight, or making apologies for their homes. I perceived this nervousness to be a result of concerns that I would negatively judge their lives and choices, and that I held some power and authority in my role as researcher. I suspected that families often would have had no other non-family or non-friend visitor than perhaps a social worker or other official who sought to assess their lives. To reduce any connotation of being 'official,' I wore casual clothes (such as jeans), always began my visit with casual chat to attempt to established a relaxed tone, sought to identify my own vulnerabilities (such as noting my poor sense of direction in getting to their house) and taking them up on any offer of food or drink. Moreover, I sought opportunities to disrupt and upend the power that was being given to me. I sought to establish myself as a 'learner' to their 'expert,' for example, by thanking them for making the time to see me, noting my own ignorance about the subject which was being improved by participants, and casting my goal as being to learn from experts like them.

Another specific rapport or comfort-building technique I made much use of was making myself respectfully physically available or involved in spaces as soon as I was invited. When invited into a home, I would immediately seek to pet the dog or cat if there was one, sit on the floor to play with children as soon as socially appropriate, or offer to hold a small child. In these ways, I sought to build validation and familiarity, establishing an intimacy that would allow respondents to share their stories (Wacquant 2011). I found this particularly effective in building relationships on the FEAT bus. I would often sit on the floor of the aisle next to a child's seat and play with them (e.g. making Play-Doh shapes, reading books to them, building Lego) thereby attempting to gently assert a role of offering comfort and belonging, without invading anyone's personal space, and also signifying a willingness to get dirty (sometimes very literally) and not being too precious.

I also took respondents up on any suggestions they made for activities (within reason), such as eating at fast food restaurants, going for walks or to a park. In one home, I was invited to a final day of term fun fair at the child's school. The mother mentioned the fair and that they could not attend due to the $5 entrance fee (per family; a surprising policy for a public school in an impoverished area). I offered to pay the amount, noting that I often bought lunch as a token of gratitude to respondents, and we all went together. I introduced myself as a family friend to community members we met, after agreeing on this with the mother, and a good time and many hot dogs were had by all! Activities like this seemed to me to be quite significantly bridge-building, in the sharing of experiences of casual fun, eating and socializing. McDermott and King (1992) describe a similar creative and active approach to forging relationships with families of prisoners, noting that their lives can be messy and unordinary.

Figure 3.9: 'Photo booth' picture taken with participant at 'Chuck E Cheese' amusement park/restaurant

Other sources of data

Key informants

I conducted interviews with 20 key informants who had a range of experiences with or expertise around prisoners' families or the prison system in general. I recruited key informants through direct requests, and I am fortunate to know many of these sources personally or professionally through my past employment. My strategy for choosing these 20 informants was guided by an effort to talk to anyone with who might be able to offer insight into the systemic or structural issues affecting children of prisoners in Canada, or into common experiences of these children. To this end, I began by approaching the leaders of the few national organisations that work on or around prisoners rights issues, and all of the organisations that I could find via online searches that provided any services to families of prisoners in Ontario. I then asked each key informant during our interview whether they could recommend others with expertise in this area that they suggest I speak with and expanded my search for key informants through this 'snowball' approach.

My initial goal in approaching key informants was not primary data collection but rather an effort to gain preliminary information and connections to aid my efforts to recruit families of prisoners to my study. As my family-recruitment efforts proved challenging, I continued to interview key informant sources as I found them easier to access, and also because I recognised that these agencies and experts might be able to provide insight into my research question. Specifically, I sought insight from them into why I might have been struggling to locate these families, why I was seeing so few services to and formal policy statements around children of prisoners. Moreover, I asked for their views on the issues faced by children and families of prisoners that they knew or had knowledge of, and what programs and policies they felt might aid this group, given their expertise.

The key informants were a combination of front line service workers who had some experience providing services to families of prisoners, Executive Directors of charitable

agencies, advocates for criminal justice system reform, and prison system activists. The specific roles of these 20 key informants can not be detailed as this would reveal the identities of some participants given the quite limited field of people working in the area of prisoners' rights or having provided programming to families of prisoners. I was privileged to be able to interview the Executive Directors and other leaders of all organisations that I located through my online searches and snowball recruitment efforts, and I submit that I interviewed a very representative if not nearly exhaustive sample of those with insight into the broader or systemic issues faced by children of prisoners. I am also confident in this assertion because I quickly achieved saturation in key informant interviews, with the majority of these interviews providing confirmation but little new information.

The caveat to this assertion is that I have a significant and unfortunate gap in this sample as I was unable to interview any representative of CSC or the correctional officers' union (as discussed above). The lack of any insights from those who provide prison-side service to children of prisoners, nor those who are responsible for prison or broader governmental policy with regard to families of prisoners, is a significant omission that limits the power of the present study to understand the policy context of this issue (discussed further in Chapter 9).

Key informant interviews lasted around an hour and were conducted in the participant's office or a restaurant. Most interviews occurred in Ottawa, Kingston and the Greater Toronto area. I used less formal, conversational approach with many of these interviews, again seeking to let the participant direct the course of the conversation, jumping between questions as issues arose naturally in conversation, and using the interview schedule as a topic guide, not survey (see interview protocol Appendix 7). These interviews were transcribed, and coded and organised using NVivo qualitative software as with the other interviews.

FEAT Transportation Service

As described, I recruited half of my sample through flyering and conversation on the FEAT bus from Toronto to federal prisons. I approached the agency with the goal of recruiting potential participants, and began volunteering to ride the bus and help with the service in aid only of recruitment.

I rode on the 48-seat bus 10 times between March and August 2013. I rode mainly between Toronto and Fenbrook and Beaver Creek Institutions, and twice between Toronto and the Kingston-area Institutions. The former trip takes around two hours each way, and the latter around 3.5 hours (see Appendix 4). I would hand out my recruiting flyers to riders in the last half hour of the trip. The bus riders were almost exclusively women, around half with children, who were visiting partners inside. There were often one or two mothers of prisoners aboard, and on one occasion I saw an adult male rider who was visiting a friend. The trip costs $35-$40 per adult rider, depending on the destination, and children under 18 ride for free. The operators of the service ensure that the service is extremely accessible, by allowing riders to pay on the day of the trip, not suffer penalties for not showing up, and allowing known riders to pay later or on a sliding scale if they do not currently have the money. The bus is booked full for almost every trip.

As I began to ride the bus regularly, I realised that I was learning a great deal about prisoners' families simply through my time on the bus. During the two hour drive each way to Fenbrook Institution (the itinerary I tended to ride along on), I chatted casually with mothers, fetched juice boxes, held babies, played with children, and cleaned up spills. I began to be privy to a great deal of conversation about the prison and its staff, the mechanics and challenges of life as the partner of a prisoner, the shared jokes and tearful moments after a visit. The information I collected in this informal way was invaluable both to learning about life for families of prisoners, as well as for informing my interviews with caregivers. The language and existing understanding of major but obscure issues for partners of prisoners (such as shopping for permitted items for an overnight visit at the prison) afforded me, it seemed, credibility and a shortcut into more open conversation with prisoners' partners. Anecdotes and information gathered from these trips are woven into

the analysis in the remainder of this document. I also volunteered with FEAT at two special events and around 8 sessions of their after-school program. My contribution consisted mainly of corralling and entertaining children and helping with set up, and these events provided me with an excellent opportunity to chat and build familiarity and rapport with parents and children that I knew from the bus service, and observe everyday life of these children.

JHS-HW Transportation service

I also volunteered for a similar transportation service operated by the John Howard Society of Hamilton Wentworth. This service is much smaller, and operates as a volunteer-driven minivan between Hamilton and Warkworth Institution in Campbellford, Joyceville and Pittsburgh Institutions in the Kingston area. I was approved as a volunteer driver in the fall of 2012 and made 7 trips between January and July 2013 (plus one scheduled trip in September 2013 when no one turned up). This drive took 4 hours each way, leaving at 6:30am and returning around 12 hours later. The trip originated in the city of Hamilton, an hour west of Toronto, to which I would travel the evening before and stay with family. The service costs families $40 per adult rider, but riders have to book and pay for the service at the agency in advance of the trip (to avoid cancellations). The trip would proceed if 3 or more people had booked and paid, however the service was often cancelled due to insufficient demand. The riders were primarily partners of prisoners, but I also drove the same step-child of a prisoner on two occasions, and a mother and son of a prisoner, an adult son of an elderly prisoner and the niece of a prisoner who visits annually, all on one occasion each.

I similarly sought to volunteer with this service as a way of recruiting participants. I would hand out flyers and chat about my study in the final half hour of the trip, and left flyers in the vehicle for riders on trips that I was not driving. However, I again began to realise that I was learning a great deal about the lives of prisoners' families during these trips. The riders were often very quiet at the start of the trip, but as we approached the prison they would begin to chat with me and one another, and after the visit, there was often much

conversation. The space was small and quickly created a sense of intimacy and shared experience, and I often found that a level of rapport and comfort would build quickly.

On several occasions, I had only one passenger to the second prison and would thus spend 3 hours alone with them, and found them often wanting to talk a great deal. One such woman disclosed her experiences of childhood sexual abuse during this part of a trip, and another spoke at length about her previous partner's domestic violence and drug use. Both returned immediately to casual banter as soon as other riders boarded. It seemed to me that the intimacy of driving alone in a car with someone, combined with the relief of intensity afforded by me not looking at them directly as I was driving and my casual, informal role of 'just a driver,' seemed to create a sort of 'confessional' atmosphere; perhaps the anxiety and fear related to visiting a prison added to the need for a type of cathartic disclosure.

Hospitality Houses

A final source of information was a trip that I made to the east coast of Canada to visit two of the four remaining Hospitality Houses in the country. These homes, Spring House in Springhill, Nova Scotia and Mountain Top House in Dorchester, New Brunswick provide low-cost overnight accommodations for people who are visiting the federal prisons located in the same town. Because of the lack of public transportation, hotels, and the rural locations of these prisons in the already less densely populated maritime provinces, these homes provide an essential service to families who may not otherwise be able to visit. Another such home also exists in Abbotsford, British Columbia. All of the homes operate as privately-run charities who do not receive government funding, aside from in-kind resources from the local prison. A fifth such home was located in Kingston, named Bridge House I and II (made up of two houses), but this service closed in 2010 (Whig Standard 2010), and a sixth home, in Port Cartier, Quebec, closed in 2003 (CFCN 2003).

I toured Spring House and Mountain Top House, interviewed staff and Directors, and visited the local prison at one site. Given that these homes are long-standing and provide

some of the only bespoke services to families of prisoners in the country, I found the information I collected to be extremely valuable.

Children's Drawings

As proposed in the original research design, I asked each child participant to draw me a picture of their family. I brought crayons or coloured pencils to every child interview (which I gave the child to keep) and asked them to draw on a blank piece of paper I brought. If it seemed that there would be confusion or distraction, I wrote 'family portrait' at the top of the page. The goal with these drawings was to access knowledge and views that children might not be able to articulate (Green & Hill 2005; Bagnoli 2009).

However, these drawings did not yield much useful information. In almost all of the drawings, the child draws stick figures, in a line, to represent the various family members. Oddly, the incarcerated parent is included in all but one of these drawings, and not placed apart from the rest of the family nor inside a prison (or prison-like object) in any drawing. Given that the drawing occurred at the conclusion of our interview, such that the children would be primed to think of their incarcerated parent and their perceptions of the conditions of his incarceration, this was a surprise.

It was also surprising because the drawings from children of prisoners that reviewed from other sources (e.g. those used to illustrate the website of Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE)) often depicted the incarcerated parent as apart, separate or inside the prison in some of the drawings. I suggest that a methodological reason: I made a very simple request ("drawing of your family" or "family portrait"), and explicitly did not provide any clarification or direction with regard to depicting the parent in prison (such as "draw your dad in prison" or "include your father and where he lives in prison"). When children asked me for clarification (e.g. "who should be in it?" "should I draw my dad?"), I always responses by saying "whatever you like." I do not know what type of question elicited the drawings on the COPE site, however I can speculate that they were less neutral or banal than mine, as the drawings are so different. This said, two drawings in the present study

had elements of interest (beyond their banality). First, Amy (whose story opened the present thesis) intentionally omitted him from the drawing, and second, one child depicted his incarcerated father in the orange jumpsuit worn by prisoners in Ontario.

Ethical considerations

The matter of conducting this research as ethically as possible was a primary concern in the design of this research, and throughout my fieldwork. Conducting research with children itself always demands an extremely high standard of ethical practice and accountability, however other factors raised the stakes as well. The subject matter raised concerns that children would become distressed or anxious, and while I was confident that my experience and training as a social worker with at-risk children would allow me to conduct interviews safely, this was no guarantee.

Further, the families I was meeting were more likely to be vulnerable to the potentially coercive or 'violent' (Spivak 1988) effects of being a research subject for a variety of reasons, including the poverty, illiteracy, and social isolation they are more likely to experience. Liamputtong (2007) argues that oppressed and marginalised people may not have or feel they have power to stop an interview if they become distressed or harmed by it. She questions whether conducting research with vulnerable people can ever be truly ethical, but concludes that to refrain from researching the lives of vulnerable people is to contribute to their voicelessness (2007). I suggest that mistrusting my respondents' capacity to consent because of the ways that they are marginalised can be infantilising. Regardless, having identified these concerns, it became clear that ethical considerations would need to be more than a static step at the beginning of the project, and rather a dynamic, iterative and challenging process that continued through every step of the project (Back 2007). My project was approved by the LSE Research Ethics Committee in fall 2011.

Recruitment

In all of my recruitment strategies, I relied on a default refusal approach, meaning that I only ever provided information about my study and asked that they contact me if interested; the default response (that is, if they did nothing) was refusal. The ethical concern here was that booking appointments with them at the time of our meeting or calling them (if I had received phone numbers from an agency, for example) may have created a potentially coercive setting in which it was easier or more socially desirable to agree to participate. Though this is perhaps an unnecessarily high standard, and impractical for most types of research, it appeared important to match the high level of vulnerability or risk that I had identified.

A possible exception is the family I met through snowball sampling, namely a referral from another participant mother. This referring mother mentioned that she knew another family which might be interested, and called them at the end of our meeting. During this conversation, she told the second mother about my study and asked if I could call her. The second mother agreed and I did so, setting up a meeting. It is certainly questionable whether the high standard of 'passive refusal' was met in this case; the second mother may have been implicitly pressured by the referring participant and by me. I found no way to mitigate this concern aside from being particularly careful in my assessment and consent process with this second mother. I had no sense that this second participant was at all anxious or cautious about participating, upon meeting her (though I note my strong self-interest in finding this to be the case).

Consent and Assent

Seeking informed and freely given consent was also understood as a complex issue, much more so than 'getting the subject to sign the form,' and vulnerable to coercive effects. I approached this issue by first developing a consent and assent process that seemed as thorough and accessible as possible. The forms were written in plain and child appropriate language, I checked in to ensure that all was understood and sought, through my words, tone and body language, to make refusal an accessible and socially-acceptable choice.

Given the low literacy and educational attainment rates of prisoners, I was primed to be concerned about literacy being a barrier to informed consent for participant families. For all of the child participants, I read the assent form aloud even if they reported being able to read it. For caregivers, I made offers to read the document aloud and sought to make this an accessible and non-stigmatizing choice; I said "some moms prefer me to read this out and some like to read it themselves, what do you prefer?." In two cases, caregivers asked me to read the form aloud, one noting, unasked, that she could read, but not well enough to read this form.

I had no caregiver refuse or withdraw consent, which is no surprise given that all contacted me to participate in the study, however three children initially refused to assent, which I took to be an indication of my having made refusal a meaningful option. With children, I completed my reading of the assent form by noting the two options (agreement or refusal) they could circle, saying "this one says 'I do want to participate' and this one says 'I don't want to participate', you can circle one of them and both of the answers are okay." Two children circled 'I don't', one saying cautiously, as he drew, "this one's okay, right?" I responded to both by thanking them for letting me know their opinion. However, with one child, it later became clear that he had misunderstood the purpose of the study. I later learned that this 7 year old believed that I would be asking him about something that he had gotten in trouble for by his dad. After he saw his older sister being interviewed, he and his mother asked me if I could interview him after all. Though this seemed to raise ethical concerns, I responded to their request by going through the assent form with the child again. He now vigorously agreed that he wanted to participate. I checked in with his mother, who had witnessed both assent processes, and she reported that she felt fine about him being interviewed, so I carried out the interview. Another child similarly initially refused, but after I had spoken with his mother and had lunch with the family, he spontaneously approached me to indicate that he did want to be interviewed. When asked, he said that getting 'used to' me had changed his mind. I again discussed this issue with his mother and decided to go ahead with the interview.

My research design included remunerating participant caregivers and children with a token of thanks for their participation, in the form of a $10 gift card. I included remuneration as way of improving response rates (though not to elicit consent) as well as a step towards equalising the power imbalance between researcher and an often marginalized subject, and arguably the mark of more ethically sound research from a feminist perspective (Head 2009). I gave the gift card during the consent process and made it clear that they could keep it if they did not consent to be interviewed.

Later in the field work, I was able to offer another incentive which seemed to have an impact on response rates, when FEAT for Children offered to let me provide a free bus ride to participants, a value of $35. With non-FEAT users, I instead offered to purchase a meal for us all during or after our interview. The high value of this incentive certainly raised the concern that participants may consent to be interviewed though they felt unsafe, uncomfortable or otherwise unwilling, in order to receive the incentive. However, not offering this incentive as a result of this fear seemed likewise problematic; was I infantilizing caregivers by not trusting them to make their own decisions? I attempted to tread carefully, assessing any signs of discomfort and stressing that the incentive would be given even if they did not consent to be interviewed. In the end, I felt from all but one caregiver that they enjoyed being interviewed; they spoke at great length, seemed comfortable and confident by the end of our time together, and communicated no concerns about me interviewing their children.

Reflexivity: my Role as Researcher

Qualitative research demands, some argue, reference to the perspectives and positionality with which the researcher herself enters the conversation. While researchers from sociological and other disciplines have taken up the postmodern epistemological questions of reflexivity, criminology has tended to ignore this debate (Phillips and Earle 2010). While some have argued that attention to positionality amounts to navel-gazing (Carlen 1994), Bourdieu argues that attention to reflexivity reduces bias and disrupts the

omnipotence of the researcher that is assumed by realist accounts (in Wacquant, 2011). Phillips and Earle (2010) argue that attention to positionality is particularly important to research in (and, perhaps, around) the prison because of the profound marginalisation of prison subjects:

> Situating ourselves more explicitly within the co-construction of prison worlds can provide an opportunity to disrupt the dehumanizing othering that is prison's principal social accomplishment. Doing so might produce accounts that amount to more than 'a report from behind bars' of 'unfortunate others'. Situating researchers' biographies and experiences more centrally in the analysis can perhaps help expose and breach a dynamic that, however unintentionally, reproduces the 'othering' functions of prison.
> (Phillips and Earle 2010)

I therefore note that I ascribe to the critical criminology view that penal systems are a function of broader social and political structures, and prisons the "deliberate and calibrated mechanisms of punishment inflicting state-legitimated pain" (Carlen, 1994: 136) and to anti-oppressive values. I have never been incarcerated nor the family member of a prisoner, but I have spent time inside prisons and with prisoners/ex-prisoners in a professional capacity. I occupy a variety of privileged positions; I am a white, middle class, able-bodied, cisgendered, post-secondary educated person whom Canadians do not read as an immigrant (though I am), and I was not a parent at the time of my fieldwork. In these ways, I was quite different from my subjects and had a different social experience, though as Back (2007) argues, such differences combined with attention to the particular social locations of the teller and listener have the potential to add richness to data construction.

I found it difficult to anticipate the ways that the families I met with would understand me and indeed, I was generally met with quizzical but wary interest. It seemed that my identity as a "PhD student" caused the most confusion; as a 37-38 year old, I likely did not meet their expectation of someone in education and I suspect that few had any familiarity with doctoral education programs. I do not recall being asked any questions about my university, my program or research, beyond general questions about what I was doing. My identity as a white woman is likely to have strongly impacted the way my data is

constructed. The context of familial incarceration is highly racialized, and I often felt that my racial similarity or difference came into play in interviews. For example, I had one woman strike a conspiratorial pose and state that while her incarcerated husband is not racist, he does not like or associate with Black prisoners, a statement she likely would only have made to a white interviewer. In Chapter 4, a long quote from a caregiver, Naomi, around her relationship with white staff in the prison, similarly felt highly dependent on my racial identity as the interviewer, this time as different from her. I heard very little from child participants about race, and I assume that part of this was due to the children of colour having some wariness or discomfort in speaking about race and racism with a white woman. A child of colour who did raise the issue of disproportionate number of white staff explicitly prefaced her timid statement with a worry that what she was saying was racist. As a woman, even though I did not have children, I perceived that this shared identity with caregivers allowed an easier and more relaxed connection and rapport building.

I found the most glaring role I seemed to hold for respondents and potential respondents was that of someone with no personal experience of the criminal justice system, and someone with the potential to confer judgment on their lives. This arose in a variety of ways, such as the anxiety and nervousness with which some participants first met me, and the wary and less welcoming way I was initially approached on the FEAT and JHS-HW buses. Given my understanding that my researcher role had little meaning, I often situated myself by mentioning my past work at a charity which everyone I met on the buses seemed aware of and positive about. While I worked in a policy analysis role for the organisation, prisoners and their families know it as a provider of services to ex-prisoners and others have come into contact with the criminal justice system. The agency provides different services in different areas, but these often include employment services, extra-judicial measures (community-based programs that can ordered by judges as alternatives to custodial sentences), counselling, housing support, and basic resettlement services for ex-prisoners (such as obtaining new ID or a pardon). I always mentioned that I no longer worked there and that my research was not in conjunction with this agency. I suspected that this lent me a certain credibility or trustworthiness for a few reasons; it may have situated me as someone who was aware of the issues faced by prisoners; who was not

scared of or unlikely to negatively judge those who are in prison; and who understood some of the language and mechanisms of the prison system.

One of the most powerful tools I found I had was to mention that I had been inside the prison in which the parent was incarcerated (in my previous employment, I toured and otherwise visited most federal and some provincial prisons in the province). I perceived a marked response to my giving this information; I was often asked about the specifics of the prison or we shared some light conversation about the location or layout of the prison. The North American prison environment creates a strong 'us and them' dichotomy – guards (the "screws," "officers," or "police") and prisoners (the "inmates," "guys," or "cons") (Sykes 1958). While these two groups are diametrically opposed, the people outside the walls who have no connection with or knowledge of the prison are in another universe altogether. I wondered, then, if by situating myself as someone who had been inside prisons, talked to prisoners and knew something about prisons (that is, having some insider-ness), but who never worked inside or for the prison service but also had no personal experience or connection (neither a screw nor a con), I had been placed by my respondents in either a third realm (for example the realm of non-prison service supportive professionals, such as social workers and advocates on the outside) or they had aligned me with families of prisoners, in whose category I did not fit but perhaps I could rest as an interloper. Regardless, after my initial conversations in the home, or a few rides on the bus, the women often appeared to accept me as non-threatening and as a kind of marginal insider, or someone who had some level of shared understanding.

A related role that appeared to be extremely salient to the respondent mothers on the outside was that of 'judger' or 'assessor'; I understood caregivers to have a strong concern that I would negatively judge their lives, their children, their partner, their choices. I was consistently met with caregivers communicating their devotion to their children and their efforts to be good parents when we first met and I suggest that they expected me to judge their partner's incarceration to reflect poorly on their parenting.

I suspect that I was also read by most of my respondent families as having more wealth or resources, or being in a different socioeconomic class than they. While I was dressed casually, and never wore any designer clothes, jewellery or obvious signifiers of wealth, other factors may have communicated my relative wealth: I generally arrived in a car, I had time to meet them any time of day (which may have signified that I had no paying work), I am attending post-secondary education, I often offered to bring coffee or buy lunch if we were meeting in a fast food restaurant, and I brought gift cards to give to respondents.

These gaps were by no means straightforward. While riding on the Transportation service, I would occasionally have women ask me why I was not coming in to the prison when we arrived, meaning that they had read me as someone who was a service user and visiting a loved one in prison (or at least that they felt it possible that I was). Notwithstanding this ambiguousness, I approached this possible status gap in two ways. Firstly, I felt it important not to suggest to respondents that no such gap existed or otherwise communicate the message that "I'm just like you!"; this would be both false and offensive (by denying the positions of relative privilege I inhabited), and may have broken down rapport. Back (2001) notes that the language of 'empowering' respondents or using a term such as 'partners' to describe them acts to obscure the researcher's privilege. Secondly, I sought to informally build bridges over this gap by identifying shared experiences and interests that might transcend class (if indeed the respondent felt a marked class gap at all). These included the casual compliments of the respondent's home that I would make anyway to establish rapport, but more often involved food. This is a small but effective strategy I used extensively as a social worker. I took any opportunity to start casual conversation about something like food (for example, mentioning new menu items at McDonalds or whatever place we were meeting, or a snack item on the table at their home), or taste any food or drink I was offered. I found this seemed to work really well, often sparking easy conversation.

Indeed, it seemed to hold in the converse: during a few of my Transportation Service rides, I brought a take-away cup from Starbucks as this chain was on my way to the subway. While no one commented on this, I felt acutely that I had communicated something about

wealth and class with this cup, setting myself apart. Almost every passenger had McDonalds or Tim Hortons food items, but I was the only one with Starbucks (which costs a little more). From then on, I brought my tea in a travel mug.

Conclusion

Several aspects of the present study contributed to the challenges of and extensive efforts required to complete data collection. These include the sensitive topic, vulnerable participants, and structural barriers, as well as my own decisions to focus on children's voices and to set out a narrow eligibility requirements. The winding paths taken to finally secure my sample were, on reflection, quite valuable; I learned a great deal about the lives of my participants before ever conducting any interviews, simply through my efforts to reach them. The coming chapters turn to fruits of these two years of labour, examining the data collected and constructed during this time.

Chapter 4 | Poverty and other Contexts

> [Families of prisoners] are forced to relocate, downsize and make difficult sacrifices in order to keep their children connected to their fathers. In a nation as great as ours, there is no legitimate reason why anyone else should ever again be forced to make these levels of sacrifices, to stay connected, particularly those-- who make up the majority in these cases –who can least afford it. The system is inequitable, it has preyed on our most vulnerable for too long, families are being further torn apart, and the cycle of poverty is being perpetuated.
>
> [US FCC Commissioner; Clyburn 2015]

Introduction

Following this review of the existing literature on children of prisoners and description of the methodology used in the present study, I turn now to the study's findings and the first attempts to answer the research question. This chapter begins the description and analysis of the study's empirical findings by exploring the contexts of these children's lives. I seek here to discuss the ways in which children of prisoners' lives and experiences are different and similar to other children. In the 'story' of my participants' experience of parental incarceration, this section forms the backdrop.

Primarily, I found poverty to be tightly entwined in the experience of having a parent in prison among my participants. This chapter argues that prison policies exacerbate the poverty faced by children of prisoners, that poverty forms one of the ways in which children are drawn under carceral control, and that poverty is a crucial context to understanding the experiences of Canadian children of prisoners. Next, this chapter explores the racialized, gendered and intersectional contexts of the lives of families of prisoners, arguing that the experiences of children of prisoners is further entwined in the marginalizations they disproportionately experience and the ways in which prison systems represent and perpetuate these oppressions. Notwithstanding, while this chapter shows the ways in which children of prisoners' lives are different

from those of other children, it is a mistake, I argue, to assume that they are a homogenous group or that they will necessarily face negative outcomes as a result of this experience.

It is important to state at the outset that while this study is grounded in a conceptual framework of the sociology of childhood, centring children's meaning-making and privileging their own voices, this chapter in fact relies less on their own voices as data. Children are likely to have less explicit knowledge or responsibility related to structural issues (for example, not having responsibility for family finances and correspondingly less awareness of poverty and their own relative poverty), and further they may have little access to or understanding of the ways in which prison policies affect their family. As a result, the backdrop presented in this chapter includes less of their voices and views, but sets the stage to hear more from them in the coming chapters.

Families of Prisoners and Poverty

Regardless of which transportation program I was volunteering for, the particular group of visitors, or the institution we were heading to, the routine was always the same: when we finally got close to the prison, the riders started their preparations – children's hair combed and smoothed, a request to stop for a final smoke, sweatshirts removed to reveal carefully chosen outfits, hand sanitiser fished out of purses to wipe hands and jewellery in an effort to prevent a 'hit' on the ion scanner[14]. Purses, phones and keys would be left in the van or lockers, and in hand for the visit: two kinds of identification and up to $25 for the vending machine, only in quarters and one dollar coins, in a clear plastic sandwich bag, only. Everyone always had the full $25, even families on welfare for whom this must have represented a sizeable portion of their weekly budget. Even the mother and child who stayed in the van while everyone else went in for coffee and doughnuts at the service centre, the mother emerging only to ask another rider for a cigarette. One day, I drove one family straight to their home

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[14] A machine used to screen visitors to federal prisons in Canada for nanogram particles of drugs (see http:// www.csc-scc.gc.ca/005/008/092/rr11-01-eng.pdf) similar to machines used in airports to detect explosives

after the visit - an extra few minutes past the drop-off point. The mum told me they usually walked the 3 kilometres home to save on bus fare.

The criminal justice system has long been known to disproportionately capture poor people. Since the pioneering study by Pauline Morris (1965) of prisoners and their wives found that financial stressors were wives' primary concern, the increasing academic interest in prisoners' families continues to reveal the economic, as well as emotional, costs of having a loved one inside (Arditti et al 2003; Comfort 2009). This literature is largely American, though Hannam (2011) had similar findings in Canadian data.

Families of prisoners have higher rates of poverty and of a variety of social risks that are associated with poverty, such as having a parent with addictions, mental health concerns (Phillips et al 2004), living in large families and having an unemployed parent (Phillips 2006). The risk of having a parent in prison is significantly higher for children of people who did not complete high school (Wildeman 2009). Disentangling the nature of the relationships between parental incarceration, poverty and other types of disadvantage, and the risks of negative outcomes for children of prisoners has been the goal of much of the quantitative research about children of prisoners, as discussed in the literature review (Murray et al 2015; Murray et al 2009). Regardless of the ways that poverty may be caused by or contribute to parental incarceration, it is clear that children of prisoners are more likely to experience poverty, financial insecurity and other social risks. The impact of poverty on children's lives is difficult to overstate; childhood poverty is associated with a range of long-term negative health, academic, behavioural and later earnings outcomes (Duncan et al. 2012).

Existing poverty

As shown in Figure 3.8, all of the twelve participant families lived in poverty or on a low income. Ten had household incomes consisting of general welfare, disability benefits or student loans, while three had employment income. The families with employment income all appeared to live below the poverty line, based on their

statements and qualification for various means-tested programs such as subsidised housing. Two families (incidentally, one of them with employment income) were markedly under-housed, with more than two people per bedroom in the home: a mother and two children together living temporarily in one bedroom of a family member's home; and a family living in a one bedroom flat with mother and toddler sleeping in the bedroom and a teen and an adult sleeping on couches in the living space.

Other indicators of the depth of poverty these families experienced and the ways it dominated the lives of my child participants arose continuously in my field work. During one home visit, the mother deemed the $5 entrance fee per family to an end-of-term school fun fair to be prohibitive. Accompanying another family to a local program, I learned that they did not have sufficient money for bus tickets. Another caregiver explained that she had acquired her furniture through a rent-to-own company (a high-interest system similar to 'payday lenders'). Predatory private lending was an issue that appeared to be facing at least two families. In one, the mother had borrowed many thousands of dollars from a private lender to pay bills (and, according to the teen daughter, pay for supplies to assist her incarcerated father in his imminent release to a halfway house). In another, the mother had sent money to someone she met on the internet on the understanding it would secure her a private loan, only to find that money lost in a scam. I suggest that all of the above reflect not only poverty, but a broader context of deep financial insecurity, a focus on short-term needs, and outright desperation faced by those living in the deepest levels of poverty in a high income country. While not generalisable to all families of prisoners, particularly given that my study participants were primarily recruited through a transportation service more likely to be used by people who did not own a car, this pervasive level of poverty is consistent with extant empirical data. That said, as some families may find the relatively low ($35CDN) cost of the transportation service and other costs of visiting to be prohibitive, my recruitment approach may also have prevented access to families living at even lower levels of poverty.

Some argue that the rates of poverty seen in families of prisoners is no accident or side effect, that poverty is itself criminalised (Balfour 2006). Wacquant (2012a; 2012b), for example, contends that late 20th century neoliberal welfare and economic reforms had as a component the 'penalisation of poverty' which in turn led to America's dramatic mass incarceration. He argues that in America "the criminalisation of poverty and the confinement of dispossessed categories serve as surrogate social policy towards the poor."

Costs of familial incarceration

While visiting with family appears to be universally positive for prisoners in terms of positive outcomes, the impact on families of maintaining contact with a prisoner is more complex, in part because this involves a variety of financial costs. There are a variety of direct and indirect ways that familial incarceration can itself contribute to the poverty of these already struggling families; incarceration does 'economic harm' to prisoners' families (Arditti et al 2003). Clear (2007) writes, "The capacity of these families to develop and strengthen their social capital is subverted. The combined effects of financial, emotional, and temporal investments into maintaining prison ties depletes the economic base of the family and refocuses attention that might be devoted to other aims."

Most directly, for many children the incarceration of a parent meant the sudden loss of one or the only family income. Some children were aware of this. For example, when asked what had changed in her life since her father's incarceration, Darcy reported:

> Usually in the summer time we'd go to like indoor pools and Canada's Wonderland [a theme park] […] 'Cause usually he would, like, pay for us to go but, like, my mom, she has to spend, like, on the rent money and the food and stuff. So she doesn't really have a lot of money to go to places.
>
> [Darcy, 10]

McDermott and King (1992: 54) noted the disorientation, strain and uncertainty that families experienced upon arrest and detention, "There are bills to be paid, people to notify, jobs to be held down, children to deal with, a hundred things to sort out." One study of caregivers of children with a parent in prison found a significant decline in employment after the family member's incarceration and two thirds of participants reported being much or somewhat financially worse off (Arditti et al 2003). Of the half of the participants of that study who reported being on public assistance, 72% reported that they began receiving benefits since the family member went to prison, with authors pointing to loss of income and child support, as well as the costs of supporting and visiting inmates (ibid.). This is no surprise; single motherhood is strongly associated with child poverty (Ananat and Michaels 2008).

Children of prisoners face a variety of proximal risk factors such as the stressful family environments caused by the financial strain associated with familial incarceration (Dallaire and Wilson 2010). The present study corroborates these findings; the incarceration of the parent had meant a loss of income from employment, disability or welfare benefits for most families and they felt they were worse off financially as a result. One caregiver, Casey, described the stress she faced: "[If partner was out] well I just don't think I'd have to worry about simple things, like paying rent, you know, paying the bills and just little simple stuff, I wouldn't have to worry about that stuff." Similarly, when asked what had changed since her husband's imprisonment, Patricia reported:

> Oh my God it's super hard because it's just me. I'm lucky enough to have my mom and my dad. Because without them, like, being able to go to work-- I was on assistance for a while and that helped me out, but it was still hard and it wasn't enough, you know.

> *And it was a change in your income? Was [partner] contributing?*

> Oh yeah, when he was out, I didn't have to work. He didn't want me to work so, it was like, you're home with [son] and you know. So I didn't have to worry about that and then it affected everybody because he was paying mortgage with my parents as well, so after he went in, 2 years after, we lost our home so [...] It made a huge difference not having him around.

[Caregiver Patricia]

Patricia and Lucas, who now live in a rented flat with his maternal grandparents, show the ways in which the loss of the incarcerated parent's income can cause a cascade of dramatic changes in a child's life, including changing home and school, particularly as this loss is often sudden and unexpected. I found some children to be acutely aware of this lost income, such as Darcy, quoted above, who understood that her father's incarceration meant that he was not contributing financially to her care and that there was less money for activities as a result.

I initially wondered whether parental incarceration might act to *relieve* financial stress for some families due to a parent's addiction and chaotic criminality being curtailed by their incarceration. However, no caregiver or child identified this despite two caregivers noting the alleviation of emotional stress and insecurity when her partner was incarcerated during a period of significant drug use.

In addition to lost income, parental incarceration can contribute to poverty through the many costs involved in staying connected to a prisoner. While there are no direct charges to families of prisoners in Canada (for example, there are no direct costs of visiting a prison and no cash deposit is required of sureties (Deshman and Myers 2014)), participants in the present study demonstrated how expensive it is to maintain a relationship with a prisoner. Like other researchers, I found that "staying connected to a prisoner is a time, resource, and labor intensive process, which may create barriers to prisoners' maintenance of family ties." (Christian 2005). The issue of costs of staying connected was raised in Canada as early as the groundbreaking 1991 *Creating Choices* report on women prisoners; one prisoner reported: "We have to pay for calls home or else call collect. My family can't afford it." and another that "We need a chance to earn the trust of our children. Distance and money are big barriers to achieving that." (Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women 1990).

Phone calls

One of the most common sources of financial stress reported by caregivers was the cost of phone calls. Telephone contact with a remand prisoner in Ontario involves accepting collect calls which are expensive and involve no market choice. Calls to a non-local number currently cost $4.25CDN[15] ($3.13US or £2.26GBP) to per-call connection charge and a 0.40 per minute rate (Telus 2016), set by the service provider contracted by the detention centre. They also require the person receiving the call to have a phone that receives collect call billing (which excludes most mobile phones and pay-as-you-go services which are easier to access by people without favourable or any credit history). A visitor quoted in a newspaper profile of a remand prison explains: "If he calls from here to Brantford and we talk for the full 20 minutes, it works out to be approximately $10.45 a call. So that's $70 a week at least, plus tax and everything else ...$170 every two weeks ... so that's $340 a month just on the phone" (Hayes 2014). In contrast, the US Federal Communications Commission recently ordered the rate caps on inmates calls shown in Figure 4.1, having determined these charges to be reasonable, fair and allowing a reasonable return for service providers.

Figure 4.1: FCC Call Charge Caps (US dollars per minute)

Institution: type and size of population	Debit, Credit or Prepaid call (inter or intra-state)	Collect call (by 02.2016/ by 01.2017/ by 01.2018)
Remand < 349	0.22	0.49/ 0.36 / 0.22
Remand 350-999	0.16	0.49 / 0.33 / 0.16
Remand 1000+	0.14	0.49 / 0.32 / 0.14
Sentenced	0.11	0.14 / 0.13 / 0.11

[Adapted from Federal Register 2015]

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[15] Dollar amounts that follow represent Canadian dollars unless otherwise noted.

These rate caps hold for local and long distance calling anywhere in the US and per-call or per-connection fees are prohibited. Thus, a 15 minute call will cost a sentenced prisoner $1.65US ($2.25CDN or £1.19) (FCC 2015). Before this change, calls rates had been inconsistent and high, a Commissioner called inmate phone services a "predatory, failed market regime," saying: "None of us would consider ever paying $500 a month for a voice-only service where calls are dropped for seemingly no reason, where fees and commissions could be as high at 60% per call and, if we are not careful, where a four-minute call could cost us a whopping $54." (Clyburn 2015).

If a Canadian prisoner is sentenced and transferred to a federal prison, they become able to pay for direct dial calls though a card-based system at more ordinary long-distance rates using their commissary accounts, however money must be added to the commissary account (through work wages, pension or family members sending money in) and can then be loaded once per month onto the phone cards, leading to discrepancies if money runs out or prisoners are moved. One caregiver explained:

> Well see they have phone cards, right, they have to put the money on phone cards but when the money runs out, you have to start paying the bills again. I'm still paying off a bill, $1,900 and something, that's what my bill is at right now.
> *Oh no. And that's all collect calls?*
> Yeah. Luckily for me they're [phone company] not being pushy with it, but yeah.
> [Caregiver Sarah]

I quickly gained research saturation by repeatedly hearing the following story from parents in the community: she initially spends hundreds of dollars monthly accepting collect calls from the prison. The financial cost or debt becomes untenable and she stops accepting all his calls and scrambling for a better solution. After speaking to others or searching the internet, she eventually learns about the local call re-routing, a service provided by a number of varyingly-reputable companies which charge a monthly flat fee to provide the prisoner with dedicated local phone number, which is then routed to the receiver's phone. After trying out different options, she finds a working solution. These lower cost phone services are a constant source of discussion on online 'prison wives' forums such as PrisonTalk and the amounts of

money at stake explains the interest. For example, when asked about the financial cost of having a partner inside, Naomi reported:

> At first it was phone bills. At first it was, you know, going from different phone companies to (company name). Because at the time, the first year I would say it was collect calls. But after that, I'm with a (company name) so it doesn't bother me and I have a home phone that is with (company name) so I'm paying $33 dollars a month […] And that's unlimited and my number is in an area code where he is. […] I was paying a lot of money and that got me saying hell no. I'm not gonna do that. But phone calls is definitely the biggest thing.

[Caregiver Naomi]

The range of monthly costs the women had for calls, even with a perfected local-number calling system in place, varied widely from the $33 Naomi reported above, to monthly costs between of $150 or more. One PrisonTalk user explained to peers:

> My boyfriend is also at Maplehurst. I got [company name] It cost $25 to register, $3.00 a month to keep the number, $1.50 to connect the call, and 12.5 cents per minute. So far it's been good for me. When I called Maplehurst they told me the only way prisoners can make phone calls is collect.. [PrisonTalk 2011]

> At these rates and with a modest amount of calling, this woman would pay $123 per month assuming one daily 20 minutes calls or $50 assuming twice weekly 30 minute calls, not including the $25 initial set up fee. The women in my study, however, spoke much more frequently with their partners; almost all reported taking one or more calls daily, which would mean paying well over $100 per month in phone calls.

To place these costs in context, in 2014 a single person with no dependents received $656 per month in social assistance benefits in Ontario, and a single parent with one child under 18 received assistance and child benefit totalling $1,050 (Daily Bread 2014). Spending $100 a month on phone calls to stay connected with a prisoner partner or parent is therefore extremely expensive, though a significant improvement on the amount initially paid for collect calls. That the provincial prison services does not provide an affordable calling system for disproportionately poor families of

prisoners suggests that the state identifies family contact as something they must allow or facilitate, but not something that they must or should support financially. This would appear at odds with the statement that the service has an objective "To encourage inmates to maintain and develop family and community ties through written correspondence and telephone communication" (CD 085) .

The FCC in the US made the link between prison phone calls and child poverty explicitly in the decision to place limits on the cost of calls from prison, saying it was "finally acting on behalf of the 2.7 million children who have been suffering unfairly and most often in silence… so that families can make a simple call, hear the voice and express the love for a parent over the phone, without sinking further into an economic morass" (Clyburn 2015).

Figure 4.2: Pay phone for use by prisoners in a CSC prison (CSC 2016)

Visiting

The second area where caregivers reported spending significant amounts of money was visiting their family member in prison, for which the primary cost was often the transport to the prison. Due both to the size of the province of Ontario, the large expanses of rural areas and the concentration of many federal prisons in one city (Kingston, Ontario), Ontarians sentenced to custody are virtually all incarcerated far from home. While many people held on remand are incarcerated in jails in large or medium-sized cities, several of the largest Ontario remand settings, as well as prisons in the north of the province, are located in rural areas. With the very limited network

of public transportation systems available in the province's rural areas, visitors who cannot access or drive a car must often pay for public transport to the nearest major city then take a taxi to the institution itself.

For example, the closest that a visitor to Warkworth federal penitentiary (the largest prison in the province) from Toronto can get to the institution by transit is taking a train to Coburg Ontario, which costs approximately $55 round trip.[16] The station is over 50km from the institution (a 45-55 minute drive) and a taxi from to the penitentiary cost around $70 each way. Similarly, a trip to Joyceville institution outside of Kingston involves a $35-$102[17] trip by transit and two $30 taxi rides. In total, a quite average visit to the institution costs a single person between $100-200 (£50-£100) in transport alone. These high costs are not unique to Canada. One fifth of visitors to Scottish prisons were found to pay £30 or more in travel costs, and over one third had to use more than two forms of transportation to reach the prison (Families Outside 2003*),* and studies of prisoner's families in different countries have document the lengths that poor families go to in terms of time, cost and complex transport journeys to get to the prison (McDermott and King 1992; Arditti et al 2003; Comfort 2009)

Two charitable organisations in Ontario offer transportation services to prisons (the two agencies I volunteered with during my fieldwork), which crucially ferry passengers straight to the prison itself and cost only $35-40 for the whole round trip (children riding free). John Howard Society of Hamilton offers rides from Hamilton to federal men's prisons every second Saturday, and FEAT for Children offers Saturday and Sunday trips from Toronto to federal men's prisons. There are a variety of issues that might pose barriers to using these services, however: they depart early

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[16] Figure is based on my searching for the least expensive fares on Via Rail's website for a roundtrip, Toronto to Cobourg, arriving before 9am and departing after 6pm, on the next Saturday ($58) and the Saturday in 6 weeks ($54). There is no coach service to Cobourg or nearby Belleville, aside from a Greyhound bus which arrives in Belleville after 6pm, so is not useful for visitors.

[17] Figure based on the same search as in previous note, with Via Rail (rates of $102 and $92) and Megabus ($94 and $35)

in the morning from a few pick-up points in the city and one service requires riders to pay for the service in advance.

Information about these services, and indeed about visiting prisons in general is very difficult to attain by partners new to the Canadian prison system; the federal and Ontario provincial correctional systems themselves offering no information about transport (such as driving directions, transit options or transportation programs) on their websites and it appears families spend the first weeks of the prisoner's stay in each new institution scrambling to understand when and how they can visit. A booklet produced independently by the charity John Howard Society of Ontario which provides practical information about visiting federal and provincial prisons is one of the most downloaded documents from their website (JHSO 2016)[18]. Three parents in the present study moved their families to the city in which the prison was located in order to be closer to the prison making visiting easier and cheaper.

Visiting partners and parents in prison has a variety of additional costs, including income lost from taking the day off and food and drink purchased during long periods of transport, and from vending machines during the visit itself. Private family visits, universally enjoyed and eagerly anticipated by everyone in the present study, posed a particular expense. One caregiver, Katie, explained:

> So, it's just, some days it's really, really hard for financials, but when it comes closer to a trailer, trailer visits [PFVs], you at least have to have the minimum of $100 for groceries.
>
> *So if you have trailers, you're sending in money to supplement for his canteen? So he can buy food for—*
>
> Yes. The guys will go and they have a list of food for the groceries and they will go through it. Our groceries for the week-- for a 72 hour visit, will be an amount that I would pay for a week or two. It's like, the last one we had, I think we paid $150, close to $160 for three days. For a family of 4. […] But you know, a CO, a CSC officer will go and they will do the grocery shopping for them. So it's like a hit and miss if they have a good sale, then fine. If they don't have a good

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[18] The first edition of this booklet was researched and written by myself and a student during my employment at this agency.

sale, everything is like, it could be a little bit more. And it all depends on where they go grocery shopping too.

Household funds and sustaining prisoner parents

Given the poverty faced by the families in the present study, the extensive costs faced by families who maintain connections with prisoners described above demand an examination of the ways in which children's well-being is affected by these costs. Asking children themselves about parental incarceration raised few comments about money or poverty, however a few appeared to be aware of the high costs of staying connected with a parent in prison. For example, when I asked Phoebe if there was anything she thought the prison should change, she suggested:

> Change the prices on the food... Because everything is almost like $3.50, they should change about, to like $2.00.
> *Okay. How does it affect families?*
> With their money? Because they need money for groceries… and bills.
> [Phoebe, 10]

I then asked Phoebe if there was anything else she would change, about anything in the world, she said "nothing", but hesitated and then said she wished "Bills could be more cheaper." That paying the family's bills is Phoebe's only idea for her wishes in life suggests that financial issues are a major stressor and one that impacts her. Caregivers, on the other hand, spoke at length about the impact on family finances of staying connected to the prisoner.

The financial impact on children of having a parent in prison would seem to depend on whether their caregivers are choosing to spend money on maintaining contact or sending money in. Indeed, most caregivers reported that they only sent money to their child's incarcerated parent if they had money left over after meeting their monthly needs. Casey reported: "Yeah, it's when I have extra, when I have every bill that needs to be done." However two caregivers admitted that the money they had spent on their incarcerated partner had come out of funds that would otherwise be spent on their children. Another reported that she had faced a dilemma in the past;

when asked whether she sent money to her partner inside, she reported:

> If I have-- I used to do it a lot, and then we just ran, well, myself I ran
> into you know, family problems, and I just wasn't making it. So he just
> finally said "ok, you know like we'll cut it out, because obviously
> something's not going right". Your bills get higher, all of those get
> higher.
> [Caregiver Katie]

However, the idea of 'choosing' to send money in to the prisoner and spending money on contact may be flawed. Extant research on prisoners' families has noted that families on the outside are under pressure to send money and eligible articles in to the prisoner, and willing to sacrifice their own needs to ensure that prisoners do not go without (Condry 2007). McDermott and King (1992) found that low inmate wages necessitated that families sacrificed to "keep" their relative in prison through relatively substantial financial contributions (1992: 64). The feeling that they needed to send money was strong, and constructed by many as a necessary sacrifice and a crucial component of 'supporting' their partner. That said, it is far too simplistic to view partners of prisoners who send scarce funds in to prisoners as manipulated, without agency, poor parents and in need of the state's protection. As Comfort (2009) notes, women may derive a variety of emotional and even practical benefits from retaining their relationships with incarcerated partners; presumably these benefits could extend to their children.

The money and items sent in to prisoners allows them to purchase items such as toiletries (as many find the standard issue items inadequate), snacks and magazines, and the only other ways they can build up 'canteen' money is through their very low wages or pension. Families may also send in an 'admission package' (known as a 'pen pack' or 'kit'), a package of very specific, listed items (such as a TV and video game system with no usb port or memory) that CSC allows prisoners to receive during their first 30 days (also discussed by Comfort 2009). Caregivers such as Sarah described these costs not as a choice but something she 'had to' contribute:

> Yeah I did his kit. And while he was in there, I wasn't able to send a lot but I sent what I could to help with, like, phone, you know, things for him for canteen, so forth and so on, now when he got out I had to help get his apartment, I had to help get clothes, I had to help get food, I had to help to get furniture like, almost his entire apartment has been furnished by me.

Christian (2005) in her study of prison visitors, argues that families may see themselves as the prisoner's protector in an unaccountable and deficient system; prisoners are seen as *needing* their visits and money, for their safety and to sustain them in light of the substandard care they perceive him to be receiving from the institution. "The need to monitor the prison system and provide support for the offender may foster a sense of devotion that overrides other demands in the family's life" (2005: 43). In this vein, Kim, who was no longer in a romantic relationship with her child's father, nonetheless sent him money at times out of her student support package to assist in maintaining him inside, based on an assumption that he could not support himself inside:

> I do send money to help with, like, the phone costs and stuff 'cause they-- He gets a phone card so I help with that sometimes. Usually, 'cause now I'm in school I get grants and stuff like that, and bursaries so it's easier to-- And then--Yeah but most of the time he has a job. I don't think it pays a lot.

Not only were these costs described as essential for the prisoner, caregivers also represented them as a duty of family members. Two women reported frustration, for example, at their partner's biological family for not supporting him sufficiently.

> Families need to step in more because if it was their boyfriend, they'd be sending them a whole lot more money. It's like they slack off their family because they consider it-- it's ok, it's family you can do that. But you shouldn't. You should support way more than what these families, how they're supporting.
> [Caregiver Naomi]

Thus, if financially supporting the prisoner is seen as necessary to maintaining contact, vital to the prisoner's well-being, and a family duty, the cost is not simply an optional extra. A New York Times editorial (2015) described this false choice, in response to the FCC inmate phone rate capping decision,"Families that have been forced to choose between buying household essentials and sharing a phone call with a loved one behind bars have long pleaded with the federal government to end price-gouging by the companies that provide phone service for jail and prison inmates."

If the money sent to prisoners is not optional, and the families sending this money are disproportionately living in poverty, then the argument can be made, as many do, that the state is effecting the perpetuation of poverty and a mechanism of social inequality and stratification (Clear 2007; Wacquant 2015); Wakefield and Wildeman (2013) argue that parental imprisonment itself exacerbates social inequality.

Other researchers go further, describing the money sent by families as a tax and profit stream, with the state "seizing resources from low-income families to help the state's own coffers, including the institutions of the carceral state itself" (Katzenstein and Waller (2015: 638). Some argue that corporate actors with a profit-making interest in prisons and their functioning have become embedded in the policy process of the 'prison industrial complex' (Davis 2011) while others disagree, identifying correctional industries simply as downstream opportunists of the ideological, political shift towards a punitive penal state (Wacquant 2012b). Regardless, the poverty that familial incarceration is contributing to or perpetuating necessarily includes child poverty. As such, the experience of having a parent in prison includes the context of an increased likelihood that children will live in poverty.

Given the harms that growing up in poverty places on children, any goals that the State has in improving the well-being of its children or improving rates of child poverty are at odds with the financial burdens it places on prisoners' families. As in the US and UK, supporting children and families is a major political focus in Canada, both federally and provincially (Canada 2015a; Canada 2015b; Ontario 2015c),

however they remain 'invisible' in Canadian social policy (discussed at length in Chapter 9). Arditti et al (2003) argue that because of the financial harms to children and families that result from having a partner or parent in prison, the US increase in punitive criminal justice systems that over rely on incarceration (e.g. using incarceration for nonviolent offenders) constitute "poor family policy" and query a relationship between incarceration and child poverty rates.

Gender, Race and Intersections

In addition to poverty, an obvious backdrop to children's experience of parental incarceration is the deeply gendered and racialized context of families' connection with the prison system. Aboriginal people and people of colour are disproportionately represented in all aspects of the criminal justice system including prison populations, and the vast majority of prisoners are men (Juristat 2015). Scholars have shown the lines between late modern criminal justice systems and the mass incarcerate to explicitly racially violent systems of the past, including lynching and slavery in the US (Alexander 2012; Garland 2010).

Once again, child participants rarely spoke of structural issues of race and gender, however these issues did arise in caregiver interviews, and existing research suggest that these are racialized boundaries and power are defining aspects of carceral control (Player and Genders 1989). One exception is this longer quote from ten year old Darcy which illustrates her understanding that race plays a role in her mother's treatment by and reaction to the prison where her dad lives, and that the disproportionate number of white guards has an impact on the prison environment. Darcy, who is mixed Black and Aboriginal, struggles to put her thoughts into words and indeed raised this issue very tentatively when I asked what she thought life was like in prison for her dad, prefacing this statement with a worry that it was 'racist.'

> It's okay for white people to, for lots of white people to be there… and yeah.
>
> *And what do you think it's like for Black people to be there?*
>
> Uhm… It's… it's good too.

Yeah? So tell me what's, when you were telling me that most of the people were white there, tell me what that means to you, what does that mean?

Hmm. I think it means if like, I though that mostly like white people would like the job… Or something like that.

And why is that?

… Uhm…. I don't know

Yeah. And don't worry, there's no right or wrong here, you can say anything you want. So how do you think it would be different if there was more Black people or Native people who worked there?… You think it would be different?

Yeah… Because mostly my mom she gets mad at the white people there because they, like, because—Before, uhm my dad's mom, he, she uhm called them to have a visit and then after my mom was with her, but she never told them that she was coming so they went, we went, and then after, they're like 'oh you didn't call and so you can't come in' and stuff and after we just went there for nothing…

Jeez. Do you think it would've been different if there had been less white people and more Black and Native people working there?

'Cause then we can like…. like…. Uhm.. it'd be better because… uhm… because.... Uhm 'cause then like my mom wouldn't have to get mad because like they're the same thing… and yeah.

[…]

Yeah that's the main thing? It would be better if there was more people like you and your mom?

Yeah.

Darcy perceives that the carceral space is organised around race, to some extent, that those with power in the institution are white, and that this causes the negative experiences she and her mother have had with staff. Caregiver Naomi, who is Black, recognised the deeply racialized nature of the prison, but presents herself as gaining respect from white staff and transcending their racism:

However white men love me, white women love me and they, they are always respectful to me, because they can tell I'm a woman of power. I stand for what I stand for, this is my man. I understand why he's in jail, but I'm still not gonna take no shit from nobody. I walk there with my head high, with my children. I respect them, they respect me. You

> know, you give respect where it's due. I don't demand respect it's, it's given because I deserve it…. To be honest with you, black COs they treat me same too, right. I don't get picked on by any of them like, doesn't matter. But other Black women, I have my friends, first they tell me when they go there they keep getting turned away because they're saying they're dressed too inappropriately or because of this or that. But it never has happened to me before. Then again I dress very casual and I don't wear miniskirts to see him there. But I wait for our PFVs to wear nothing, right? [laughs].
> [Caregiver Naomi]

Naomi constructs herself as able to achieve security in situations that others find precarious and insecure, and presents - for me during our interview, and for the prison staff during visits - a display of self-confidence, power and self-worth. Her quote is reminiscent of idea of the 'cool pose,' a term to describe a performance of Black masculinity (in the US), characterised by a focus on pride, strength and control, and employed to respond to racist humiliation (Majors and Billson 1992; Phillips 2012). Naomi's quote also illustrates the profoundly sexualised way in which prisoners' partners are constructed by the prison. Prisons have strict rules around visitors' clothing, many aspects of which are focused on preventing women from dressing in a manner that is determined to be inappropriate, specifically sexually provocative . For example, skirts must be a certain length, and straps on tank tops (singlets) must be a certain width and not 'spaghetti straps'. Visitors are also required to engage in only a short hug and kiss at the beginning and end of the visit and not to touch (though practice appears to vary slightly by institution and security level). These rules, and the "fetishized attention to attire" (Robson 2013: 74) suggest a construction of female visitors as highly sexualised, provocative and promiscuous, and in need of civilising, and it also constructs male prisoners as hypersexual and unable to resist being incited by women's bodies. These constructions map identically on to what scholars have argued is a construction of Black men as hyper sexual and Black women as excessively sexually available. Steeby (2008) notes that historically in the US South, white prisoners were not allowed conjugal visits while Black female sex workers were 'trucked in' to the prison to service Black men, as their sexuality was seen as being stronger and in need of control. While not all visitors are Black women, the

ways in which their bodies are regulated in the liminal carceral space of the visiting area suggests that this power is focused on the intersectional convergence of race and gender. The way that girl and boy children experience this, both during visits and in the lead up period when their mothers are scrambling to find sufficiently modest clothing, can only be normatively instructive about the meanings of gender and race. That said, no child raised any points around dress code or sexuality or intimacy in the visiting room, aside from several noting their great relief and joy at being able to hug their parent once he was transferred to his 'home' sentenced prison.

Gender is an obvious defining characteristic of the prison and the visiting room. The vast majority of prisoners are male (Juristat 2015) and the vast majority of prisoners' children are cared for by their mother or a female relative (Glaze and Maruschak 2008), and thus children of prisoners are likely to live in single-female-headed housholds. The job of maintaining the prisoner from outside, smoothing over some of the pains of imprisonment through funds, phone calls and visits, therefore falls disproportionately on women (partners, mothers, and sisters) (Mills and Codd 2007; Condry 2007). This is no surprise; women and girls more generally have fewer opportunities within families (such as for education) and overwhelmingly more responsibility for child care and housekeeping (Nussbaum 2001). Nussbaum (2001: 247) argues that women tend to be constructed instrumentally, "as reproducers and caregivers, rather than ends in themselves"

This is supported in this context by a Canadian study of violence against women who attended PFVs with male prisoners. Toepell and Greaves (2001) found that women felt obliged and 'rushed' to start these visits as quickly as possible, that it was their prisoner partners who initiated and completed all of the application paperwork and that the prison encouraged these visits for the benefit of the prisoner. It is noted that CSC has conducted interviews and 'family violence assessments' for all potential PFV, and that they are ostensibly a source of safety for families during PFVs, however Toepell and Greaves (2001) found that it was dangerous for women to be honest with correctional staff about being afraid of their partner.

This gendered and racialized context of parental incarceration would seem likely to profoundly impact children of prisoners, particularly if they visit the prison. However, I had much difficulty accessing any opinions or experiences from children that spoke to these issues. Again, their more abstract nature and the extent to which these are largely 'adult concerns' that children do not have direct access to may have made them difficult to put words to.

Heterogeneity of Experiences

> *Advice from Ben, age 11:*
>
> Like, uhm he's going to be, like, out soon. So, like, it, like, kind of flies by

This chapter has focused to a great extent on the poverty faced by children of prisoners, despite the fact that this group of children is far from homogenous and some may experience wealth and privilege. I therefore raise the following argument with the admission that I may also be implicated: in reviewing the charity and media literature around children of prisoners, I found that many sources tended to make homogenising assumptions about the ways in which children experience parental incarceration. For example, some sources suggested that trauma is necessarily part of the experience,

> Children of incarcerated parents carry the burden of the highest volume of risk factors among any grouping of at-risk children, and are vulnerable to poor educational performance, high rates of teen pregnancy and substance abuse, higher rates of teen suicide, developmental lags, and a constellation of mental health issues due to trauma, loss, grief and the three S's: Stigma, Silence, and Shame. [Arkansas Voices 2013]

These ideas rest on a very specific representation of the child of a prisoner, one in which: prior to incarceration, the parent lived at home with the child, was a primary caregiver and provided financial support; the child witnessed the parent's arrest; the

parent was not responsible for ongoing violence towards the child or his other caregiver; the child is aware of the parent's incarceration; and the child has ongoing, positive contact with the incarcerated parent.

While this certainly may be the case for many children, the empirical literature does not support the homogeneity of this experience. Existing research suggests that around half of children of prisoners lived with this parent prior to their incarceration (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). There is evidence hinting that many children are not even aware of their parent's incarceration. For example, one study found that fully 35% of children with a mother in prison were not told this (Poehlmann 2005). This rate is likely higher for fathers in prison as their children are much less likely to have had a change of caregiver after parental incarceration (Glaze and Maruschak 2008).

Finally, some children may derive a net benefit from their parent's absence as a result of incarceration, such as children who were being harmed by the parent's domestic violence, criminal involvement, or drug use (Holt et al 2008; Turanovic et al 2012). The 'tangle' of covariates of parental incarceration (such as poverty and parental criminality) and the many relationships between these factors are part of the reason that coming to conclusions about the impact of this experience on children's well-being has been so challenging for quantitative researchers.

The findings of the present study support this literature. Some children did indeed lose a primary caregiver to incarceration, but others did not live with the parent prior to their incarceration, thus they never experienced the loss of a parent nor were they exposed to his or her criminality. Some children had seen their parent arrested but most had not; some had child welfare involvement but most did not; and some had large spheres of extended family support while others were more isolated. They were far from homogenous and not identical in their experience of parental incarceration.

Some children, particularly those who were infants or not born when their parent was incarcerated, characterised their parental incarceration as significant, sad and

unwanted, but also 'normal' for them. For example Grace, aged 7, was born several years after her father's incarceration and has visited him frequently and consistently since she was a baby. She said about having a father in prison: "it's kind of normal. It's just like my mom's divorced, and he lives in another house."

Conclusion

This chapter sought to set the stage for the focus on children's self-reported experiences in the coming empirical chapters. Children's voices are intended to be privileged in the present thesis, however situating these voices in context allows a richer analysis. Children of prisoners are far from a homogenous group, however they do share a disproportionate risk of living in poverty. Given the complex ways that poverty, as well as race and gender, appeared to be entangled in the experience of parental incarceration of my participants, and the ways that familial incarceration may exacerbate or cause poverty, this context is a crucial backdrop to understanding these children's lives.

Chapter 5 | Children's Emotions: Grief, Fear, and Anger

Advice from Tom, age 10:

That don't be sad. Yeah. And to be happy.
And to be happy? Okay, that sounds like good advice.
And to get over it.
And to get over it. What does that mean?
That the, it, it just means not to worry about it anymore.

Centring children in this research by privileging children's own voices and views can necessarily be challenging, particularly with research involving young children and with research into policy topics that may be abstract, complex and only indirectly visible to children. Indeed, many of the empirical findings and arguments that are constructed in this thesis relating to structural issues such as poverty and penal ideology are only peripherally based in children's own voices. Further efforts to privilege children's self-reported experiences will thus be continuously made throughout this thesis in a variety of minor ways, including the order in which the 'story' of the empirical findings is told. The exploration of the children's own views will begin, therefore, with children themselves in tightest focus, looking at their own emotions. Children's emotions were at the forefront of interviews and the most common response to my initial, general questions about the experience of parental incarceration was that the child felt sad. Tom's advice to peers above betrays the emotions that most of the children in this study disclosed about their parent's incarceration: loss, sadness and fear

This chapter begins with an examination of children's grief over their incarcerated parent being missing from their lives, and the ways that this grief is quite distinctive. Unlike other types of loss, and other ways in which a parent might be missing from a child's life, the ways that children miss an incarcerated parent appears to be characterised by ambiguity and lack of social supports. The next section discusses other vulnerabilities that appear to thread through the emotions of children of prisoners: their fear and anger about their parent's safety, and the secrecy and

confusion about parental incarceration that appears to exist within families. Children's modes of coping with these unwanted emotions are then reviewed, and finally, secrecy about parental incarceration is discussed.

Grief and Uncertainty

Advice from Zoe, age 6:
I would say 'Don't feel sad, my dad is in prison too.'

I began my interviews with child participants by simply asking them to tell me about having a parent in prison: what's it like? Their answers to this question were the most homogenous of the study: virtually all responded that they felt sad and missed their parent. Children's sense of loss was described in three broad ways: missing the incarcerated parent's ability to participate in their lives or share enjoyed activities; the lack of support, time spent together or other caring role was what they missed; or the simple absence of the parent itself as a source of sadness. I have termed these categories *concrete secondary loss*, *intangible secondary loss* and *primary loss,* respectively, based broadly on concepts employed in the bereavement literature (Cowan 2010, Doka 1989) as well as Arditti et al.'s (2003) conceptual framework on the losses faced by families of prisoners.

I note that these categories are not implied to be mutually exclusive, discrete nor exhaustive; rather they are intended to afford a new perspective. A more nuanced understanding of children's sense of sadness and loss related to parental incarceration, and the meaning they attribute to this loss, allows another view into the experience of parental incarceration and insight into the nature of children's relationship with their incarcerated parent. Arditti (2012) argues that understanding children's loss and trauma around parental incarceration is centrally important to understanding the negative behavioural and mental health outcomes shown in some children.

First, some children, especially younger participants, described missing their parent by focusing on the secondary results of the more instrumental or concrete losses that

were the result of the parent's absence, such as the lack of participation by the parent in their lives and the activities which they could not do together. Psychological theorising of grief describes the loss of the role that the missing person played in one's life or the things they contributed as a secondary loss (Cowan 2010) and argues that each secondary loss involves its own mourning and grief. Oliver, for example, explained his feelings about his father's incarceration as relating to his father's absence as a source of help and support in his life:

> It sucks [...] You can't always talk to him, he's not there when, to wake you up in the morning, help you with your homework or anything…
> The only way you can talk to him is through a cell phone or something when he calls.
> [Oliver, 15]

Others mourned the loss of other types of support, such as Darcy, age 10, who reported that "on celebrations they can't come and like give you presents and stuff and support you… like a tournament, a soccer tournament, they won't be there to, like, cheer you on and stuff." Many children similarly mourned their incarcerated parents' inability to engage in activities with them, such as playing, cooking and playing video games together. To them, 'missing' meant 'missing out.' Ten year old Tom reported, "Well the worst part is when he's in prison. I don't like when-- I don't like when I don't get to laugh and play with him, when he's in prison." Fourteen year old Amy, whose story opened this thesis, explored her ambivalence about missing her father; she reported feeling both that she is missing out on activities with her father, but also lays the blame for their lack of closeness not just on his incarceration but on her own agential decisions.

In a second category of missing their incarcerated parent, children described the secondary loss of the more intangible role their incarcerated parent would otherwise play in providing emotional support, care or time. Lucas identified the worst part of having his father in prison as being "That I can't spend enough time with him." He elaborated:

> Uhm... kinda get down sometimes 'cause I see other kids with their
> dads and stuff, just spending time
> *Yeah. What does 'down' mean, tell me what 'down' means?*
> Feels sad.
> [Lucas, 12]

Ten year old Phoebe echoed this, reporting that kids who have a parent in prison have "difficulties of missing their dad, of not having a dad there for you" The salient element here is the mourning of emotional support and care which is lost with her father's incarceration.

Finally, a third category of 'missing' their parent had to do with the primary matter of the parent's absence itself, apart from the outcomes of this absence for them in their lives or anything their incarcerated parent would otherwise provide them. Thirteen year old Lily explained that "Him not being there is just sad" and fifteen year old Oliver reported that the worst part about his dad being in prison was "Not getting to see him." Oliver later described his feelings about his father's incarceration as follows: "It's not the best feeling in the world. [...] He's like my, he's my hero. So not having him here really sucks"

Disenfranchised and Ambiguous Grief

> *Advice from Samantha, age 16:*

> Well, I would probably give her [hypothetical peer] just to hold it, hold
> on. Because your dad will come, hopefully come back. 'Cause if he
> doesn't then I dunno. That's how life is. Everything happens for a
> reason.

While they could easily identify the loss of their parent to incarceration as sad, children seemed to have difficulty further describing, contextualising or comparing their grief. I asked children to compare the loss of their incarcerated parent to another (hypothetical) child like them who had 'lost' a parent to divorce, military deployment or out-of-town work: did they think this was this similar or different? Children had a great deal of trouble answering this question; many felt that that there was a

difference, but appeared to struggle to identify exactly what that difference was. This may have been due to the question being too abstract or otherwise developmentally inappropriate. However it may also be related to the social invisibility of parental incarceration, and to a resulting lack of common meanings or even words for speaking about it. For example Amy, who chooses to have less contact with her long-incarcerated father, answered as follows:

> Uhm I think-- Like I get how they feel like that, but I think there is a kind of difference. Like I have a friend whose parent died, like, her dad died when she was like six or seven or something and like… And like-- But I don't really-- I think that might be worse because, like, they don't get, they don't get the option-- And I think I'm just snotty and rude and I just tell him, 'No, I'm not going to see you because, well, whatever.' So, like, I feel like that makes me feel bad because some kids don't get to see their parents just because, like, they can't because they're, like, passed away or something. And that's like, that sometimes makes me feel like I'm taking it for granted 'cause I have the option. So I guess there's kind of a difference with that. But they all, I guess we all have the same kind of feeling of, like, 'I'll never get to do that with my dad' or whatever.
> [Amy, 14]

Amy sees similarities in the experiences of children whose parents have died (they both will never get to share in certain activities with their fathers) but also guiltily negates this comparison because she does have the option to see her father in a limited way; her father is not quite as 'lost' as her friend's father who died.

The literature on grief and bereavement provide insight into this difficulty, specifically that which theorises grief experiences that are out of the ordinary. While the traditional and widely-used Kubler-Ross (1969) model of grief stages and other models of bereavement focus on grief responses to the 'normal' and permanent loss of a loved one by their death, these models may have limited application to understanding the grief of children whose parent is lost to incarceration and may return at some point in the future. There also exists a bereavement literature about atypical grief experiences, and researchers into families of prisoners such as Arditti (2012b: 200) have made theoretical connections to the concepts of *disenfranchised*,

ambiguous and *traumatic* grief. I will examine each of these concepts in turn and argue that my data supports these conceptualisations of children's grief over parental incarceration. The concluding chapter will return to these concepts and suggest that they may have utility to practitioners who work with children of prisoners and to future research.

Gerontologist Doka (1989: 3) is credited with developing the concept of disenfranchised grief, which refers to mourning that is not acknowledged or supported because the "socially recognised right, role or capacity to grieve" is denied. The loss, the griever or the relationship may lack social recognition (Turanovic et al. 2012). The death of a gay partner is frequently raised as an example of this type of grief (though perhaps this is less relevant in some environments today) as are the death of a pet, an ex-spouse, or the loss that results from dementia, miscarriage or abortion. Disenfranchised grief may be the result of (and may result in) a lack of social rituals and opportunities to publicly mourn, hostile or indifferent attitudes towards the loss or loss characterised by secrecy and shame (Arditti 2012b). For example, here Sophia notes that she copes with the loss of her father by pretending that he is on vacation. When asked to give advice to a hypothetical peer, she said,

> I'd give them… like, keep it cool and try not to think that he's gone,
> like, try not to think that he's in prison, try to think like he's on a
> vacation for a couple of years. That's what I've been thinking. That's
> what I've been saying to myself.
> [Sophia, 10]

Perhaps lacking any other model for thinking about her father's absence, and finding discomfort in thinking about him being in prison, Sophia relies on fantasy to cope. While effective for her to the extent that she wishes to share this strategy with others, it raises concerns as it is bound to be disrupted by reality and it raises the possibility that she has no other tools, space or support for coping with the loss of her father.

The concept of disenfranchised grief has been applied to children's grief, more generally, with some arguing that children's bereavement is inevitably

disenfranchised; they are the "invisible or forgotten mourners" (Cowan 2010:226).
As parents create the norms for grief responses for their children, they can cause
disenfranchisement through their beliefs about how the loss should (or should not)
impact a child. For example, Crenshaw and Lee (2011) argue that disenfranchisement
may be the result of children not being supported by their caregivers through a loss
because they are erroneously thought to be too young to understand.

Given the secrecy and stigma that surrounds parental incarceration and the marked
lack of policy attention, services or supports for children of prisoners, disenfranchised
grief seems a particularly useful concept to apply. Arditti (2012, 2005) invokes the
concept of disenfranchised grief to families of prisoners theoretically and in her 2012
book applies it empirically to her earlier study (Arditti et al. 2003: 104), reflexively
quoting her own field notes in which she (a self-described 'prison widow' at the time)
calls familial incarceration "a funeral that no one attends". Jones and Beck (2006)
apply the concept in their study of adult family members of death row inmates, as did
Hannem and Leonardi (2015) to a study that included phone interviews of adult
family and friends of Canadian prisoners. Several authors invoke the concept
theoretically to discuss the impact of parental incarceration (Hames and Pedreira
2003; Turanovic et al 2012). However the present study is one of few attempts to
empirically apply the concept of disenfranchised grief to the self-report of children of
prisoners, mainly because so little literature on children of prisoners is drawn from
research with these children themselves. A very recent PhD thesis which used the UK
data from the pan-European COPING research project is one such other source
(Manby 2015)

The related concept of 'ambiguous loss,' developed by Boss (1999), is also of use.
Situations of loss which are uncertain and incomplete, in which coping and resolution
are blocked, and in which information is scarce, are described as ambiguous. Using
examples such as a soldier who has gone missing in action or caring for a parent with
dementia, this type of loss is described as "the most distressful of all losses, leading to
symptoms that are not only painful but often missed or misdiagnosed" (Boss 1999: 6).

This type of mourning is theorised to be particularly difficult because its uncertainty renders it immobilising, prevents progress, is irrational and exhausting, and, like the concept of disenfranchised grief, is socially invalidated and unsupported by any rituals of resolution.

The uncertainty associated with the criminal justice system, particularly in the initial stages of trial when the future is particularly unclear, speak to the issue of ambiguity. One partner of an Ontario remand prisoner gave this quote to a newspaper about her experience: "It sucks everything, like everything, out of you ... it's just lonely and sad and stressful; always constantly worrying and wondering and waiting ... no guilty, no sentencing, no nothing. They haven't proven anything. And he's been in almost four years now doing dead time ..." (Hayes 2014). The term "dead time" is widely used to refer to incarceration on remand, pointing both to the stasis involved in waiting for criminal cases to make their lethargic journey to verdict or sentencing, and to the related lack of programming, work or recreational opportunities in remand settings.

This concept has also been applied to understanding the experience of children of prisoners (Arditti 2012b; Bocknek et al. 2009) and indeed, it resonates with the efforts of some children in the present study to achieve certainty. I believe the present research is the first to apply the concept empirically to qualitative findings from children themselves. For example, ten year old Darcy reported that "all the time when I talk to him on the phone or I send him letters, I always ask him when he is coming out." Oliver's father's incarceration is particularly confusing and uncertain as he has been repeatedly in and out of prison due to his drug use and related criminal activity for much of his children's lives. When asked if he thought his father's incarceration was similar to a parent leaving home to serve in the military or work far from home, Oliver reported:

> Well, I think it's different 'cause when he goes to work I know he's
> gonna come back but when, like- I don't know what's gonna happen to
> him in prison.[...] It's scary. Not knowing if I'll see him when he gets
> out or not.
> [Oliver, 15]

Oliver's thirteen year old sister answered the same question similarly, saying that it is "a lot different" having a dad in prison than working far away: "Well if your dad's at work then he will eventually come back, but if he's at prison it will be a while before he comes back." Sarah's phrasing raises the possibility that she fears her father may not eventually come back to her.

Finally, the grief experiences may be 'traumatic' if the loss was sudden or unexpected. Children who experience traumatic grief are argued to be unable to progress through the normal grieving process due to the traumatic circumstances of the loss not allowing them to access the memories of the lost person in a positive manner and thus unable to fully experience and 'integrate' the loss, allowing the grief to diminish (Crenshaw and Garbarino 2007). This is similar to the theorising of ambiguous loss being particularly difficult because the uncertainty of the loss prevents grievers from "reorganising the roles and rules of their relationship" (Boss 1999: 7). One study which involved children of prisoners being psychometrically assessed for post-traumatic symptoms found a high prevalence of these symptoms in their subjects (Bocknek et al. 2009). I heard several examples of children having strong reactions to their parent's incarceration, from their caregivers. One parent reported, for example, that her son slept poorly, wet his bed and saw a drop in his grades after his father's latest imprisonment.

On the basis of this discussion and findings, I propose that my data supports the conceptualising of parental incarceration as potentially disenfranchised, ambiguous and traumatic. As such, children of prisoners' experience of grief and loss can be difficult to manage and cope with, and I propose that this concept merits study as a possible mediating factor of the negative mental health and behavioural outcomes seen in children of prisoners (Murray et al 2009). Further, this discussion could be of use to therapeutic and other helping professionals who work with children of prisoners, allowing a more insightful, bespoke and potentially effective intervention with these children. For example, an understanding of the complexities of this type of grief could bolster encouragements of disclosure and transparency to a caregiver of a

child with a parent in prison, or inform an exercise of helping children create their own 'grief rituals.'

Fear and Anger

The secrecy around parental incarceration appears to be tightly tied to fear of uncertain or anticipated consequences to their incarcerated parent. Indeed, fear of a variety of elements was a significant theme of my interviews with children, even when children were vague or unsure about exactly what frightened them. As with descriptions of sadness and loss above, children appeared to lack the language to describe their feelings or name the target of their fearfulness. Rob reported:

> *And what about when daddy went back to prison, how did that feel?*
> Uhhh… sad.
> *Yeah? Why?*
> 'Cause… it's, it's sad…
> *What's sad about it?*
> Going, going back…
> *Yeah? Tell me why is it sad?*
> Because I don't like it.
> *Yeah? Why not?*
> Because it is scary.
> *It's scary? Tell me what's scary?*
> Uhm….
> [Rob, age 7]

As with ambiguous grief described above, several children spoke of fear related to the uncertainty around their parents' return and being afraid that he would never be released home to them. For example, in answering questions about her advice for another child whose parent was about to go for prison, Darcy noted:

> *Can you imagine what that [hypothetical peer] girl would be worried about when her dad was going into prison?*
> That she'll never see him again.
> *Okay. Is that something you ever worry about?*
> Yeah.
> *Yeah?*
> 'Cause all the time when I talk to him on the phone or I send him letters, I always ask him when is he coming out.
> [Darcy, 10]

When asked what he worried about, 12 year old Lucas responded: "That [dad] might not be, might not be able to come out." Oliver too harboured a fear that his dad would be hurt and or never be released:

> Well I think it's different cause when he goes to work I know he's
> gonna come back but when like I don't know what's gonna happen to
> him in prison.
> *Right, so not knowing?*
> Yeah not knowing what will happen
> *What does that feel like?*
> It's scary. Not knowing if I'll see him when he gets out or not
> [Oliver 15]

That children felt this uncertainty about whether and when their parent would be released is interesting given that nearly all of the incarcerated parents of my child respondents were serving defined prison sentences, however there are a variety of ambiguities in sentence length, both formal, such as parole and statutory release, and informal, such as the risk of an increased sentence due to institutional disciplinary charges. Alternately, parents may have kept details about the sentence from children in an effort to protect them.

Crewe (2011) describes uncertainty and indeterminacy of a more discretionary style of penal governance as a 'new pain of imprisonment' after Sykes (1958) original conceptualisation of the assault on prisoners' psychological well-being as a result of the deprivations and frustrations of prison life. Crewe (2011) terms this 'tightness' and conceives of this as a soft, psychological power that keeps an immobilising grip over its subjects through the unpredictable penal power of indeterminate sentences, shifting goalposts of a decentralised categorisation system, and the demands of self-governance. A sense of ambiguity appears to be felt by children, as suggested by the discussion of ambiguous grief above, in which examples were given of children finding the uncertainty of their parents' incarceration particularly troubling. Whether this is related to the penal strategy of governance through uncertainty described by

Crewe (2011) or more simply to children's relative lack of agency, information, or even cognitive skills of abstraction is unclear.

Another source of fear articulated by children concerned their parent being hurt while in prison. Abby reported,

> *What about mom? How do you think mom's doing about having a dad inside?*
> She gets sad sometimes and cries when he doesn't call. Or, and we all cry when he doesn't call because we think he's in trouble or something.
> [Abby, 11]

For example, one child relayed a rumour which I had heard before in my past prison advocacy work: this prison folklore was that the first $80 that a prisoner owns or earns when he enters a federal prison is kept by the institution to pay for his body bag (if he were to die in prison). This is certainly not an official policy; I believe it refers to the $80 minimum balance that prisoners must keep in their inmate account.[19] However the 'body bag' story appears to be a widely heard rumour, inside and outside of institutions across the country.[20] It is unclear whether the source or perpetuation of this rumour is primarily by prisoners or staff; I believe I was told this as an offhand remark by CSC correctional officer on a tour of a federal institution. Regardless, the story speaks, I suggest, to the threat of violence entwined in prison life. Violence and the threat of violence by other prisoners are an "endemic problem" in prisons throughout the world (Worrall & Morris 2012: 425) and Canadian prisons are no exception (Sapers 2013). Other sources of grave physical harm may also include disease, drugs or even prison staff.

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[19] Section 31, CSC Commissioner's Directive (CD) #860 (2014).

[20] For example, see discussions on the forum 'Prison Talk Online' by prisoners' partners about this subject: http://www.prisontalk.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-352773.html and http://www.prisontalk.com/forums/showthread.php?t=657563; a Canadian ex-prisoner mentions learning it from another prisoner here: https://www.vice.com/en_ca/read/what-its-really-like-to-spend-time-in-a-canadian-prison; and it is further mentioned in these discussions: https://uk.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20070610181119AAbiFOo and http://www.cancrime.com/2011/03/20/one-inmate-dead-two-injured-after-uprising-at-millhaven-pen/#

I found this rumour disturbing upon originally hearing it, but learning that a child of a prisoner was aware of this rumour was extremely unsettling. It is no surprise that children who become aware of this potential for violence and physical harm become fearful for their parent's safety. Oliver had heard the 'body bag' rumour:

> 'Cause if I didn't get to talk to him, how do I know if he's okay, if he's sick or what he's been doing...
> *Yeah. What are the kinds of risks that you imagine could be there? Like he could be sick, is there anything else you can imagine?*
> The other prisoners […]… Scary 'cause… if you don't know that your dad has been like hurt or something, and then you find out, like, a few days later he's, he's not alive or something. It would just suck because I heard when he went in he, like he had to pay for a body bag or something in case something happened […] So it's just scary.
> *Who told you that? I heard that story too from another kid.*
> Yeah one of my buddy's dads that went in told him and he told me. […] I got home and started talking to my mom about it. Just to find out that like apparently where he was, there was nobody like that, that would do that. So that made me feel better
> *Yeah. Yeah. Gosh that's quite something to hear*
> Yeah.
> *How did you feel like when you heard that?*
> Scared.
> [Oliver, 15]

Several other children reported fear of the other prisoners and awareness of the violence inside. In describing the prison security process, Darcy suggested,

> They should do that, because, like you never know, someone has like a knife or something, like that in their bag and after when they see that person they just… uhm…. they…
> *What might happen?*
> They can die?
> [Darcy, 10]

Josh explained that he had initially been scared about the prison being a violent place based in part on media depictions of prison:

> Then I was, like, well as long as you're not gonna be, like. 'Cause at the same time too, I was a little worried too 'cause it, it was funny, a month or two ago, before, we watched this movie about a women's

> prison and what was going on in the prison was very, like, scary. It
> was, like, violence and I was like, jesus, if you're gonna be… I'm
> scared now. I don't know what's gonna happen.
> [Josh, 17]

Another source of fear was of the criminal justice system and its staff themselves.

Several children spoke of being frightened of the prison building and the staff and two

caregivers also described their children's fearful reactions to witnessing a police raid

on their home. This latter issue of witnessing raids and arrests has been discussed as a

potential source of later post-traumatic symptoms and as an example of the types of

experiences that may form the pathways to negative outcomes in children of

prisoners. Dallaire et al (2015a) found that incarceration-specific risk factors such as

witnessing a parent's arrest predicted internalizing and externalizing outcomes in

children with a mother in prison. A Danish study found that 47% of police officers

had experienced children crying during their arrest of a parent (Scharff-Smith and

Jacobsen, 2011). Interestingly, both of the children whom I knew, from their

caregiver, had been present at home during a dramatic police raid refused to tell me

about this, saying they could not remember. One caregiver described her son's fear:

> They knew he wasn't here, they kept screaming and asking, you know,
> 'where is he?' Asking my son, 'where is [partner]?' Like a three year
> old is gonna know. You know, where [partner] was. So.
> *I'd love to hear more about that. How did [child] react when the police*
> *came in?*
> Oh, oh, wow. We woke up off our bed with bright shining lights in our
> face, loud, you know, thumping shoes, you know, sounds. Saying,
> 'don't move, put your hands up'. And then I'm thinking, 'what the,
> what the fuck, am I being robbed right now?' Do you know what I
> mean? But then I realised that it's the, it's the police. And, remind you,
> that has never happened to me in my child— ooh I never went through
> things like this […] How [son] reacted is he urinated in his underwear.
> He was, he was shocked. Uhm, you know, they were pointing the gun
> at both of us, like.
> [Caregiver Naomi]

Interestingly, although my sample of children was quite heterogenous in terms of

demographic elements, the experiences of the stability of the parent's incarceration

and the relationship with the incarcerated parent, I could see no obvious relationships between these elements and experiences of fear and grief. For example, I noticed no difference in descriptions of fear and grief in terms of gender, race or age, though older children appeared more resolved in their feelings, often describing how they had learned to best manage their emotions. I found boys to describe their fears that their parent would be harmed inside as vividly as the girls.

Secrecy at Home

An unexpected element of parental incarceration I encountered upon embarking on fieldwork was children being lied to about their parent being in prison. As I began meeting families of prisoners and orienting myself to the issues they faced, I also became aware of the pervasiveness of caregivers and incarcerated parents hiding the nature of the incarcerated parent's whereabouts, particularly during the initial period of involvement with the criminal justice system, such as trial and remand incarceration. I began to get a sense that hiding a parent's incarceration from children may in fact be the norm. One of my key informants raised this with me as well: "one of the most interesting things I've ever heard about parenting is how many parents say you're dad's out West doing construction."

The online support network for prisoners' families, 'Prison Talk Online' (discussed in Chapter 3), provided an indication. The site has a sub-forum for people raising children who have a parent in prison, and the issue of whether to tell children about their parent's incarceration was a common topic of conversation; the responses varying between those who tell children that dad is away at work or college, and those who tell them that dad is in prison or use "developmental explanations" (Poehlmann 2005a) such as that the parent is 'away on a time-out.' However, I note that the likelihood of giving honest explanations of a parent's whereabouts may be high in users of this forum. These families appear to be much more likely to have a loved one who has been incarcerated for some time; a very common theme of people's initial post to the forum is that they have felt very confused and isolated for some time, until finally finding this online space. This in turn means that they are unlike most families

with a loved one in prison; most prisoners spend short amounts of time incarcerated, and it would seem likely that the longer that a parent is in prison, the more likely they are to tell a child their true whereabouts.

Empirical data on this issue is limited; in the apparently only study, Poehlmann (2005) administered psychological tools with children with a mother in prison (N=60) their caregiver and their incarcerated mother, finding the following: 50% of caregivers gave simple and honest explanations of their mother's incarceration; 7% used developmental explanations; 20% gave distorted explanations (explaining that their mom was away at college, vacation or hospital); 15% did not tell the child where their mother was; and 8% told the child about their mother's incarceration but included developmentally-inappropriate, frightening details.

However, the focus on maternal incarceration in this study renders it less generalisable to the greater population of children of prisoners and suggests that the rate of distorted or no explanations could be much higher. Men make up over 90% of the prison population, thus paternal incarceration is much more prevalent. The vast majority (90%) of children with incarcerated fathers live with their mothers and have not faced any change in caregiver with the incarceration of their father, where children of incarcerated mothers are more likely to live with a grandparent (53%) than their father (28%) (the remainder living with another relative (26%), friends (10%)or foster care (10%)) (Mumola 2000). It would seem logical that caregivers of children who have changed caregivers due to parental incarceration are much less likely to provide a distorted or no explanation.

Most surprisingly, I encountered the secrecy that surrounds parental incarceration on the family visitation bus I rode during my fieldwork. The children on these buses were *on their way to or from a family visit in a prison* yet I was asked by parents several times, as I came around at the end of the bus ride to hand out my flyers and explain my study, to not mention anything about prison. I was also a few times told by parents that I was welcome to interview their children, as long as I did not mention

the parent being in prison (which I declined). These caregivers often reported that they told children that the place we were going to was a college, workplace or 'daddy's house.' One caregiver explained to me that when her partner was in remand (where visits are behind glass) she told their child that his father was working in an 'electricity factory' and so he had to stay behind the glass to keep them safe.

The fact that any secrecy with children existed within a group that was, seemingly incongruously, actively involved in visiting the parent in prison and engaged with a bespoke social service, which most families are not, raises the possibility that this issue may be widespread. Indeed, this group is far from average. Where everyone riding the bus was undertaking a prison visit, only 20-25% of prisoner parents more generally have monthly or more frequent visits with their children, and the majority of mothers (54%) and fathers (57%) in prison have never had a visit from their children since their admission (Mumola 2000).

A seemingly bizarre situation I encountered in my bus rides was the situation of a caregiver telling me that their child did not know that his or her parent was in prison, while it seemed quite obvious to me that the child in question was well aware that their parent was incarcerated. One such child explicitly mentioning to me that his father was in prison and I viewed many instances of such children being plainly exposed to others on the transportation service bus speaking about prison and having no response of surprise. One of these caregivers was someone I often chatted with, so I gently asked if she was sure that her son did not know; she was firm: he has no idea. Poehlmann (2005: 687) had a similar finding during her study; she writes,

> it became apparent that some children knew more about the mother's incarceration than what they were told by caregivers. For example, one child (whose caregiver said she never directly told the child anything) spontaneously whispered during the [psychometric testing]: "Don't tell anyone, but my mommy's in jail. Nobody knows but me." Another child whose caregiver said that the mother was in the hospital spontaneously remarked: "Mama's at a hospital. I think she hit her head. Maybe it the jail-hospital.

In my research interviews themselves, however, this issue was naturally minor or non-existent. My recruitment strategies made it clear to potential participants that I sought to ask children about their experiences of incarceration. It would seem a fair assumption that caregivers who do not tell their children about their incarcerated parents' whereabouts, or for whom some aspect of the parent's incarceration is a secret, would not respond to my solicitations to interview their children around this topic.

However, one example of secrecy was raised in my interviews. Samantha, 16, noted that when she and her younger siblings were brought by their mother to the prison to see their father after a long absence, her mother told Samantha and her 15 year old brother where they were going, but not the younger children. She recalled, "We, like my mom told you, we up, went to that one visit, and my mom tells me everything, and my brother as well. So we expected it, but the kids [younger siblings] didn't." Samantha's 10 year old sister described the same event, at which the family was in fact refused the visit by staff, after travelling over 350km from their home to the prison (due to not being properly registered for the visit):

> Mom kinda had to lie to us, she was like "oh we're gonna see [family friend] in his new place" and I was, "cool." And then after that, I found out, they said "Oh guys you can't go visit your dad." And we're like, "wait, we're supposed to visit our dad?"
> *Okay, so you didn't know?*
> Yeah, I didn't know. None of us did besides [15 year old brother]
> *So you didn't know it was a prison, either?*
> I didn't know, I thought it was a food tasting place.
> [Sophia, 10]

This example is atypical in that the children knew that their father was incarcerated, but were for some reason taken to the prison without knowing where they were going. However, it speaks, I suggest, to the seemingly tangle of secrecy that surrounds parental incarceration within some, perhaps many, families. Moreover, it contributes to the broader themes of ambiguity and invisibility that have begun to emerge in the present project.

Secrecy was not without salience to children. Josh described the importance he placed on his mother not lying to him about her incarceration. He had initially been told by his aunt about her hospitalisation after a flight, but not that she had been arrested and was incarcerated upon her release from hospital.

> No, 'cause at first my aunt told me my mom was in the hospital, so I was like, alright, it makes sense, because my mom, she has medical conditions as it is, so I just... 'Cause she's like sitting down on the plane from here to [overseas]. On its own, it's a long plane ride and she had back issues from previous, like, injuries and falls and stuff. So it made sense. I was like, 'sitting on a plane for so long, of course you're gonna have problems from sitting down, standing up, cramping, everything gets worse. So the hospital makes sense.' And then my mom told me, she was, was like, 'yeah I was in the hospital for the time your aunt's letting you know I was in the hospital. Just recently I actually got put into the prison.' So I was like, 'oh okay, makes sense, lovely. She didn't lie to me or anything?' I was like 'okay cool, that's all I want to know, makes sense.'
> [Josh, 17]

For Josh, the potential that his aunt (his current caregiver) had lied to him about his mother's incarceration was a concern, such a concern that it was "all I want to know." He clearly places value on knowing the truth about his mother, and having things "make sense." If one begins with the assumption that caregivers seek to optimise their child's best interest, and that decisions that appear inconsistent with this aim are due to ignorance or external barriers, this decision can be seen as not at all surprising. Parents may be concerned that a child may not be developmentally ready to receive this information (Crenshaw and Lee 2011), that it will cause distress, that it may damage their relationship with the incarcerated parent, or that a child will tell others and be ill-treated or otherwise stigmatised (by teachers, for example; discussed in the following chapter). Given the oppression and marginalisation more likely to be faced by families of prisoners, who are more likely to be Black or Aboriginal, living in poverty, and have lower educational attainment and face a variety of other marginalisations, this fear of mistreatment by figures in authority is to be expected.

I query whether the approach of caregivers to lie to children about their incarcerated parent's whereabouts is pervasive. If this secretive approach by caregivers is indeed widely prevalent, it is an issue that requires further research data and analysis. The tendency, however widespread, of lying to children about their parent's incarceration suggests that caregivers understand parental incarceration as needing to be kept secret and as knowledge that would raise risk or vulnerabilities for their children. Certainly it appears that their understanding of the meaning of parental incarceration is shaping their practices and decision making.

The decision to keep the incarcerated parent's whereabouts a secret is not a neutral choice. One key informant, a mental health professional around the prison system, suggested,

> I think [parents] are probably just uninformed of what's going on. I think they probably don't understand the context necessarily of what happened to the parent. 'Why did they go?' Especially if they think their parent has just chosen a job somewhere to go to construction or is working in a prison and you only get to see [them there]. So is the child thinking, 'did you choose a job far away rather than be with me?' [Key informant 2]

Developmental psychologist Poehlmann (2005: 692) found that children are slightly more likely to have a positive view of their incarcerated mother when they are told about her imprisonment in a way that was "simple, honest, and developmentally appropriate." Arditti (2012: 104) notes that secrecy towards children about their parent's incarceration, due to families colluding to keep secrets and not socially validating the child's experience of loss, is part of this disenfranchised grief discussed above.

Regardless of the reason for the secrecy, it raises an interesting possibility for the present research project: that this secrecy may be so pervasive that it was a cause of my profound lack of success in recruitment. My recruitment difficulties were so extreme and divergent from even commonly expected low response rates that some systemic issues must be at play. I hypothesise that these issues could include fear of

retribution or surveillance, transient and chaotic family lives of those with a partner in prison, illiteracy, lack of access to phone or internet, or simply my recruitment materials being poorly presented. However, I note that all of these issues exist in other research with vulnerable participants and sensitive topics which even then achieve some level of response. My profoundly low response rate (including less than 10 responses from hundreds of flyers distributed over a wide geographic range and through a variety of targeted means, and zero responses from a variety of social media avenues) raises the possibility that something unique to my topic could be playing a major systemic role.

Coping with negative emotions

> *Advice from Amy, age14,*

> It's gonna be fine. At some point it will be fine, you will adjust and it's all gonna be good.

The pieces of advice from child participants that open many sections of this thesis are used to highlight children's ideas about the most significant aspects of their experiences of parental incarceration. However some of this advice also represents their ideas about how children of prisoners can and do cope with parental incarceration and in particular the challenging emotions it raises. There was, again, a surprising homogeneity of responses when I asked children about coping and advice for how others might cope. Four broad themes emerged: children spoke stoically of the need to "be strong" in the face of parental incarceration; many referred to waiting for their parent as a type of stasis; children noted the value of visiting the parent in prison to coping; and many mentioned the emotional support of their primary caregiver. Twelve year old Lucas included all four of these elements, when he offered his advice to the hypothetical peer:

> Like be... Just stay strong and stuff.
> *Stay strong? […] What does it mean to be 'strong'?*
> Like, don't be sad.
> *Don't be sad. Yeah? Is that what being strong means, is not being sad?*

> ….I guess like, don't… like don't give up, and like, on hope. Like he might come out sooner
> *What do you think, do you think that you, you followed that advice about 'staying strong'? […]How did you do that?*
> … I don't know, just don't think about like I don't count like the days coming down and stuff. …Like, I don't know. Like the phone calls, the phone calls that he makes to me helps me. And stuff like that.
> *Why do you think that is?*
> 'Cause I get to hear his voice.
> *Okay, yeah, gotcha. Anything else that makes you feel hopeful or that makes you stay 'strong'?*
> Not really. Well, at least I have my mom out here.
> [Lucas, 12]

A primary theme of children's discussion of coping was a types of stoicism, with children describing the importance of being 'strong,' and equating the conquering their feelings of sadness and with a strength of character. Lucas displays this element in the quote above, as does Tom whose advice at the opening of this chapter was "Don't be sad," "get over it." and "not to worry about it anymore." Josh constructed his negative feelings as being completed or neutralised once he has coped with, and thereby overcome, them. The message is that negative feelings such as sadness are to be controlled and conquered, and are to be dealt with stoically and alone:

> *So how did you feel when you found out that she that she was in prison?*
> At first I was a little hurt and upset, but then again I coped with it in the way I know how to, and just, I didn't feel— It took me like a couple of days to like find the perfect way to cope with it. But over that I was like 'meh'. After I was done I was like 'I'm good.'
> [Josh, 17]

Boys in particular showed this coping approach and indeed, this stoicism would seem a gendered performance of "strength," infallibility, independence and emotional detachment, all conventions of hegemonic masculinity, and in the context of all of these boys living in lone-mother-headed homes and having an absent, incarcerated father (aside from Josh), may also be related to enacting a gendered role of the head of their household (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Phillips 2012).   The second

category was also gendered, with mainly girls describing their coping approach as consisting of waiting, and focusing on the parent's eventual return. For example, Grace proposed the following advice to the 'hypothetical peer'

> Just say that, just be happy
> *Just be happy? Is that your own advice for yourself when you go for a*
> *visit? Yeah?*
> And I just say to myself, 'he'll be out soon and I can talk to him."
> [Grace, 7]

Samantha, age 16, similarly suggested that a hypothetical peer keep a tight grip on the future goal of the parent's return, advising that they: "hold it, hold on. Because your dad will come, hopefully come back." Here, efforts are made to dispatch with feelings of sadness by seeking to psychologically shorten the passage of time and look to the future. This approach was primarily exhibited by girls. In a quote above, 10 year old Sophia, coped with negative feelings about her father's incarceration by pretendig that he was on vacation, and advised peers to "keep it cool and try not to think that he's gone, like, try not to think that he's in prison." Like the 'conquering' of sadness in the first category, emotions are presented an element to be contained and countered, and positive emotions are prized. Children using both of these categories encouraged peers to 'be happy' (Grace and Tom), and "don't be sad" (Tom and Darcy).

The third and fourth mechanisms for coping with negative feelings differ; instead of responding to grief by looking inward and seeking to change their own thinking, as in the above examples, children seek comfort and reassurance externally in an effort to relieve sadness about parental incarceration. The value of visits, and in particular being able to physically touch a parent, was frequently raised as a way to effectively cope. Amy giving advice to a hypothetical peer, explained:

> It's not the end of like seeing your parents 'cause there is, like, that
> opportunity to talk to them and you can stay, you can stay closely
> connected with, like, a parent or, that's in prison because you have
> opportunities, like, that now. Like, letters and phone calls and visits
> and socials and whatever else. So that it's gonna be, like, hard, of
> course it's hard. But it's… it's not gonna be the same as, like,
> everything else. But it's better than nothing.
> [Amy, 14]

Eight year old Isaac also indicated that visits mitigated the negative elements of parental incarceration. The broader experience of visits is discussed in Chapter 8, however these examples illustrate the value that children attribute to visits as an aid to coping with negative emotions associated with having an incarcerated parent. Several caregivers spoke of the relief and benefits to their children that came with the start of 'contact visits' once the incarcerated parent was sentenced and left the closed, behind-glass visits of the remand institution.

The fourth coping mechanism identified by some children consisted of using their caregiver as a support, or more generally sharing their worries and other feelings with others. Most children identified their mother (the caregiver of all but one of my participants) as their primary source of support, indicating that they talked to her if they are feeling sad and this was effective in making them feel better. I found less mention than Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) of children explicitly making the link to using friends, recreation, sports or faith-based activities as a source of coping and resilience. As discussed, their caregiver may be one of the only people in their lives who is aware that their parent is in prison.

While I found some suggestions of patterns of age and gender in the coping methods identified by children, I interestingly found no pattern related to specific experiences of parental incarceration, such as whether the child had experienced period of release with a parent, repeat periods of incarceration or the type of relationship that the parent had with the caregiver.

Conclusion

This chapter provided much evidence that the centring of child voices is a valuable methodology for examining parental incarceration. Even quite young children here provided detailed, thoughtful and evocative descriptions of their emotions and views, even around abstract and emotionally-charged topics. Their statements included disagreement and alternate views from parents and others in authority, thus supporting

the suggestion that children can provide unique information about their experiences which cannot be accessed by only asking their caregivers. Far from passive, oblivious or detached observers, they have been shown to be valuable reporters about their own lives.

Children of prisoners in this study were far from apathetic about their parent's incarceration. This chapter showed that children felt sadness and grief over the loss of their parent to the prison, including grief that is difficult to manage due to its ambiguous, disenfranchised and even traumatic in nature. Children also expressed fear about their parent's safety and well-being, which appeared to be mediated for some by the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the parent's incarceration. Anger was also expressed by some older children. The ways that children managed this range of challenging emotions was varied and appeared in some ways gendered. Girls and boys both reported that they sought to conquer or ignore their sadness and longing for their incarcerated parent, though some boys appeared to take a stoic stance while some girls sought to psychologically shorten the sentence by focusing on their ideas about the parent's eventual return. Finally, this chapter discussed the possibly prevalent approach by caregivers of children of prisoners of lying about the incarcerated parent's whereabouts. Though this issue cannot properly be examined in the present study given my methodology, it raises an intriguing issue that requires further research.

The next chapter continues to examine children's interviews, next pulling back the lens from the child's internal emotions to situating the child within the family. Children's roles within the family are explored, and in particular two situations that may occur in the context of parental incarceration: incarcerated parents becoming 'centred' in the family and children taking inappropriate levels of responsibility for family care.

Chapter 6 | Family Roles

> [My daughter] would think that her actions could change things, right? So like, if she was good then that would reflect on him, even though I'm telling her it's his behaviour she thinks that it will reflect on him and that they would let him out. So she wanted to be good and she wanted to like, she has a hard time eating vegetables, well she hates like some of them like, broccoli and stuff. But then, she would like, ok well if I eat all of my vegetables then can he come? Like you know, I'd be like "clean up your mess, look at all your toys are everywhere! And you know I'm gonna fall on them and she would be like "well if I clean them all up, and I put them all away, then can he come?"
> [Caregiver Kim]

Introduction

In the previous chapter, children spoke of grieving over parents lost to parental incarceration and longing for their return. This raises questions around the role that the incarcerated parent plays in these children's lives, the roles that children and parents play in their families, and about whether these families function differently when parents are incarcerated. This chapter discusses a finding that incarcerated parents may be centred, in various ways, in the functioning of their families. Aside from the issue of parentification, which the literature suggests is harmful to children, this discussion aims to be non-normative; I do not seek to assess 'proper' types of families, rather, to show the ways in which children's experiences of family roles and functioning may be affected by parental incarceration.

Idealising

As discussed, virtually all child participants reported that they feel sad about their parent's incarceration, that they miss him or her, and that there is nothing positive about their incarceration. As Boswell (2002) found, children in the present study overwhelmingly preferred their parent to be home and looked forward to their release. Children in the present study rarely made mention of their parent's perceived failings, or aspects of their relationship that was weak or weakened by incarceration. With few

exceptions (discussed below), I heard few examples of even minor criticism of the incarcerated parent. While it may seem an obvious finding that children idealise and miss an absent parent, the context of parental incarceration adds complexity given the strong likelihood that for some of the children in my study, the absence of their parent meant a reduction in abuse and chaos that the parent had perpetrated in or around the family.

Prisoners are naturally more likely than others to have engaged in an ongoing and escalating pattern of criminal behaviour prior to their incarceration and as such, children of prisoners who lived with this parent are more likely than their peers to have been exposed to parental criminality.[21] Parental criminal behaviour may involve a variety of chaotic and distressing experiences and witnessing a parent's interaction with the criminal justice system, such as an arrest by police, may have caused frightening experience for children. Indeed, recent research interest in witnessing a parent's arrest queries whether this is one of the mechanisms through which parental incarceration results in negative outcomes for some children. Dallaire et al (2015a) show that "incarceration–specific experiences, such as witnessing a mother's arrest, predicting both internalizing and externalizing symptoms, and their findings suggest that there may be multiple, such specific risk factors that are harmful to children.

While none of the incarcerated parents in the present study had been sentenced for child abuse convictions that I was aware of, I became aware of several families in which the incarcerated parent had been charged in the past for assaulting the child's mother (though not as the 'index offence' of their current incarceration). Witnessing domestic violence is associated with a variety of negative outcomes for children (Holt et al 2008). It is therefore likely that at least some of my child participants have faced chaos and even harm in their homes as a result of the parent now incarcerated, and that these decreased immediately and completely upon his incarceration. However, every child - save one, Samantha - even those with a more ambivalent attitude

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[21] This relationship is, however, far from straightforward. Many people who engage in criminal behaviour are never incarcerated and some prisoners were incarcerated for their first offence

towards their parent's incarceration, indicated that they preferred their parent to be home rather than in prison. When I asked what, if anything, was positive about their parent being in prison, almost all children said "nothing," though a few added that while there was nothing good about their parent in prison, they did enjoy the visits with him in prison or joked that they enjoyed the lack of supervision. Twelve year old Summer added that while she would prefer him to be out, she was glad that "he's getting help" in prison in relation to his drug use. This suggests that children idealise incarcerated parents just as other children often do, which may surprise some who would imagine that these feelings would be reduced by the chaos and harm in the home. It is consistent with the finding by Boswell (2002) that all of her child subjects stated they would prefer their father not to be incarcerated, looked forward to his return home and wished for more contact.

Both Samantha and Summer, who as noted were alone in exhibiting anything other than a strong wish for their incarcerated parents to return home, had experienced repeated periods of having a father realised from prison and re-incarcerated. This raises the question of whether the element of repeated sentences and instability in the relationship with the incarcerated parent affects family roles and relationships. This issue would particularly benefit from qualitative study with a larger sample.

The caregivers in the present study were more ambivalent than their children, suggesting that this is not simply a family narrative of idealising the incarcerated parent. As Comfort (2009) found in her study of women partners of prisoners, for some, incarceration lead to a positive reprieve from chaos and abuse wrought by their partner, as well as from worry about his well-being. Several caregivers explained to me that while they disliked aspects of their partner's incarceration, they felt it was positive overall, and positive to his parenting, as his drug use before incarceration was frightening and risky. Cecily, whose partner had been using drugs chaotically in the period before his incarceration felt that overall, "It's a good thing that he's inside." She explained, "He could be dead and I could visit him in the grave, right?" Some noted that aspects of their partner's incarceration had improved the attention he gave

them or their child, which would likely affect their child's parenting experience. Patricia described enjoying their daily phone calls and finding that they allowed them to "bond as parents". She further reported that she felt more valued by her partner:

> It's funny you'd ask that because I tell him I think we're doing a lot better now […] You know, like, he gets mad because sometimes I say, 'Boy our relationship is so much better now that you're in there, right?' And I don't know, it's because now they feel like…. They feel like, 'Well I'm here, in a cell. If I'm not good to her then I'm really gonna lose her'. So I mean, he's a little bit more understanding, he's a lot more sweet.

Kim reflected on her ex-partner's relationship with their daughter, coming to the conclusion that his parenting and relationship with his daughter has been improved by his incarceration as a result of both of the issues noted above – the reprieve from a chaotic life and an increased attention to his child. She reported that when their child was younger, "he never really played with her, he never really did anything like he bought her treats and you know, they didn't spend a lot of time together, I feel like it could've gone a different way had he not been incarcerated." She explained:

> He was going down a really negative path and he, his friends were, like, really important to him and stuff like that. And now he sees that his friends are not so important so it kind of like helps [their daughter] because he tells her like, you know 'my friends weren't always there to help me when I get in trouble, like, do you see that at school, like, when someone gets in trouble their friend is not like, there to back him up and the friend leaves.' And stuff like that. So, like you know there are some good stuff and then there's the bad stuff.

> He's grown a lot in there. So he went in when he was young so, to learn a lot more from older people. And then, like, I feel, like, he had more time 'cause like he wasn't around that often, it was mostly, like, on weekends and stuff like that 'cause I was going to day school and night school so my mom would watch her. And by the time that we get her and she goes home, it's time to go to bed and stuff like that. And then on weekends he was working so, like, now because he's incarcerated he like, spends more time talking to her, writing letters. When they have the visits like it's really uninterrupted, cause there's

no cell phones going off and stuff like that. […] So I think it's going to make them closer

However caregivers were quick to note that this admission did not mean they approved of the conditions of their partner's incarceration. As Clear (2007: 618) writes, "to recognise the frequency with which intimates detest what happens to their loved ones is not to deny that it is also common that they feel a relief when the chaos that person brought to their lives is interrupted." One key informant, a mental health professional who had been in a relationship with a man who had been intermittently incarcerated for many years, was sharply critical of the penal system but nonetheless concurred:

> [my partner] would go in and truthfully it was some relief to him being
> in because it meant that he wasn't dead on the street and life got less
> chaotic temporarily. Which was, you know, for those moments, was
> just a relief for not being dead.
> [Key informant 2]

Some older children appeared to have the capacity for more ambivalence as well, raising the possibility that the unambiguous idealising described above is related to children's young age. These youth wished their parent was home but could identify positive aspects of the experience of parental incarceration such as Amy noting that she faces less discipline because of her father's incarceration. There was a single exception to this unanimous desire for the incarcerated parent to be released and to the identification of their incarceration as being negative overall. Sixteen year old Samantha explained that her father's repeated periods of incarceration meant a reprieve from the chaos in the family's life:

> But then when he comes back, the whole thing just starts over again,
> just gonna be like... […] well like when he, when he comes back, it
> starts all over. He starts the [theft], he starts the drugs, he starts getting
> my mom into it and I'm just stuck doing the same thing, and its... just
> sick of it.
> [Samantha, 16]

Samantha played a significant caregiving role for her younger siblings, seemingly to the detriment of her academic and social lives, and sees her parents' relationship as being partly to blame for this. Her father was released from prison into a halfway house before our interview, and Samantha spoke of her frustration about her mother spending her time and resources on her father now that he could be visited more freely. Samantha expressed much anger at her mother, not for her mother's role in the criminality that caused her father's custodial sentence, but rather for her perception that her mother neglects her children, prioritising their father's demand on her money and time, and pandering to his needs. Speaking as if directly to her parents, she said:

> And it's all like, this is your guys' fault. You guys should be able to stay
> separated from each other, instead of staying away from your kids.
> This is both of your guys' fault and you guys should pay for it. Since
> 'cause he's out of the jail now, which I kind of wish he wasn't but was,
> she should be able to concentrate more on her kids, than, than my dad.

Setting aside the burden that Samantha clearly feels she bears as a result of her parents' criminality, she notes an ambivalence towards her father's release from prison:

> *So do you think overall it's been a good-- positive thing for you or a*
> *negative thing for you to have your dad be away in prison?*
> It's kind of both? Because like at one point I was like, 'yay!' and then at
> another point I'll be like, 'I miss him'? But then when he comes back,
> the whole thing just starts over again

Centring of the Incarcerated Parent

Similarly to idealising their parent, I found that many children and their families appear to privilege or centre the needs and wishes of the incarcerated parent, to some extent, in the family. In small ways, such as choosing not to share their problems with their parent during visits to avoid upsetting him, and larger ways, such as caregivers making large decisions that were more in the interest of the prisoner than the children, I felt I came across instances of this continuously throughout my fieldwork.

One aspect of this was sacrificing their own needs, for the sake of the prisoner. Three of the 12 families in my sample had moved to the Kingston area to be close to the prison that held the parent, which involved school moves and a marked lack of social support in two cases (where the third move occurred many years ago, when the children were small). The impact of moving appears to be negative for children as it is associated with failing a grade at school, and frequent moves with a range of poor educational and occupational outcomes (Wood et al. 1993; Hagan et al. 1996) . Coleman (1988) and others argue that moving disrupts children's social capital and in turn their educational and occupational achievement. It is noted that moving can also have the benefit for children of prisoners of decreasing the time they spend travelling to visit, and the cost to their family of doing so. The prioritising of the prisoner's needs can have far reaching implications for already-struggling families. Clear (2007: 621) notes **"These investments** [that families make in staying in contact with a prisoner] have opportunity costs, and the families of the incarcerated are often isolated from the community as a consequence of the way they retain ties to the person behind bars."

 I also found that some children and caregivers centred the views of the incarcerated parent, privileging wishes, concerns and feelings over their own. For example, Phoebe referred to her dad's feelings when I asked about theirs:

> *What do you think about visiting dad when you go and visit him?*
> He gets really happy.
> [Phoebe 10]

Phoebe further explained, when asked what she thought his room where he slept was like that "It's just like a gym mat, like you do gymnastics, it's not soft […] Like a thick mat. I feel sad for him. I wish I could like change beds." Phoebe does not simply wish her father to be more comfortable, she poignantly wishes to sacrifice her own bed and experience his suffering in his stead. One parent provided another vivid example of prioritising the incarcerated parent's concerns. In response to a question about any behavioural challenges she had seen in her children, Cathy described a day

in which her youngest child, aged 7, had a seizure at school and in describing her thought process, it becomes clear that one of her first, panic-inducing thought is about the impact that this event will have on her visit.

> There's one day, [son] took four seizures. His first day ever taking seizures, he took them at school and he had 4 before they even called me. I took him out of the school unconscious. They didn't even call an ambulance, they called me! So I'm like 'alright.' So I'm on the way there, and I'm panicking, because I have visits the next day. Like, I call V&C ["visiting and correspondence" unit of the prison], I'm like 'I don't know what to do, I've already talked to my husband today, I can't get hold of him, I might not be in tomorrow, like I don't know what to do.' Like, I was legitimately panicking.

A similar issue raised was the effort to not worry or bother the incarcerated parent with negative aspects of their lives in the community. The concern was that their lives were hard enough and they needed to sacrifice their own needs for problem-solving help or reassurance from the parent or partner in order that the prisoner could be as worry-free and calm as possible. This tendency is discussed by other researchers, such as Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) finding that children being keenly aware of their incarcerated parent's stressors and needs. I could identify no difference in this element of centring of the incarcerated parent in terms of the parenting history or stability of the incarceration of the incarcerated parent. Interestingly, I also saw no pattern related to whether the incarcerated parent was the biological parent of the child or whether the incarcerated parent had ever lived with the child.

Comfort (2009) also discussed the privileging of a prisoner's wishes and needs, concludes that this issue is both deeply gendered as well as an element of secondary prisonization, demanded of them by their role in the carceral environment. Indeed, the centring of the incarcerated parent cannot be discussed without attention to the deeply gendered nature of the relationships between (mostly male) prisoners and their (mostly female-headed) families. That families of prisoners become instruments of the incarcerated parent's emotional and financial needs must be placed in the broader context of the inequality of women within families. Nussbaum (2001) notes that

despite feminist successes, "instrumental and male-focused ways of valuing women are amazingly persistent" (2001: 247). In relation to this privileging of men's needs, she argues that women may still be treated in families as "not an end in herself, but as an adjunct or instrument of the needs of others, as a mere reproducer, cook, cleaner, sexual outlet, caretaker, rather than as a source of agency and worth in her own right" (2009: 243).

A deeply gendered element of this responsibilization also arose, in the framing of boys as substitute 'heads of household' in their single-mother-headed home, replacing their fathers. For example, Oliver, age 15, described the increased responsibility he faced at home due to his father's incarceration in gendered terms, noting that he was the only non-baby boy in the family: "I'm a, I was the only boy in the house pretty much, other than my little brother. [It means] Lots of responsibility." Similarly, caregiver Naomi noted the ways in which her partner encouraged this gendered responsibility in her 6 year old son:.

> For example like if [child] is doing something, you know, [father] will be like you know '[child], don't fight with your sister. You're the bigger brother, I'm not there, you're the man of the house." So makes him, you know, [child] play that role of, you know, the man, the big guy that has to take care of his mommy and his sister.
> [Caregiver Naomi]

Comfort (2009) argues that this tendency to privilege the prisoners' needs is deeply entangled in the demands of the carceral system on the quasi-inmate partners. However it may also originate in the requests, implicit or explicit, of the prisoners themselves. I propose that factors rooted in the carceral setting and the imprisoned parent's response to these form a context that is crucial to understanding the centring of incarcerated parents within families and thereby children's experience of parental incarceration, namely, the inward-looking focus by prisoners that is encouraged by the carceral system.

Firstly, being self-involved during a prison sentence has a particular penal cultural context and history. The contemporary prison is built on a history of distinctive penal reforms and goals that placed great value on self-reflection. In response to the squalid, harsh and idle conditions of 18th century English and Colonial gaols, modern liberal-democratic thinkers proposed reforms intended to improve hygiene but moreover morally rehabilitate and 'correct' prisoners through a focus on silent and solitary penitence (Smith 2009). This focus on looking inward led modern prisons to be constructed with costly individual cells and conditions that would today be labelled solitary confinement. A focus on self-reflection continues today with correctional programming demanding that prisoners be actively and enthusiastically involved in the psychological assessments and programming of the institution, even if this involvement is concocted to satisfy the institution (Crewe 2011).

McDermott and King (1992), for example, note the self-serving accounts that prisoner subjects gave of their past relationships and future plans. Cathy, again, provides an example, here describing her prisoner husband's relationship with his own family:

> His family's not there for him […] His sister has seen him once in 3
> years. And his dad has never come up. […] His mom is very sick and
> ill, so he has nothing to do with her cause he can't handle it. When he
> sees his mom really sick, it sends him backwards. So he chooses to
> keep himself better and stay away.

Secondly, the culture of prisons is often one of extreme suspicion of others and making few if any friendships. Prison researchers have universally found prisoners wary of personal relationships, keeping a mask, not engaging in feelings or closeness (Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2005) and to keep a distance from family (Schinkel 2014) as a way to manage the prison experience. Rod Earle (2014) writes of the prison experience:

> "What is there to care for in prison but the self?" is the monad question
> men's prisons insidiously pose, inviting, by implication, another
> equally existential or sociotheological question, the kind always posed,
> but rarely answered in the affirmative; "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Schnikel (2014) conceives of this as prisoners 'limiting their horizons' in order to ignore what they have lost. Sykes' (1958) depiction of the stoic prisoner 'keeping their head down' and 'doing their own time' is a persistent refrain of prisoners historically and in the contemporary period (Crewe 2009). Included in this depiction is a focus on not becoming involved in the 'drama' of other prisoners' lives but focusing on oneself to make time in prison pass more quickly and manageably, an attitude long described by prison ethnographers (Irwin and Cressey 1962). Phillips (2012) notes the gendered nature of the focus on 'doing your own time,' in the way it privileges independence, toughness and emotional 'strength.'

One key informant suggested that prisoners are too preoccupied with managing their own safety to parent. Indeed, researchers have describe the fear of violence, along with concerns over status, as creating deep insecurities in male prisoners and producing gendered posturing and violent reactions (Phillips 2012). Concentrating on children's needs in this context, this key informant argued, is impossible in the context she described as constant traumatic stress, being focused on "just their basic survival, on being terrified every day." She argued,

> Every day that they were in prison they thought that they could die. So imagine walking around with the intensity of every day thinking that this could-- that you're at risk of being killed, essentially, either by other prisoners or guards or whatever situation. So your life is at risk all the time. I think deprivation has a huge impact on the way people can relate to each other.
> [Key informant 2]

While these indigenous characteristics of men's socialization and survival in the prison may be primary determinants of prisoners' behaviour and adaptation, there is also strong evidence that prisoners behaviour and social relations depend on 'imported' characteristics linked to criminal identities, poverty, race and other social locations (Irwin and Cressey 1962; Dhami et al 2007). While outside the scope of the present project, it is noted that prisoners as a group have consistently been found to

have higher rates of narcissism and other types of personality disorder which lead to a propensity towards self-involved thinking (Davison and Janca 2012).

An additional issue may be at play, related specifically to parenting. Perhaps due to the lack of opportunity that incarcerated parents have to engage in the everyday conflicts, discipline processes and boundary battles that are part of the average parent-child relationship, as well as experiencing the natural self-centeredness of young children, prisoner parents may be less attuned to the need to prioritise their children's interests. Combining the finding that children and caregivers in the present study tended to look inward to the incarcerated parent and privilege his needs, and that prisoners may have a tendency to be inward-looking, I suggest that incarceration may have the potential to hinder the essential parenting skills that would seem in opposition: being responsive, sensitive and supportive to children's needs.

Parentification

More extreme is the concept of parentification, which involves the centering of a family's interests, goals and resources on the parent to the extent that the child takes on inappropriate emotional or instrumental parenting roles. Parentification is the dynamic of a parent overburdening a child with caregiving responsibilities that are excessive and developmentally inappropriate and "overtaxes their developmental capacity;" it is seen by the developmental psychology literature as a form of boundary dissolution (Nuttall et al 2012: 767; Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark 1973). This issue has been found by researchers to co-occur with child physical and sexual abuse, and linked to a variety of concerns in childhood, including poor social competence, difficulties with self-regulation, both internalising and externalizing problems, and psychiatric symptoms (Nuttall et al 2012). The concept has been mentioned in discussions of children of prisoners in the literature (Harris and Graham 2010; Gabel

and Johnston 1995; Codd 2013) however I found no indication that it has been the subject of empirical study with this group.[22]

In the present study, I found instances of children providing both significant instrumental and emotional caregiving to their family, though in a minority of participants and concentrated primarily on one large, struggling family. Samantha, the one child respondent who preferred her father to be in prison in the discussion above, was the oldest child living at home in this family and appeared to take on a significant caregiving role to her many younger siblings. Samantha reported that she had skipped classes extensively throughout high school and reported having completed only a few credits thus far, meaning that her likelihood of graduating was nil. She made a casual statement at one point that she had missed classes to stay home to help her mother, but the extent of the caregiving she described appeared to be a full time role. Her toddler brother had started calling her 'mom', which upset her mother. When asked to explain what parental incarceration is like, she reported,

> Well, having a dad in prison, it all depends on how many kids, and how the mom's lifestyle is. Well, since, my mom has so many kids, and, but she also has two teenagers to help, at times they would, like, teenagers like to go out, they like to do everything. If they have a boyfriend, they want to go out with her boyfriend. But at the same time, the mom needs the help, and it's very hard for when, you miss your dad and everything.
> [Samantha, 16]

Her sister Sophia, age 10, also appeared to take a strong caregiving role. She said this of what it is like to be the child of a prisoner:

> It's all bad, it's like really hard.
> *Yeah? tell me some of the hard stuff.*
> It's hard because like, uhm, like it's hard because we have to watch all the babies and [sister] she likes to drool, and I got some drool on my foot, […] It's kinda hard without dad, telling them not to do this and not to do that.

---

[22] One source, (Gabel and Johnston 1995) cited a study by Lapointe, Picker and Harris (1985) as having a finding around parentification, however upon reading this source, I suggest that this is a misreading of the Lapointe et al. study (which, additionally, does not mention the concept of parentification)

A sister in the same family focused on her mother's grief at her father's incarceration when asked about her own feelings. In response to the question *"What's it like to have a dad who is in prison?"* Lily, 13, responded, "Well a lot of crying for my mom […] Especially if you have a lot of kids." Lily further indicated taking on a marked emotional caregiving role when asked about her decision not to talk about her father's incarceration to friends. While most children described their secrecy about parental incarceration in terms of protecting themselves, Lily reported that her worry was her father's reputation: "Well, if I told everybody in the world about it they'd think that my dad's a bad person. That he deserves to be in jail." Her brother, Oliver, age 15, described his responsibilities for the family in gendered terms, noting he was now "the only boy in the house," as discussed in Chapter 4.

The caregiver in this family, Sarah, appeared to be aware of the extent of the caregiving her children were doing, explicitly describing how she relied on both her older children as emotional sources of support, particularly during a time when she felt depressed. Her descriptions of their support evoke a peer, friendship relationship:

> I'm telling you, I don't know what I would do without [Samantha] especially when I went through my dark time there. I don't know what I would've done […]

> Her and my son [are] a big support and if I was down in the dumps and fears, go outside for a second and [Oliver] and [Samantha] are smokers and they'd come out to smoke with me like you know what I mean. And my son would come up with, just the stupidest things, like seriously stupid stuff [laughing]

I did not have the sense that Sarah was fully aware of the extent of the physical caregiving that Samantha was doing, and the impact on her school attendance. However she appeared to be aware that this level of emotional caregiving could be harmful to her two older children:

> And like I hate myself for it […] But at that time I didn't have anybody. Like I had my kids but that was it, right? And I have to admit my two oldest are the best support team […]

> It's not something I would want my kids to be doing for the rest of their life. You know what I mean. So, when my kids do take me back like that, for me to sit back and look at it, it's like 'oh my god, I really have amazing kids you know what I mean. And I don't know how they do it.

Sarah linked this boundary dissolution directly to her partner's chaotic drug use and his incarceration. When I asked specifically whether she ever worried that her older two children were taking on too much responsibility, she reported,

> They end up taking-- Well actually, I did put that upon my kids way back. I did. Again, that was the enabling part of me, for my husband. I wasn't on drugs or anything but because I was, because of how much I loved him and I was so hell bound and determined to bring him back to the family, you know what I mean? I would hunt for him all day all night, find him, fight with him you know what I mean? And wait for him to do whatever it was he had to do and, and resolve that he didn't come home, but "could you come back at this time to get me?" And then I would, and then it just kinda was a cycle like that for almost a year. And so [Samantha] was getting up with the kids in the morning and so forth and so on and that's when I was telling you about how I stepped back and looked and went ok this is not, this is not right. And then it happened again now, when I had kinda like fell right into a depression. Like I sat there going 'oh my god I can't do this no more.'

Parentification appears to present a real risk of harm to children. For example Nuttall et al (2012) found that mothers who reported parentification experiences in their own childhood, were more likely to have poorer knowledge of infant development and less warm responses to their children at 18 months, which in turn is associated with externalizing behaviours and other 'poor socioemotional outcomes. As appears obvious in the above case study of Sarah's family, Samantha's responsibility for the care of her siblings has had a negative impact on her academic potential and social life. On the basis that parentification can be harmful to children and that it may be an element of the dynamic of some child and incarcerated parent relationships, I propose that it would benefit from study in relation to the experiences and outcomes of children of prisoners. In that the pathway from parental incarceration to poor internalising and externalising outcomes is the subject of interest for researchers (Murray et al. 2009), parentification may yield an interesting variable for exploration.

Mitigation

This discussion of parentification is not intended to imply that this is an average element of the lives of children of prisoners. In contrast, several children gave accounts of their parent reassuring them and seeking to reduce their responsibilisation and boundary dissolution. For example, teenager Josh reported that when his mother was first incarcerated he was frightened for her safety, particularly after having seen a movie about a violent prison, but she effectively allayed his fears:

> My mom goes, like, 'no need to worry 'cause it's nothing like what
> you see in the movie or anything like this, it's so much nicer and
> everything here. 'Cause the prison there is like one of the nicest
> prisons in the world apparently?
> [Josh, 17]

In fact, Josh's mother was at the time incarcerated on remand in a UK women's prison and, I understood, had spent time in solitary confinement; it is very unlikely that this was 'nice' in any sense. However, one can assume that she gave her son this reassuring explanation to reduce his fears about her well-being, preventing him from taking on an emotional caregiving role.

Several parents also spoke of their efforts to reduce the tendency they saw in their children to centre or worry about the incarcerated parent. For example, the parent above whose child promised to eat vegetables raised this issue in the context of having concern about the impact of parental incarceration on her daughter and her efforts to counteract this effect. Caregiver Patricia noted the explicit effort that she and her husband make to de-centre his needs:

> So don't ask me for money. So if i do have the extra money, I do but
> he's working so whatever money he does have, he'll put it towards the
> card to keep in touch with us. So… He didn't call home for almost
> three weeks. And there's times where Damien will talk to him and he's
> super busy playing games or talking to somebody or something and
> he's just like "Hi dad, I'm busy, Bye dad".

Conclusion

This chapter has explored children's experiences of parental incarceration in the context of their family life. Using children's accounts, combined with their caregivers' descriptions of the prisoner's role in the family, I have argued that prisoner parents may have a tendency to become centred and privileged in their family structure and functioning. I described children idealising their prisoner parents and having that parent's interests be centred in family decisions. In an extreme example of children's interests being marginalised within the family, children from one family appeared to be parentified, taking on problematic caregiving roles. However, efforts by other parents to de-responsibilize and protect children were more common. These issues were discussed in the context of the gendered nature of privileging the need of mostly-male prisoners, and the inward-looking culture of the prison. After having discussed children's emotional responses to parental incarceration and then their experience of family life in this context, the following chapter pulls the focus back yet again to explore children's experiences of their community.

Chapter 7　|　Children in their Community: Secrecy and Stigma

Introduction

The previous chapters explored children's experiences of parental incarceration in terms of their opinions, emotions and then in their relationship with their immediate family. The present chapter situates the child in the context of the other structures with which she has direct contact: her neighbourhood, peer group and school.

Examining the child in the context of these structures is crucial to understanding their experience. "Children exist within social systems and can only be understood when placed in context of the structures and relationships with which they interact and are affected" (Arditti's 2013: 9-11). Indeed it was frequently children themselves who raised with me this layer of their lives. When asked about the experience of parental incarceration, children in my study most often spoke first about their own feelings of loss and then about the ways in which parental incarceration intersected with other meso-level aspects of their life: their anger at watching a prison guard search their mom before a visit; worries about a peer finding out where their dad is; stress over how to respond when a teacher brings up Father's Day activities. In the ways that parental incarceration is distinct from other types of parent loss, then, it appeared that this experience primarily occurs in, and in the interactions with, the places they occupy outside the home, such as school and neighbourhood. Here, issues of risk, secrecy, and passing as normal were negotiated. One child began to cry only when telling me his concerns about how others might view his incarcerated father; this issue is clearly emotionally significant and troubles, confuses and saddens him greatly.

This chapter will explore an issue identified by almost all of my child participants, namely their secrecy about parental incarceration with almost all of the people in their lives outside their home. Secrecy will then be discussed in the context of the concept of stigma, the concept that people become 'marked' as deviant when associated with a negative attribute.

Children keeping secrets

Chapter 5 included a discussion about the secrets kept within families about parental incarceration, arguing that these secrets may be perceived to meet short term goals for caregivers, but they can be harmful to children. While secrecy from children could only be explored through caregiver's responses and secondary data, secrets kept *by* children about parental incarceration can be explored through data from the present study. This strict secrecy in which children kept their parent's incarceration was a surprise to me. Indeed, keeping secrets from peers, school teachers and others in the community emerged as one of the primary themes of my interviews with children. Though I expected children to keep this information close and share it carefully, when I asked children who they tell about their parent's incarceration, they overwhelmingly reported that they disclose to almost no one outside the home, including keeping this a secret from most friends. Even children whose parent had been repeatedly incarcerated and released, which would seem likely to create an instability that would be very difficult to keep secret from peers and community, regarded this as an important secret. None treated this information lightly, and many expressed serious concern about others finding out.

It appeared that keeping parental incarceration a secret was the default, defensive stance of every child, though some assessed situations and chose to disclose. Here Darcy indicates that while she is not able or willing to articulate why parental incarceration is a secret, she very firmly understands that it is:

> *Do you tell anyone, any of your friends that dad is in prison?*
> No.
> *Is it a secret?*
> Hmm... I'm not sure 'cause my mom just said 'don't tell people.'
> *Gotcha. What do you think about that?*
> I think that it's right 'cause like … I'm not sure. I just think it's right.
> [Darcy, 10]

Thus, while I had anticipated exploring the ways in which relationships with systems such as schools and their staff moderate or mediate the experience of parental

incarceration, it quickly became apparent that this would be difficult. Questions about the impact of supportive or negative interactions with individual teachers, or the experience of schools or individual teachers who were knowledgeable about or provided bespoke support to children of prisoners were difficult to explore, as was reflecting on previous research that has explored the impact of teachers and school on children of prisoners' outcomes (Stanton 1980, Dallaire et al 2010, Trice and Brewster 2004). The *absence,* in large part, of relationships with school and other community systems, in terms of the experience of parental incarceration, was instead a defining finding. This said, the almost unanimous secrecy reported by my participants with regard to their teachers can provide insight to researchers who explore whether the negative impact of parental incarceration on educational outcomes is affected or even mediated in part by factors in the schools themselves (such as stigmatising reactions by teachers, training for staff about parental incarceration).

For example, Dallaire et al (2010) found that teachers perceived maternal incarceration to have a stronger negative impact on children. They then conducted an experiment in which teachers assessed a fictional student, and found that teachers describe a student whose mother is away in prison as less competent than a student whose mother is away for other reasons. While these authors were careful about the inferences they drew from their findings, other authors have used these findings to suggest that teachers' responses may be a contributing factor to maternal incarceration being found to be more harmful than paternal incarceration (Hagan and Foster 2012). If many, or even most children of prisoners and their caregivers do not disclose this to teachers, then teacher attitudes or behaviours cannot significantly contribute to the poor academic outcomes found in this group of children. It is possible that teachers may be aware of parental incarceration unbeknownst to the child, however I note my experience of repeatedly finding that the many professionals and charities I contacted in the course of the present study reported that they had never thought of the issue of parental incarceration.

Understanding Children's Secrecy

Children gave different responses when asked why they do not tell others about their parent's incarceration, though broad themes of fear and struggle over whether to trust others with this information ran throughout these responses. The responses formed three broad categories. First, I encountered a fear of anticipated or experienced negative repercussions. This type includes concerns about being ridiculed or hurt by those who know. I have termed this category: 'Bad things'. Secondly, I found children seeking to avoid the discomfort that this information might produce in them by the listener's reaction. For example, some children spoke of their worry that the listener would pity them or ask unwanted questions, if told. I have termed this category 'uncomfortable reactions.' Thirdly, I found a desire to keep this information private, as a goal in itself, regardless of any impact it may have. I included here concerns that the information would spread beyond the entrusted listener as a rumour. I have termed this 'family business', a phrase that several children used. One child reported that he kept his father's incarceration a secret, but was unable or unwilling to articulate why this was[23] and in two interviews, I did not ask the question[24].

Bad Things

In the first category, the negative repercussions that children in this category of responses mainly spoke of were fears that they would be ridiculed or their relationships harmed if they told others of their parent's incarceration. For example, Sophia reported that she does not disclose:

> 'Cause I thought that like they'd make fun of me about it.
> *Yeah? Have you ever had someone make fun of you because of it?*
> … [shakes head 'no']

---

[23] This child, age 8, was quite reticent in responding to several of my questions and ended the interview soon after this point, saying that 'I don't feel like talking anymore.'

[24] One of these was my first interview, at which time I had not yet realised the salience of secrecy by children. The second was a difficult interview in which I had challenges keeping the child oriented to my questions, and in the course of this I appear to have omitted the question.

[…]

What did you think they might say or do?

I thought, like, that they would like go like "Ha ha, your dad's in prison and ours aren't, we have a dad and you don't."

Okay. Goodness, how would that have made you feel, do you think?

Really sad.

[Sophia, 10]

In a more literal version of concern over harmful repercussions, two younger children reported a concern over being picked on and physically hurt by peers because their fathers are in prison. Rob expressed a belief that people might beat up kids whose parents are in prison:

So let's say you have someone in your class and their daddy, they just found out their daddy is going to go to jail

And I would say, uhm 'my dad is at jail too! Probably your daddy will meet my daddy!'

Oh okay! And what else would you tell them?

I would say it's okay that your daddy's going to jail!

Yeah? And what about if they felt worried, what would you say?

Uhm I will make you feel better.

Yeah? How would you make them feel better?

I, I start by trying to … if people don't like people's daddies at jail, uhm… I would say 'hey stop beating them up!'

Yeah? Do people, do kids, do people beat, get beat up because their daddy's in jail? … [child shaking head?] No?

I get beat up for no reason.

[Rob, 7][25]

Phoebe reported that she is picked on because her father is in prison, and doesn't tell others for fear of being picked on, which she reported happens daily regardless:

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[25] After this disclosure of experiencing violence, during which his mother was in the room, I sought to ensure that Rob was safe from harm. Rob and I spoke about whom he had told about being beat up (he had told his teacher at the time of this incident, which he reported finding helpful) and whom he felt comfortable talking to more generally when he was having strong feelings (he identified his mother, his teachers, friends and police officers).

> Every day. Like "you don't have a dad that's in jail! [sic] You don't have an actual dad!" […] It's… I can't explain it, but it's really hard because all my friends do is just they pick on me and pick on me just because I have a dad that's in jail. Then one of my good friends stick up for me when [they] called me a back stabber.
>
> [Phoebe, 10]

I perceived both of these retellings to have a veneer of fantasy and unlikelihood. However the issue of interest here, given the privileging of children's own voice and meaning-making, is not the veracity of these stories, but rather why these children told their story this way. I suggest the possibility that describing concrete events like being physically 'beat up' could be cognitively or emotionally easier than speaking to an interviewer about emotional pain. For both Rob and Phoebe, having a parent in prison was something that marked them as a target for harm by their peers. It may also be that they are targeted by peers for mistreatment in their school, and given their higher likelihood of poverty and a host of marginalisation and social risks, their risk of being bullied may also be higher.

This concern over negative repercussions was shared by virtually all of the caregivers I interviewed. Caregivers reported concerns that their children would be discriminated against, particularly by teachers, would be picked on or targeted by peers, or would more generally be associated with criminality. However this was in sharp contrast to children's responses. While many children spoke of concern over being ridiculed or picked on, not a single child expressed concern that others would judge them as criminal, badly behaved or otherwise 'bad' as a result of finding out about their parental incarceration. Further, the negative reactions that children did experience were exclusively from peers; not a single child mentioned concerns about a teacher or other person in authority treating them badly as a result. This inconsistency raises an intriguing example of the divergence between children's self-reported experiences and caregivers' perceptions, and again highlights the importance of interviewing children themselves and not relying on caregiver's reports. From a positivist perspective, the inconsistency may simply be a symptom of children being cognitively less adept at

imagining potential future repercussions, at assessing the likely emotional reactions or behaviours of others, or at identifying more systemic and abstract issues (e.g. stigma against criminalised people). However, from a perspective which privileges children's own meaning-making, this inconsistency instead raises questions of how or why children may understand this situation differently.

Uncomfortable reactions

In the second category, children reported that they worried about the reactions that people might have to their disclosure of parental incarceration. For example, Sarah (whose father was recently released to a halfway house) expressed concern that if people found out about her incarcerated father, they would pry and ask more questions, which would make her uncomfortable. She reported:

> I know not to tell people that have parents who like to like snoop around in people's life.
>
> *Okay, and why would you not tell them? What do you think might happen?*
>
> Because then they'd always tell their children to ask me a whole bunch of questions. It wouldn't be right, because it would be kind of creepy. Sitting there and people are all like "So where's your dad now?"
>
> *Gosh, how does that make you feel?*
>
> I'd be all like "eeeeh I'm not talking."
>
> [Sarah, 11]

The reactions that children sought to avoid were not necessarily typically negative, and included seemingly well-intentioned responses. Josh, for example, preferred people not to know about his mother's incarceration because he disliked the pitying reactions that people might have. He explained:

> 'Cause someone will always come to you and be like 'yo it's horrible, I'm so sorry, it's like I can't imagine what would happen if my mom went to prison' Don't, it's like, people like that bug me
>
> *Yeah? What bugs you about them?*

> Cause they always try and like, they don't understand 'cause like they, they're probably the ones, like 'I live in the house with both my parents, we're nice, we're family, we live together.' [To which I respond] 'Yeah? good job, you have 3 brothers and you have a sister too, good job and you're all together happy family and you get your car in three months and you're cool'. Me? uhm no. My dad lives on his own, I lived with my mom, I lived back and forth between my mom and my dad. […] I wanna live with both of my parents, they can't live together either cause they argue a lot, but what am I gonna do? You know it's not just, it's okay. So they're kinda like- So for me to look at, it's like 'You really wanna try and act like you could be sympathetic to me? Towards me, 'cause you don't know what is going on? [sarcastically] Good job bro, you can try that' 'Cause it's just honestly, that's why they bug me. Like they're the ones that really want to try and push towards feeling something that they haven't felt in their life.
> [Josh, 17]

Fourteen year old Amy similarly reported in the introductory chapter that she disliked being pitied for having a parent in prison, saying "And I don't like that, when people [say] 'oh I'm sorry.' I don't care if you're sorry for me, it's fine […] I'm not a big fan of [pity] No, like it's, it's been like a whole life thing."

Family business

In the third category, several children noted a concern about people finding out about their father's incarceration due to the breach of privacy itself, regardless of any emotional or concrete impact. The harm here appears to be solely the thought process of the potential 'listener,' regardless of what that person might do or say as a result. Darcy explained that if peers found out about her incarcerated father:

> I would feel kind of mad because I don't like want people to know my family's business.[…] Because like if it's, if you tell people your business and they go tell somebody else, and then after it will be like going all around...
> [Darcy, 10]

Teen Oliver similarly explained:

> Like everybody that I know knows pretty much. But like only my, I
> only tell like certain things to my best friend. […]…Because I can trust
> him, not to tell anybody
>
> *Okay, okay. What would happen if somebody did tell somebody, like*
> *what's the concern? For you?*
>
> It wasn't their business to know.
>
> [Oliver, 15]

Later in the interview, Oliver notes that his teachers know that his father is in prison, but he has negative feelings about them knowing his 'business,' saying: "It's weird 'cause I don't... I don't know them but they know about a bunch of things going in in my life." Data from other sources, such as the online bulletin board discussed, appears to support this finding that parental incarceration is largely kept secret from the community. The caregivers in my study expressed much concern that their children would be stereotyped as delinquent or less competent, or overtly discriminated against, if others learned of their parent's incarceration.Threads on PrisonTalk Online discussing relationship with children's school echo this finding; users widely report that they do not tell teachers about the other parent's incarceration

The Impact of Secrecy

These reasons for children's secrecy around parental incarceration are, I suggest, a contribution to knowledge about parental incarceration. These findings shine a light on the ways that children think and feel about having a parent in prison, which may be useful for developing hypotheses around pathways to resilience or pathology. This seemingly pervasive secrecy can have direct and indirect negative effects for children. First, secrecy prohibits community caregivers from the opportunity to provide useful support. If children's improved care is a goal, then having teachers, doctors and other key caregiving figures in their lives be aware of their parental incarceration will provide them with insights into, and opportunities for responsive care to meet the child's emotional and behavioural needs. For example, knowing that a child is

missing school because they are attending a prison visit allows a teacher to be prepared for a returning child who might be emotional and distracted, as well as tired and hungry. Further, every community caregiver who knows about a child's parental incarceration is a potential member of an extended network of support. Effective social support networks have been shown to have an array of benefits to children's outcomes and well-being (Hagen and Myers 2003). "Connecting children's microsystems via increased communication between caring teachers and concerned caregivers could help improve children's outcomes, as children may have access to more caring individuals who are committed to helping them deal with their parent's incarceration." (Dallaire et al 2010: 289)

Secondly, secrecy about parental incarceration effectively renders children invisible to the communities with which they interact, and may contribute to the notable lack of policy attention to the topic of parental incarceration. Finally, keeping secrets can be isolating, disconnecting children of prisoners from their communities by limiting the ways in which they can connect to, participate in and be known to their communities. Harter et al (2005: 322) argue of their similarly secretive subjects, youth without homes: "when the hidden homeless remain invisible, their life experience too often are sequestered, opportunities for emancipation too often diminished, and potentialities too often suppressed rather than actualized." Thus while efforts to pass as normal may be a tactic to meet short term goals relieving risk and discomfort, the invisibility of children of prisoners from their communities may exclude them, and have profoundly negative effects on their social capital.

However there is a counter perspective, supported by intriguing data, that secrecy around parental incarceration is protective for children. Hagen and Myers (2003) administered a series of psychometric tools with a large sample of children of female prisoners and found that for children with low levels of social support, those who did not keep maternal incarceration a secret had higher internalising and externalising problem scores. That is, those children with few people to talk to but who spoke

freely about their mother being in prison had the worst outcomes. They note that keeping secrets is a normal, pervasive and positive developmental step for children, and further that parents requiring that their children keep this potentially stigmatising information secret may be wise and protective (ibid).

Secrecy as stigma management

> *Advice from Isaac, age 8:*
>
> No [I wouldn't give advice], 'cause I don't really talk about my daddy in school

One explanation for this last finding is that secrecy about parental incarceration is an effective stigma management tool and that stigma is damaging to children's outcomes. As discussed previously, Goffman's (1963) classic conception of stigma has been criticised as overly focused on individual interactions and ignoring power and structure, therefore Link and Phelan's (2001) formulation of stigma as both an interpersonal and structural process of exercising power, occurring at the convergence of labelling, stereotyping, and separation ('othering') is employed. Stigma is defined here as rooted in structural oppression and based in group membership. Phillips and Gates (2011) note that, strictly, children of prisoners are not themselves directly stigmatised, but rather experience stigmatisation as a result of their proximity to incarcerated people, who themselves hold the stigma attribute of prison and criminality. Goffman termed this 'courtesy stigma' (1963).

Stigma has been widely applied by researchers to aid in understanding familial incarceration, with some arguing that social stigma may be one of the mediators of negative outcomes in children of prisoners (Hannem 2010; Phillips and Gates 2011; Hagen and Foster 2015; Arditti 2015). Several caregivers identified a concern that their child's teacher would learn of the parental incarceration and pose a threat to the child if s/he stereotype their child as badly behaved, or otherwise stigmatise or discriminate against their child. No child reported experiencing a negative reaction by a teacher, though at least one caregiver had moved a child to a different classroom

after she felt that he had been discriminated against by his teacher, as a result of the teacher learning of father's incarceration. However this child did not understand the episode this way; he reported that he had been asked to leave the school after they found out that his father was in jail (seemingly having been misled by his mother) but did not report any perception of mistreatment by his teachers.

However, this fear may be well-founded. Dallaire et al.'s (2010) research, discussed above, found that teachers assessed a fictional student as less competent if her mother was absent due to incarceration (particularly for female students). Indeed, the qualitative element of this study offered further insight: teachers, all of whom expressed support and care about students with a parent in prison, reported concerns that *other* teachers would have lower expectations of and stigmatise these students. While no child respondents spoke of a worry that someone would think that they were a criminal or deviant if they found out about their parental incarceration, stigma may still play a role. The category of 'bad things' in the proposed reasons for secrecy used above encompasses, I suggest, examples of seeking to avoid stigmatisation, and the other two categories may as well; fearing that peers would laugh at, hurt or otherwise harm them indicates that children understand that their parent's incarceration is information that renders them vulnerable.

Indeed, it would appear that it is not the experience of negative reactions that demands secrecy, as shown by the few actual experiences of discrimination in the present sample. Rather, it appears that the vulnerability to harm is sufficient to make the default position for *every* child in the present study to not disclose, and for several caregivers to make significant and potentially harmful decisions such as moving home and moving a child to a different school on this basis. Harter et al (2005) note the serious lengths that their homeless youth respondents went to in their efforts at secrecy, to "remain invisible and thereby pass as normal rather than deviant… when participants shed their protective anonymity, they risk stigmatisation." In fact, several children reported that when they did make the decision to tell others of their parent's incarceration, the experience was positive. Phoebe reported the experience of telling a

peer "was awesome, to have friends on my side." Children found that adults could be sources of support and reassurance. Josh also found support when he disclosed to his dance teachers: "They even said, like after I told them? Yeah, like 'we're here for you bro like, anything you need, just tell us and we'll be there.' Like, so then I was 'alright, so I have support.' It's like everywhere." When asked why she felt comfortable telling her teacher, Sarah reported: " I feel safe because they're sort of like, well they're a guardian, but they're sort of like…A third parent." Sophia reported that when she disclosed to a teacher, it was in fact not a negative experience, and she expressing almost surprise that the teacher did not comment on this information: "Telling her was kind of… It was like...It was kind of, I don't know. Normal." However secrecy may, in a circular fashion, reinforce the very stigmatising attributes that children seek to hide. Harter et al. (2005) note that "Stigmatization not only creates definitions of acceptable and non-acceptable individuals and groups, it creates powerful cognitive maps of acceptable and non-acceptable places (and the types of people to be encountered in particular social settings)." Thus children learn that socially incarceration is negative and any connection to prisons a negative attribute, but through their secrecy, they reinforce for themselves and others that prisons and prisoners require secrecy. Lucas provided a striking example of this when explaining his fears that his peers would be frightened of his father because he lives in a place where only 'scary' people live. Thirteen year old Lily similarly explained why she does not tell others that her father was in prison, "Well if I told everybody in the world about it they'd think that my dad's a bad person. That he deserves to be in jail."

Conclusion

This chapter has explored children's lives in the context of their community, arguing that for many, their relationships with peers and their school is marked by secrecy. Children all spoke of wishing to keep their parent's incarceration a secret and gave a variety of reasons for this secrecy, showing how stigmatising, emotionally charged and sensitive this information is for them. Children's concerns about stigma betrayed some of the meanings that parental incarceration hold for them, and suggested that

they may live more isolated lives due to their secrecy. However while it appears on the surface to be problematic that children cannot speak openly about their parent's incarceration, there is evidence that their secrecy may also be protective. The next chapter delves into the object of this secrecy, the prison itself.

Chapter 8 | Children, Prisons and Being Parented from Inside

Advice from Darcy, age 10:
Don't be sad because maybe you might get to see them if your mom is
allowed, allows you and that he'll, he will still send you like letters and
stuff. And even if you're gone, he'll still love you.

Introduction

Unlike spaces such as school and peer groups, one space in which there is little
secrecy about parental incarceration is in the prison itself. [26] Children have direct
encounters with the prison during visits, but they are also subject to the prison's
policies and power when they send or receive letters and calls. Further, the carceral
system affects them indirectly through the ways it modifies their incarcerated
parents'. caregiving practice. This chapter explores this range of ways that children
experience the prison directly and how the practices of the carceral system may affect
them. This chapter will concur with many familial incarceration researchers by
arguing that these families become quasi inmates, subject to carceral control and
living their lives 'in the shadow' of the institution (Comfort 2008).

Visiting parents in the prison

Advice from Phoebe, age 10,

Calm down, it's alright, but after a few months you'll see him at the
jail. I'll tell her the information I know.

The maintenance of family relationships during and after incarceration has been
shown to be highly positive for prisoners a number of ways. There are crime
prevention effects of having a strong attachment with a spouse (Laub and Sampson
2001) and strong benefits of visits by family members to prisoners, including a lower

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[26] Though, as discussed, even some children visiting their parent in prison may not know that their parent is
incarcerated. Some caregivers construct elaborate fictions of the prison environment as being, for example, a
workplace, to keep the incarceration a secret from the child

likelihood of re-offending after release (Shafer, 1994; Bales and Mears, 2008); Derkzen et al 2009). On release, family members provide practical and social capital to aid successful resettlement, such as help finding accommodation and employment, and the desistance value of living with a supportive partner and becoming a parent (Mills and Codd 2008). The Canadian court recognises both that family contact is a vital constitutional right of prisoners and serves the rehabilitative goals of the prison. In *Hunter v Canada* [1997] 3 F.C. 936, the Federal Court agreed that the maintenance by inmates of their family relationships and friendships in the community was firmly linked with individual self-fulfillment and human flourishing, the values that underlie the Charter guaranteed freedom of expression. The Court noted that "the general policy objectives [of the inmate phone system] are to assist the rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into the community through telephone contacts in a manner consistent with the protection of the public, the correctional staff and the inmates themselves."

However, these seemingly universal benefits to prisoners of having visits from family must, I suggest, be approached with caution in this discussion of children's experiences and interests; it does not necessarily follow that visits are universally or even normally a benefit to children. That said, when I asked my participants about visiting the prison, most were overwhelmingly positive; they loved seeing their parent, hugging him and being together during the visit. All (aside from a teen who chose not to visit, unrelated to the prison space, and a teen whose mother is incarcerated too far away to visit) looked forward to visits. As discussed in Chapter 4, some children found visits to be therapeutic, helping to soothe or mitigate the negative aspects of parental incarceration. For example, when I asked Isaac how he felt about his father being in prison, he responded:

> Kind of bad…. But… Some is actually…. Well I don't really have a
> feeling 'cause I get to visit him almost every Friday and...And then, so
> I don't even feel anything.
> [Isaac, 8]

Comfort (2002) describes prison visiting rooms as a 'home satellite' where relationships can be performed, and indeed, some children perceived visits as being the same as interacting with the parent at home. Certainly for Isaac, visits seem to solve the problem of parental incarceration.

However, as my sample was mainly federally sentenced prisoners, visiting was 'open' (as opposed to 'closed', or behind glass); those in some medium or minimum settings, children could play with their parent in an outside space or sit together on couches. Their visiting experience was therefore very different than the majority of prison visits, as most prisoners are on remand, and thus can only meet family behind glass (or, in two new settings, through a video screen from the lobby of the prison), and can have a maximum of two 20 minute visits per week. Prison researchers have noted such limited visits present such great investments of time and resources to achieve but deliver only a short and poor quality time together (McDermott and King 1992). Children who described their earlier, closed visits indicated strongly negative feelings, particularly at not being able to touch the parent. Research has found that families find the lack of contact upsetting and confusing (Arditti et al 2003).

Open visiting may contribute to the fact that when asked about visits, my child participants almost all reported enjoying them. However, they also described a variety of ways that aspects of visiting the prison can be frightening, frustrating and otherwise unpleasant for children. This conflict around visiting may reflect a disconnect between the stated experience of prison visiting and the impact on children of visiting. Indeed the finding that children stated enjoying their visits sits in contrast to some existing research on children who visit a parent in prison. Shlafer and Poehlmann's (2010) study of children's relationship with an incarcerated parent found that many children reported ambivalent feelings about their incarcerated parent, and that no child reported having a positive experience of visiting. Given that this study is a mixed method longitudinal design, these findings are more valid and reliable than the present study, however the significant contrast suggest that there is more to the

difference in findings than this. Perhaps the visiting context in Ontario prisons is less frightening or otherwise negative than the American prisons in this study.

Psychologist Dallaire has studied the effect on children of visits to an incarcerated parent. In one study using family drawings to assess attachment relationships which included a control group separated from parents for other reasons, Dallaire and colleagues (2012) found that more frequent contact (in the form of calls, letters or visits) with an incarcerated parent was positively associated with attachment insecurity factors (such as role reversal, tension and anger), while visits with a non-incarcerated parent was not. Another study found that face-to-face visiting with barriers was associated with more internalising symptoms but letters and phones calls with fewer such symptoms (Dallaire et al. 2015b). Poehlmann (2005) found that children who have visited a mother in prison have a slightly less positive representation of her than peers who have not visited. She (2005: 693) suggests a possible cause as being that a "visit may activate the child's attachment system without affording opportunities to work through intense feelings about the relationship," not allowing them to receive the comfort, support and reassurance they needed to deactivate it. Dallaire et al (2012) note:

> Non-contact barrier visits with parents may especially stress a child's
> attachment system because the attachment figure may appear
> vulnerable and the partition or barrier makes it impossible for parents
> to comfort the child with physical contact.

It is worth noting here that by privileging the self-reports of children as the source of data over diagnostic tools or the assessment of professionals or caregivers, as is the approach of the present research, naturally creates conflict where children have a different understanding of themselves, their needs and interests. Certainly children have different understandings of their long and short term needs and interests, and are likely to attribute symptoms of emotional distress in different ways than professionals or caregivers might. In child welfare practice, in my experience, children often wished to stay with parents despite assessments that there were emotional or even physical risk to them from staying, due to their bond to, comfort with or parentified concern

over their parent. In the present study, however, the child's self-reported experience is primary, and as such, the finding that children enjoy visits and find them positive stands alone.

The finding that that families of prisoners tend to 'centre' the incarcerated parents' needs and interests also raises the issue that visits are focused on the prisoner's needs rather than that of the children. While I had no ability to gather primary data on prison visiting, other sources of data suggest hint at this possibility as well. One of my key informants argued that visits are focused on efforts at physical intimacy between prisoners and their partners, and that children are unsupervised or encouraged to play with toys to this end. Indeed, several of the programs described in the penultimate chapter explicitly seek to support and encourage "child centred" visits between children and their incarcerated parents, suggesting that visits may ordinarily not be focused on children's needs. If visits do involve parents and children spending time together, the question becomes whether the visit is focused on ameliorating the parent's loss of their child or the child's loss of their parent.

Thus, while children in the present study report enjoying visits and the opportunities for contact, intimacy and shared experiences, my broader findings raise the question of whether visits exacerbate problematic family roles that privilege incarcerated parents and fail to centre the needs of children. If children are explicitly or implicitly encouraged to act in ways that meet their incarcerated parent's needs (such as to be cheerful, helpful, not bothersome, well-behaved), then their own needs for responsive and focused parenting may not be met. Unfortunately, I have no data or insight into whether my child participants were thus encouraged. The question of the priorities, roles and goals of visits for families, and whether these are child-centred or focused on ameliorating the incarcerated parent's needs, is deserving of further, direct study.

The experience of prisons and prison staff

Feelings of Fear

Aside from the enjoyment of seeing their parent, when I asked children about the prison - its staff, practices and spaces - they were less uniformly positive. A common response was that aspects of the prison frightened them, in particular the security process that precedes the visit.Visitors to all Ontario prisons undergo a security check before they are allowed in to any visit, which includes a metal detector and physical search in all institutions, and an ion scanner and/or a drug dog search in federal institutions. The ion scanner uses a cloth wiped by a correctional officer on the visitor's shoes, glasses or watches to detect micro particles of drugs. These processes raise two concerns for prison visitors. One, visitors who are active drug users are in effect barred from visits. Two, because of the common presence of drug particles on commonly-touched items like money, gas station pumps and bus seats, prison visitors spend a great deal of time seeking to ensure that they will not set off the scanner by accident.

As a professional visiting prisons in the past, I was initiated into the required routine on one of my first visits: all items to be brought into the institution are wiped with alcohol wipes or hand-sanitizer solution, particularly any jewellery or glasses. Hands are washed carefully and shoes wiped with alcohol, and one is careful not to touch the car door handle nor the door handle to the prison. Very careful visitors that I met on the bus insisted that they'd never "had a hit" because they washed their hair the morning of the visit, had a separate set of clothes and shoes which they only wore to the institution and washed separately, and touched nothing from the point of cleaning until having passed the scanner.

Several children identified the dogs other aspects of the security process as frightening. Eight year old Isaac reported, for example, that he liked visits, "Except for when the dog comes cause I'm scared of big dogs." This is consistent with a

number of studies of children visiting prisons (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008; Hall, 2000; Brown, 2001; Scharff-Smith and Jacobsen, 2011). Tom noted:

> When you walk through the machine […] Yeah, that's the worst part
> […] It goes off
> *Is that a good thing or a bad thing?*
> Bad thing
> *Okay. And then what happens?*
> People get kicked out […] Yeah, and that's it.
> [Tom, 10]

Several children, particularly younger participants, found the prison itself frightening. Twelve year old Lucas felt one prison his father had lived in "looks scary because of all, it looks so dark and stuff" and six year old Will also found his father's prison to be dirty and frightening, telling me sarcastically that he someone would need 'good luck' if they were going to a prison:

> Uhm, good luck. […]Yeah, 'cause it's dirty […] And nasty.
> *Oh it's nasty sometimes. What's nasty about it?*
> The walls.[…] The, the paint peels off the walls
> *The paint peels off of the walls. What does that make you feel like?*
> …Nervous
> *Yeah, why do you feel nervous about that?*
> I don't know […] So that's why it smells like, smells like a maniac in there […] And, and, uhm. So good luck, it smells like fat rat, rat died in there. A rat died there.
>
> [Will, 6]

There was a strong sense from children that the prison space was stark, unpleasant and uncomfortable. Though none had seen their parent's sleeping quarters, or any space beyond the screening and visiting areas, many imagined it was unpleasant:

> *If you could change something about where your dad lives, what*
> *would you change?*
> I would change it into a nicer place
> *Yeah? How would you make it nicer?*
> Just start with the bars. Put a door in there, put the lock on the outside, so it would still be like a jail, but I could make it into a little house area
> *And what would be nicer about that?*

Him having a couch and him having a nicer bed, him having nicer
everything
Ok, so you'd just make it nicer for him?
Yes. So he can, like he can feel like, that 'oh I'm still grounded so I'll
just stay here and just sit on the couch'
[Phoebe, 10]

*Do you have any thoughts about, how do you imagine where your
dad sleeps when he's in prison?*
I think it looks dark. And then damp
Damp?
I think. Unless they have lights in there. Then I think they have bunk
beds, like in the movies. But not actual bunk beds, like with chains to
connect them.
[Sarah 11]

This is consistent with Nesmith and Ruhland's (2008) study which found that some
children reported a variety of frightening ideas about their parent's prison experience.
While some reported positive or benign images, others thought their parent lived in a
cave, that people were screaming and that everyone was unhappy (ibid.). Several
children raised concerns about their parent being together with other prisoners and
fear that they might harm him. Lucas here raises several of these elements:

*Let's first of all talk about [prison], what did you think about that
place? The building and all that*
It looks scary because of all, it looks so dark and stuff
*Yeah. I know that feeling. And what did it feel like to know that dad
was living there?*
R: I felt bad for him.
Yeah? why is that?
R: Cause he has to be there, and deal with all those different people
there
I: Say again?
R: He has to be there with all those different people
Ok what does that mean, 'all those different people'?
Uhm, different criminals.
[Lucas, 10]

Antagonism and stigma

> *Advice from Abby, age 11:*

> [I'd give advice about] How to act in there, and not be mean to other
> people. Always be nice to them or the guards will like spin around
> and start, they'll turn and they'll sometimes go mean.

As may have been expected, I heard a significant amount of negative views on people who work in the prison. When I asked ten year old Tom reported what he thought of the people who work at the prison, he replied: "they're really mean." A caregiver Patricia noted: "The way they treat you. The way they treat you, the way they speak to you they're very intimidating, it's very intimidating." This is consistent with the limited existing Canadian literature into partners of prisoners, which shows the ways in which women visitors find prison staff hostile, disdainful, degrading and disrespectful (Toepell and Greaves 2001; Hannem 2010).

Some caregivers found a difference in treatment between different prisons, like Patricia who described in Chapter 4 that she had dreaded visiting until her husband was moved to a minimum-security institution, which she felt was like a 'vacation.' This corroborates research suggesting that carceral regimes and the tone of individual institutions can affect behaviours inside; more strict and punitive regimes are associated with more oppositional and adversarial attitudes of its prisoners (Kruttschnitt and Gartner 2005). I also found that a few caregivers had one prison officer in particular whom they directed a great of complaints and vitriol towards, and who found staff in general to be rude, unhelpful. Caregiver Cathy felt that one officer was targeting her family in particular, and working to have their visits terminated or reduced. The antagonism towards prison staff may also be affected by a binary and antagonistic culture inside the prison between prisoners and staff, long supported by research, and partners' sense of solidarity with the prisoner. One key informant, a prisoner advocate, who notes about relationships with prisoners:

It's a difficult relationship, it's hard to sustain it's hard to maintain it's filled with tremendous frustration and anger and resentment. There's a you know the strong sense that the system is out to get you […] It becomes a cause, your relationship is a cause. It's not just something you experience yourself, it can very much become a cause you've invested all you have to fighting the system and you can't back away when you start finding that it's really not personally satisfying.

[Key informant 5]

I did not find this approach in many children, but Oliver did indicate a blanket negative view of criminal justice staff, when I asked about prison staff (whom he called 'police'):

I don't like... police at all, so...
Ok. tell me about that…
Uhm.. …. There's reasons. [.]… Dad's experience, some friends.[…] I've never been in trouble with the police.
[Oliver 15]

Another key informant, also an advocate for prisoners concurs: "There's a common enemy also in relationships, […] because you're both against the system and wanting that person to get out." Lee et al (2015) found that experience of familial incarceration negatively affected people's reception of government legitimacy and fairness, and served as a barrier to civic participation, such as voting. Some caregivers felt that staff stigmatised them, treated them poorly due to their relationship with a prisoner, and suspected them of criminal behaviour as a result. Patricia reported:

Because you're meeting somebody in there it doesn't mean that you're a criminal, you know. And I think that they definitely look at you like because you're visiting someone in there that you're just like everybody else in there, you know. And they don't give you that respect.

[Caregiver Patricia]

A personal, anecdotal experience may corroborate this view. When I worked as a prison policy analyst at a charity, I also supervised Master's of Social Work students for a university department, and with one student in 2010 we developed a guide with practical information for prisoners' families, as none existed. To this end, my student began calling every federal and provincial prison in Ontario, asking for not-publicly-

available information about visiting, including a variety of issues such as whether the toilets had change tables, the cost of lockers, wheelchair access and more. When her efforts began, as a casual idea, we agreed that she would not state her purpose in asking for this information, and if asked, would indicate that she was planning to visit a prisoner there. The results, though anecdotal, were shocking: for the majority of institutions the student was repeatedly spoken to in a markedly rude manner, a few times hung up on, information was demanded from her about whom she was visiting, and much of the information was simply not provided. When she called back immediately after, introducing herself and her true purpose, she felt that the tone in which she was addressed was dramatically more courteous. Some indirect research supports this experience. A recent study of prisoner grievance documents in the US found that prison staff regularly derided prisoners as 'narcissists and whiners.' Canadian research by the CSC (Larivière and Robinson 1996) though now dated, itself found that 76% of correctional officers held so-called 'punitive views of corrections', 23% showed empathetic views and 53% supported rehabilitation. Interestingly, correctional staff were more punitive and less empathetic than all other classifications of staff in the institution, whom families are unlikely to meet. Correctional staff in the maritime provinces and in lower security institutions were also less punitive, more empathetic and more supportive of rehabilitation, but gender was not found to have an impact (Larivière and Robinson 1996).

While only a few children in this study raised instances of perceptions of mistreatment by staff, and indeed most made positive remarks about staff, the issue of rudeness or more serious mistreatment raises a question of whether any such behaviour that does occur constitutes stigma or even discrimination against families. Further, it raises the question of whether such behaviour is structural, that is, supported and engendered by the carceral regime itself. Several issues support the idea that there is a structural stigmatising of prisoners' families.The many barriers that families face in staying connected to their their loved ones are consistent for families throughout the country and caused largely in broad, top-down policies affecting the entire federal or provincial prison system. Likewise, the extensive regulating of the

families of prisoners during visits is inscribed in formal policy and a not only a function of individual choices by staff or the culture in a specific prison site (though these may contribute). Link and Phelan (2001: 375) argue, "If stigmatized persons cannot be persuaded to voluntarily accept their lower status and inferior rewards, direct discrimination can be used to accomplish the same outcome. If direct discrimination becomes ideologically difficult, sophisticated forms of structural discrimination—such as tests that induce stereotype threat—can achieve some of the same ends." However many instances of positive interactions with staff are noted below, and one key informant, for example, disagrees that maltreatment of visitors by staff is based in structural stigma, arguing that it comes down to individual 'bad apples':

> The pattern is that you are treated differentially. That's the pattern but the purpose of that is not on purpose. The motivation for that is not 'we're going to mess with families to put them in their place.'
> *I think, I think that a lot of families think that*
> On an individual basis, that could very much be the thing. On an individual basis, that correctional officer who is in your face is giving you a bad time just doesn't like you, or more importantly doesn't even know anything about you but doesn't like the person you are coming to visit. You know, 'so and so is a trouble maker, so and so is a pain in the ass, you know what so and so is in here for and then…' you know. So on an individual basis that may be true. But they, but that it is on purpose… But mostly prisons are - prison environments are unpleasant for offenders, but prison environments are unpleasant for staff.
> …
> I would not go to the conclusion that there is a systematic undermining of family visits just to be nasty. I wouldn't make that conclusion.
> [Key Informant 1]

Even if it occurs, this respondent argues, the maltreatment of families is not an intentional or structural goal of the prison service. Because I have no access to any internal policy documents, training or interviews of the service, this is difficult to examine. However, a structural and systemic element of the treatment of families of prisoners that can be explored is the marked *lack* of systemic attention or policy,

raised in Chapter 9 in which I argue that there is a profound dearth of formal policy, service provision, funding, research or mainstream attention to children of prisoners.

Ambivalence

Given this context, it may be surprising that the primary response to my questions to children about their views on prison staff was positive or ambivalent. I was surprised by children's responses to questions about prison staff. Where I expected the strong antagonism I had heard from caregivers and knew from prisoners, I found the children to have generally positive or neutral things to say about the staff. Where a few children reported being frightened of staff, they all balanced this with more positive views. Lucas explained that the prison staff at the institution where his father used to be incarcerated were frightening whereas the staff at the current institution are nice. He reported:

> Oh yeah, there was one there were one security guard that was rude cause he like he always like thought that we were bringing drugs inside and he always used to like treat us bad and stuff like even when he brought the dog around he like made the dog go around like so much times to find something. And stuff like that.
> [Lucas, 12]

Sophia also expressed fear of the prison staff, but explained that she was no longer scared of them when she got used to them:

> I kinda thought they were kinda scary. But then I got used to them, 'cause like second time, we asked for crayons and then I was kinda scared to ask the first time we visited, so we didn't colour the first time. Second time we coloured […]
> *It sounds like you were scared of them the first time you saw them?*
> Yeah […] 'Cause I didn't know what they looked like […] Since I was learning about them a lot, I find them helpful.
> [Sophia, 10]

Several caregivers also indicated positive attitudes to prison staff overall. Caregiver Katie indicated that she saw staff as being either pleasant or, at minimum, having a rough day:

> Some are really nice, some you can have a laugh with. Some, you just like, they're very straight to the point "have a nice day" you know, very to the book. Where others are "ok well, I kind of know you, so we can have a little bit of a conversation but I still have to keep it work-based"
>
> […] they do get it, but they get it from the point that they have to put a uniform on and you know, look and see. But then you get the occasional officer and they will be you know, emotionally supportive. You know, and like actually pull themselves. I have always looked at it like, ok, just because you're an officer, or a guard, doesn't mean you don't have your own problems.
>
> *I: Mhmm, isn't that the truth.*
>
> You're having a hard day so you make our guy, or men, or whatever you want to call them somedays, you make their day a living hell because you guys don't get a head to head. Doesn't mean that that person is not getting beat at home just because they wear an officer's outfit. Just because you're sitting in a cell doesn't mean that your wife is being faithful to you or your wife is not abusing you on the phone.

Caregiver Sue also felt that staff were fair and helpful in the way they shopped for her PFV supplies, further discussed below, where they could make decisions that were unhelpful to her:

> *Will they go to somewhere cost-efficient, like do they go to the No Frills [less expensive], or do they like go to the Sobeys [more expensive]?*
>
> They will go, um, I've known people to go to Food Basics, I've known officers to go to Freshco [both less expensive], but some days they will accommodate for you, if you want something extra, you'll have to write it down on the list, soya milk, or like if you have a family occasion, like a birthday or something, they will add it to your grocery list so that they can celebrate together. We've done that.
> [Caregiver Sue]

Alternately, some caregivers felt that they were treated well because they were 'well-behaved' visitors, but noted that prisoners and other visitors were treated differently. Caregiver Lisa, for example, reported that she herself was treated well, "because it depends on, it is, I don't give them any, I don't challenge them. I know some people do. So um. But the way they treat him? No." Caregiver Cecily noted that she did feel she was treated with respect, but also qualified this: "Yeah. The way they treat him is different, you know, But you're asking like the way they treat us." Cecily also compared herself to other visitors: "I don't think that I get mistreated at all. I know that they don't like people who do drugs!" and noted, unlike some other caregivers, that she sees them differently than police officers

> Because a. They are protecting what's theirs and they don't have a reason to like, they don't know him as a person, or as an individual. So for me it's like, 'what's it to them?' So they're not really, they're more, they're more protecting them than anything, Right? I think the cops that are out here on the road are garbage to me. But I mean, you know, that's just my opinion.[…] But as far as the institution goes, I think that they're just doing their job.
> [Caregiver Cecily]

An issue which was raised repeatedly by caregivers, though not by children, was their frustration with the inconsistency and lack of accountability of the prison system. The ion scanner in particularly was viewed with much suspicion by caregivers, several suspecting that it did not always work properly. Naomi also felt that complaints about this were not properly dealt with: "they need to do that because a lot of people complain about going off and they're not doing anything." Caregivers expressed a sense of insecurity, feeling that they were always at risk of having a bad experience at the prison. Caregiver Sue described the time invested in,

> … getting money together, cleaning your ID, making sure you wipe down your, washing all your clothes because yeah, ion-scan sets off and does whatever. Then you come three hours and you get turned away. First visit I ever went to [prison], the dogs sat on me. And then I started crying, I'd come all the way from [several hours away], I had her and she was just a little baby and then I said "well, what am I gonna do?" And they took me to this office and then this dog ran

across and jumped on the desk and took an apple off the table. Okay?
I said "are you joking with this hyper black lab" I said, "and you're
telling me this dog is trained?"

[Caregiver Sue]

This is consistent with a study of the Canadian prison system (Topell and Greaves 2001) which found inconsistent approaches to visitors, in staff's tone and treatment, the implementation and flexibility of search and other procedures, all often depending on the particular staff member who is conducting the search. This precariousness antagonism was noted by nine year old Abby when she noted, in her advice that opened this section, that staff can "spin around and start, they'll turn and they'll sometimes go mean."

Case study: food and prison visits

An experience that raises the issues of inconsistency, unfairness and inefficiency, and was raised repeatedly by interviewees, was that of food in the prison during visits. Food and sharing food with a parent during visits was clearly very salient for children, and they repeatedly gave examples of positive experience of sharing crisps with their father during visits or having him cook for them during PFVs.

Food for the PFVs was a strong topic of conversation and contention for my caregiver participants. For PFVs, visitors' bags are security checked and they are given an extensive and specific list of items that can or cannot be brought in. For example, visitors cannot bring any toiletries that contain alcohol, and I was told by several women about the lengths they had gone to find alcohol free shampoo. Food is ordered and paid for by the prisoner, and a correctional officer purchases the food from the list at a local grocery store. The prices that prisoners are charged (because, for example, the food was bought all at a certain local grocery store and not the lower-cost store preferred by the family) was a point of contention. The main issue raised was the need to order condiment items (e.g. ketchup, salt and pepper) anew for each PFV as all of the food remaining in the trailer is disposed of by prison staff after the visit. Visitors

cannot take the food home, nor the prisoner take it back to his cell, as this is considered a security risk. Comfort (2002) notes the importance of food in creating the 'domestic satellite' inside the prison, and the deeply gendered performance of caregiving by prisoner partners. Caregiver Bree and her mother agreed:

> There should have somewhere you can get actual food, not these, just vending machines.
>
> *Yeah! I can't tell you how many mums I hear this from! So it was just garbage food?*
>
> Yeah, chips and chocolate and pop. People are going to be in there with kids from 9:30 to 3:30, no food? No kind of food? Just rubbish? Garbage?
>
> [Grandmother:] Sandwiches or whatever, and even if it means we get the pop from you guys so it's not glasses coming out, you know. Whatever the issues. So you're there for that length of time, the person can enjoy eating a cooked meal just for that one time that they see you. So they know what they're looking forward to. Instead of same old, same old, the only difference, I'm seeing my family.

Ugelvik (2011) argues in his ethnography that food is performativity for prisoners, allowing them to transcend the prison - 'escape' – because of the way it serves as a reminder of home, connection with friends and family. For immigrants in the Norewegian prison, Ugelvik's subjects also used illicit re-preparation of prison food as a way to resist the colonialism of the clichéd, old-fashioned Norwegian food served in the prison. de Graaf and Kilty (2016: 28) agree: "Mealtime resistance via the storing, sharing, and trading of food exemplifies how women negotiate power in the carceral context; this use of individual agency, albeit limited, fosters togetherness and solidarity." Earle and Phillips (2012) similarly show the ways in which preparing food becomes a practice of racialization, gender and power for prisoners. One key informant, who had a partner in prison in the past, argued:

> I don't think you realise it but I think so much of our emotions are tied to like hunger or like the quality food we need and stuff, never mind children right? Like, and so when you go in there, it's all… And we're vegetarian so they have vending machines with like the salami

> sandwiches and whatever but there's nothing vegetarian except for a
> chips or… I would, I would, when I got at the minimum [when partner
> was placed at a minimum security institution], like, I pushed so hard
> that they would let me bring in like a peanut butter sandwich.
> [Key informant 7**]**

Ugelvik (2011) argues that prisoners experience the food they receive as a "continuation of the more general attacks on their identity" by the carceral space through their inability to enact agency and competency over their meals. Extending this analysis to families of prisoners aids in making sense of the frustration that my participants reported around food during visits. Caregiver Cathy raised her frustration at rules around food that she deemed unreasonable:

> [Husband] tried to bring down an open thing of cookies [from his cell,
> to a visit], all there was, was like 3 cookies out of the package, but
> because it was opened, they threw the whole container in the garbage.
> He was just bringing them down for the kids, this was his treat to give
> for the kids and they threw it in the trash.

As noted above, food purchased for the PFV visits is all thrown away at the end of a visit, which several caregivers noted their frustration around. They failed to understand what the security issue with taking home a bottle of ketchup could be, and thus found the rule to be arbitrary, unfair and even punitive. In one of the few other studies of the Canadian visiting system, women interviewees also raised the high cost of food for the conjugal visits (which some saw as 'inflated' from the price they would otherwise pay in the community) and the anger at having their food thrown away after a visit as a seemingly arbitrary policy (Toepell and Greaves 2001).

Similar to concepts of arbitrariness, unfairness and inconsistency, is that of precariousness. Kim noted her opinions that "They like to promote like family visiting and they like to promote having family time, but I feel like you can sneeze and they'll take it all away". Indeed, while visits with family are a right for prisoners, protected by the Beijing Rules to which Canada is a signatory, families have no right to visit

prisoners, and prisons themselves do not seem to see visits as rights. In the Ontario Correctional Act, the relevant section is titled "Visiting Privileges."

Secondary Prisonization

> *Advice from Phoebe, age 10:*
> [I'd tell hypothetical peer] Everything I know. How much the bus costs to go there, how much dadadadada. How things work, and the dog might sit on you if you have drugs […] That there is, that you have to pay for your food and drinks, but the toppings are free […] Like ketchup, relish, mustard, mayonnaise. They're just little packages.

Several children showed a detailed orientation to the prison environment and its practices, becoming attuned to the regulations and functioning of the institution. In this way, children are also affected by secondary prisonization, a term coined by Comfort (2009) to describe the ways in which women partners become quasi-inmates, adapting the practices and cultural life of the prison. Phoebe's quote above about prison rules indicates, for exampled how attuned she is to the formal and informal policies of the prison environment.

Children thus become subjects of the prison structure: their behaviour is modified by the prison and its power, in direct encounters such as when they visit, call, or write letters, but also when the prison's systems and requirements affect their caregivers' parenting decisions. Moreover, they become governed and regulated by the carceral power, constituted as its subjects by its 'mentalities of rule' (McKee 2009). Katie noted that she and her husband are "doing time together. Because you're involved in visits. Which is time. You're involved with their lockdowns, which is time. Because it affects you."

Children's Experience of Parenting from Prison

Contact between incarcerated parents and their children varies widely; US figures show that around half of state prisoners had spoken to their children or received at least one visit from them since their admission, with 85% of federal prisoners having

had phone contact and half having has visits (Glaze and Maruschak 2008; Withers and Folsom 2007). The lack of contact with the remainder of incarcerated parents with their children could have a variety of reasons, including that the incarceration is kept a secret, the caregiver does not allow or facilitate contact, or that the prisoner chooses not to have contact out of concern for children's or their own needs. Hairston (2003) suggests that some incarcerated parents "mistakenly believe that there is little they can do for their children from prison and that they can compensate for their absence once they are released." I heard several stories of prisoners and caregivers not wanting their children to visit in the harsh visiting environment of the remand centre, often focusing on the behind-glass element of these visits; these families began visits after the parent's move to the relatively more child-friendly sentenced prison. Due to the sampling strategy used, however, all of the children in the present study had visited their parent in prison (aside from the one child participant whose mother is imprisoned overseas), all have phone contact and many have extensive, daily phone calls.

Meaningful parenting role

Exploring children's experience of parental incarceration leads to questions about their experience of the incarcerated parents' parenting practice itself. However, two teen girls, Samantha and Amy, disagreed from the outset that their fathers were even able to parent from prison. Samantha reported,

> Well, you can't really have any parental thing, since 'cause he's locked
> up he can't really see us. He can't really know what we're doing.
> [Samantha, 16]

Likewise, Amy was able to choose to not be parented by her father, by refusing visits and calls; she suggested that his crimes disqualified him from giving her advice or having control in her life.

However, most of the families I visited, caregivers and children constructed the incarcerated parent as playing and important and comprehensive parenting role from

inside Some caregivers spoke of the incarcerated parent's attention to and interest in parenting improving since their incarceration. For example, Kim noted that where in the past her ex-partner had focused on the practical aspects of parenting, such as providing financially for their daughter, he is now focused on their relationship. Indeed, evidence from research with prisoners suggests that incarcerated parents place great value on their parenting role, even if they cannot enact it as others do (Walker 2010; Arditti et al 2005).   Kim is one of the caregivers who believes that her daughter's father's incarceration has been positive for him and for their daughter, on the whole, despite disagreeing strongly with the way the prison and criminal justice system treat him. She explained,

> Like I don't think she was really a priority before, to him. It was more about "well okay, you know, we need money to put a roof over her head." And you know she has to do stuff, you can't just leave her at home and so when-- So I think when he went in, he seen it more, he'd seen the effect on her more […] I think that's what happened, he just, she just became more important to him because like-- I think she made him happy, you know. Like, you always hear somebody's happy to hear your voice all the time and somebody is always thinking about you and stuff like that, so. Then he wanted to stay like that. So I think that's why, like, you know, he does all stuff, and then it just turns into, like, something that you need to do. Like you know, he always needs to talk to her, 'cause "oh I need to talk to her, I have to tell her something."
> [Caregiver Kim]

Most were adamant that their partner was meaningfully parenting from prison, as Katie is:

> Like, my husband is a dad. He is THE dad. He's had several comments [to this effect] from different correctional officers, not toward him, maybe not towards him, but towards me […] So he's like the best dad, one of the better dads in there. He is constantly reading, constantly playing, constantly trying to make it fun, but we are limited to what we can do.
> [Caregiver Katie]

Kim similarly praised her daughter's father's parenting, reporting that he was at times he was in fact the better parent:

> I noticed he has a lot of patience with [their daughter] and he tries to explain things to her and he tries to use like, like, her kind of way of thinking. Like you know, "well if this friend and this friend did this and you know, should you follow them? Like, even if you're gonna be left out and they're gonna make fun of you and say that you're a chicken 'cause you're not gonna do it 'cause it's not cool when you can't go out and have fun with them", you know? So I think, like, sometimes I think he's better at explaining things to her because I'm just like, "You shouldn't do this and you shouldn't do that and this is what is gonna happen." And that's it! Like, you know, I don't really make it for a child.
> [Caregiver Kim]

Interestingly, in the only case in the present sample in which the incarcerated parent was the mother, and in which the caregiver was not the mother, the incarcerated parent appeared to play the *more* significant parenting role. Caregiver Bree, who was the child's maternal aunt, reported that she referred all parenting decisions to her sister in prison:

> Because she calls him every day and I say usually, like, "okay I need to speak to your mom." If she doesn't talk to me about that then I say "okay I need to speak to your mom before something happens and you have to run it by her first"
> *Okay okay, she's— that sounds really active*
> Yeah
> *So she's keeping track of what's going on in his life?*
> Pretty much. Yeah, I'm more of the shelter. I give the shelter and what he needs and then anything else she…

These caregivers constructed parenting as consisting primarily of communication, emotional support and decision making, and therefore one that could be performed by primarily through phone calls. Caregiver Kim argues that this type of parenting is the most important:

> If you don't wanna be a parent then you're not gonna do a good job being a parent. Cause lots of parents out here are not even parents, who don't pay child support, who don't visit their children who do not even call their children but they, they go over they go sleep with their mom and then the mommy makes it seem like it's ok and then they, they call that being a parent. Being a parent doesn't mean you take a kid to buy her a toy, that's not being a parent. Being a parent is being consistent

> with things, having routine. [Father] reads my kids' bedtime stories
> when he calls at 9 o'clock, okay?
> [Caregiver Kim]

Though she also recognised that his inability to contribute financially to their daughter's care could be seen as diminishing his parenting role, saying "lot of fathers feel like they're worthless now. Like you know, you can't even provide for your child."

Harsh discipline-focused parenting

Other caregivers saw the incarcerated parent as playing a more limited or adjunct parenting role because of his incarceration, often pointing to the prisoners' inability to be present physically with the child or provide financially as hindering their ability to parent. For example, caregiver, Katie, who above had noted how successful her husband's parenting was, also stated:

> Over the phone, it's kind of hard. When they're getting to the age of
> realising "okay, dad is not there to enforce it," so you have to be
> behind your husband or partner to help to enforce the punishment, or it
> will not work […] Yes, those big limestone walls. It's harder for him to
> be a parent because it's only a phone call. And you know because my
> daughter is getting bigger, it's "Yeah, so? You're only on the phone"
> kind of attitude."

For these caregivers, parenting from prison was often constructed as a disciplinary 'back up' or to reinforce her position if the children were not minding her. When asked about parenting from prison, several caregivers explained that the incarcerated father would tell children to do as their mother asked and that she would refer discipline problems to him, asking for his support or for him to address the issue with the child. Caregiver Katie explained,

> I try to make him a part of family over the phone. If I'm not getting
> through to my kids, then here is the phone. "Now you're in charge,
> you're the parent" So whatever dad says, goes.

Similarly, when asked whether her son-in-law can parent from prison, caregiver Reese's mother (her children's grandmother, who lives with them) reported,

> I notice sometimes he would talk to [her grandchildren] and tell them, "make sure you're doing your homework, make sure you listen to mummy and grandma," and that sort of stuff, you know. Instilling more or less what we're telling them.
> [Mother of caregiver Reese]

The environment of the prison may also engender a restrictive, harsh and discipline-focused parenting style which undoubtedly affects children's experienced of and relationship with their incarcerated parent. Caregiver Katie explained:

> Which in a way leads to a more difficult problem because it used to be the fact that his parenting had to do the same thing as in prison. But then I had to explain "okay, but he's not in prison, or she's not in prison, we have to do this as an adult parent family"
>
> *Sorry what do you mean? When his parenting was more affected by prison what does that mean?*
>
> Sometimes in an inmate's life, when their children are involved with the father, their punishment kind of has to lead to— they forget [it's not prison]. Because it's their every day life. Whereas you as the mother has to step in and say "ok well they're not kids, I mean they're not inmates, they're kids! You can't lock them in their rooms 24/7" Where they sometimes they, in occasion he's had that problem, but we've learned how to overcome that. […] Because I know on several occasions he's given out a punishment and I've let it go for a couple of days, and then said "okay, well never mind." Because either I become really soft, and feel for them, or I think it's too much. And you have to decipher between the difference.
>
> [Caregiver Katie]

Harsh parenting appears to be indigenous to the prison experience; the length of time spent incarcerated is associated with less responsive and more restrictive parenting practice (Modecki and Wilson 2009). One key informant stressed that the repressive prison environment was incompatible with the practice of parenting and may engender harshness:

How do you keep standing up and how do you parent when you're
parenting from a place of traumatic stress, right? Like I think […]
systems of racism and colonisation create that same kind of trauma
and how do how do you parent from that place of [deprivation]? […]
I think there's something about control, right? When they don't have
any control in their life at all. And so, and they're out of control of that
relationship so yeah I think that becoming a disciplinarian is about,
you know, like, having some control.
[Key Informant 2]

This may also be a gendered issue; the following quote by caregiver Sarah raises the
issue of gendered power:

But… it's a, I don't know for some reason with a man, it's just the
voice itself. It's not even the presence. Like, the presence just gives
him that much more authority but just hearing their voice it's like, I
don't know it's deeper, it sounds meaner I guess I don't know. […]
[Especially when] He went in for his 2 year bit, they'd hear is voice on
the phone and if I was upset with them for something because they
didn't do something right or whatever, you know what I mean, dad
would speak and then all of a sudden it was like "stand up attention."
"Oh my god I'm so sorry I did that mom and da da da da" You know
what I mean? like… so yeah, I guess they can [parent], just it's not as
effective as them actually being there.

[Caregiver Sarah]

An element of seeking to deter their children from their own criminal behaviour may
also be a reason for harsh parenting from inside prison; one key informant who does
therapeutic work with prisoners called the approach: "I don't want you to fuck up the
way I fucked it up." She described one client who calls his child every two weeks and
says,

"Well be good in school, don't do this do this." And I'm like "are you
kidding me?" I say to him sometimes, I'm like "did you do well?" And
he's like "well no, I don't want him to do what I do" So you get 10
minutes with him and you're gonna tell him orders for the things he's
been through? […] I'm like, "just play with him. Like you have 10
minutes: play, joke, laugh, have fun. If that's what you've got, take that
time to do that, get that relationship back." And I think it's probably
part of loss of control in their own lives and also the fear of not being
there and then wanting to say don't do what I've done.

[Key informant 2]

The issue of prisoners being 'centred' in their families' lives, discussed above, is relevant firstly because the ability to parent at all often depends on the children's caregiver to not only allow contact but also to facilitate this parenting by providing resources like their time, money and support (Walker 2010). The centring of the prisoner parent also may mean that these parents are less able to recognise and prioritise their children's needs. One study found that while incarcerated mothers were concerned with their children's well-being, they did not recognise the harmful impact of issues such as their criminal behaviour and incarceration had on their children and their relationship (Gillham 2012).   Indeed, research with prisoners which has explored their concepts of parenting and appears to unanimously find that fathers feel that incarceration hinders their role and identity as parents (Arditti et al 2005; Chui 2016). Walker (2010) noted in her study of fathers in prison,

> The social and economic context in which these men were parenting was complex and fragmented and the nature of their relationships and family life was often very fluid, transient and constantly changing. They faced competing demands and expectations. The terrain in which they were fathering/parenting was inconsistent and unpredictable and, for the most part, economically impoverished. The base from which they were attempting to parent was, for some, very fragile.

The experience by children of the specific parenting practices from prison is difficult to assess but research may provide clues, such as Folk et al's (2012) study which found that children displayed more negative emotions after viewing a video message by an incarcerated parent who had been in a negative mood prior to filming the message.

Phone calls and letters

Advice from Amy, age 14:

That like it's not the end of like seeing your parents cause there is like that opportunity to talk to them and you can stay-- you can stay closely connected with like a parent or-- that's in prison because you have opportunities, like, that now, like letters and phone calls and visits and socials and whatever else. So that it's gonna be, like, hard. Of course it's hard. But it's… it's not gonna be the same as, like, everything else but it's better than nothing so that's … it'll all be good.

The prison environment poses a variety of practical barriers to communicating with a parent. Speaking by phone with a parent can only occur when the prisoner initiates the call, and in remand settings, they are making a call in the middle of a range, which is noisy, not private, and automatically ends after 20 minutes. Sending letters in to a prisoner involves ensuring that strict rules prohibiting stickers, markers and other items are followed, and for the prisoner, access to stamps, paper and pen can be a practical challenge and the distance a more abstract one. Eleven year old Sarah ruefully noted her experience that "like, a month after my birthday he [father] sent me a birthday card and he's like 'Happy birthday.' I said thanks, but my birthday was a month ago."

Having a relationship with a parent through the modalities of phone and letters was also felt by Josh to be awkward and stilted. He noted the difficulty of keeping in contact with his mother by both letters and his daily phone calls because of the time delay of letters:

She calls me and like anything new that happens I'll tell her right after it happens on the phone. So it's like, if I send her a letter saying what I told her on the phone the same, like day before or the day like whatever, having-- unless-- it gets sent like two weeks after. Because she'll receive it two weeks after. It's like I sit here and the same thing just happened, like it seems kind of redundant to me. […] But I don't know, sometimes like when I have people like family telling me like 'send her letters, send her letters, send her letters' I kinda feel

> pressured, so I'm like, 'okay I'll send a letter and I'll go, I'll write one' just saying the same exact thing
> [Josh, 17]

Being parented through the medium of telephone and letter also raises the possibility that some or all children have more agency because they can disengage from communication simply by putting down the phone. If this reduced the control and authority that a parent in prison has then it may correspond to an increased empowerment of their children. For example, Amy noted "with phone calls and letters I don't have to pick up or I don't have to write back so that gives me like an option." As caregiver Katie noted above, her daughter had responded to her incarcerated parent's attempts at discipline by saying "Yeah, so? You're only on the phone." Similarly, caregiver Kim noted that her daughter's father's attempts to discipline over the phone were hindered because "you can tell when someone is lying if you're face to face, rather than over the phone."

The use of daily child-focused calls by parents raises questions of whether phone conversations can constitute parenting practice, how relationships are affected by calls being the primary modality of parenting and how children experience phone call-based parenting. An interesting parallel can be found in studies of phone contact in transnational parenting, a literature mainly focused on domestic workers and other economic migrants and their 'left-behind children,' and the ways they maintain communication and relationships. There are several striking similarities. For example, London-based Filipina mothers were able to call their children, but the high calling rates prevented children from initiating calls back to them; they would call frequently and for long periods in attempts to 'intensively mother from a distance;' and transnational mothers risk being constructed as 'deviant' because they leave children behind (Madianou and Miller 2011; Chib et al 2014; Fedyuk 2012). Mothers in several of these transnational-mothering studies felt that their constant phone calls allowed them to 'reconstitute' or redefine their mother role and that the phone mitigated negative aspects of their absence (Chib et al 2014; Madianou and Miller 2011; Cabades and Acedera 2012).

Interesting, given the parallels, are the self-reported experience of these women's children, who in one study were "significantly more ambivalent about the consequences of transnational communication" (Madianou and Miller 2011: 457). Children noted a variety of asymmetries in the communication and were critical of the idea of that the phone calls had allowed their mothers to "reconstitute" their role. Some children described the calls such as that they were focused on practical matters and did not allow for the "depth and quality" of relationship (Cabades and Acedera 2012); they sacrificed other activities while waiting for calls at certain times, and the intrusiveness and micromanaging of frequent calls from a person who really did not understand them. Moreover, children reported that "while their mother was trying to be present, they behaved as if they were unaware of the actual age of their children. As they saw it, their parents refused to acknowledge that they were growing up, and this was resented […] Being in constant contact did not mean parents actually had a better understanding of who their children were." (Madianou and Miller 2011). A study of Turkish transnational families (Senyurekli and Detzner 2009) had a similar finding that the modality of phone had a significant impact on the nature of the communication with family, arguing that family cannot be performed meaningfully by phone alone. They found that participants did not feel able to fully express themselves through the medium of phone calls, did not share emotions freely and withheld information.

Another interesting notion for children of prisoners that is raised in Madianou and Miller's (2011) study is the finding that the group of children who were more critical of their mothers' attempt at phone-based parenting were those for whom there had been a gap of communication (in this case, before the advent of inexpensive cell phone services), which the authors query as a source of relationship harm (Madianou and Miller 2011). For almost all prisoners in Canada, the period initially spent in remand settings awaiting trial and sentencing are also a time of much reduced communication; calls are more expensive (discussed further in Chapter 4) and more

difficult to access. It is worthy of study whether this gap in communication is particularly harmful to children of prisoners.

There are clearly important differences between incarcerated and migrant worker parents, including the deep gender difference, the fact that transnational mothers see their economic provision for their families as resulting in personal empowerment and a net gain to their left-behind children, the lack of stigma for left-behind children but also the issue of these children feeling rejected or abandoned (Chib et al 2014). Perhaps stemming from the gender difference, or the voluntary nature of the separation, these studies indicated that the transnational migrant mother put much more emotional labour into maintaining contact than the left-behind family (Fedyuk 2012). However, it would seem sufficient similarities remain to raise the possibility that analyses of each case could benefit the other.

I heard numerous examples of prisoners seeking to forge relationships with their children despite the more and less formal barriers posed by the carceral structure. One ex-prisoner who contacted me explained that he made it a goal to call his children every evening for his entire imprisonment and the lengths he took to do so while on remand, a routine that might have been taken from a classic prison sociology text (Irwin and Cressey 1962). He collected the sugar packets for tea that came with his meal tray, sold these to the range cleaner (a prisoner given a position of relative power). In exchange he received the following service: the cleaner is given the power by guards to dictate which cells were 'cracked' (opened) first at range time, and the first doors cracked would be those best positioned to access the scarce telephones; the cleaner 'sold' the first spots for, in this case, packets of sugar, and this father was able to buy phone time with his children.

Phone calls were highly valued by most children, and many spoke almost daily with their parent. While a number of challenges with this modality were described above, strategies and circumstance could overcome them, such as being transferred to federal prison for a sentence, which opened up the possibility of cheaper, unlimited and easier

to access calling by prisoners. Caregiver Patricia noted that the phone could be used for more than simply conversation:

> But I think for the most part we try to make it the best we can and that's how we do. We can work-- Like they'll read each other jokes, they'll read maybe a chapter of a book over the phone.
> [Caregiver Patricia]

Families showed me many examples of heartfelt letters and drawings, all kept in special boxes (for example, Figure 8.1). That said, children rarely spoke about letter mail spontaneously, though never mentioned it negatively either; I wondered if it was a performance of family that they did not find meaningful, or whether low literacy levels or frequent phone calls rendered the letters superfluous. However they often spoke highly of the drawings they received from parents, and sending in photographs of children was something caregivers felt that prisoner parents valued.

Figure 8.1: Letter with drawing from incarcerated parent to participant Isaac, 8
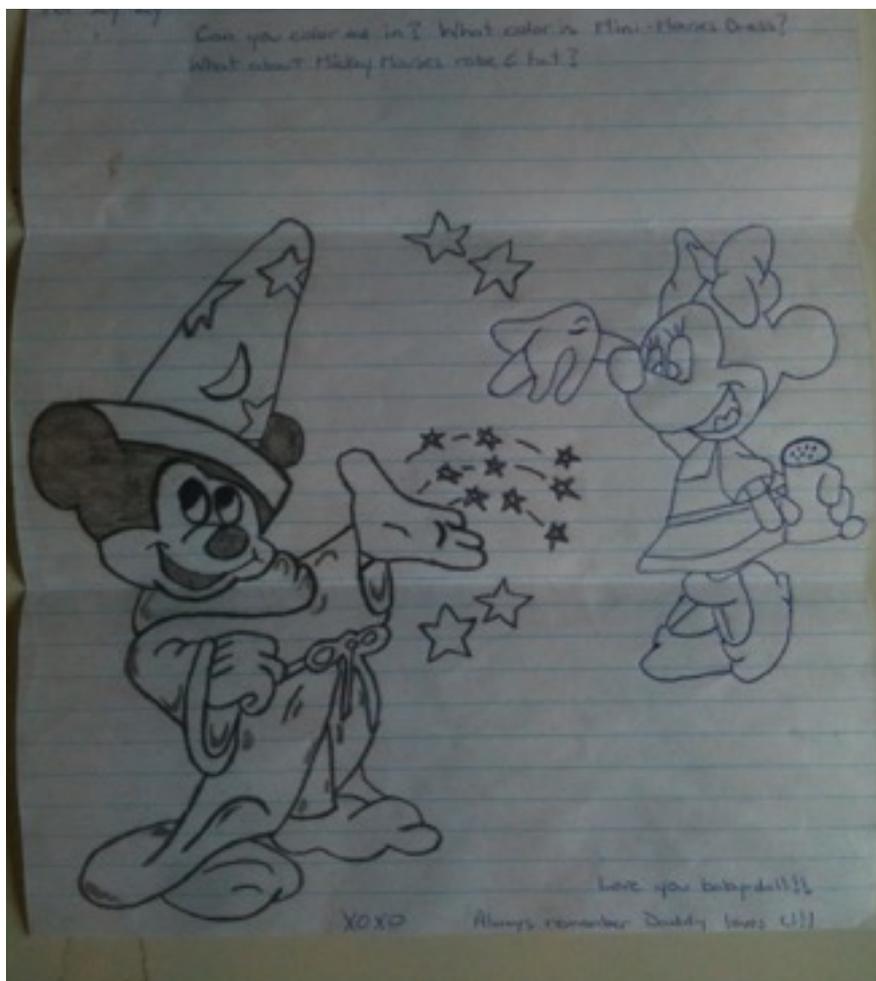
One parent I interviewed, an ex-prisoner who contacted me after seeing my flyers, described the lengths he went to maintain a connection with his children through calls and letters. He showed me intricate activity sheets that he had created whilst in prison, with crossword puzzles and other games based on their recent conversations, some of which involved the letter being sent back and forth with ongoing contributions from parent and child (Figure 8.2 and 8.1).

*Figure 8.1: Letter from incarcerated father to child*
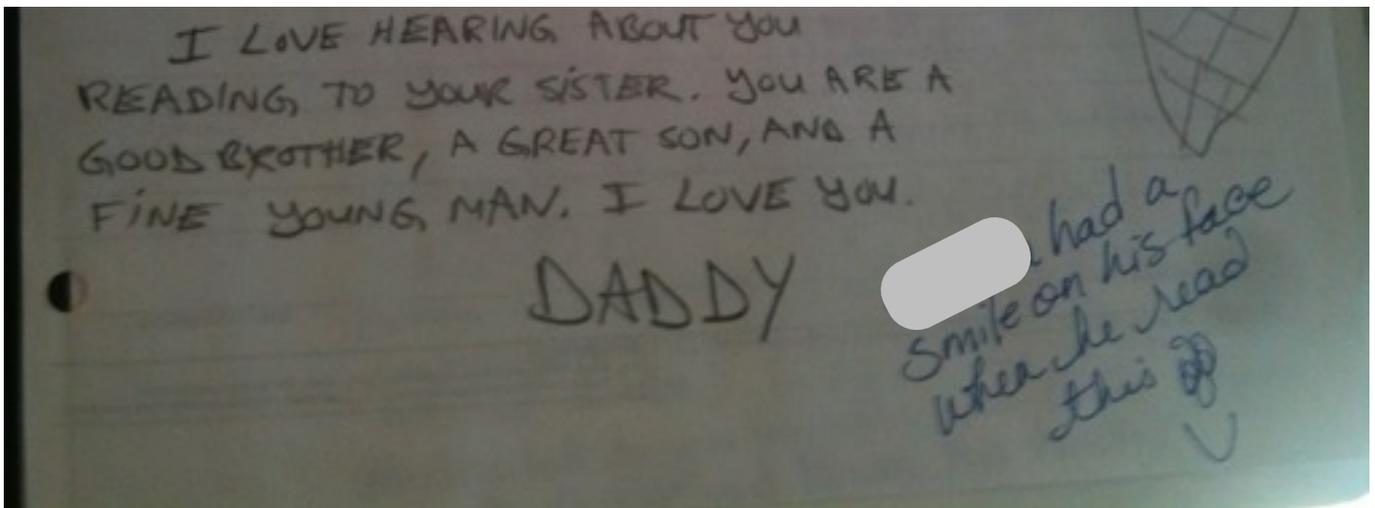
Figure 8.3: Puzzle created by incarcerated parent for child
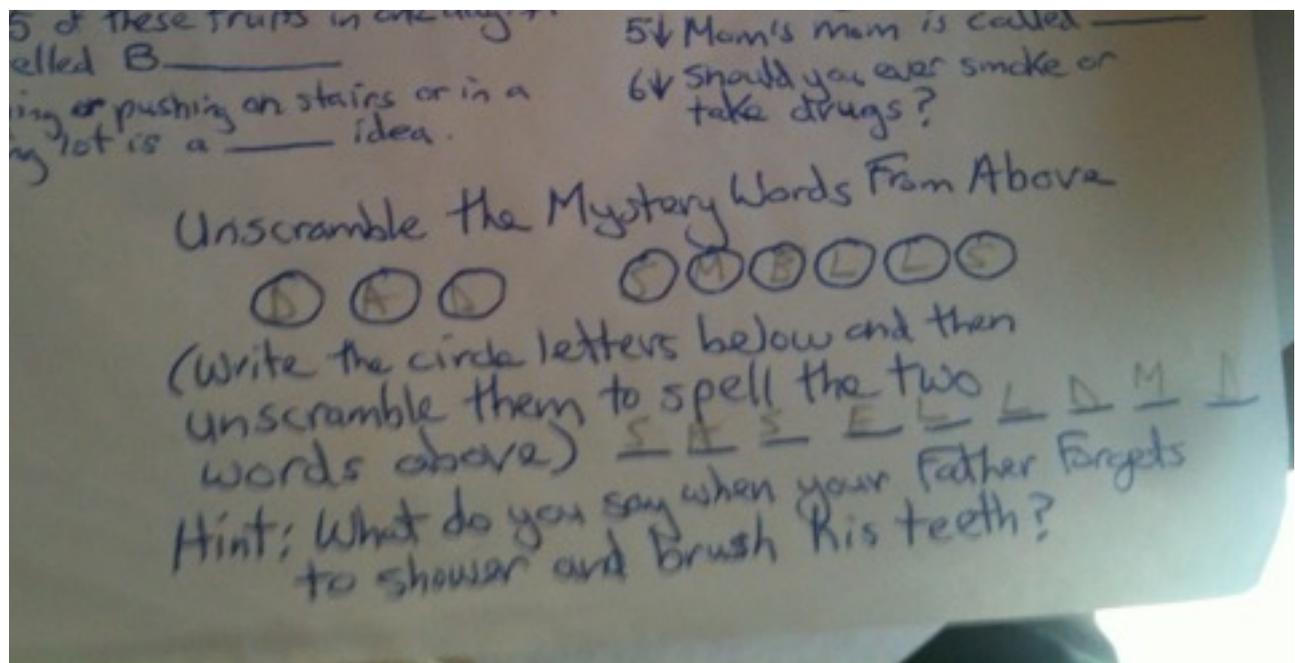
Fedyuk (2012), in describing photographs exchanged by transnational migrants with their families, argues that that they have 'powerful expressive potential", serving "as a way of making separation more bearable, maintaining connection, making up for the lack of intimacy, proving love, and re-enacting a family at a distance". However she notes that the images are more valued by the migrants than the family left behind; the former employ them as an aid for maintaining strength away from home.

Additional research is needed on the effect on children of other forms of contact with their incarcerated parent. Over three-fourths of parents incarcerated in US prisons report having mail contact with their children and about half report phone contact (Glaze & Marushak, 2008). Maintaining contact during parental incarceration and between visitations with mail correspondence and phone calls may help children and parents stay connected and preserve attachment bonds. Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010) found that a lack of contact with an incarcerated parent was associated with feelings of alienation. However, scant research exists on the impact of other modes of contact on children's adaptation during this time.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the ways that children experience the prison itself. During calls and visits to the prison, children have direct contact with the carceral structure, and have their behaviour modified by its demands. They reported a variety of feelings about the prison and its staff, including fear and antagonism towards staff, but also ambivalence and positive attitudes towards staff at times. The ways in which the prison system affected children by means of modifying their incarcerated parents' behaviour was explored, focusing on the engaged but also harsh ways parenting practices that the prison appears to engender. Caregivers' focus on the ways they perceived the prison system to be unfair, inefficient and lacking in accountability

towards families was raised briefly, and the sharing food with the prisoners was raised as an example to illustrate the points raised in this chapter.

Finally, the construction of children as temporary carceral subjects, through secondary prisonization was reviewed. Despite being subjects of the prison's power, children of prisoners are markedly absent from the discussion of prisons. The coming chapter discusses this invisibility, noting their absence from policy, research and decision-making that affect them, through parental incarceration.

Chapter 9 | "Let me be careful, but it serves no purpose to know": The Invisibility of Children of Prisoners in Policy

Introduction

This thesis has discussed the ways in which familial incarceration may often be kept secret from teachers and neighbours. I argued in Chapter 7 that this secrecy may contribute to the seeming broad ignorance about the experience of parental incarceration by many people, organisations and systems who would otherwise be considered knowledgable about the experiences of marginalised children or criminalised people, such as child welfare agencies, or prisoner rights organisations. I suggested that an acute awareness and subsequent management of the stigma that exist around criminalised people (a category in which they have been subsumed through the 'polluting' process of courtesy stigma (Goffman 1963), as well as the fear of overt discrimination, kept my participant parents silent about their children's parent in prison or own experiences of the prison system as visitors.

However, as McCormick et al (2014) write, "children of criminally incarcerated parents are an invisible population in Canada," and this invisibility runs deeper than can be explained by their and their caregivers' individual secrecy. When researchers began to explore the topic of parental incarceration in the early years of the 21st century, the data appeared to show that children of prisoners faced gravely poor outcomes, and the sheer number of these children with the late modern penal explosion meant that even small differences were massively consequential. Murray (2006: 771) writes that these findings:

> …should have prompted large-scale epidemiological and intervention studies to assess the risks associated with parental imprisonment and to evaluate programs aimed at supporting prisoners' children. Penal and social policies should have been implemented to prevent harmful effects on children. Neither the research nor the social policy has been forthcoming.

I will show in this chapter that children of prisoners have not been recognised in social policy, indeed they are markedly absent from a variety of discussions, policies

and systems in which they would be expected to be recognised, and their absence causes contradictions in stated policy intentions.

As Harter et al argue (2005: 306), "Invisibility is…both medium and outcome of discourses." I will argue that there are four reason for their invisibility: first, their membership in multiple categories of oppression or subordination creates a situation of 'intersectional invisibility' wherein they disappear from each category. Secondly, the racialized, classed and gendered way that prisoners and families are constructed supports the erasing of prisoners' children and parenting. Their invisibility serves the criminal justice system; I will specifically argue, thirdly, that the invisibility of children of prisoners is convenient and cheaper to the running of everyday criminal justice systems in the short term, and, fourthly, that their absence from carceral discussion is no accident, and that their erasure from the penal discourse is deeply political, serving a law and order ideology that requires the dehumanisation (including the de-parentification) of prisoners. Finally, I will discuss the lack of organised resistance to the practices and policies of the criminal justice system that affect families of prisoners, linking this to invisibility and related lack of problematisation.

Absent in penal policy

A frequently repeated phrase in my key informant interviews with policy makers, service providers and advocates, and particularly in my broader attempts to seek participants from various service settings, was: "I've never thought about this before." Again and again, people who work with at-risk children (including child welfare agencies), marginalised families, prisoners, and other criminalised people, reported not having thought specifically about the issues faced by children of prisoners. I suggest that this is reflective of a wider ignorance. As they represented most of the (non-prison service) service providers and virtually all of the advocates for Ontario prisoners and marginalised families, my key informants would be the most likely people in the province (and for most of the federal system) to be aware of this group's experience and needs. Professionals who are further removed from the penal system

would, I suggest, only be less likely to have considered the plight of children of prisoners, unless they have had specific experiences with them as clients (who disclosed this fact). One prisoner advocate reported that she has rarely discussed issues of parental incarceration because other issues related to prisoners' 'basic needs' had always taken precedence:

> I don't think that's indicative of not being a priority but I think there are people trapped in systems that were just like "I need help to get out of this system." And so talking about the children is not necessarily a priority now .
> [Key informant 2]

Part of this neglect must also be due to the lack of research or even basic information about Canadian children of prisoners. As noted in Chapter 2, no quantifiable demographic information is collected from prisoners about their children anywhere in Canada. A senior official noted that family situation *is* discussed and recorded qualitatively during some interviews with prisoners:

> So all of that, from that standpoint, all that information is captured. It's all known, it's all disclosed, people do eventually ask. It's just not necessarily part of the intake and assessment process and documented in a way that is retrievable and quantifiable.
> [Key Informant 2]

However being "just" irretrievable and unquantifiable renders this information useless from a policy perspective. The lack of useful data clearly contributes to the absence of this population from policy discussion. This absence is marked. In the formal policies of CSC (known as "Commissioner's Directives" (CD)), the explicit mention of prisoners' children is extremely limited and that which does exist frames them virtually exclusively in terms of the risks they pose to the prison. The following shows, for example, the total five mentions of children in the CD concerning prisoner visits, the main point of interface between many prisoner's children and the institution.

> [definition of] Accompanying adult: within the context of bringing minor children into a penitentiary to visit an inmate, an accompanying adult can be anyone who has reached the age of majority of the province where the institution he/she wishes to visit is located,
>
> [definition of] Minor child: any individual under the age of majority.
>
> 11. A minor child must be escorted by an accompanying adult.
>
> 18. Both the accompanying adult and the minor child must be approved as visitors in accordance with the above paragraphs. The accompanying adult will also complete the Visiting Application - Child Safety Waiver form (CSC/SCC 0653-1E) every two years.

One might consider missing, for example, any mention of what the goals of the process are for children, any special rights or needs that children have in respect of visits, or any special accommodations, equipment or recommendations to address children's safety or well-being. The "Child Safety Waiver" form mentioned is simply a contract to be signed by the child's outside caregiver which releases CSC "from any responsibility it may have in allowing the said child/children to accompany me on a visit to _____ Institution."

An important exception is the policy related to the CSC Mother-Child program, which has, since 1996, allowed for women prisoners to reside with their children inside the institution under certain conditions (LaBoucane-Benson and Van Dieten, M. 2013). This policy states that its objective is to "To provide a supportive environment that fosters and promotes stability and continuity for the mother-child relationship" and notes as a policy principle that:

> The best interests of the child shall be the preeminent consideration in all decisions relating to participation in the Mother-Child Program. The best interests of the child include ensuring the safety and security as well as the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of the child.
>
> (Commissioner's Directive (CD) 768)

One respondent explained the history and inception of the Canadian Mother-Child program:

> [One warden] was very clever, I mean she-- basically she had women [..] who were in custody and their kids would come to the fence to see their moms, they would walk sometimes for days to see them. And she would let them come in, have lunches with their moms, and do stuff […] It was quite progressive. And I mean it was the time too, right, I mean a lot of the people working in those systems knew that there was not much difference between them and who they were guarding. And most of them were Indigenous women and so she— there was a woman who was pregnant and she decided to, you know, instead of announcing it or even requesting [removal of the child], she got all the women to, you know, they made booties and bonnets and whatever, invited the media in to celebrate the birth of this child and, and so it became such a positive thing that they didn't kick the baby out. That was the first Mother Child program.
>
> [Key Informant 4]

The program usefully allows for children under 4 years old to reside full time with their mothers, and 5-6 years olds on a part time basis with regular weekend and holiday visits. This program is, however, implemented in a method and political context that means it is very different in practice than stated policy. Specifically, it is extremely difficult to access and thus consistently "hardly used" since its 2001 inception and even less so in recent years as shown in the table below; the part-time program in particular has been "rarely used" at any point (Brennan 2014). There are around 900 women incarcerated in federal institutions (Juristat 2015), around half of them mothers, and the program (both its full and part time iterations) has been used by an average of 2.9 mothers per year since its inception (Brennan 2014.).

Figure 9.1: Total Number of Participants in CSC Mother-Child Program

Total Number of Participants Across Canada from January 2001 – August 2012
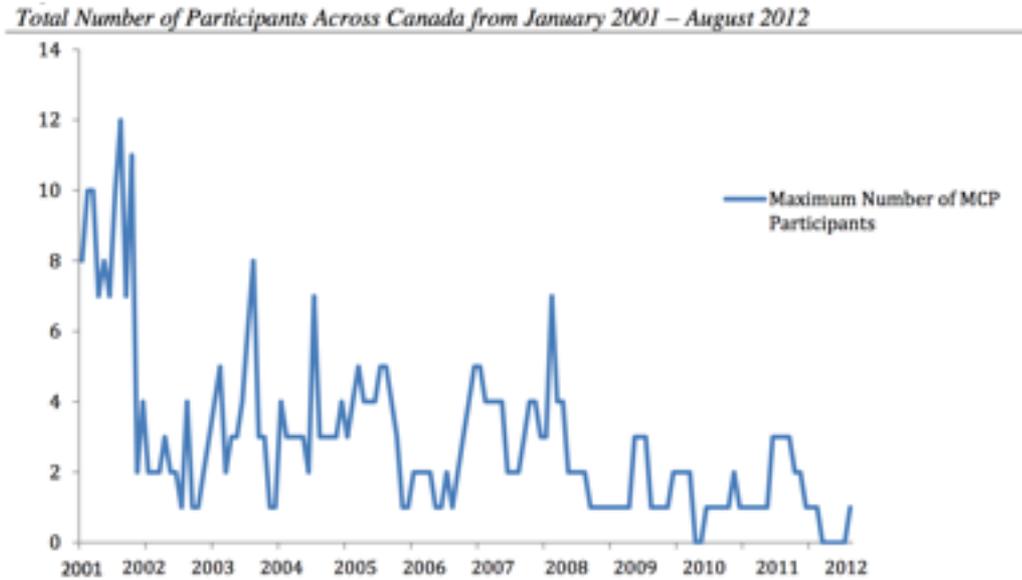
(Table reproduced from Brennan 2014: 17)

Brennan's 2014 review of the program found that several factors make the program inaccessible, many of them related to the recent punitive turn in federal correction tied to the broader project of penal modernism. Amendments to the eligibility program in 2008 excluded women who had been convicted of certain crimes including violence[27] and children aged 7-12 who were previously eligible for the part time program, required child welfare agency support and added a "re-evaluation" of participation for any mother who did not allow her child to be searched for contraband before entry to the institution. Researchers note:

> Therefore, while CSC has a structure in place to allow women to build, maintain and strengthen their relationships with their children, the institutional rules are so restrictive, that virtually no offender has qualified for the institutional program.

 (LaBoucane-Benson & Van Dieten 2013)

Advocates also noted to Brennan (2014) that women's institutions have become more crowded and their environments more punitive in nature, and both these factors

---

[27] Federal prisoners include only those sentenced to a prison term over two years, making convictions for violence more common.

reduced the accessibility of the program. A report indeed indicates that overcrowding prevents there being sufficient bed space for the program to operate in at least one women's prison (LaBoucane-Benson et al. 2013)**.** In all, the Mother-Child program exists 'on paper' but, I would argue, children are in practice no more present within institutions either physically or figuratively because of it.

Further, an advocate for women prisoners explained that she is wary of recommending the program because of the ripple effect that the parenting assessment can have:

> Personally I don't encourage women to go through the assessment unless there's a really strong chance they can have their children. Because if you look at the assessment, the [form] for the assessment process they use, it's basically the same assessment process you have if you've been accused and considered to be violent or abusive of your children […] My concern is after they're released, if child welfare sees this kind of assessments on your file there's a presumption, presumption that you were an abusive and-- or the very least there will be scrutiny that would not otherwise have existed.
>
> [Key informant 4]

In reviewing publicly-available Correctional Service of Canada documentation, I located the following additional references to children of prisoners, in sum:

- A pilot program, Child Link, in the Western Region which provides video visitation for women prisoners in a Saskatchewan prison with their children, who attend at a halfway house in Edmonton, Alberta. Like the Mother-Child program, the actual use of the program is extremely limited. The program launched in 2012, with one prisoner holding video visits with her son for 5 months in 2013 (CSC 2013) However, the program has apparently expanded to include more mothers at this prison since 2013
- Reference to the family orientation program, a one hour session that was offered to new federal prisoners, run by the charity Canadian Families and Corrections Network, which provided information and documents around contact with

families. However, this program lost its CSC funding in 2013 and is now no longer offered.

- Information on the CSC website intended for prisoners' families about some practical aspects of visits, including a web tour, security information and basic contact information, and a CFCN document with information about visiting

- A 1995 edition of a now-defunct CSC research summary publication devoted to families and corrections (see Carpentier 1995)

However, I found occasional references to prisoners as parents in CSC research, particularly related to women prisoners, and a reference to parenting skills in descriptions of the programming that prisoners can be offered. I emailed CSC to ask about provision of parenting programs to federal prisoners, and received the following reply:

> CSC is legally mandated to provide programs and services that address offenders' criminal behaviour and contribute to their successful transition into the community. As a result, the Service offers correctional programs that are based on research of "what works", targeting factors that have been proven to reduce future re-offending.
>
> *Since parenting programs do not directly target such factors, these types of programs are classified as social programs* within CSC. Unlike correctional programs, social programs are not offered on a national basis and are subject to institutional approval, feasibility, and suitability. This said, the Service offers the Parenting Skills Training Program in select federal institutions. This program targets men and women who have, or hope to have, contact with their children. The offender's partner may also participate in this program.
>
> […] It should also be noted that each federal Women Offender Institution does ensure a parenting skills program is offered, either the specific Parenting Skills Program previously referred to, or a parenting skills program facilitated by community based organisations and/or volunteers.
>
> [Mason 2015; emphasis mine]

I then attempted to request information on the actual provision of the Parenting Skills Training Program from CSC and eventually received the following data:

Figure 9.2: Image of information received from CSC (2015) regarding parenting program completion

The data include all program completions that were completed at a Federal Institution or Healing Lodge from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2014 where the program had the word "Parent" or "Parenting" in the program's module title or had a sub category label of "Living Skills Parent Skills" or "Living Skills Other Parenting Skills". The following data are the number of program completions that ended during the year indicated. Each completion represents an offender who was accepted into the program and attended all sessions regardless of their outcome.

Table 1. The Number of Completions of Parenting Skills Programs							
Region	Facility	Title of Program Module	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Atlantic	Nova Institution For Women	The Parenting Skills Training Program	6	7	1	0	7
Quebec	Joliette Institution	Parental Skills (Local)	8	12	18	5	11
Prairie	Edmonton Institution For Women	Parenting Skills Program	0	0	8	0	11
	Pê Sâkâstêw Centre	Father's Of Tradition	0	15	4	11	9
	Bowden Institution	Aboriginal Parenting Program	0	0	31	39	14
	Grande Cache Institution	The Parenting Skills Training Program	0	0	3	2	0
	Willow Cree Healing Lodge	Miyo Opikinawasiwin Program; Good Child Rearing/Parenting	18	31	39	32	28
	Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge	Kisewatotatowin Parenting Program	0	0	0	7	0
		Nobody's Perfect Parenting Program	4	0	0	0	0
		Nobody's Perfect Parenting	0	6	7	0	0
Pacific	Fraser Valley Institution	The Parenting Skills Training Program	0	3	0	0	0
Total			36	74	111	96	80

(Source: Data Warehouse. Data current up to the end of fiscal year 2014-2015)

For reference, the following prisons included in this table house male prisoners: Pe Sakastew Centre, Bowden Institution, Grand Cache Institution, Willow Cree Healing Lodge. There are approximately 15,000 people in federal custody, meaning that 0.7% of prisoners completed the parenting program in its busiest year since 2010 (Juristat 2015). This chart shows that the program is primarily taken up by male prisoners (female prisoners account for the following percentage of participants: 2010: 50%; 2011: 38%; 2012: 31%; 2013: 13%; 2014: 36%), however as women make up 6% of federal prisoners, provision is strongly skewed towards women prisoners (Juristat 2015).

Ontario provincial prison service documents contained extremely limited reference to prisoners' children. I found no reference in any publicly-available document published by this service to 'child', 'parent' or 'family.' The single exception was the 30 page document "Information Guide for Adult Institutions" for prisoners (MCSCS

2015). In this document, the word 'parent' does not occur and the word 'child' occurs once (in this sentence: "A visit may be denied or stopped in the following situations: […] fails to prevent children from disturbing others in the visiting area;"). There are several occurrences of the word 'family,' however these refer to adult family members acting in a support capacity to the prisoner, for example assisting in meeting bail conditions, bringing clothing to the prison, paying fines on the prisoner's behalf, paying for newspaper subscriptions and verifying information to and supporting the parole process. The denial of any responsibility to prisoner's families in this document is stark; advice to prisoners states:

> It is up to you to tell your family and friends where you are. It is also
> up to you to deal with any *problems* you have in the community (e.g.,
> debts or *family matters*, etc.).
> (MCSCS 2015: 24; emphasis mine)

It is ironic that provincial prison policy appears to be less attuned than federal policy to the needs of children of prisoners, as practical parenting issues would seem to be much *more* pressing for provincially incarcerated people, and remand prisoners in particular, as this includes the period immediately after arrest. Issues such as arranging alternate caregiving arrangements for children for whom the prisoner was a primary caregiver, arranging for funds to be directed to the caregiver if the prisoner was a financial provider for the child, and attending to a child's initial surprise, confusion and fear around a parent's arrest and incarceration, are naturally all tasks that are more likely to be attempted immediately after arrest.

I suggest that the above list is evidence of a profound paucity of attention, service or responsibility to children of prisoners in the policy and practices of Canadian corrections, and particularly the Ontario remand system. While limited references to these children are found, they are in practice not meaningfully present. Children and partners are constructed as incidental, social concerns, outside the purview and responsibility of the prison system, this in spite of the myriad ways in which the lives of children of prisoners may be deeply affected by the decisions and policies of the

prison system. Children can be seen as constituted as subjects of the system in the Foucauldian sense when their lives are controlled, regulated and managed by the system through the mechanisms visits and other encounters (McKee 2009), even if this regulation appears to be invisible and by stealth. I found no examples of children themselves being consulted about prison policies that affect them; children's 'voice' appears to be wholly absent in prison policy.

Further, several policy and program elements related to parental incarceration are notably absent from this list. First, I found limited reference to parenting from prison, aside from the modest provision of the CSC Parenting Skills Training noted above. For example, I found no reference to prisoners having access to additional visits or phone calls with their children, nor programs that practically support parenting that including parent coaching, structured visitation, or video visiting. There are pilot programs in many US states that incorporate such elements (ASPE 2010). Secondly, there is no provision for or mention of any research or even basic data collection related to prisoners' children. As discussed, no quantitative or retrievable data is collected about prisoners' families at any provincial or federal institution in Canada.

Thirdly, I found no formal or informal reference to any services focused, in full or part, on the needs or wishes of children of prisoners. Where other international jurisdictions have comprehensive or broadly-available programs such as family visitor centres outside the prison (such as UK-based PACT 2016); programs that facilitate child-focused contact and activities during visits (such as ASPE 2015), resources created specifically to inform and support children of prisoners (such as the Scottish service Families Outside 2016); and specialised summer camps for children of prisoners.[28] No such programs are offered anywhere in Canada.

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[28] Examples include a camp program for which children enter their incarcerated father's prison daily and spend structured days engaging in a camp curriculum together with their father (Place for Grace (2016) in the US), and an overnight camp hosted by the prison service and staffed by correctional officers (Washington State DOC (2016) in the US),

Exceptions are the following: The limited provision of the Mother-Child and Child Link programs mentioned above; A storybook program run by the Elizabeth Fry Society in three Vancouver-area prisons, and another storybook program run by local library volunteers in one women's prison in Edmonton, Alberta (Elizabeth Fry 2015; GELA 2015; Mitchell 2010) and possibly ad hoc programs at other institutions (Vivar 2016); a worker from CFCN, spoken of fondly by several children, who offers crafts, games and other activities to children during occasional visits in Kingston Institutions.

In comparison, Storybook programs are run as broadly-available service to prisoners in UK and many other countries.[29] A senior official described the extent to which Canada fails to meet higher standards of service provision to prisoners' families:

> Certainly there are other countries that have shown that you can support families in a much more fulsome manner. There are some countries that have schools that are run on behalf of or as part of the correctional system, where family is seen as a central part of re-integration… There are some countries where things like healthcare services are even provided to immediate family members because what's the point, particularly if you're dealing with mental health services, if there's a dysfunctional family environment and you've got to deal with that at the same time? So there's countries that as a matter of policy and practice have gone much further than Canada has.
> [Key informant 2]

Finally, I found no formal or informal reference to the rights of prisoners' children, nor of prison services' formal responsibilities to them. While prisoners' children are profoundly affected by CSC policy and practice, they regularly enter CSC property when they visit, and they are subject to CSC rules in all of their interactions with their parents, they are not framed as *clients* of CSC. Even more so in provincial prisons, children appear to be constructed as incidental and any responsibility for them passively abdicated. This would seem to differ markedly from other state institutions

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[29] In the UK, story-reading programs are widely available to prisoners, such as those run by Storybook Dads (http://www.storybookdads.org.uk/) which provides services in over 100 UK prisons (male and female). Similar services are offered throughout Europe and Australia.

that family members of the direct client may visit, such as Hospitals, which might rather see family members as indirect or secondary clients, not to mention clinically valuable for the information and support they can provide. One respondent describes a telling experience:

> I had a, to supervise [prison] visiting and there were a number of tables and then the families would come in, they'd have their little goodies and little gifts for their kids and their little toys over there. […] So you had a very diverse, you know, parents coming through but you could see all of them not really knowing their roles. They really didn't know, the parents, they didn't really know, they didn't really understand their roles. They didn't know how to, "how do I?" So I said to my supervisor and I said, "Can I run a mother's group or a parenting group?" And he goes "It's not in our mandate." And I said, "so how can that not be in our mandate?"
>
> *When your mandate is to reduce reoffending*
>
> Exactly, yeah, exactly. And I said, "tell me something," I said "when little Joey leaves," I said, "wouldn't it be a better outcome and help him by knowing that we have at least done that much to help make the home a better place to come home to?"
>
> [Key informant 13]

Similarly, families can make complaints to the federal Correctional Investigator about the treatment of a prisoner by CSC, but they cannot have their own treatment or rights investigated. The Investigator described his office's mandate, set out in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), as follows:

> We always cast it in the light of the inmate… So if the young person or the family member makes a complaint to us about the way they were treated, we would respond to that, as I said, but our response would be in the context of 'John has been denied a visit from his son,' not 'the son has been denied access to John.'
>
> [Sapers 2014]

This lack of attention, policy, rights, voice or support from a system which can so deeply impact their daily life, well-being and outcome is remarkable. Ironically,

families could just as well be constructed as valuable resources by the penal system. As discussed, family support is one of the strongest predictors of reduced recidivism, thus if lowest re-offending is a goal then it would be sensible to encourage families in their support and contact with prisoners

Invisible in Canadian social policy

In addition to being having no meaningful presence in prison policy and programming, children of prisoners are also absent from the broader children and family policy context. While this group of children can easily be described as high needs and high risk, and number in the hundreds of thousands, they simply do not exist in Canadian social policy.

Canada at the time of this fieldwork had a conservative majority government, and tends to have classically liberal social policy aims such as lower taxation, reduced welfare state, increased privatisation and marketisation, and individual choice over service provision (Esping-Andersen 1990). In practice, Canada is quite average in its social policy support to its 5.6 million children (Statistics Canada 2012). Canada falls around the OECD average in child poverty rates, has a relatively generous maternity leave entitlement, and relatively worse terms of childcare enrolment and cash benefits for families (focused on low income families, having moved sharply away from more universal child benefits) (Beaujot et al. 2013).

However, supporting children and families is a major political focus in Canada, and widely referred to in government rhetoric. For example, in the recently released federal budget, one of five published "budget themes" (including "Protecting Canadians" and "Balancing the Budget") is "Helping Families Make Ends Meet" (Canada 2015a). In a budget announcement video, a cabinet minister explains:

> We are introducing these [tax benefit] measures because strong
> families make a strong country. And our goal as a government is to
> make sure that Canada is the best country in the world to raise a
> family. That's why we want to help families who are trying to make

> ends meet and why our new tax cuts and benefits will help all
> Canadian families with children.
>
> (Canada 2015b)

Provincial governments (which have responsibility for welfare payments and most direct social service provision) echo this focus on supporting children and families. In a recent press release about a new service to special needs children, the current centrist government of Ontario states that "Giving every child the opportunity to thrive and have the best possible start in life is part of the government's plan to support families and create positive environments where children and youth can reach their full potential." (Ontario 2015).

These statements contrast sharply with the profound paucity of services, research and attention to children of prisoners. Earlier chapters have shown that families of prisoners are both disproportionately impoverished and must spend significant amounts of money on visits and calls if they wish to keep in touch with the prisoner. However federal government rhetoric about supporting families to prosper financially includes no mention of this group, nor are they offered any specific direct benefits or tax deductions to offset the amounts spent in the recent budget that includes, for example, tax credits for parents to recoup money spent on children's arts classes and fitness programs (Canada 2015c). Nor does the provincial government provide or fund any services specifically to children of prisoners, a group that might benefit from a range of service provision options to address needs, be they practical (such as a transportation program), emotional, or case management.

It might be suggested that children of prisoners is too small a group to warrant stand-alone programs or mention in a federal budget. However other groups of children are mentioned in the 2015 budget (such as children with autism; Canada 2015c), and children of prisoners likely number in the several tens of thousands in Canada (footnote 3). I therefore argue that Canada's treatment of children of prisoners, or more accurately, governments' neglect of these children, is at odds with stated policies with respect to supporting Canadian children and families, both around financial support and service provision.

Explaining Children of Prisoners' Invisibility

This policy discord could be innocuous; the waxing and waning of political interest in certain issues seems often to be as much about novelty as determined by severity or need. However, the above evidence does not show any waxing, as such. I found no evidence that children of prisoners have ever been the subject of any significant or consistent attention or service provision in Canada. Further, their absence from policy and political discourse has been shown above to be quite marked and broad.

Harter et al. (2005: 308) write that homeless youth, their comparably invisible subjects, are "phantoms" and argue that "Structures both enable and constrain; thus the disappearance of many youth without homes in mainstream institutional discourses simultaneously enhances and diminishes the power of various stakeholders." Similarly, I will argue that the invisibility of children of prisoners far from innocuous, indeed it is a function of the roles and positions these children occupy and serves a variety of purposes for those in power.

Intersecting Invisibility

In several of my key informant interviews I found myself having to re-route the conversation back to children of prisoners when participants had steered towards populations with which they were more knowledgeable, conflating the interests and needs of children of prisoners with prisoners themselves or their partners. The overshadowing of children by the needs and interests of their parents was thus another way in which they were rendered invisible. For example, here a key informant turns the focus back to the prisoner:

> *If there were kind of broader government policy in this area, or something specific to the rights of or the role of families and children of prisoners, what should the aims and goals of that be? What would it look like, if you feel there is a need?*
>
> Well, I think, for me, you know, it's always about what is going to best facilitate that individual so in this case the offender from being able to integrate back into his [community].
> [Key Informant 2]

A key informant who sought to set up a program for children of prisoners also found that the parent's incarceration was so overshadowing that he had difficulty finding board members from his community who understood that the focus was to be on the children: "The first thing they go is "hmm, you wanna set up an organisation that helps kids who have a parent in jail." And then everybody focuses on "a parent in jail." [Key Informant 6]

Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach's (2008) concept of intersectional invisibility provides one explanation. Specifically, they argue that less prototypical members of oppressed groups that also belong to another subordinate group are not recognised as members of either group. Like any group, people connected by subordination are heterogenous, subject to internal power hierarchies that see the most powerful members as controlling elites, even if they occupy a limited social space as a group (Hannem 2012). In this way, the marginal members of marginalised groups become "acutely socially invisible." (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach 2008). Cornish (2006) notes that "the most profound stigmatisation often occurs at the intersection of multiple forms of exclusion." This corresponds to Crenshaw's work on intersectionality, which argues that there is a unique marginalisation at the intersection of forms of oppressions such as racism and sexism (2002).

I suggest that intersectional invisibility contributes to the absence of any significant advocacy work, research, service provision or other attention to children of prisoners. Children are clearly marginal and less powerful members (in both abstract and practical terms) of groups that include adults. Their interests are particularly rendered invisible when they are assumed to have identical interests to the more powerful members of a series of more specific groups: the criminalised, secondarily criminalised people, or even the family of an individual prisoner. Children's interests may fail to be privileged even in services that explicitly seek to support them. For example, one key informant who works with families of prisoners reports an approach to prison visits that privileges the prisoner's and the prison service's interests over the child's:

The other thing is, you know I'll— if we can make it an enjoyable experience, they're more likely to want to go again. The whole thing was, 'let's try to figure out how to make this an enjoyable experience and that'll promote ongoing communication of contact.' And the benefits are, you know. And that's what I said to CSC: the benefit, it, it's a safer place because [prisoners are] not allowed a visit if you're acting up. So it's a benefit for CSC, the program. Obviously with maintaining good family contact, it's better for reintegration, so it's good for the inmate, you know. If, if these kids, it's their dad, 90% of them it's their dad in jail, who a lot of times is their hero, they miss him. So to, to facilitate this is only gonna promote stronger bonds between them.

[Key informant 6]

Without wishing to imply that this respondent's approach is bad for children, nor that it is not based in a benevolent interest in children's well-being (and indeed he may have simply been describing an effective way to promote this program to CSC partners), I suggest that this statement is grounded in several uncritical and unfounded beliefs. One is that visits are always and necessarily beneficial to children and that prisoners' and children's interests and wishes coincide. Poehlmann's (2005) research into negative outcomes associated with children visiting prisons in some situations suggests that this assumption is problematic. Another is that prisoners' needs for reintegration success is a goal for which a child's visit can and ought to be a means. Codd (2007: 258) notes the concerns about using children as tools to increase the well-being and interests of their parent: "it is more appropriate to support families for their own sake, rather than as instruments of penal policy."

Accountability

I posit that another reason for the invisibility of children of prisoners from the criminal justice system is that it serves the needs of this system for these children to be unknown, empirically. As noted, no quantifiable data is collected about children of prisoners or parenting in prison. Without basic knowledge about families of prisoners, it is possible to not take (or be given) any responsibility for their well-being or

outcomes. A senior official responded to my questions about the lack of available data about children of prisoners:

> We don't know. If you were to ask me the question how many have children and age ranges and what happens to them, and are they involved in child welfare or Children's Aid Societies, I could not tell you …
>
> *Why?*
>
> Let me be careful but it serves no purpose to know. I'm not saying…
>
> *No, no, I know exactly what you mean.*
>
> It's… What would the Correctional Service of Canada do with that information?
>
> *When one has information, one almost, one could say one is given the responsibility to do something with that information.*
>
> Yes. You know, that's when I… It serves no purpose. Now of course it serves a purpose, It's tremendously important from a policy perspective and from a family health perspective and integration and all that stuff. But at this point, what would, why would CSC ask? 'Where are your three kids?' 'Who is feeding them tonight?' That may become relevant for day parole consideration or maybe even for assessing for a family visit. But [if] you're doing a pen placement?
>
> [Key Informant 1]

In this interesting passage, the official treads carefully but communicates his opinion that the lack of data collection is not innocuous; if information about children of prisoners existed, the prison service might be held to account or required to respond to this information. He statement that "it serves no purpose" for the prison service to know may as well be in inverted commas, as he quickly notes that the data would, of course, serve a policy purpose; he is explaining that it serves no *desired* purpose for the prison service.

The data, if known, could lead to the government to be given challenging responsibilities for children of prisoners' well-being and for addressing the impact of parental incarceration. For example, public awareness of the numbers and plight of children of prisoners could mean political pressure to provide a variety of services and supports. Further, basic data about children of prisoners, combined with recognition

of their needs and outcomes, could lead to administrative, judicial or quasi-judicial demands that children of prisoners be treated as clients of the prison service. This would not be unfounded; children enter prisons, are subject to prison rules, enter into communication with prison resident which is mediated by the prison, and are profoundly emotionally and materially affected by prison policies. That they are *de facto* clients of the prison service can certainly be argued.

If children of prisoners were seen as secondary clients of the prison service, responsibilities would be a high financial costs in the short term; providing, for example, transportation services, financial resources to support family visiting, further visiting options including video visits, structured and supported family visits, bespoke programming for child of prisoners, would all be associated with high financial cost, particularly in development. These costs may actually also be a wise long-term financial investment, potentially recuperated through lower recidivism rates, and meet other correctional and social justice goals, however short political cycles may make such investments unattractive.

However an instrumental focus on families as tools for meeting recidivism and prison violence reduction goals might be worse than invisibility. Codd (2007) noted concerns about children of prisoners being framed instrumentally by prison services as a means for improving prisoners' behaviour. McDermott and King (1992) noted that the UK attention to prisoners' families by HMPS observed in their study amounted to little more than 'lip service' and a recognition that families could serve as a residence upon release. Nussbaum argues that the state has a responsibility to value family love and care, but also seek to promote individual capabilities where existing social norms make distributions asymmetrical or women the instruments of the ends of others (2001: 285).

In addition to financial costs, responsibility for children of prisoners might be seen as adding to the risk and liability faced by the prison service. If 350,000 children became clients of the prison service, and their well-being and outcomes thereby fell under the purview and mandate of the service, a secondary concern after cost might likely be

the security risks and other changes the prison would see this as presenting. Watson (2015: 342) argues that CSC resists research by external sources in an effort to avoid criticism, transparency, and change; "Asking for [in her case] staff perceptions could potentially open a door to problems or criticisms that would demand organisational attention and modification of the status quo." The provincial prison system is even more opaque; as a criminologist was recently quoted in the media: "Looking at the Ontario [corrections] website, you don't see any evidence of a research unit in Ontario… There needs to be engagement with community so that what goes on in prisons is not mysterious." (White 2016)

The prison system has also long been argued to take an actuarial approach, reducing prisoners to their risk assessment (Hannah-Moffatt 2016). Lives reduced to actuarial rates and devoid of social context are surely less messy to manage. Munn (2012) invokes Foucault to show that prisoners' lives are lived under regulation, discipline and surveillance, all through the language of risk assessment but which, she argues, sends the message of undesirability and un-fit-ness. A striking piece of evidence of this faith in actuarial assessments, and reluctance to discuss experiences is found in Watson's (2015) case study of her failed attempt to gain research access to CSC prisons. She received the following response from CSC to her proposal to ask staff about their perceptions (of substance abuse programming):

> CSC currently uses a variety of actuarial tools to assess change and the impact of a program, which have been demonstrated to be more effective than clinical assessment. Accordingly, the basis for asking for opinions is not supported by research.
> (Quoted in Watson 2015: 342)

As shown above, families are similarly already reduced in formal policy primarily to potential carriers of contraband, over any other attribute or potential. One respondent decried the extensive, stigmatising security processes and moreover the privileging of liability and convenience over all else:

>Why are they a security risk? Why are volunteers a security risk? Why are families assumed to be a security risk? They—other than the administrative convenience of the system itself. Doesn't somebody actually have to do something on the basis of evidence to treat you as a class. And because children can be victimised by others (??) parents and therefore be suspected because somebody could put something in their diaper and they'll find some case in Alberta 30 years ago and some. Yeah, you know, that justifies it forever. What's the cost of this? What's the cost to the next generation? […] It's only the convenience to you. It's, it's easier for you to block everyone than it is to start find… To just only block only those who really are a problem. So you, they, the policies are essentially I mean they change a little bit, try to at times change the presumption. But really when you look at the system, all the presumption is if you're not one of us, being staff, you're dangerous. And they do the same with agencies, and volunteers and everything but I think that's particularly a problem with children.

>[Key Informant 5]

Ideology

The final reason for the invisibility of children in penal policy is, I argue, that the construction of prisoners as parents is incompatible and disruptive to the political narrative of criminals under the neoliberal hegemony. The invisibility of children of prisoners therefore serves the ideology needs of the system. Canadian criminal justice policy has changed dramatically since the Conservative Party formed the first of three consecutive governments in 2006. An explicit push by the government to change the penal landscape of the country has seen a myriad of legislative changes in line with the punitive trend across English-speaking and Western European countries.

The government introduced broad-ranging mandatory minimum prison sentences, actively resisted research- and court-supported safe injection sites, and introduced a 'dangerous offender' designation which allows prisoners to be kept incarcerated indefinitely (CBC 2011). The 2015 Election platform by the incumbent Conservative Party continued to use criminal justice policy as a major election issue and to use a punitivism narrative with a promise to introduce "Life means life" legislation (removal of parole for certain life sentences) and attack the other two major political

parties for their criminal justice stances. A new "life means life" legislation bill was introduced but died on the order paper after the government called an election, though in fact many argued that the Bill served no purpose; life sentences can mean a prisoners will die behind bars, if they are denied parole. For this reason, "Justice critics and opposition members claim this bellicose stance appears to be aimed more at scoring political points than protecting the public" (Harpur 2015).

Under this ideology, criminals are constructed as unredeemable, deviant 'others,' and people in prison exemplify the extreme binary on which the punitive Law and Order approach to criminal justice relies. In this normative and strict binary, the category of criminals is constructed as mutually exclusive from other, law-abiding and hardworking citizens. This is seen in the frequent use of a 'zero-sum game' to suggest that criminals having rights harms or preclude the rights of victims (Reiner 2007). For example, one press release says another party leader's "dangerous, ideology driven criminal justice policy would make our communities less safe by putting the so-called "rights" of criminals ahead of the rights of victims" (Conservative 2015).

For example, regulations pertaining to Ontario Corrections state "The Superintendent or an employee designated by the Superintendent for the purpose may authorize, in writing, that telephone conversations between an inmate and any other persons be listened to or otherwise intercepted where the Superintendent or designated employee believes on reasonable grounds that the conversations will contain evidence of an act that would jeopardize the security of the institution or the safety of any person.[30]" However it is my understanding that all telephone calls are monitored, and without suggesting that this is inappropriate or unnecessary, in the context of the above Regulation, it means that the person's incarceration is taken in itself as reasonable grounds to suspect that their conversations *will* contain evidence of safety-jeopardizing acts. Given that the majority of provincial inmates are on remand and therefore legally innocent, this contradiction is bold indeed.

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[30] Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services Act (1990) Reg. 778. In the subsequent clause, it is noted that prisoners' calls to solicitors, MPs and other officials are confidential and not subject to this clause.

To this strict binary, the presence of children and parenting roles is, I would argue, disruptive. Outside of the prison context, young children are constructed as universally innocent, and parenting as valuable, worthy of policy and financial support (as shown above). Further, parenting is profoundly human and complex. In contrast, prisoners are constructed as narrowly deviant, less-human 'others.' One respondent explains that the resolution to this discord is to remove the attribute 'parent' from prisoners:

> Oh well I think right now it's seen as anyone who is a prison doesn't deserve to be a parent. That they're somehow bad and we, we hadn't been there for probably a good couple of decades but we're back there again. And it's not encouraged for them to think, I mean they're encouraged to do addiction programmes or anger programmes or whatever and, and not focusing on some of those relationships, so yeah, so.
>
> *And do you think that's political ideology?*
>
> Yeah of course, of course, yeah. I mean, the fact that these are people not deserving of being parents. We are more willing to spend you know billions of dollars putting kids in care than promoting those relationships or encouraging people.
>
> [Key Informant 4]

Giddens (1984: 192) describes ideology as functioning to legitimate and favour dominant interests by constructing narrow interests as universal, denying contradictions, and bolstering existing social structures. As such, the contradiction that children of prisoners and prisoners' parent role presents to the current criminal justice ideology can be seen as needing to be denied to maintain the ideology's legitimation and sense. One respondent explained:

> It is a different concept and that's exactly what we're seeing now in this government. This government isn't going to punish people for what they do. This government punishes people for what they are, that's why you tend to increase mandatory minimum without rationale and also effectively abolish pardons at the same time. I mean if you

really thought that harsher penalties will change people why would you want to abolish pardons[…]

You're different, you are substantially different from the rest of us and those who are touched by you are the same. So whether you abolish pardons or you abolish visits, it's the same thing; it's what you are. Once a criminal always a criminal. You're, you're a bad seed and that's a fundamental shift.

[Key Informant 5]

Another key informant agrees, noting that the punitive focus in the system does not allow children of prisoners, themselves a complex type of 'victim' of the prisoner's crime, to be considered. A provider of a religious-based service to former prisoners, he does not hide his disdain for punitive policy:

I think because our justice system is so retributive, that when there's an offender— And the victims are not considered, I think that none of the victims are considered. and we never look at the, at the circle of things. […] So no one's gonna look at the children of offenders' victims.

[…] I think that if our justice system had any restorative qualities, and even if they were really Christian, as they pretend to be, they would be more concerned with the healing of the entire community. Okay? So I think that that's something that is too big and too important for people who are governing us to remotely grasp.

Yeah it seems to clash with something.

Yeah, their right wing, Christian bullshit views. But. In France, the theory used to be if we can build a school we can close a prison. In Canada we're building prisons and closing schools. And we call 'em progress [laughs]. And we're much more civilised, of course.

[Key informant 3]

However the punitive shift may have been temporary; Canada's Supreme Court has begun to strike down mandatory minimum sentence provisions enacted in 2011 as inconsistent with the Charter (R *v.* Nur 2015),[31] and the centrist party which has

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[31] The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) is a bill of rights in Canada's constitution which sets out Canadians' civil and political rights.

recently been elected to form a majority federal government has indicated it will re-assess the previous government's sentencing reforms (CBC 2016).

Resistance

> *What kind of advice would you give them?*
> I think I'd give them the advice to at least try and fight for their right to like be able to talk to them and visit them.
> [Lily, 13]

I found very few instances of families seeking to change or resist any aspect of the criminal justice system that contributed to negative feelings, or even awareness that such efforts might be possible. When I asked caregivers, key informants and some children what changes they would make to the justice and other systems to benefit children of prisoners, the responses were most often that they could not think of anything, raised practical suggestions (such as 'more comfy chairs' or more efficiency in the security screening process), or argued that supportive, group-therapy style services should be offered to children. Unlike other groups of parents with concerns about the ways their children are being treated by state systems, such as parents demanding better services for children with certain health conditions, I found very few examples of caregivers resisting, organising or even meeting each other. Notable exception was a caregiver Naomi who was attempting to start a support group for other partners (though this effort was later disbanded), a key informant who had started a peer support group with other women when her partner had been inside, and some key informants who argued that fewer parents should be in prisons.

There are a variety of issues that may prevent the formation of connections and sense of 'community' between family members of prisoners. The nature of being a prisoner's family member means that one only meets peers in person if paths cross in the strange space of prison waiting rooms. If prisoners' families find each other online, the initial period of remand may be marked by much confusion, or hopes that the situation is temporary (and thus not be worth investing in forging new peer

relationships). Moreover, the common denominator between them is highly negative and unwanted. Stigma or fear may also prevent efforts to meet others; indeed, I found many caregivers to be quite blaming, derogatory or outright hostile in their attitudes toward other families of prisoners, in very gendered ways. For example, when I asked caregivers about their treatment by prison staff, I was often told that they themselves were treated with respect because they were not 'ignorant,' rude, or dressed provocatively during visits, unlike other women. These families may also simply be too exhausted to take on advocacy activities; given the demands on their finances, time, and emotions that are involved in having a loved one in prison, there may be no resources left with which to enact resistance.

Further, while families of prisoners share a greater likelihood of facing social risks such as poverty, they are far from homogenous in other aspects of their lives, experiences and interests. Wacquant (2015) warns,

> The sociology of marginality must fasten not on vulnerable 'groups' (which often exist merely on paper, if that) but on the institutional mechanisms that produce, reproduce and transform the network of positions to which its supposed members are dispatched and attached. And it urges us to remain agnostic as to the particular social and spatial configuration assumed by the resulting district of dispossession. In particular, we cannot presume that the emerging social entity is a 'community' (implying at minimum a shared surround and identity, horizontal social bonds and common interests), even a community of fate, given the diversity of social trajectories that lead into and out of such areas.

One key informant had run support groups for women partners of prisoners for several years, but noted this lack of homogeneity, as well as the fears that kept women from connecting:

> It was so difficult, again partly because when you talk about a group, other than the fact that they have a husband in jail, they may have nothing in common. […] We think that there's one thing - that happens to be convenient for us - in common. And then found that they're very different, they don't necessarily trust each other, they don't necessarily want to share anything with each other. There's a huge risk of that in

the prison environment, you basically want to stay out of politics,
prison politics. […] It's just there are so many unknowns and so many
risks. And so even though you may personally think you might get
some support out of it, it's just too scary.
[Key informant 5]

While groups like this might eventually be effective in supporting women to advocate for themselves and their families' rights, this does not necessarily constitute collective resistance faced by families of prisoners, both because it may not challenge systemic stigma or other repressive structures, and because, as Cornish (2006) notes, the advocacy is not widely known. In discussing stigma against partners of prisoners, Hannem (2012) argues that collective resistance is needed before people can recognise that they are part of a stigmatised group. However this does not resonate with my findings; I found that caregivers in the present study were very conscious of being 'marked' by their familial incarceration and being stereotyped and otherwise mistreated as a result, with virtually no resistance of any kind, much less collective.

Cornish (2006) offers a different analysis, based on her study of sex workers in India, of the lack of resistance by some stigmatised groups which better explains the present findings. She argues that before women can organise and resist, they must problematise the existing social order, challenging their own self-stigma. The concept of problematisation is based in the work of Freire (1970), who argued that material and symbolic oppression can lead to a fatalism of constructing this treatment as inevitable, and thus believing the only response is to adapt to the existing social order. By supporting people to think critically about these repressive conditions and structures, becoming aware of allies, questioning the ways they are treated and imagining other possibilities, the social order becomes problematised and collective action can be developed. Link and Phelan (2001) similarly argue that stigmatised groups who accept the view of their own lower status, particularly those who face direct discrimination, are less likely to resist.

Cornish (2006) constructs a strategy to develop resistance strategies: self-stigma is challenged by problematising it, through using the language of rights, showing equivalencies with other repressed groups and movements which have successfully

organised for change, and showing the group's own positive achievements. In this way, people in oppressed groups can become active agents with control in their relationships with powerful institutions (Harter et al 2005). In light of this analysis and strategy, it is worth noting that I found a marked tendency of the few existing organisations working with families of prisoners to not problematise the treatment of prisoners' families by prison systems, at least in their public materials. For example, the security processes faced by visitors is widely presented as challenging but necessary, infallible and politically neutral.

As these groups would be the natural source for organising collective resistance, their lack of criticism and problematisation is not benign. However, the receipt of funding from the federal prison service or federal government (currently, previously or sought after) by most of these groups, or their need for gatekeepers in prison systems to continue to provide them access to prisoners, raises the possibility that this conflict may prevent them from being publicly critical. This possibility is given credence by the fact that the two key informants in the present study who were far more critical and problematising of the conditions faced by partners of prisoners and prisoner parents were a now-retired advocate and an advocate whose organisation has made the decision not to accept government funding.

The lack of collective resistance is not inconsequential; these actions have the potential to improve the conditions faced by aggrieved groups, but even if 'ineffective' at promoting change, they can 'give voice' to invisible or silenced groups, and support their 'dialectic of control' (Harter et al 2005), and be therapeutic. Matti (2016), an American writer and now-adult child of a prisoner father, describes the catharsis she felt after a trip to her state capital to testify and protest against prison expansion with a campaign group:

> I cried. I cried because until that moment, I had felt defeated by mass incarceration. Having a loved one in prison can do that. It can make you feel small and powerless; it can make the system feel fixed and unrelenting. But we are not insignificant and weak; we are important and strong. And if the system does not serve us, the system must change for the better.

[Matti 2016]

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined an argument that children of prisoners are 'invisible' : absent from social policy and unacknowledged in the prison policies that affect them. Further their absence is contradictory to child poverty goals. I argued that several factors contribute to this invisibility, such as intersectional invisibility, the identity of prisoners families in the context of multiple oppressions, and the financial and liability interests this may serve for prison systems. Finally, the absence of these children from the public discourse is convenient law and order ideology. I argued that this invisibility is part of the reason for the lack of organised resistance by families.

Chapter 10 | Conclusion

The present thesis describes and analyses the findings of qualitative research into parental incarceration. Despite its small sample size, the project makes a number of contributions to the literature on children of prisoners, in part because of the somewhat innovative but certainly uncommon methodology it employed.

Summary of Contributions

This research presents a range of novel contributions. First, this study adds to the growing corpus relating to children's self-reported experiences. This literature privileges children's own voices and views, and the present study has sought to do so from design through to analysis. My interviews, with children as young as six, support the finding that even young children can be competent, thoughtful narrators of their own lives. While significant ethical and recruitment challenges are posed by research projects that seek to engage children around their experiences of emotionally-laden and potentially distressing topics, such as parental incarceration, this should not preclude such research.

The present analysis presents a range novel contributions to the study of parental incarceration in particular. The first empirical chapter showed the ways that poverty in many ways defined the lives of the children in the present study. It also raised a warning against assuming that children of prisoners are homogenous in their experiences. The discussion in Chapter 5 on varieties of grief drew a link between the loss and sadness experienced by children of prisoners in this study and the literature on atypical grief, supporting the link to concepts of disenfranchised, ambiguous and traumatic grief. These concepts may have utility to practitioners working with individual children, and are worthy of broader empirical study. Chapter 6 discussed the centring of incarcerated parents within families and parentification within participant families. These appear to be novel concepts as applied to the study of children of prisoners, and raise a variety of intriguing possibilities that require further study, such as the role that these issues may play in mediating the outcomes faced by

children of prisoners and the ways that caregivers and incarcerated parents might be supported in lessening the extent to which children's interests are neglected.

Chapter 7 examined the findings around children's secrecy in their communities about their parent's incarceration, echoing similar findings in a very small research base. The unanimity and conviction with which children in the present study described their decisions to keep parental incarceration a secret suggest that this is an entrenched and widespread practice. This is an important contribution to the study of parental incarceration that is allowed only by the particular (and atypical) methodology I used, namely that I interviewed children directly and did not recruit them through a therapeutic service (which might have encouraged them to disclose to peers, counselled their caregivers to support disclosure or involve peer support). Chapter 8 discussed findings related to children's experience of the prison itself and the practice of prison-based parenting. Supporting earlier research, I found that the carceral space and policies presented a variety of challenges to maintaining a relationship with an incarcerated parent, and to children feeling confident and secure. Finally, the preceding chapter showed the ways that Canadian children are rendered invisible in prison policy and broader social policy, and argued that this invisibility serves the penal system in a variety of financial, liability and ideological ways.

This research raised several larger themes which were consistent across the data and analysis, from the tightest lens pointed to children's internal lives, to the broadest policy context. Poverty and its effects were tightly intertwined in every aspect of this project, and was raised as a factor in everything from emotional responses to policy contexts. Another was the sense of ambiguity and uncertainty. This was raised in children facing the uncertain grief over a parent who is neither present nor lost, to families attempting to navigate prison systems that are perceived as bewildering, arbitrary and unfair. The possibility that through poverty and uncertainty the penal system plays a role in burdening these already-struggling families is compelling and worthy of further consideration and study.

The idea of invisibility was another theme, broadly defined to include the secrecy that surrounds a parent's imprisonment within families and from communities, the enigmatic role that families play in maintaining prisoners' wellbeing, and the marked lack of programming and policy that even refers to prisoners' children. While these children number in the tens of thousands in Canada, and the experience and outcomes of parental incarceration appear to be significant, they are hidden from view and from the smallest community to the broadest policy level. Their invisibility became a theme in my data collection. For example, I was continually met with surprise from organisations, advocates and policy staff; few had thought of these children much less recognised their need for bespoke consideration, services, policy and care. I also wonder whether the extreme recruitment challenges I faced are linked to the secrecy that surrounds these children, and perhaps the secrecy they themselves keep. Future researchers may benefit from this insight, and the variety of ways invisibility manifested itself in this project, in both identifying their research questions and choosing their methodologies.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This discussion of the ways that children respond to having a parent in prison turns now to examine the ways that states could respond to parental incarceration. While this thesis has sought to be less normative to this point, examining the ways that children *do* experience parental incarceration while limiting comment about how they *should* or *ought* to experience it, the findings of the current study allow for conclusions to be drawn about which interventions, strategies and appropriates are best supported if children's best interests are privileged over other goals. In setting out these policy and practice suggestions, I take up the challenge that Balfour (2006) sets, in her critique of post-structuralist feminist criminology, of moving beyond asking 'how?' to asking 'what now?' if researchers truly seek to improve the lives that we study. My efforts to disseminate the findings of the present study in an accessible manner to families and service providers will be my attempt, per Balfour (2006), at feminist criminological counter-hegemony.

Implications for direct interventions

> *Advice from Ethan, age 8:*
>
> You know what I would do? Take the [visitation program] bus!

The present study's findings, combined with the extant literature, allow some modest insight into the types of strategies that might provide the most benefits when working with children of prisoners. However two caveats are required prior to this discussion of interventions: First, the general lack of sufficient and comprehensive data on the outcomes, needs and experiences of children of prisoners results in a lack of clarity about how the well-being of the children of prisoners might be improved through programming. Second, interventions that seek to address the problems of parental incarceration by intervening with children themselves are proceeding in a fundamentally flawed manner. As discussed throughout, the negative outcomes that can be clearly causally linked to parental incarceration are limited to anti-social behaviour and the effect size is modest. The reason that children of prisoners are a profoundly disadvantaged and vulnerable group of children is an effect of the prison system disproportionately capturing profoundly disadvantaged and vulnerable people. As such, policy or program interventions focused on children of prisoners may be an effective way to intervene with children with the highest need in communities. However, as Hannah-Moffat (2016) argues, the tendency to respond to structural problems through programs that focus on correcting individual 'deficiencies' is deeply political, grounded in liberal ideology. The present discussion seeks to avoid this correcting approach, and has as a goal only to improve the well-being of children of prisoners.

Justice System Approaches Families

Aspects of the criminal justice system that are frightening for children to witness may be in some cases difficult to avoid, but must still be problematised and not constructed as inevitable. The present study found some evidence, though mainly from caregivers, about the extremely frightening experiences that their children have had during police raids of their home, supporting existing research findings. The implication for criminal justice practitioners, and police in particular, is that if possible, efforts should be made to reduce the severity or number of frightening experiences for children. Criminal justice practitioners could be trained in identifying and reducing the possibilities of children witnessing frightening events, such as taking meaningful steps to avoid children seeing their parents arrested or being directly exposed to police raids of their home. While the privileging of 'security' may be used as justification for these events occurring at times, this assumes that children's emotional well-being is less valuable or important than (often vaguely-defined) security risks, which I suggest is insufficiently problematised. The feasibility for such policies is evidenced by them having been enacted in other jurisdictions, with input from children themselves.

Children themselves spoke of fear of the prison space itself, finding it frightening, stark, dirty uncomfortable or unfriendly. While some aspects of this experience might be perceived as being necessary for maintaining security and this aim prioritised over children's well-being within the carceral space, the implication is that children value the pleasantness and comfort of such a setting, and efforts to improve the setting in this regard would be of value to them. Changes to make prison spaces which children will inhabit more comfortable, appealing, less industrial, and 'family friendly', for example, raising the standards of prison visiting areas to that of the public areas of other public institutions (such as hospitals and schools). Such changes must not be dismissed as merely aesthetic; as discussed, such elements communicate the priorities and tone of the institution, they may reduce children's fear, and incidentally may also have extended benefits to staff and prisoners. One prison in Minnesota has partnered

with parental incarceration researcher to remodel their approach to visitors and conduct evaluations on children's outcomes (Giles 2016). Changes include pictures geared at children in the lobby, having books available for prisoners and their children to borrow and read together, as well as booths with municipal staff offering information on services such as library cards, food assistance, and other social supports.

In addition to making the prison space more comfortable, the present study supports the renovation of visiting areas and staff approaches, more figuratively, to better communicating a respect for visitors' dignity. Chapters 8 explored the ways that carceral spaces and practices engender secondary prisonization in families, contribute to interpersonal and institutional stigma, and communicate the construction of families as suspicious, disruptive to the prison, and unworthy of respect. A paradigmatic shift in organisational culture may be needed, and institutions might benefit from first considering how other public institutions, such as hospitals, approach their family visitors. The Minnesota prison pilot study mentioned above includes these types of seemingly-minor dignity-promotion elements, for example announcements for families to enter the prison are now made in person by staff, where previously staff instructed families through an intercom from behind glass (Giles 2016). Minor changes like these may act to disrupt or counter the myriad subtle ways that children are taught by the carceral space how they are socially constructed.

Another aspect of familial incarceration that appeared to deeply affect and trouble families was their perception that they were being treated inconsistently, unfairly and in a way that they could not predict. While policy documents are available to families at times, the present study has shown the many ways that families find the prison system difficult to navigate and predict, and it was noted that issues of uncertainty and confusion are widely noted in empirical and theoretical literature on prisons, prisoners and familial incarceration, and can be linked to the issue of dignity raised in the

previous point. An implication for practice is that prison services could better serve families through a fundamental shift in their approach to communication with and treatment of prisoners' families, towards goals of transparency, consistency, accountability and responsiveness. For example, communication can be made more improved by becoming more accessible in terms of literacy levels and modality, such as providing clear, useful and consistent information about prison visiting rules through website, pamphlets, as well as through a responsive call centre. The current system, in which families resort to scouring internet message boards for basic, needed information, and one of the only sources of information is an unofficial document by a charity is neither professional nor supportive of the dignity and needs of families.

The present study has offered empirical and literature evidence suggesting that certain aspects of staying in contact with and supporting a prisoner may pose challenges or even harms to their children (for example, exacerbating poverty). The implication is that Canadian prison services could support the dignity of families by valuing them and ensuring that they are considered in decision making. Nussbaum (2001: 276) argues,

> the family simply is part of the basic structure of society, and capability-based principles of justice should apply to it directly as a part of that structure, within limits set by the other capabilities, especially the personal liberties (associational, dignitary, and choices related) of citizens.

Related to the privileging of children's voices throughout this project, an implication is that capabilities of children of prisoners could be promoted by prioritising policies that protect their dignity, so that they are not the "mere instrument of the ends of others" (Nussbaum 2001: 285). This suggestion incorporates the finding that children's interests and needs may be sidelined and de-prioritised in some families that face parental incarceration. In the interest of recognising children as competent actors, with opinions and interests that are valuable, children's needs could be considered, and their views could be solicited, in policy processes that affect them.

This study explored the ways that parental incarceration contributes to child poverty through a variety of costs on families of prisoners. Given the harms that growing up in poverty places on children, any goals that the state has in improving the well-being of its children are at odds with the financial burdens it places on prisoners' families. While children are unlikely to be aware of the specifics of this burden, these financial burdens likely negatively affect them and are incompatible with Canada's child poverty goals and commitment to children and families' well-being. The implication is that for the benefit of children, as well as conforming with stated policy goals, steps could be taken to reduce the cost of maintaining a relationship with an increased parent. There are a number of small and large ways this could be done, including vending machine items be offered at wholesale cost and generate no profit; all lockers costs be refundable; vendors for telephone services be chosen primarily on the basis of the lowest cost to the fee-payer; caps be placed on phone charges (by the Canadian equivalent of the FCC, the CRTC); no commissions to the prison be included in contracts for any services or goods that are paid for by prisoners or visitors; the items allowed in the admission 'pen packs' be procured centrally and offered at cost with no profit generation; that basic condiments be included in Private Family Visit 'trailers' and families able to remove leftover food from these visits for their own later use.

Further efforts to reduce the child poverty implications of parental incarceration could move beyond reducing these exorbitant and patently unfair costs, to finding ways to partner with families to reduce the cost of being the family of a prisoner. For example, efforts by the prison service to reduce the high cost of transportation to prison visits could include running a bus (of which one or two are always standing in the parking lot of several of the federal prisons I have visited) to the local train or bus station before and after weekend visits. In the United Kingdom, families of prisoners on general assistance are entitled to the cost of one annual visit to the prison, consisting of transportation and hotel costs, indicating such a support is feasible.

Finally, criminal justice practitioners who have adult clients that are prisoners or otherwise involved in the criminal justice system may use the findings of the present study to develop more responsive or insightful care to prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families by considering the implications that their clinical decisions may have for clients' children. While such clients may benefit from counselling sessions with their family, for example, this may place a tremendous burden on the client's children in terms of time away from school, costs of transportation to sessions or impacts of a therapeutic process not focused on their needs. Such practitioners would benefit from hearing the voices of the children in the present study, and in particular the fears and grief that burden them, and query the ways in which they might adjust their practice to lessen this burden.

Interventions Aimed at Children

An effort to respond socially to the issue and harms of parental incarceration has a tendency to lead to recommendations for programming aimed at children. Several key informants and caregivers made vague suggestions for therapeutic groups and peer-support programming when asked about possible interventions (though these suggestions were not made by children themselves). On the surface, the idea seems positive, and the analogy is, I think, drawn from children facing other types of troubling and stigmatised situations where support groups are widely used, such as a disability or a parent with mental illness. Phoebe attends such a group for children with a parent in prison, and described this as a very positive source of support:

> *What is that like to meet other kids?*
> It's like they combined with me. They can combine with me and share their experiences.
> *Oh okay. And what does that feel like?*
> It feels awesome […] Like they share their experience they had in jail and I have the same experience as them.
> [Phoebe, 10]

While not wishing contradict Pheobe's views, given my efforts to centre children's voices, I do raise a contrasting view namely that of the empirical literature, which at this time do not necessarily support specific therapeutic interventions with children of prisoners. Efforts to reduce the disadvantages and poor outcomes seen in children of prisoners by addressing the experience of parental incarceration misunderstands the causal relationship between these variables. Efforts to 'correct' children of prisoners of the poor outcomes they disproportionately show also raises concerns associated with the managerial turn in social programming, particularly in justice and crime prevention services, in late modernity. Actuarial assessment of risk and needs are increasingly used to make a variety of managerial and treatment decisions, with a misplaced faith in the predictive value of these actuarial tools and a move away from clinical assessment (Hannah-Moffat 2015). Given the tendency to pathologize children of prisoners, discussed below, this actuarial focus gives rise to the potential for children of prisoners to be identified as 'risky'

Targeting services to children of prisoners because they are 'at risk' of future criminal behaviour may have unintended negative consequences if this affects their self-concept or if minor delinquency is more likely to be captured by official labelling processes (McAra and McVie 2007; Farrington and Murray 2014). The current actuarial, risk analysis-focused social policy environment may perpetuate a notion that children at risk of delinquency must be identified and 'risk managed' to avoid later criminality (Kemshall 2008; Simon and Feeley 2003; Hannah-Moffat 2015). There is strong evidence that this can be hugely counter-productive, with early contact with welfare services disinhibiting desistance (McAra and McVie 2010). Another caveat is that the extant empirical data about children of prisoners allows for very limited conclusions about what types of programming might benefit them.

Complex and even conflicting data places service providers in a difficult position. Children of prisoners have been historically neglected by policy makers and service providers and face a variety of challenges. There is a tendency to assume both that

some intervention, even if not evidence-based, is better than none, and that if ones practice is borne from a desire to help, it will be helpful. Unfortunately, the history of the caring professions does not support these modes of reasoning (Munro 1999; Gambrill 2006; Lilienfeld 2007). A better supported strategy for working with children of prisoners is to conduct bespoke assessment of a child's specific experiences related to parental incarceration that may place them at risk of emotional harm (e.g. seeing a parent arrested) and ways that these stressors may be impacting their functioning (Dallaire et al 2015a). Moreover, there is support for directing interventions towards the child's caregiver on the 'outside,' who may be facing a variety of stressors such as a sudden drop in family income, practical demands such as negotiating the jail system, or a lack of social supports (Miller et al 2013), parenting programs for prisoners , and supports for prisoner parents at the point of reunification in the community to find jobs and attend to mental health concerns (Kjellstrand et al 2012).

Child participants spoke very positively of visits, however noted that certain aspects were frightening or annoying. Poehlmann et al.'s (2010) review of this literature found that the research shows positive outcomes for children when visits occurred as part of a supportive intervention, but that more visits with incarcerated parents in non 'child-friendly' visitation environments may be associated with attachment concerns, and more attention and behavioural problems. The implication is that visiting processes and spaces in prisons could be made more friendly to children, and more responsive to their needs and concerns. Further, responses from community agencies could be more bespoke and responsive; instead of presumptively encouraging visits between children and incarcerated parents, practitioners could support children in making their own decisions about safe and available options to have contact with their parent, or encourage efforts to make existing visiting arrangements as child-focused and supportive as possible (Saunders 2016; Poehlmann et al 2010).

Given the limited evidence around best practices with children of prisoners, it is important that no one-size-fits-all approaches are used in clinical interventions with

this group. While counselling, peer support and services that encourage visiting parents in prison may indeed benefit individual children and youth clients, the best evidence at this time does not support these intervention strategies as wholesale therapeutic responses to children of prisoners. In particular, practitioners are encouraged to be wary of any clinical approaches that uncritically assume either that all children of prisoners will benefit, or that the best interests of children and their prisoner parents *necessarily* converge. Based on the discussion in Chapter 4 of the sense of loss and grief disclosed by children, and the ways in which their grief may usefully be conceptualised as disenfranchised and ambiguous, practitioners may benefit from exploring these concepts. Efforts to address the peculiar aspects of this grief, for example, by creating grieving rituals where none exist or make efforts to improve the quality of supports, may be of use.

Interventions Aimed at Prison-based Parenting

I asked a few older children whether they had ideas for how the justice system might change how it practices. Samantha suggested:

> A computer that only accesses the internet to a limit.That has, like, say,
> Skype so they could Skype with their family. And everything else,
> while they're in prison.

> [Samantha 16]

Indeed there are a variety of ways that prisoners could be supported in their parenting with the aim of improving the experiences of their children; a review of pilot programs in the US found a variety of innovative approaches and some encouraging evaluation findings (ASPE 2010). The present study has shown the importance that children place on communication with their parents, the barriers faced to this communication, and suggested that better communication is a benefit to children. On this basis, strategies to support communication between prisoners and their children are supported, with the explicit primary goal of improving children's well-being. Parenting programs for prisoners, particularly those which are specific to prison-based

parenting, gender-specific, valuing both fathering and mothering, and focusing on children's needs, are supported and also happen serve a variety of benefits to prisoners and prisons (ASPE 2010; Kjellstrand et al 2012; Creating Choices 1990).

Interventions Aimed at Caregivers

As with the discussion of interventions aimed at children of prisoners above, interventions aimed at caregivers also pose a risk of doing more harm than good. For example, caregivers of children with a parent in prison may be advised to disclose this to the child's teacher (e.g. Gloucestershire 2016). Indeed, increased communication between children's parents, teachers and other community caregivers would seem indisputably positive, as children would receive more bespoke care, have access to more knowledgeable caregivers and would not be burdened by secrets. However, the circumstances appear to be more complex. In an experimental study, Dallaire et al (2010) found that teachers assessed a fictional student whose mother is in prison as being less competent than a student whose mother is away for other reasons, particularly for female students. Further, in testing a large sample of children of woman prisoners, Hagen and Myers (2003) found that for children with low levels of social support, those disclosed maternal incarceration had higher internalizing and externalizing problem scores. The authors argue that keeping secrets is a normal developmental stage for children, and potentially protective.

However, research is starting to suggest that focusing on the caregiver may be crucial to improving the well-being of children of prisoners, both because of the many stresses they appear to be at risk of facing, and the impact of this stress, and caregivers' reactions to it, on their children. Miller et al (2013) show the association between caregiver experiences and reactions and children's negative outcomes. There is some suggestion that caregiver reactions may be part of the as-yet unknown pathways between parental incarceration and negative mental health and behavioural outcomes. On this basis, practitioners working with high-risk youth are supported in

querying clients' experience of parental incarceration and exploring what specific events this entailed. For example, assessing whether a child experienced the sudden loss of a primary caregiver or witnessed a parent's arrest would appear crucial.

If families have complaints about their treatment by the criminal justice system in Ontario, they ostensibly have several options to lodge complaints. They can complain informally to the prison itself or make a formal complaint to the warden of the institution through the CSC grievance procedure, seek judicial review of a prison's decision or launch a civil suit, or take applicable matters to the provincial human rights commission or specific administrative tribunals. One key informant who advocates for prisoners noted that her organisation had begun using Charter rights to argue for improved family contact for prisoners:

> When you take the perspective of the kids, you interfere with my right to have access to my parent. It's the argument we've been trying to make, is that it's not coming in from the women's right but the child's right to access. So the recent increase in phone calls, cost of phone calls. So we said, you know, that interferes with the child's right to have access to his or her mother and or father, and we've argued they should have access to things like Skype.
> [Key Informant 1]

Using international human rights systems have been increasingly pointed to as a useful avenue for addressing the needs of children of prisoners. Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the right to family life, and a variety of authors have argued that this instrument could be usefully invoked to address the lack of consideration and voice of children around parental incarceration (Lagoutte 2011). However all of these mechanisms present a variety of challenges to families of prisoners, such as requiring high literacy skills, awareness, professional support, and, perhaps most importantly, a willingness to face the perceived risk that the prisoner will suffer informal repercussions.

Other instruments set out the rights of prisoners and might be used to indirectly secure the rights of their family members to, for example, contact with prisoners, such as the Bangkok rules, to which Canada is a signatory, and the Correctional Investigator ombudsman process, however in both cases the prisoner is the rights holder and the subject of the inquiry. American campaigners have developed a children of prisoners 'bill of rights' to use as an advocacy tool (SFCIPP 2016)

Awareness of 'collateral' risks of incarceration

If parental incarceration poses potential risks to children, then the most fundamental response is surely to reduce unnecessary imprisonment of parents. One key informant proposed this as the needed response to parental incarceration (though mentioned only mothers):

> I think that we should be keeping women in the community [...] I
> think we should be arguing at every step to keep them out of prison
> and if the main the main reason they're being put in prison is because
> there is nowhere else for them to be or just standard practice or
> whatever, then, you know, we shouldn't be allowing it and we should
> be privileging their position as mother.
> [Key Informant 1]

While this raises a larger discussion of the purpose and utility of incarceration that is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is noted that there is a great deal of criminological evidence to suggest that the extent and ways that incarceration is used in the UK and North America does not contribute to public safety, and that prison rates could be dramatically reduced without compromising community safety. In particular, the extensive use of remand incarceration and short prison sentences dramatically increase the rates of children experiencing parental incarceration without any clear social benefits. In Canada, 83% of sentenced prisoners serve a month or less in prison (Juristat 2015).

To reduce the incidence of unnecessary parental incarceration, sentencing decisions could consistently take into account the parenting status of the convicted person. As well, a variety of non custodial sentence possibilities exist which could be used in place of incarceration, including probation, house arrest, curfews, electronic monitoring, and intermittent sentences. One child participant had this insightful suggestion for an alternative sentence:

> *How do you think that people should help people who have a family member in prison, who have a mom or a dad in prison?*
>
> Uhm I think that it should be like much more easier for them like they would have a mini placement, just to live with us for a little bit and then like, we get to like see our mom and dad like every like, twice every week. So, like, to make kids happier.
>
> [Sophia, 10]

The Need for Better Data

The burgeoning academic interest in children of prisoners has translated into an explosion of data collection and re-purposing of secondary data with analysis aimed at better understanding the outcomes and experiences of children of prisoners, and at disentangling the relationships between covariates. This work has great potential but is still in its relative infancy and faces challenges, such as data not being collected consistently or in a quantifiable manner about the children of Canadian prisoners, which inhibit policy and program development.

1. Upon admission to any custodial setting (including remand), when a variety of other information is routinely collected, prisoners should be queried about any children for whom they have a caregiving relationship. This quantitative data should minimally include the children's age, gender, race, relationship with caregiver in the community, and residence distance from the prison, as well as information about the prisoner's practical and financial support for this child in the month prior to prison admission. This data should be linked to other data collected about the prisoner, such as mental health medication, income source and level, and conviction and incarceration history.

2. History of parental incarceration should be included in upcoming 'waves' of longitudinal studies of child development and routinely included as an independent variable in the design of future longitudinal studies of children's development, including in Canada.

3. Researchers should continue to develop qualitative research that explores children's views, beliefs and opinions, using a variety of creative methodologies and with a variety of children who may not be consistently included in research (such as children from a range of racialized communities, who live in rural communities, or who experience disabilities).

4. Comprehensive evaluations of parenting support programs to prisoners is needed, and in particular, an effort to determine when different types of interventions are best offered in the process of incarceration, pre-release and post-release (Kjellstrand et al 2012), and in terms of the benefits to children of prisoners. Moreover, Canada should financially support high quality and critical evaluation research into interventions that seek to improve the well-being of children of prisoners. "Interventions grounded in [empirical] data need to be developed and tested to try to assist inmate parents and their children as they navigate the real dangers posed to their well-being" (Kjellstrand et al 2012)

5. Qualitative and quantitative researchers may find insight and potentially worthwhile research questions in the variety findings of the present study, such as the contributions noted above

Conclusion

This thesis and the stories it documents and explores bear little resemblance to the doctoral project I started developing in 2010. At that time, I imagined a massive, mixed-methodology project, scores of subjects and host of spectacular, hypothesis-generating and externally-valid findings. The realities of doing qualitative research

with children and around the prison system were much different. In 2013, as I limped to the finish line of my data collection with 22 hard-won child interviews, I had the distinct sense that I had turned up very little. My interviews seemed thin, few of my key informants had insights, or even much to say, about children of prisoners, and so many doors I had tried were shut or non-existent. I made a joke to colleagues that my thesis - my response to the research question 'how do Canadian children of prisoners experience parental incarceration?' - would consist of one line: they feel pretty sad.

In 2014, I started my analysis and began reflecting on my data collection with the benefit of some distance. I began to see the value of the many casual hours I had spent in the company of my participant families - chatting, preparing for visits, hanging out. I began to read between the lines and see, for example, that the lack of data, services and information was a finding in itself. That the difficulty in finding participants was interesting. That the difficulty that many of the children I met seemed to have in describing their experiences of parental incarceration was important. My hopes for dramatic findings gave way to an appreciation for having been privy to some of the minutiae of the daily lives of my child participants, hearing their jokes, stories and interests, and learning about their hopes for the future and their kind advice to others.

Children of prisoners tend to be sad about their parent's incarceration, but they are much more. They are preoccupied with the excitements and dramas of their everyday social lives and activities, just like their peers at school. They are conflicted, confused and uncertain about parental incarceration and what the future will hold in this regard. They feel frightened and wary about the prison at times, but also excited and happy about spending time with their parent during calls and visits. Parental incarceration is part of their life, and may also impact them in ways they do not recognise. It does not preclude them from happiness and rich lives.

Advice from Sierra, age 6:

My dad's in there too […] It's alright, but if your dad is in there, he'll come out soon

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Notation Convention

Throughout this document, quotes from interview participants over three lines are presented as indented blocks of text, without quotation marks, followed by the speaker's pseudonym. I have removed three types of elements *without* notation in the quotes that are used throughout the document:

1. Non-word sounds by interviewer (myself) or the interviewee (e.g. 'uhm')
2. Words that I spoke which were banal and simple prompts for the interviewee to continue speaking (e.g. 'Yeah?')
3. Words that I spoke which were short repetitions of the interviewee's own, last words (generally used to prompt the interviewee to continue). For example, in the following (real) transcription:

> It's kind of normal
> *It's kind of normal, yeah*
> It's just like my mom's divorced, and he lives in another house.

I produced the following quote (used in Chapter 4) from the above transcribed passage: "It's kind of normal. It's just like my mom's divorced, and he lives in another house." In the case of all of these three elements, I only removed them if I felt confident that doing so did not change the meaning of the quote.

The following annotations are used in the quotes presented throughout (quotes are fictional, to aid in clearest demonstration):

Symbol	Indicates
… e.g. "I walked in… and then I saw him"	The speaker paused
-- e.g. "I couldn't believe-- I walked in and couldn't believe it"	The speaker trailed off, interrupted themselves or otherwise stopped mid-sentence

[…] e.g. "I walked in and saw him […] I couldn't believe how he looked"	A section of the transcript has been removed. In the majority of cases, this is the interviewer (myself) employing a neutral prompt, such as 'yeah?' or repeating back the participant's last statement
[text] e.g. "I walked in and saw [partner]"	A word or phrase of the transcript has been removed to protect confidentiality. The text in the brackets provides information about the type of information removed
italics e.g. *Then what happened?* I couldn't believe how he looked	These words were spoken by the interviewer

Appendix 2: Ontario Prisons

Federal:

	Name	Type	Capacity
A	Bath Institution	Medium Security, Men	340
B	Beaver Creek	Minimum Security, Men	201
C	Collins Bay Institution	Medium Security, Men	492
D	Fenbrook Institution	Medium Security, Men	420
E	Frontenac Institution	Minimum Security, Men	132
F	Grand Valley Inst. For Women	Multi-level, Women	171
G	Joyceville Institution	Medium and Maximum Security	452
H	Kingston Penitentiary	Maximum Security, Men	421
I	Millhaven Institution	Maximum Security, Men	413
J	Pittsburgh Institution	Minimum Security, Men	250
K	Regional Treatment Centre	Multi-level psychiatric institution, Men	143
L	Warkworth Institution	Medium Security, Men	537

[CSC 2014b]

	Name	Type	Capacity
1	Algoma Treatment and Remand Centre	Correctional Centre and Treatment Centre	104
2	Brantford Jail	Jail	90
3	Brockville Jail	Jail	44
4	Central East Correctional Centre	Correctional Centre	1,184
5	Central North Correctional Centre	Correctional Centre	1,184
6	Chatham Jail	Jail	53
7	Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre	Detention Centre	450
8	Fort Frances	Jail	23

Kids of Prisoners study

Bio

My name is Else Marie Knudsen and I'm conducting the Kids of Prisoners Study as part of my doctoral program. I'm a PhD student at the London School of Economics & Political Science in the UK, in the department of Social Policy. My supervisor is Dr Coretta Phillips. I hold a BSc and MSW from U of T and an MSc from the LSE.

I trained as a social worker and worked with vulnerable families in Toronto for several years, as well as with various community-based advocacy groups like TPAC. I then worked at the John Howard Society of Ontario, which provides services and advocacy for people involved in the criminal justice system. I helped to write lots of documents that I hope are useful, like the JHSO Visiting handbook.

I've had the chance to do some neat things like write submissions to government, appear before government committees, and write in the newspaper. In 2011, I was able to go to the UN in Geneva and participate in a meeting about children of prisoners.

Right now I live in Toronto while I conduct my research. Normally, I live in London, England, where my university is.

Please get in touch with me if you have any questions or comments: e.m.knudsen@lse.ac.uk or KidsOfPrisonersStudy@gmail.com

(This is me and my fantastic new niece, Olive)

Study Information
Consent, Confidentiality & Voluntary Participation
Researcher Bio
FAQs

For Families of Prisoners
Information and resources for families

Canadian agencies that can help

Information for Teachers and other service provoders

Academic Information
Study summary
Existing literature
Advocacy & research organisations
Ethics approval

Home

Kids of Prisoners study

Services and supports for families of prisoners

- Canadian Families and Corrections Network offers information and referrals to families of prisoners. They have a toll free info line:
    For English: 1-888-371-2326
    For French: 1-877-875-1285

- F.E.A.T. for children of incarcerated parents is a new agency in Toronto that offers a visiting service (a low cost bus form Toronto to the area penitentiaries) and afterschool programs(near Jane and Lawrence) to kids of prisoners and their caregivers.

- The John Howard Society has offices throughout Canada, and 19 offices in Ontario. Each office is different but all focus on helping people who have come or are at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system. Look here for your local John Howard Society office and check out their website to find out what programs they offer.

- The Elizabeth Fry Society provides services to women who have come into contact with the criminal justice system. E Fry has offices throughout Canada - look here for your local Society office.

- There are Hospitality Houses (places where people who are visiting prisons from far away can stay overnight) near a few federal prisons. Note that the Bridge Houses in Kingston have shut down.

- Angel Tree, a program of Prison Fellowship Canada offers Christmas gifts and camp opportunities to children of prisoners

- The Correctional Investigator is an ombudsman (advocate) for federal prisoners. Their role is to "investigate and bring resolution to individual offender complaints"

Study Information
Consent, Confidentiality & Voluntary Participation
Researcher Bio
FAQs

For Families of Prisoners
Information and resources for families

Canadian agencies that can help

Information for Teachers and other service provoders

Academic Information
Study summary
Existing literature
Advocacy & research organisations
Ethics approval

Home

| 9	Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre	Detention Centre	510
10	Kenora Jail	Jail	105
11	Niagara Detention Centre	Detention Centre	260
12	North Bay Jail	Jail	121
13	Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre	Detention Centre	326
14	Sarnia Jail	Jail	101
15	Stratford Jail	Jail	53
16	Sudbury Jail	Jail	185
17	Toronto East Detention Centre	Detention Centre	473
18	Toronto West Detention Centre	Detention Centre	631
19	Maplehurst Correctional Complex	Correctional Centre	1,550
20	Monteith Correctional Complex	Correctional Centre	232
21	Ontario Correctional Institute	Treatment Centre and Correctional Centre	228
22	St. Lawrence Valley Correctional and Treatment Centre	Treatment Centre and Correctional Centre	100
23	Thunder Bay Correctional Centre	Correctional Centre	132
24	Thunder Bay Jail	Jail	132
25	Vanier Centre for Women	Correctional Centre and Treatment Centre	124
26	Windsor Jail	Jail	140

Appendix 3: Maps of Ontario Federal Prisons

All Federal Institutions in Ontario (showing concentration in Kingston area)
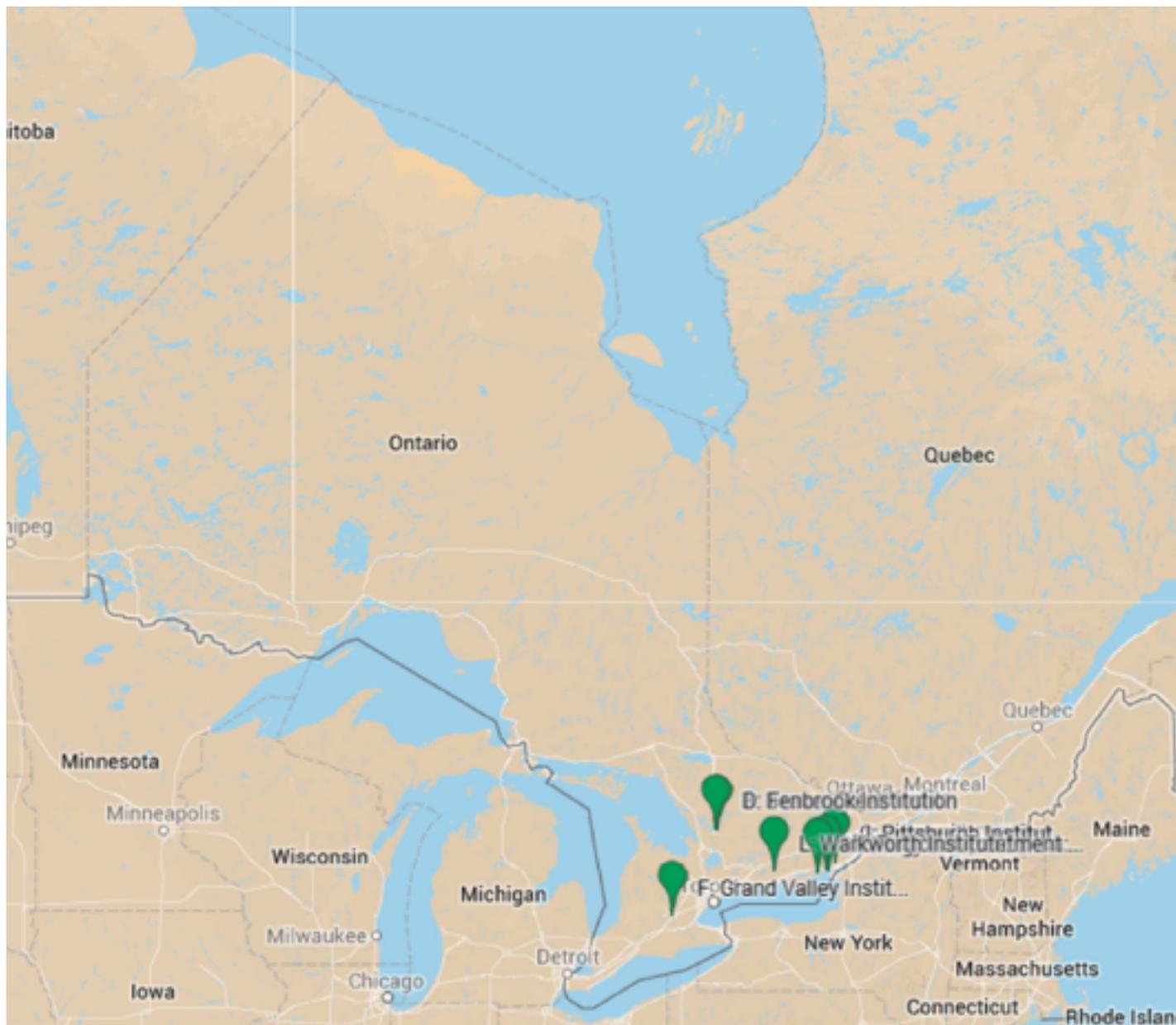

(©Google; Google 2014a)

Federal Institutions in the Kingston area
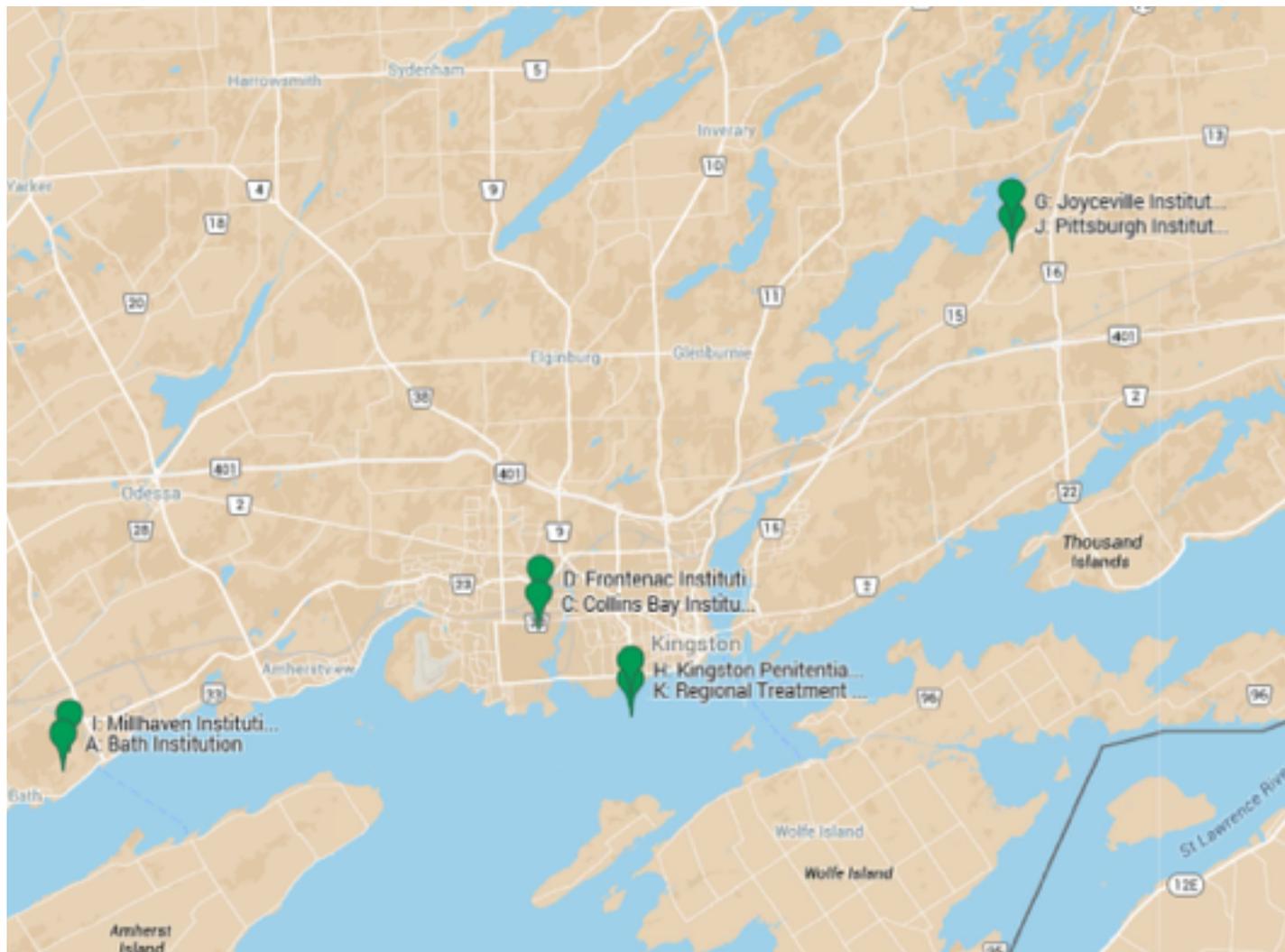
(©Google; Google 2014b)

Appendix 4: Field Work travel

JHS-HW bus from Hamilton to Warkworth and Joyceville/Pittsburgh Institutions. Approximately 385km and 4 hours driving time, each direction.

FEAT bus from Toronto to Fenbrook/Beavercreek Institutions. Approximately 180km and 2 hours driving time, each direction.
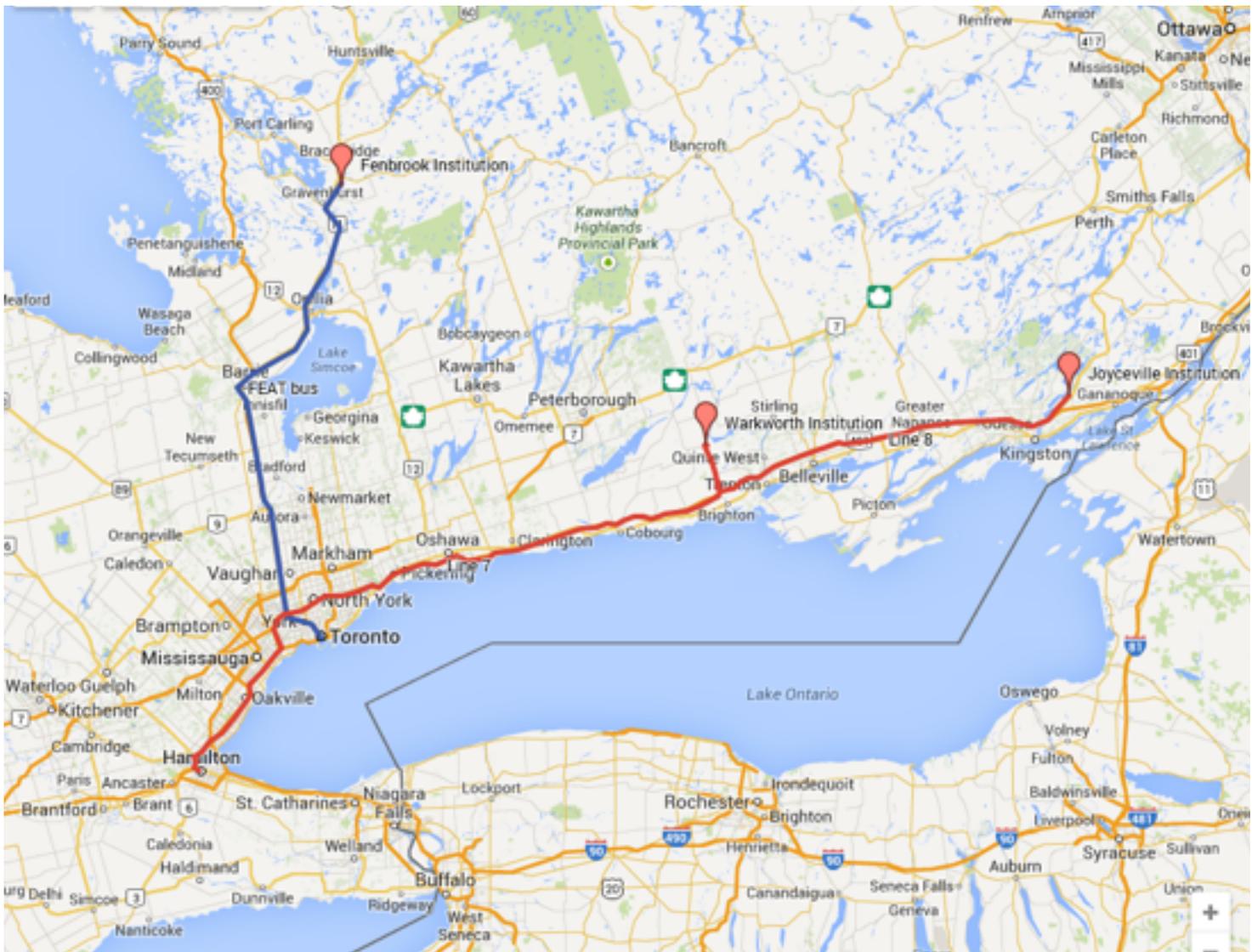
(©Google; Google 2014c)

Appendix 5: Website

Kids of Prisoners study

Child or youth with a parent in prison?
→ I want to hear their story! ←

If you care for a child or youth who has a parent in prison, I'd like to hear from you. I'm conducting a study about the experiences of kids of prisoners in Ontario. I'm conducting this study for my PhD research - you can find out more about me here.

I'm looking for children and youth (**ages 7-17** who live anywhere in **Ontario, Canada**) who have a parent in any type of prison, jail or halfway house. I'd like hear their story and also talk to their caregiver on the 'outside.'.

So why should you and your child or youth participate?

- You and your child might like the **opportunity to tell your own story**
- You and your child will both receive a **token of thanks** for meeting me (a $10 gift card to Tim's or McD's)
- Some people think that we need **better services and supports** for families of prisoners. Before we can argue for more supports, we need to learn more about what life is like for families of prisoners - have your say!

I don't work for CSC (Corrections) in any way and **I don't ask any questions about why the parent is in prison.** I'm also not a psychologist and **I won't assess your child** - I just want to hear what you both have to say. I will not share any information with CSC or anyone else - everything is completely **confidential**. Find out more about confidentiality here. Before the interview, I'll tell you about my study and ask for your and your child's **consent**. Find out more about consent here.

Here are answers to some frequently asked questions about participating in this study.

If you're interested in participating or want to know more, please get in touch with me:
Email: KidsOfPrisonersStudy@gmail.com

Thank you!

ps: If you're a parent looking for services or resources, check out the info under "For Families of Prisoners" at the right

Home

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Study Information

Consent, Confidentiality & Voluntary Participation
Researcher Bio
FAQs

For Families of Prisoners

Information and resources for families

Canadian agencies that can help

Information for Teachers and other service providers

Academic Information

Study summary
Existing literature
Advocacy & research organisations
Ethics approval

Simple template. Powered by Blogger.

Browser address bar: http://www.kidsofprisonersstudy.com/p/information-for-families-of-prisoners.html

Right sidebar:

Study information
Consent, Confidentiality & Voluntary Participation
Researcher Bio
FAQs

For families of Prisoners
Information and resources for families

Canadian agencies that can help

Information for Teachers and other service provoders

Academic Information
Study summary
Existing literature
Advocacy & research organisations
Ethics approval

Information for families of prisoners

This information that might be helpful when you have a loved one in prison. I can't vouch for all of the info in the links. If you have any comments or suggestions for this list, please let me know!

*General
- The Families and Corrections Network has a Children of Prisoners Library which has several pamphlets that you may find useful. Check out the list under "Materials for Caregivers" at the bottom.

- Sesame Street has created a whole toolkit focused on information and resources around kids who have a parent in prison. It includes a booklet for parents on the outside with lots of great information. I love these quick tips and ideas for parents.

- Action for Prisoner's Families in the UK has a booklet called Living with Separation which deals with a variety of issues faced by partners on the outside. Keep in mind that it's not from Canada, so the phone numbers and agencies won't be relevant to you.

*Visiting and keeping in touch
- CFCN has a booklet called Time Together, which is a guide for people visiting prisoners throughout Canada

- The JHSO Visiting Handbook has practical information for people visiting a loved one in a federal or provincial prison in Ontario

- FCN has a booklet called Communication Tips with advice about staying in touch.

- Families Outside is an an agency in Scotland. They have a document called Visiting Prison with your Child which has some good tips. Keep in mind that it's not from Canada, so the phone numbers and agencies won't be relevant to you.

*Talking to kids about their parent being in prison
- This is a great booklet called The Outsiders: telling the children from an organisation called Action for Prisoners Families in the UK. Keep in mind that it's not from Canada, so the phone numbers and agencies won't be relevant to you.

- This information from FCN called Questions Kids Ask gives advice on how to respond to kids' questions about a parent in prison

- This information sheet from the Offenders Families Helpline in the UK may be helpful. Keep in mind that it's not from Canada, so the phone numbers and agencies won't be relevant to you.

- This document called Talking to Kids about Imprisonment is from the Families Outside agency in Scotland and has some good tips. Keep in mind that it's not from Canada, so the phone numbers and agencies won't be relevant to you.

*Resources specifically for parents in prison (print these & send them in!)
- Sesame Street has a sheet of tips for parents inside

- CFCN has a booklet called Staying Involved, which is aimed at helping incarcerated fathers stay in touch with their kids

Appendix 6: Flyers

CFCN Mail-out flyer

Do you care for a child
who has a dad
in a correctional institution?

I'd like to hear their story!

My name is Else Marie Knudsen and I'm a PhD student who's studying kids of prisoners. My study is about **children and youth's opinions and experiences about having a dad in prison.** I'm looking for children and youth (ages 7-15) who might be willing to be interviewed.

The study would involve me coming to your home **two times, for one hour each.** We can book any time and date that works for us both. I would be asking your child questions like "what you think about having a dad in prison?" and "what do you think about phone calls with your dad?" and asking them to draw a picture. I would also ask you some questions about your child.

All of the information that you or your child give me will be completely **confidential** and no names or identifying information will be used when I write about the interviews. Before the interview, I'll tell you both about my study and ask for your and your child's **consent.** You or your child can change your mind at any time, without any consequences. Your participation is completely **voluntary.**

I don't work for CSC (Correctional Services) or CFCN (who sent you this package). They kindly let me add this flyer to their mailing, but CSC and CFCN will not know if you decide to participate. I will not share any confidential information with them and they will not share any confidential information with me.

I understand that this might be an upsetting topic for some kids to talk about. I have **training and experience in working with children and youth,** and the interviews can be stopped at any time your child wants. I'm happy to discuss any concerns you have before you decide.

So why should your child or youth participate?

- They might like the **opportunity to tell their own story**
- They might have **opinions or ideas** they'd like to share
- They will be part of a research project that will **teach us** about kids of prisoners. If we want to change things, first we need to understand them!
- When I'm done with my research, I'll send you **information about the findings** of my study
- Your child or youth will receive a **small token of thanks** for meeting with me. The token is $10 in gift certificates to McDonald's or Tim Horton's.

If you may be interested in participating, or just want to know more, please get in touch with me:

Email: **KidsOfPrisonersStudy@gmail.com**
Phone: **416-580-9551** (feel free to text me or leave a message, and I'll call you back)

Thank you!

Posted flyer

Child or youth with a parent in prison?
→ I want to hear their story! ←

My name is Else Marie. I'm a grad student who's researching **kids of prisoners**. I'm looking for kids and teens **ages 7–17** who have a parent in **any kind of prison, jail or halfway house**. I want to hear their story about what it's like to have a parent in prison, and to hear from their caregiver on the outside.

So why should you and your child participate?
- You and your child might like the **opportunity to tell your own story**
- To teach others what life is like for families of prisoners
- You & your child will both receive a **token of thanks** (a $10 gift card)

I don't work for Corrections and I **won't ask anything about why the parent is in prison.** I won't 'assess' your child – I just want to hear what you both have to say. I will not share any information about your family with CSC, CAS or anyone else – everything is **confidential**. Before the interview, I'll tell you about my study and ask for your and your child's **consent**.

Please get in touch with me or find out more:
- → Web: www.KidsOfPrisonersStudy.com
- → Email: KidsOfPrisonersStudy@gmail.com
- → Phone: 416–580–9551 (call or text)

Thank you!

e: KidsOfPrisonersStudy@gmail.com
p: 416–580–9551 (call or text)
w: www.KidsOfPrisonersStudy.com

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w: www.KidsOfPrisonersStudy.com

Distributed flyer

Do you care for a child/youth with a parent in prison or halfway house?

I'd like to hear what you have to say!

My name is Else Marie. I'm a grad student who's researching kids of prisoners. I'm looking for children and youth, and their caregivers, who might want to tell me their story. To participate, kids must be aged 7–17, live anywhere in Ontario, and have a parent in any prison or halfway house.

So why should you and your child participate?

- You and your child might like the opportunity to tell your own story
- To teach others what life is like for families of prisoners
- You and your child/youth will receive a token of thanks ($10 gift card)

I don't work for CSC (Corrections) and I won't ask anything about why the parent is in prison. I won't "assess" any child – I just want hear what you both have to say. I will not share any information about your family with CSC or anyone else – everything is confidential. Before the interview, I'll tell you about my study and ask for your and your child's consent.

Please get in touch to participate or learn more:

→ Web: www.KidsOfPrisonersStudy.com

→ Email: KidsOfPrisonersStudy@gmail.com

→ Phone: 416–580–9551 (call or text)

Thank you!

Appendix 7: Recruitment letters

Letter to federal prison wardens

Warden First name Last name
pen
address street cityzip

22 February 2013

Dear Warden Last name,

I'm writing to ask for your assistance with my research project. As part of my doctoral program, I am conducting a study on the topic of children of prisoners in Ontario.

Specifically, my research is a qualitative study of the self-reported experiences of children and youth (ages 7-15) who have a parent in any type of prison or halfway house. As you may be aware, there is limited research on this topic and next to none in Canada.

Existing international research suggests that these young people are more likely to face existing social disadvantage, and to be at increased risk for later involvement with the criminal justice system themselves. I hope my eventual findings will be of assistance to community service agencies, provincial and federal correctional systems, and others who have contact with families of prisoners.

In order that I might recruit participants, I would like to request that the enclosed flyers be posted for visitors to your institution to see. I am not seeking to conduct any research in or about your institution, nor to interview any staff member or inmate of your institution whatsoever. I only wish to get information about my study out to families of prisoners.

I would be grateful if your agency would consider positing the enclosed flyers:
1. In the waiting areas or after the security check process
2. Inside the V&C visiting room

Before reaching out to individual penitentiaries throughout Ontario, I contacted CSC Research Branch to discuss my request. I was informed by a Senior Research Manager (Sara Johnson) that because I do not seek to conduct any research inside or about institutions, that there is no process of authorizing requests such as mine. She suggested that I simply make a request to the Warden of each institution.

I would be happy to provide your agency with further information about my project, including a copy of my Ethics Review Committee approval and Consent/Assent Forms or details of my interview questions. Please let me know if you would like to know more about my study.

In return for your assistance, I can offer your institution a written document outlining my eventual findings, the larger research context and the relevance to correctional settings. If your institution is within 2-3 hours of Toronto, I would also be happy to offer an in-person training to staff on this topic if that would be useful.

Thank you kindly for considering my request; your support of my research is very much appreciated. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Else Marie Knudsen, MSW MSc
PhD candidate, Dept. Social Policy
London School of Economics & Political Science
e.m.knudsen@lse.ac.uk
416-580-9551

Appendix 7: Interview

Interview Schedule: Child Participants

1. Primer, language-assessment and rapport-building questions, such as:
    a. What was school like today?
    b. What did you have for lunch?
    c. Tell me about [an item in the room].

2. Administrative and Ethics:
    a. Describe research,
    b. Explain consent confidentiality
    c. Ask child for child's consent

3. Like I said before, I'd like to talk to you about having a dad in prison. What's it like to have a dad in prison? [re-phrase: Tell me about dad being in prison?] [prompt: how do you feel about dad being in prison?]

4. Before dad went to prison, what kinds of things did you do together? [probe: did

5. I'd like to know what's good about your dad being in prison. What do you like about having your dad in prison? [prompt: what's the best part?]

6. I'd like to know about visiting your dad in prison. What do you think about visits? [probe: What are some things you like about visiting? What are some things you don't like?]

7. Do you get to have any other contact with your dad, aside from visits? Tell me what you think about (making phone calls/getting letters/etc). [probe: how do you feel about (letters/phone calls/etc)?

8. When did it all start? [re-phrase: Think about your dad being in prison – when did that start?]

9. What sorts of things have changed since your dad went to prison? [prompt: what's changed at home? What's changed about [mom/caregiver]? At school? In your family?]

10. I'd like to hear about the time your dad was arrested; tell me about that. [prompt: what happened? Who was there? How did you feel?]

11. I'd like to hear what you think about the prison? What do you think about the people who work there?

12. What are things you don't like about your dad being in prison? [prompt: what's the worst part?]

13. Why do you think all this happened? [or probe, if child mentions at any point feeling angry, hurt: At who? Why?]

14. If you learned that one of your classmates was about to have their parent go to prison, what advice would you give them?"

Topic Guide: Caregivers

1. Child's age at parental incarceration

2. Child witnessed arrest(s)?

3. Timeline (when entered, exited prison)

4. Extent of caregiving role prior to incarceration (lived with?)

5. Child's behaviour (pre/post changes?)

6. Child's mental health (pre/post changes?)

7. Child's anti-social behaviour (pre/post changes?)

8. Family changes: finances

9. Family changes: support, time, other resources

10. Visiting (how often, content)

11. Calls and letters (how often, content)

12. Parenting from inside (meaningful role, impact, commitment)

Interview Schedule: Key Informants

1. [Consent process]

2. How did you come to work in the field of (penology/criminal justice/families of prisoners)? Tell me about your training and experience.

3. Have you ever been involved in providing service of any kind to children or families of prisoners? Tell me about this.

4. In your view, what are the main issues (negative and positive) faced by children of prisoners? Faced by caregivers of these children?

5. Research has begun to explore the outcomes of these kids but there appears to be very little direct research into their experiences. Does your experience with these families give you insight into this?

6. I would like to know more about the programs that are or have been offered to children of prisoners in Canada. Are you aware of any programs, provincially or federally, that target their specific needs? Any past programs?

7. I'm interested in the extent to which programs and policies that impact children and families of prisoners are based on research evidence. What do you see as the role of research in informing policy in this area?

8. What do you think should be the main goals of programs for children and families of prisoners?

9. Do you have any thoughts on programs that any level of government could implement to improve the experiences or outcomes of children of prisoners?

10. What governmental policies, or changes in policy (federal, provincial or municipal), do you think have most impacted children of prisoners (negatively or positively)?

11. What do you think should be the aims and priorities of governmental policy in this area?

12. Do you think that there are any stakeholders are missing from the discussion on CIPs?