**MARKED BY ASSOCIATION:
STIGMA, MARGINALISATION, GENDER AND THE FAMILIES OF MALE
PRISONERS IN CANADA**

Stacey N. Hannem
MCA, University of Ottawa, 2003
B.Soc.Sci. (Hon), University of Ottawa, 2001

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (sociology)

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ABSTRACT

This research is an exploratory study of the impacts of incarceration on the families of male prisoners in Canada, the stigma they encounter, the ways stigma is institutionalised, and the gendered nature of these realities. This is the first Canadian study of its kind and takes into account uniquely Canadian aspects of families' experiences, for example, the geographic dispersal of Canadian penitentiaries and the use of private family visits within prisons.

The findings of this study are based on twenty-six in-depth interviews conducted with family members of Canadian prisoners (n=17) and service providers who work with these families (n=9), and three focus groups with thirteen family members of incarcerated men.

This study finds that families experience financial and emotional hardships due to incarceration and that families are often stigmatised and isolated from the community due to their association with a convicted man. Particular attention is given to the financial hardships that result from the geographic dispersal of Canadian prisons and the malign neglect that allows institutional policies on visiting and family contact to unduly burden the families of prisoners.

Theoretically, the marginalisation of prisoners' families and the hardships that they experience are viewed as the outcome of a "sticky" stigma that is transferred from the prisoner to his family. This stigma apparently helps justify the social neglect of prisoners' families and their financial, emotional, and social needs. I also examine the gendered nature of sticky stigma, shown in how patriarchal understandings of family

relationships allow stigma to be most easily transferred from men to their partners and families.

Using the work of Goffman, Foucault and Douglas, the study views stigma as originating in cultural definitions and as structurally embedded in the policies and practices of criminal justice and social agencies that define prisoners' family members as risky individuals. Stigma also colours family interactions with institutional staff. I examine the targeted use of the "ion (drug) scanner" as one example of a structural stigma. Structural stigma is shown to exacerbate the experiential difficulties of coping with involuntary separation from a loved one and negotiating the maintenance of family relationships throughout incarceration.

Keywords: prisoners' families, stigma, effects of incarceration, risk

To my parents,
who first taught me by example to feel compassion for the needs of others;
and for Christopher,
whose random acts of kindness continue to inspire me.
With Love, SH

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CHAPTER I

SITUATING THE PROJECT: PERSONAL, SOCIO-POLITICAL, AND ACADEMIC CONTEXTS

The use of imprisonment as a punishment for law-breaking is generally considered to be a specific form of punishment that targets only the wrong-doer. However, when a man is convicted of a crime and sentenced to imprisonment, the implications of that punishment extend beyond the body and psyche of the prisoner to his family. Those who care for and are connected to that man through the bonds of kinship are also affected by his incarceration and may experience the pain of separation from a loved one and a myriad of complications associated with maintaining family relationships despite the barrier of the prison institution. Alternatively, a man's incarceration may be experienced as a reprieve for family members from abuse and suffering at his hands. In either situation, the crime and period of incarceration has an impact on the prisoner's family, who must negotiate their way through the criminal justice system and its policies and deal with the social reality of their connection to someone who has been convicted of an offence. Wives, intimate partners (opposite and same-sex), children, parents and siblings are all affected by the incarceration of a family member.

This is an exploratory study of the impact of incarceration on the families of male prisoners in Canada. The research seeks to examine their experiences in dealing with the incarceration of a loved one and the myriad of social and practical hardships and institutional relationships that result, with particular attention given to the social and institutional regulation that accompanies the status. The study operates on two levels: first, substantively, to provide a qualitative description of the impact of incarceration on the everyday lives of these families, and second, theoretically, to situate these

experiences as the product of stigma that is transferred from the convicted man to his family. Stigma is understood to be a phenomenon that is interactionally realised: the interaction of an attribute and others' perceptions of and reactions to it. Therefore, this process of marking and ostracising the family members of male prisoners is considered in light of existing knowledge about the role of patriarchy¹ in binding the identities of women and children to the male head of the household and the function of the prison institution in perpetuating the stigmatisation of prisoners and their families.

Despite the long-recognised links between family support and the successful reintegration and rehabilitation of former offenders (Irwin 1970; Holt and Miller 1972; Waller 1974; Cobean and Power 1978; Homer 1979; Eckland-Olson et al. 1983; Maruna 2001; Naser and La Vigne 2006; Griffiths, Dandurand and Murdoch 2007), until very recently the effects of imprisonment and release on the families of incarcerated men have been largely ignored by social scientists and by society at large, with the exception of a few notable studies that have been conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom. A review of available literature on the topic of prisoners' families, originating in the United States and United Kingdom, revealed that there were no studies that addressed, in a significant way, families' experiences of stigma-laden interactions with social and government agencies, although these accounts emerged as being very significant in negotiating the incarceration of a family member. Thus, this research seeks specifically to explore the theoretical and practical implications of the stigmatic attitudes that are directed toward prisoners' families and that result in social difficulties.

¹ Patriarchy, as I use it here and throughout the dissertation, is understood as a central concept in feminist social theory that indicates a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 1989: 214). Patriarchy becomes a salient aspect of interpersonal and family relationships when women are subject to male domination within the household and women's identities become defined by their roles in domestic and reproductive labour.

Stigma is viewed as structurally embedded in the policies and practices of criminal justice and social agencies that define prisoners' family members as risky individuals who are likely to be involved in crime themselves or to become engaged in criminal lifestyles. This structural stigma is shown to exacerbate the experiential difficulties of coping with (sometimes lengthy) periods of involuntary separation from a loved one and negotiating the maintenance of family relationships throughout the incarceration. It is my contention that even those social and government agencies in Canada which recognise the needs of prisoners' families do so within a context that defines these families as both "risky" and morally lacking. As such, this study intends to answer the question: *how do the families of Canadian prisoners experience, negotiate and resist personal stigmatisation at the symbolic level and regulation at the structural level?* The term structural, here and throughout the dissertation, is used in reference to an understanding of social structures as constructed realities and categories (such as gender, class, religion, race, etc.) which limit or shape the boundaries of human agency and are generally found embedded in social institutions. Thus, structural stigma is used to define a cultural understanding of risky populations which has real implications for individuals' experiences of regulation and the choices that they are positioned to make.

Utilising a symbolic interactionist framework that is informed by aspects of Michel Foucault's work, this research project seeks to understand the everyday lives of prisoners' families in Canada and their perspectives on the challenges that they face in dealing with the incarceration of their loved one. Furthermore, the experiences of prisoners' families as they are described in this work may be taken as an empirical example of the way that stigmatic attitudes are directed toward and have an impact on

many marginalised populations in our society. This thesis, therefore, has broad implications for furthering our understanding of the social and moral regulation of groups defined as deviant or risky.

My own introduction to the hardships faced by prisoners' families occurred quite fortuitously. As a young Master's student in criminology, working on my thesis research with a particular sub-population of released offenders, I was engaged in interviewing ex-prisoners about their experiences with a community-based reintegration program. On one occasion an individual whom I interviewed invited me to have lunch with him and his wife. His wife, Jane, a woman in her late-forties, was an intelligent, well-spoken and lovely woman who immediately shattered every social stereotype of prisoners' wives and who listened with interest as I described my research, asking questions and commenting on my choice of topic. Then she observed, almost off-hand, "you know, no one ever talks to the wives and children... everyone is very interested in the guys - how do they cope with imprisonment and reintegrating into the community - but no one has ever asked me how I felt about my husband being in prison... no one has ever asked me how I coped." She went on to suggest that perhaps I might one day undertake to document these experiences.

Jane's comments stayed with me. Upon further investigation, I determined that she was absolutely correct in her claim that the people who are most affected by the use of incarceration in our society, other than prisoners themselves, have been virtually ignored by academics, politicians, policy makers and society at large. The vast majority of available literature on prisoners' families originates in the United Kingdom and in the United States. To date, there has been no published academic work on the subject in

Canada. Grassroots and volunteer organisations such as the Canadian Families and Corrections Network² (CFCN) have generated what little Canadian information is available.

In this chapter I will provide an overview of the existing international literature on prisoners' families and discuss the unique Canadian context that provides the backdrop to this research and differentiates it from earlier American and European studies. I then briefly introduce my theoretical approach and some of the gendered considerations that have shaped this study. The conclusion of this chapter provides an overview of the remainder of the thesis.

Review of the Literature on Prisoners' Families

Given the long history of incarceration and the wealth of resources that have been directed at studying and documenting the use of prisons, concern for the effects of imprisonment on prisoners' families is a relatively recent phenomenon and has only been sporadically addressed. The very first study to involve prisoners' families was conducted in the 1920s and the experiences of the families themselves were raised only in the context of asking whether inmates in the state of Kentucky were receiving adequate rates of pay (Schneller 1976). In her study, conducted on behalf of the governor of Kentucky and the US Department of Labour, Ruth Bloodgood (1928) determined that the families of male prisoners experienced significant financial hardship as a result of the incarceration of the primary breadwinner. The report recommended that the wages paid to inmates for labour during incarceration be increased and that a set portion of any pay

² The CFCN is the only national organisation to focus their efforts specifically at addressing the needs of families of prisoners.

be sent to the wife and dependents to help alleviate financial distress (Bloodgood 1928). Bloodgood (1928) also recommended that case workers be hired to assist the families of prisoners and that public financial assistance should be given to the dependent children of incarcerated parents. This is the first known documentation of the financial difficulties that are imposed on a family when a man is incarcerated, a situation that remains common today.

It was another decade before Jerome G. Sacks (1938) turned his attention to the effects of imprisonment on the families of twenty-three white male prisoners in Washington, D.C. In his unpublished Masters thesis, Sacks (1938) reported that nineteen of the families had difficulty in making social and economic adjustments to the imprisonment of their family member and that very few supports were available to assist them. Interviews with families and officials identified that the lack of communication amongst families, correctional staff and community social service agencies contributed to adjustment difficulties and lack of assistance. Sacks recommended that these communication difficulties could be remedied by introducing family counselling at the prison and by extending the mandate of parole work to include offering support and assistance to families during the incarceration period and following release. Schneller (1976) notes that these recommendations were never adopted into Washington D.C.'s correctional policy.

It would be more than twenty years before a third study of prisoners' families would be completed. James Blackwell based his (1959) doctoral dissertation on a questionnaire administered to eighty married inmates and 48 prisoners' wives in Spokane, Washington. Blackwell attempted to identify factors related to the successful

adjustment of spouses separated by incarceration. Blackwell (1959) found that the non-incarcerated spouse's access to financial, social and emotional resources, shorter sentence lengths, and efforts to maintain contact during incarceration all contributed to the likelihood of successful adjustment to forced spousal separation by incarceration. While this study is interesting and novel in its approach, the validity of Blackwell's findings is considered somewhat suspect, due to the small sample size and his use of quantitative analysis to study such a clearly qualitative and subjective phenomenon as adjustment (Schneller 1976). However, all of the early studies of prisoners' families emphasised financial difficulties and the lack of social resources as key effects of imprisonment on the family.

While it was apparently still a marginal topic of interest, three studies of prisoners' families were published in the 1960s. First, Serapio R. Zalba's (1964) research on *Women Offenders and Their Families* focused on the children of female prisoners in California. In 1965, Pauline Morris published her landmark study of prisoners and their families in Great Britain. Her three-year study, the largest of its kind to date, included in-depth interviews with 932 inmates and 676 prisoners' wives. Morris (1965) found that the most commonly mentioned problems faced by prisoners' wives were 'money' (41%), management of children (34%), loneliness and sexual frustration (32%), and fears about what would happen when their husband was released (23%). Only five percent mentioned concern with the hostility of the community and four percent feelings of shame or guilt over their husband's crime and incarceration (Morris 1965: 292). Seventy-eight percent of the wives were receiving financial assistance from the government and most families experienced a significant decline in income due to the incarceration of the

husband/father. Morris' findings echoed those of Sacks (1938) in identifying the lack of communication between families and corrections/parole officials. Despite the fact that a prison welfare officer was available to assist families, most were unaware of this resource and felt disconnected and ignored by prison officials, noting that a visit and information from a parole or prison welfare officer would be helpful (Morris 1965). The wives expressed distrust and negative feelings toward other social welfare agencies such as the Children's and Education Departments and housing authorities and mentioned feeling discrimination and hostility when dealing with these organisations (Morris 1965: 294). Although only a few of the women reported experiences of hostility as a concern, most expressed a fear of gossip and were aware of the stigma associated with their husband's crime and sentence (Morris 1965: 295). This finding suggests that while stigma may have been problematic, the wives prioritised what they saw as the more pressing issues of finances, family adjustment, and emotional turmoil.

In the same year, Nancy Anderson (1965) completed a smaller study of prisoners and their families in Melbourne, Australia, aimed at determining whether community services were meeting the needs of this population. Anderson (1965) interviewed eighty-four prisoners, fifty-nine prisoners' wives and twelve employees from community agencies that worked with prisoners and/or their families. She determined that the bulk of support services offered specifically to this population took the form of financial aid and social welfare, while only a few agencies offered family counselling or social programs. Anderson (1965) recommended that existing community agencies be linked with those that provide services for prisoners' families in order to co-ordinate their efforts and offer a wider range of services. She also suggested that wives of prisoners be given a

brochure or information that outlines available services in their areas, and that free baby-sitting services, the inclusion of wives in their husbands' rehabilitation and therapy sessions and better training for personnel who provide services to prisoners' families would further aid in family adjustment and coping. Anderson later published a summary of her findings in a 1967 edition of the *Australian Journal of Social Sciences*, reporting that family reorganisation (ie: wives taking over the role of disciplinarian and sole care giver for children and learning to manage the household independently), the limitations of distance and cost on maintaining communication with the incarcerated husband/father, social stigma and lack of community resources were also problematic for prisoners' families (Anderson 1967).

Schneller's (1975, 1976) study of "the social and psychological effects of incarceration on the families of Negroes" found that prisoners' families frequently encounter the barriers of financial and emotional hardship³. The incarceration of the male head of the household had a solely negative impact on the vast majority (61 of 71 families questioned) while only four families reported predominately positive changes from the incarceration of the father/husband. Schneller (1976) concluded that the imprisonment of married men violates the principle of specificity of punishment by causing hardship to the wives and children, who are legally innocent. He recommended the implementation of increased family counselling, visiting privileges and conjugal visits to help combat emotional hardships, and suggested that a free transportation service to the prison be created to aid families with the financial burden of maintaining contact.

³ Interestingly, due to the prevalence and normalisation of criminality and incarceration in the negro community, Schneller's study did not find social stigma to be a problem.

In 1978, Laura J. Bakker, Barbara A. Morris and Laura M. Janus, then graduate students in the field of social work at California State, published an article referring to prisoners' families as the "hidden victims of crime". Their study included interviews with seven prisoners' wives and analysed the family's experience in the criminal justice system from arrest to incarceration. The findings of this study corroborated earlier reports of financial and emotional hardships, feelings of stigmatisation from criminal justice officials and individuals in the community, lack of information about the criminal justice process and incarceration, and perceptions of significant increases in stress levels and family chaos (Bakker et al. 1978). The authors also reiterated Schneller's (1976) claim that the incarceration of an individual collaterally punishes the family, thereby creating victims of the system. According to Bakker et al. (1978), society has an obligation to ensure, as much as possible, that the pains of punishment do not extend to the families of offenders, by providing necessary financial aid, transportation to prisons, child care, cost-effective housing and a myriad of resources designed to combat the effects of incarceration on families.

In the early 1980s, data from the TARP (Transitional Aid to Released Prisoners) experiment⁴ in the United States considered the role of "significant women" in the post-incarceration reintegration of prisoners and outlined the negative economic impact that a returning prisoner has on his family (Liker 1981; Curtis and Schulman 1984). They focused on the aftermath of incarceration and detailed that released prisoners often returned to their families and drew on scarce family resources while being unable to obtain employment or otherwise contribute to the welfare of the family as a whole. Their

⁴ The TARP experiment provided temporary financial and employment assistance to newly released prisoners in an effort to aid in their reintegration to life in the community. The TARP project and its results are discussed in detail in Rossi, Berk and Lenihan (1980).

study demonstrated that the impact of incarceration on families can even extend beyond the finite period of incarceration.

Lowenstein (1984, 1986), on the other hand, considered the psychological aspects of prisoners' wives experiences of stress and coping with the absence of a partner and the effect of 'temporary' single parenthood on the behaviour of prisoners' children. Her study concluded that women with greater personal and family resources were better able to cope with their husbands' absence, with level of education being the most significant factor (Lowenstein 1984). Wives with higher levels of education had a more realistic comprehension of their situation and more marketable employment skills to combat financial difficulties through increased earning-power. Those families who had adopted an egalitarian approach to division of labour and parenting prior to the husband/father's incarceration were also more likely to adapt successfully to the required role changes and altered family dynamics (Lowenstein 1984). These types of findings have been anecdotally, if not systematically, supported by later research (including my own) in which middle-class, college educated women who are employed have been found to be suffer proportionally less economic difficulty following the incarceration of a spouse or partner than a woman who does not work outside of the home and does not have an education to fall back on.

The 1990s saw the publication of two qualitative monographs on the subject of prisoners' wives. In 1990, Laura Fishman published her ethnographic study of thirty prisoners' wives in the State of Vermont, *Women at the Wall: A Study of Prisoners' Wives Doing Time on the Outside*. In the most comprehensive study of its kind since Morris' 1965 research in the UK, Fishman interviewed the wives about their relationships

with their husbands prior to incarceration and explored the women's experiences in dealing with their husband's imprisonment and separation from the family. Financial difficulties, emotional stress, family readjustment, lack of resources and social stigma emerged as primary themes in Fishman's research. Lori Girshick's (1996) book, *Soledad Women: Wives of Prisoners Speak Out*, is unique in that Girshick herself was married to a prisoner of Soledad prison (whom she met and married during his incarceration). She conducted interviews with 25 other women whose husbands were also incarcerated at Soledad prison in California. Her findings closely mirror those of Laura Fishman, but emphasise that the husband's incarceration often results in a loss of income and the exacerbation of existing financial problems, recognising that the families of many prisoners have a lower socio-economic status (Girshick 1996). Girshick (1996) also emphasised that prisoners' wives exercise agency and resistance to the stigma of the criminal justice system, economic deprivation and racism, while engaging with the traditional feminine role of "caretaker" to both children and spouse. Her feminist analysis of the issues reveals the complex structural intersections of gender, race and class that impact prisoners' wives' understandings and experiences. While Fishman and Girshick have each produced a wonderful qualitative study of the experiences of prisoners' wives, they have been criticised for failure to engage with the question of ethnicity and for under-representing minority groups in their interview samples (Comfort 2008).

Carlson and Cervera's (1992) study of sixty-three prisoners and thirty-nine wives looked at methods of coping, family relations and the use of conjugal visits and family reunion programs. They found that communication through telephone calls, letters and visits were important coping strategies for both prisoners and their wives and also found

that families were able to maintain emotionally close, cohesive relationships, despite separation (Carlson and Cervera 1992). Prisoners reported more positive views of family visiting and conjugal visits than did their wives. This finding is due, at least in part, to the fact that the financial and organisational burden of travelling to the prison falls on the wife and may cause considerable stress and hardship for her (Carlson and Cervera 1992).

The vast majority of recent studies of prisoners' families focus on the impact of parental incarceration on children, exploring the emotional and social issues that arise, including family separation, trauma, isolation, behavioural problems and increased risk of offending behaviour (see Shaw 1992; Gabel and Johnston 1995; Seymour and Hairston 2001; Boswell and Wege 2002; Marstone 2005 and Bernstein 2005). Most of these studies are of American prisoners and their children. Given the sheer enormity of the prison industrial complex in the United States and the fact that, at any given time, one or both of the parents of an estimated 2.3 million American children are in prison (Parke and Clarke-Stewart 2003: 191), it should come as no surprise that concern has begun to emerge for the welfare of these young victims of the criminal justice system. The believed correlation between parental incarceration and the future criminality of the child has contributed to social and academic concern. Travis and Waul (2003) have also published a collection of essays that discuss the social and economic implications of incarceration and release for the families and communities that are most affected by criminalisation and imprisonment – the urban ghettos of poor, ethnic communities – considering the devastating impact of political decisions that have resulted in skyrocketing rates of imprisonment in the United States. Increases in the numbers of incarcerated parents and spouses have led to studies of the difficulties and issues around

maintaining family contact through visitation and describe the experiences of stigma, frustration and humiliation that often accompany the family's entrance to a prison (Christian 2005; Arditti, Lambert-Shute and Joest 2003; Comfort 2003).

One emerging niche in the study of prisoners' families is concern for the experiences of the families of death row prisoners in the United States. Two recent collections have been published, detailing the stories of families whose loved one is awaiting execution or has been executed (see King 2005; Sharp 2005). The emotional implications of incarceration for families are particularly significant when there is no release to look forward to – only a funeral. Kate King's (2004) study compared the grief and grieving patterns of families of death row inmates and the families of murder victims. Her conclusion was that "pain is pain," and not lessened by the fact that one's family member was convicted of a terrible crime. Fortunately, this particularly troubling issue is not one that need concern the families of men incarcerated in Canada at present.

Most recently, Rachel Condry (2007) has published a study of the relatives of serious, violent and sexual offenders in England. Her research involved in-depth interviews with thirty-two family members and focused on the families' feelings of shame related to the offence and the impact on their identity, social interactions and adjustment. The experience of stigmatisation and the impact of the offence emerge as a primary theme in this work and she explores the negotiation and resistance of stigma at the individual level. She describes how family members attempt to make sense of their loved one's crime and their use of strategies of resistance and stigma management to maintain a sense of identity and to cope with feelings of guilt. A chapter of the book is devoted to discussion of the role of self-help organisations, and the importance of these

interactions in the lives of family members. She explores how self-help organisations can assist family members in coping and in finding a safe space in which to discuss the myriad of issues related to the criminal behaviour and incarceration of a loved one. Her research does not deal specifically with incarceration as a catalyst for family troubles, but focuses on the commission of the offence as the precursor to emotional difficulties and the experience of social stigma.

Gwénola Ricordeau's (2008) study of prisoners' families in France considers the effects of incarceration on family relationships and argues that imprisonment punishes the entire family. She also found the effects of stigma to be very salient for prisoners' families, often contributing to family breakdown due to the family members' desire to separate themselves from the origin of the stigma and to preserve their own identities as distinct from that of the offender.

Megan Comfort (2008) published a book based on her research into the wives and partners of prisoners at San Quentin prison in California. Comfort focussed her study on the maintenance of intimate relationships despite the barriers of prison. She details the experiences of prison visitation, conjugal visits, and the intrusiveness of corrections on inmate-family interactions. Most surprisingly, her work also examines the prison as a site of power and control for women who are struggling to cope with difficult and sometimes abusive relationships, but who wish to maintain their ties to these men. The prison is viewed as offering a reprieve from abuse, and an opportunity for change. Comfort reports that some women prefer to be involved with incarcerated men as they view themselves as having the best of both worlds: they are able to have an intimate relationship while keeping their autonomy and being able to control the contact that they have with him.

Some women report a feeling of being “needed” and enjoy the certainty that their partner will be unable to pursue other women while incarcerated. This unique perspective adds to the literature and underscores that the period of incarceration may, in fact, be viewed by some women as a positive time for their relationships.

The lack of research on the situation of Canadian prisoners’ and their families is a significant gap in the existing literature. Only one Canadian study has been undertaken by the Canadian Families and Corrections Network in Kingston, Ontario, in cooperation with the Correctional Service of Canada, published in 2003 (see Withers 2003). The strategic policy document that resulted from this research advocated better services for prisoners’ families in the context of correctional services (Withers 2003). Some of the key areas of concern included the need for correctional staff who interact with family members and visitors to the institution to be properly trained and sensitive to the needs of families, the high cost of telephone calls originating from the institutions, the lack of funding for support services to prisoners’ families and the need to integrate families more fully into release and reintegration planning (Withers 2003). The CFCN report is based on public consultations with over six hundred participants across Canada and provides an overview of the issues faced by families who are dealing with the incarceration of a loved one. This consultation is the only published study of the effects of incarceration on Canadian families to date and, as a policy document, offers no theoretical or contextual analysis of the findings.

Only recently have the families of prisoners become a topic of some interest in academia. Yet compared to the thousands of studies of crime, offenders, and corrections published each year, the families of these convicts are still marginalised in the social

sciences. To date, nearly all existing studies⁵ of prisoners' families have consistently found that finances are a major source of worry for the families of incarcerated men. From as early as Bloodgood's 1928 study to the most recent research, the incarceration of a spouse and/or parent is known to often cause financial hardship in the form of lost income and increased expenses. The research that follows concurs with these findings. Early research alluded to the gendered nature of these financial outcomes, while later research (see especially Lowenstein 1984, 1986 and Girshick 1996), including my own, engages with the impact of gender and the already marginal location of women in the job market as a key contributor to financial hardships.

Fewer studies have looked at the emotional aspect of involuntary separation due to incarceration. Those that have considered the existential aspect of a loved one's incarceration have found that prisoners' families encounter a range of emotional turmoil, both during and following the period of incarceration. The stress and sadness do not necessarily end at warrant expiry. Many families have great difficulties adjusting to life post-incarceration and coping with the (re)negotiation of family roles. The children of prisoners are thought to be particularly affected by the incarceration of a parent.

Stigma also emerges as an important concept in the literature. Many of the studies engage with the notion of stigma and discuss its effects on the social interactions of family members. The literature generally concurs that stigma is a problem for the families of incarcerated persons. However, the examination of stigma is conducted primarily at the symbolic and individual level. Although Fishman (1990), Girshick (1996), and Comfort (2007) all mention that stigma from guards is encountered upon entering the

⁵ And those that do not make this claim (for example, Condry 2007) do not engage with the question of financial or practical difficulties.

penitentiary, none of them engage with the institutionalised nature of this stigma and how it appears to be expressed in policies, which form the social context in which these guards operate. Significantly, the Canadian experience is also absent from the literature. In the next section I will discuss some of the major differences that make the Canadian context unique for prisoners' families, and worthy of further study.

The Canadian Context

Available literature from the United States, United Kingdom and France confirms that there are at least some cross-national generalisations that can be made about the situation of prisoners' families, yet there is still work to be done. We know that the family members of prisoners experience significant financial repercussions associated with the incarceration of a wage earner, emotional hardships due to the strain of involuntary separation (including loneliness, grief, sexual frustration), the social effects of stigma and difficulties in family adjustment and re-adjustment upon release. However, the Canadian correctional system includes at least three unique features that are linked to specific issues for families that do not arise in European and American studies: the geographic and spatial dilemma of doing corrections in Canada, the use of private family visits in Canadian penitentiaries and the socio-political context of Canadian penalty.

First, the sheer geographic size of the nation and the relative dispersal of the Canadian population, in combination with the centralised federal government responsibility for prison administration, have implications for the location and accessibility of federal prison complexes. In the United States, the individualised state responsibility for the administration of courts and prisons ensures that sentenced

prisoners are housed in their home state (or the state in which they committed their crime). The proliferation of prison construction in the United States and its connection to private enterprise, despite its various difficulties, also actually contributes to the relative accessibility of prisons which are scattered across the United States. For example, the state of New York alone boasts seventy state correctional facilities housing approximately sixty-two thousand inmates (NYS Department of Correctional Services, 2008), and this number does not include the local county jails, which would be the jurisdictional equivalent of Canadian provincial correctional facilities. By comparison, the Correctional Service of Canada operates a total of forty-nine federal correctional institutions across the country of Canada, a geographic area that is more than seventy-five times the size of New York State. The state of Texas has seventy-eight state correctional and private prison facilities (Texas Department of Criminal Justice, 2008). Her Majesty's Prison Service in England and Wales is responsible for ninety-eight adult correctional facilities (HM Prison Service 2007), twice as many as the Correctional Service of Canada, spread over an area that would fit into Canada more than sixty times over!

Clearly, Canadian prisons are more sparsely distributed than those of other countries that have been the subject of study. As a result, the families of Canadian prisoners are disproportionately affected by the cost of travel and the logistical difficulties associated with maintaining a relationship with an inmate. They report having to travel further distances to visit their incarcerated loved ones and also that the cost of telecommunications is often much higher, due to the greater physical separation. In fact, two Canadian provinces (Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island) and the three northern Canadian territories do not contain even one federal prison. Federally sentenced

men and women who reside in these locations will find themselves transported to other provinces, far away from family and friends. Notably, the bulk of Canadian federal institutions are located in the south-central, more densely populated, regions of the country. The residents of northern, rural areas, which are often economically depressed and often the sites of aboriginal reservation lands, are disproportionately separated from their families when a federal sentence is imposed⁶. The geographic and spatial dilemma of prison location is unique to the Canadian context and has an undeniable impact on the family members of many Canadian prisoners.

A second unique feature of the Canadian federal correctional system is the availability of private family visits (PFVs). Created to address, in some ways, the problem of geographic separation, the private family visiting program allows the family members⁷ of Canadian prisoners to spend up to seventy-two hours at a time with their loved one on the prison grounds, housed in special trailers or cottages that are separated from the general prison population. The visits can occur as often as once every two months, depending on the demand for the program at the particular institution (CSC 2004c). The families are not under surveillance throughout the visit, with the exception of periodic checks by correctional officials, and are able to interact with relative freedom and to engage in some semblance of “normal” family life for brief periods of time. The Private Family Visit Program was introduced to Canadian federal penitentiaries in 1980 (Vacheret 2005) for the purpose of encouraging the maintenance of family relationships

⁶ Though not the subject of this study, it is interesting to note that the families of female prisoners are even more disproportionately disadvantaged as there are only six regional facilities for federally sentenced women available across the country and it is virtually certain that family members will have to travel to visit their loved one (see Maidment 2006: 41-42).

⁷ Defined as spouses, common-law partners, children, step-children, parents, siblings, or anyone else deemed by CSC to be in a ‘close familial relationship’ with the offender.

during incarceration and to aid with social preparation for the inmate's eventual release to the community (CSC 2004c; Vacheret 2005). This program is unique in that prisoners are not required to earn private family visits through good behaviour, but are statutorily guaranteed the right to have family visits, unless they are subject to disciplinary measures within the institution or have a history of serious family violence that is untreated. Prisons in the US and Great Britain and Wales do not offer a comparable program. Thus, the experience of maintaining family relationships throughout lengthy periods of incarceration and preparing the family to be reunited is altered, perhaps in a positive way, by the Canadian use of PFVs.

From the 1960s until the late 1980s in some US states, prisoners were allowed to have "furloughs" for the purpose of maintaining family relationships; brief, twenty-four or forty-eight hour unescorted temporary absences from the prison. However, a sensational incident in 1987 in which an offender on furlough violently assaulted a young couple, and repeatedly raped the woman, saw the eventual demise of the practice. The public was outraged when the circumstances of the crime were reported in the media and the issue was raised by George Bush (Sr.) during his candidacy for presidency (Travisono 1999). According to Travisono (1999), "within two years, almost all furlough programs were dismantled" (20). As an alternative to the furlough system, private family or conjugal visits of twenty-four or forty-eight hours were offered on the prison grounds by some American prisons. However, conjugal visits have never been widely available in American prisons as the notion that prisoners might be allowed to engage in sexual relations has never been popular and is particularly difficult to reconcile with the prevailing punitive philosophy of the American public (Burstein 1977; Travisono 1999;

Wilkinson and Unwin 1999). Today, only six states allow some form of conjugal or private family visitation: California, Connecticut, Mississippi, New Mexico, New York and Washington (Hensley, Rutland and Gray-Ray 2002; Wilkinson and Unwin 1999). In June of 2007, the state of California made headlines when it announced that it would permit gay and lesbian couples to take part in the conjugal visitation program, making it the first state to do so (McKinley 2007). The prison system in Britain and Wales does not allow conjugal visiting on the prison grounds, but prisoners may be able to earn one unescorted family visit in the community during their sentence.

The Canadian use of private family visits, then, not only has implications for the maintenance of family relationships but brings the families of prisoners into a unique relationship with the prison system. During private family visits, family members are literally free citizens who have chosen to be temporarily subject to the rules of incarceration and the regulations of the penitentiary. The qualitative dynamics of the private family visit, and the regulation that families in prison are subject to, have not previously been explored in American or British literature on prisoners' families, due to the relative scarcity of such programs. Therefore, garnering an understanding of family visiting in the Canadian context is an important and distinctive element of this research.

Finally, there is evidence to suggest that the socio-politics of incarceration in Canada are sufficiently distinct from those of the United States and Great Britain to warrant independent study of its effects (Christie 2004; Meyer and O'Malley 2005; Moore and Hannah-Moffat 2005). The Canadian approach to criminal justice and corrections has been characterised by turn as more balanced, less punitive, and generally less susceptible to the forces of public opinion than the American and British experiences

(Meyer and O'Malley 2005; Roberts, Stalans, Indermauer and Hough 2003). Where other countries are reported to have adopted increasingly draconian law and order approaches to crime, Canada has resisted significant change and retains an approach to corrections that is founded on the rehabilitative ideal and the notion of effective administration (Hatt, Caputo and Perry 1992; Doob and Webster 2007). The Correctional Service of Canada, and particularly its cognitive-behavioural rehabilitative paradigm, has been touted by practitioners as among the best correctional systems in the world and exported to other nations in the form of best practices and program models.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the seemingly moderate approach taken by Canadian correctional officials, it appears that Canadians are beginning to have a general belief that the prison system is not punitive enough. In letters to the editor and on talk radio, many Canadians commonly refer to federal penitentiaries as "Club Fed" and hold a host of misconceptions about the conditions and privileges available to inmates. Although crime rates in Canada have been stable or declining since the early nineteen-nineties, the Canadian public appears to be increasingly afraid of victimisation and consequently less tolerant of crime and disorder (Roberts, Stalans, Indermaur and Hough 2002). High profile incidents of gun and gang-related violence in Canadian urban centres and several sensational cases of child abduction and sexual abuse have taken the problem of crime from the periphery to the centre of the Canadian consciousness. Calls for the use of mandatory minimum sentences, the abolition of parole and statutory release, longer sentences and fewer luxuries for inmates are common in the Canadian media. In the 2006 and 2008 Canadian federal elections, all three nationally representative parties included law and order and the rhetoric of "getting tough on crime" in their platforms, appealing to

the public's concern for crime control. The new political urgency directed at the crime problem is surprising, given that just a few years previous, the (then) ministry of the Solicitor General reported that:

Examining the attitudes of the public to the criminal justice system [has] shown that Canadians are not very supportive of “get tough” policies. Public support for capital punishment has fallen to a historic low and the majority of survey respondents prefer parole to incarcerating offenders until the end of their sentences (Public Safety Canada 2001: ¶7).

While it is true that Canadian rates of incarceration are significantly lower than those of the United States, Canada still exhibits very high rates of incarceration by international standards, ranking among the top five western, industrialised nations in its use of imprisonment (Correctional Service Canada 2005). The conditions in Canadian federal prisons are not the most austere or harshest, but neither are these conditions the most comfortable or gentle, particularly as compared to Norwegian and other Scandinavian correctional facilities. Public support for recent, more punitive, criminal justice legislation⁸ reveals that Canada may in fact be currently experiencing a late turn toward a more American-style, law and order approach, as Meyer and O'Malley (2005) suggested might occur.

Within this shifting socio-political context, there seems to be reluctance amongst bureaucrats and politicians to increase expenditures for any programs that appear to be “soft on crime” or “soft on criminals”, and this unfortunately may include support systems for prisoners' families. Since 2004, various local programs across Canada that

⁸ See, for example, Bill C-2, the conservative government's *Tackling Violent Crime Act*, passed in March of 2008. This legislation included provisions to increase the scope of dangerous offender legislation, mandatory minimum sentences for several categories of drug and firearm related crimes and the creation of a reverse onus for obtaining bail, as well as raised the age of sexual consent to sixteen years of age. Controversially, and without precedent, the Harper government issued a notice to the Canadian Senate that no changes to the legislation would be accepted, and yet there was surprisingly little backlash or comment from the Canadian public at this attempt to curtail a “sober second thought”.

offer assistance to families affected by incarceration have been unable to secure continued funding, resulting in a scale-back of services at some and the demise of others⁹. The Canadian situation has not been conducive to the provision of nation-wide, core support programming for families affected by incarceration. Social supports and networks for prisoners' families in the United Kingdom, on the other hand, have been available since the late 1980s. Originally organised around concerns about the families of Irish political prisoners in Ireland and Britain (see Coulter 1991), such organisations have since expanded to offer their services to all prisoners' families (not just those of political prisoners) and are generally well organised and government funded.¹⁰

No systematic effort to provide resources and support for prisoners' families has occurred in either Canada or in the United States, although religious and charitable organisations in both countries have attempted piecemeal programs and support groups. In Canada, such groups have occasionally received government grants by applying for funding under the umbrella of the Crime Prevention Council of Canada. Requests for funds often point to the risk of intergenerational criminality and mobilise the crime prevention through social development paradigm as a means of gaining support for programs directed at the children and partners of offenders. However, even with this community protection reasoning, funding is generally cyclical, insecure and subject to social and political whim.

⁹ Examples include the loss of funding for House of Hope's family support and counseling programs in Ottawa, which resulted in their closure, and the Bridgehouse's (Kingston) loss of substantial funding from CSC and the United Way. Bridgehouse's funding cut-backs resulted in the cancellation of some support programs, although the core accommodations and travel assistance for families visiting prisons were saved by financial support from the city of Kingston.

¹⁰ See Action for Prisoners' Families (formerly known as the Federation of Prisoners' Families Support Groups) (London): www.prisonersfamilies.org.uk

While the situation is similar in the United States, recently there has been increased political interest in the effects of incarceration on families and particularly on the children of prisoners. In 2000, President George W. Bush launched an initiative to increase funding to charitable organisations willing to work with the children of prisoners on the basis that, without intervention, these children are likely to grow up to become criminals. He was the first American president ever to suggest that funds and services should be provided specifically to the children of prisoners. In an address to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an American civil rights organisation, in July of 2000, President Bush stated:

“More than a million children [in the United States] have one or both parents in prison. These are forgotten children – almost six times more likely to go to prison themselves. And they should not be punished for the sins of their fathers. We should give grants to ministries and mentoring programs that offer support to these children. . .” (cited in Family and Corrections Network 2004).

The funding earmarked by President Bush is administered primarily by religious organisations and there has been strong criticism of this approach on the grounds that children’s access to social services should not be dictated by religious interests. Support for prisoners’ families is still not uniformly available in the United States and, as in Canada, is tainted by the notion that family support services are necessary to prevent children from becoming criminal.

Although the rate of incarceration in the United States impacts a greater number of families, increasingly conservative criminal justice policies in Canada may draw us closer to American-style rates of incarceration and have the potential to impact many more Canadian families, making the effect of incarceration on families in Canada a timely and important area of study. While Canada’s approach to corrections has been

painted as a kinder form of justice, in practice this does not necessarily mitigate the effects of incarceration and involuntary separation on families and should not entail a social and governmental abdication of the responsibility to offer services and supports.

Theorising Stigma

The marginal location of the families of incarcerated men, academically, socially, and politically, can be viewed as a function of their stigmatised identity. The issue of stigma arises frequently in the literature and is generally acknowledged to pose a serious problem for this population as they are identified by their association with the incarcerated man. Stigma effectively disenfranchises prisoners' families, limiting opportunities for the improvement of their social and economic situation and curtailing public sympathy and concern for their well-being. However, systematic consideration of stigma has generally been limited to its individual and interactionally realised forms. Rarely has stigma been defined as embedded in the structures of neo-liberal society. Although the experience of stigma is prevalent and salient for many prisoners' families, no studies have been found that explore prisoners' families experiences of stigma in relation to social and government agencies in a significant way. This form of structural or institutional stigma appears to be a key aspect of the experiences of prisoners' families as described in the literature, and yet little space has been devoted to understanding the theoretical and practical implications of stigma embedded in the policies and practices of criminal justice and social agencies in their dealings with marginalised populations like prisoners' families.

Foucault's concept of the marginal is a useful place to begin consideration of the situation of the families of incarcerated men in Canada. Foucault theoretically differentiates the situation of the marginalised in our society from that of the abnormal or "other". For Foucault, the marginalised are still a part of the larger society; they speak the same "language", share cultural and social understandings, and subscribe to many of the same values as mainstream society. They also often play essential social and economic roles and yet they are perpetually on the borders of society because either their identity and life is significantly defined by values that are counter to the mainstream, or they belong to a group whose welfare is systematically subordinated in favour of the welfare of the larger, mainstream group (Gutting 2005). I would argue that the families of offenders fit into each of these categories. Marginality then, as Foucault conceived of it and as I use it throughout this work, is the practical outcome of stigma, which prevents marked individuals from being fully accepted in their community. As I will discuss, stigma leads to marginality by permitting the community to deny full citizenship rights or to turn a blind eye to the sufferings of those who are perceived as counter to the mainstream and therefore undeserving of these considerations. Throughout this dissertation, the described lived experiences of prisoners' family members and the difficulties they encounter may be seen as linked to stigmatic attitudes in society. Where stigma does not directly *cause* the associated difficulties, the problems are allowed to persist by virtue of a stigma which justifies social neglect.

The identity of prisoners' families is often assumed by "normal" persons to be associated with criminal behaviours and values that contradict and are threatening to mainstream values and public safety. The validity of this charge is suspect as many

family members have no criminal record and have not been involved in illicit activities. However, the notion that those who are related to a person who has been convicted of a crime are more likely to be involved in these types of dangerous and illegal activities themselves is a pervasive one in our society that is, at least in theory, supported by criminological and sociological research on associations and involvement in deviant behaviour. Prisoners' families are then marginalised by the probability that those who engage in illegal conduct are more likely than not to be associated with others who are also criminal. Individuals who do not wish to be associated with criminality will seek to eschew relationships and social interactions with those who might pose a risk. Additionally, marginalised groups are useful scapegoats and the condemnation of their deviance through avoidance and social punishment serves to reinforce the propriety and rewards of normal, conforming behaviour (Durkheim 1938). As such, we are able to systematically disregard the welfare of the deviant group by emphasising the importance of protecting and upholding the welfare of "normal", law-abiding citizens. The well-being and integrity of prisoners' families, then, is a small sacrifice to make in the interests of locking up potentially dangerous criminals who might bring harm to innocent persons. Although our criminal justice system is premised on the principle of specific punishment, seemingly ignored is the contradiction in the fact that the use of imprisonment has collateral impacts on families as well. It is a concession we are willing to make, and the average Canadian appears not to give a second thought to the plight of a prisoner's family.

This dissertation, then engages with three unique aspects of the stigma that is associated with criminality or deviance: the symbolic: individual, interactionally realised

discrimination and avoidance; the structural: risk-based responses and institutionalised management and; the social: marginalisation and neglect which is justified in terms of just deserts.

*Theorising Gender*¹¹

The stigmatisation and marginalisation of male prisoners' families as associated with criminality is exacerbated by the marginal gender location in which most find themselves. Understanding that by "gender", we are referring to the social constructions of hetero-normative sex role expectations that position women in the private sphere and limit their identities and choices to prescribed definitions of femininity, we can see that a definite gender bias exists in these family members' experiences of incarceration. In fact, the lack of attention given to the families of prisoners may, in itself, be seen as resulting from the marginalised status of women in our society. While the vast majority of incarcerated persons in Canada (and, indeed, around the world) are men, it stands to reason that many of these men are engaged in relationships with women who are deeply affected when their men are sent to prison. While much money and effort has been invested in the study of incarcerated persons and the prison complex, the female partners of these men have been neglected or considered as appendages to their men in federal correctional statistics. While feminist criminologists have worked hard to draw attention to women as offenders and victims of crime, there has been little corresponding attention to the female partners of prisoners. These women's lives are, arguably, as affected by the criminal justice system as those of female offenders or victims.

¹¹ While these issues are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2, I wish here to introduce the gendered nature of the problems that the families of male prisoners face.

As described in the literature, the problems faced by families of the incarcerated are predominantly women's problems. These difficulties are the result of a complex intersection of patriarchal norms, the gendered division of labour and the traditional role of woman as carer. When a woman is imprisoned, it is very rare that a male partner or spouse remains on the outside, maintaining the family unit and awaiting her release (Casey-Acevedo and Bakken 2002; Maidment 2006). More commonly, the relationship dissolves, or the incarcerated woman was already a single mother. The dependent children of incarcerated women are most often sent to live with extended family, or put into foster care. Thus, the burden of raising children and coping with issues of incarceration is often shifted to a female relative – the mother or sister of the incarcerated woman, for instance.

When a man is incarcerated, if he has a spouse or partner she is more likely to retain custody of any minor children and will often attempt to preserve her relationship and sustain the family unit throughout the incarceration. Girshick (1996) attributes this tendency to work to preserve the relationship to expectations that the wife will act as a caregiver, and to the importance of the wife/mother role in the formation of a woman's identity. A woman's identity, in her own mind and in the perceptions of others, is often closely linked to her husband/partner and his social status, particularly if she does not have a career or social identity that is separate from her husband/partner and family. This phenomenon allows for the stigma of a husband/partner's identity as a "criminal" to be easily transferred to his wife/partner in her interactions with others. Although some marital relationships do break down and end in divorce due to incarceration, even these women are not immediately exempted from the impact of incarceration and the

emotional, social and financial difficulties that it poses. In fact, they are subject to the additional hardship of relinquishing the often central “wife” identity.

The disproportionate effect of the incarceration of male partners on women is, in part, reflective of patriarchal norms, such as the expectation that women will be primary caregivers for young children, and the tendency to economically devalue “women’s work” with lower rates of pay or no pay at all for women who choose or are forced by necessity to work only in the home. This gendered economic inequality exposes women to financial vulnerability and greater rates of poverty (Girshick 1996). If there are young children in the household, the male may be the primary provider, while the woman is the primary care-giver, and his removal from the household due to incarceration can be financially devastating to the family. Established patterns of family life will be disrupted and require the female partner to take on the role of sole parent and provider. Regardless of the family’s original financial status, incarceration is likely to have a negative impact and require a change of lifestyle, and most often this difficulty is borne by women.

While fathers, husbands and brothers are also affected by the incarceration of a loved one, the impact is usually (though not always) mitigated by a financial status that is independent of the incarcerated family member and a lesser tendency to link their own identity with that of their incarcerated loved one. Men are more likely than women to have a social status that does not rely on marital or kinship ties, including an occupational status outside of the home. This autonomous identity appears to significantly reduce the likelihood of transferred stigma as others relate to the non-deviant, established master status. Conversely, female spouses and children who often do not have an established, positive public identity that is capable of over-riding the negative impact of their familial

relationship to an incarcerated person are more likely to experience greater transferred stigma and to find it socially debilitating. In light of this gendered experience, this research is focused on the families of male prisoners, with particular emphasis on the hardships faced by female partners and children. Many of the issues that will be discussed also apply to the families of female prisoners, however, the experience of a mother's imprisonment and separation from her children carries other unique implications that I do not address here and are certainly worthy of further study.

Summary

In the following chapter we will examine the phenomenon of stigma as it is related to criminality and provide the theoretical basis upon which to discuss the experiences of prisoners' families in Canada. Chapter three describes the data collection and methods used in this study, followed by an analysis of the experiences of prisoners' families with respect to negotiating the everyday realities of the incarceration of a loved one (chapter four), negotiating stigma in the community and in institutions (chapter five), and negotiating the family member's release and return to the family unit (chapter six). The final chapter (chapter seven) provides an overview of the key substantive and theoretical contributions of this study. I also provide discussion of social and policy changes that could be utilised to assist prisoners' families and suggest areas for future study.

CHAPTER II

STIGMA IN SOCIETY: THE CREATION AND PERPETUATION OF DIALECTICS OF DIFFERENCE

In August of 2004 the philosopher and social theorist Ian Hacking published an article entitled “Between Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman: between discourse in the abstract and face-to-face interaction” in the prominent international journal *Economy and Society*. In this article, Hacking points out that the work of Foucault and Goffman is complementary and calls for a drawing together of their methods. This research seeks to respond to this challenge and to empirically ground Hacking’s theorising by linking the work of Erving Goffman (and symbolic interaction, more generally) and Michel Foucault to provide a more holistic picture of the phenomenon of stigma and the relationship between interaction, knowledge construction, and power. The process of stigmatisation and the social response to stigma is further linked to cultural discussions of risk and understandings of danger, as they are theorised by Mary Douglas. This approach to linking the macro and micro aspects of stigma is a unique contribution to theorising about the lived experiences of marginalised individuals.

In this chapter I will set out the theoretical framework for the empirical research to follow by exploring in detail the symbolic and structural (or micro and macro) aspects of the process of stigmatisation in neo-liberal western societies and its relationship to the modern rhetoric of risk. First I describe the history of the concept of stigma and discuss the contributions of Erving Goffman to the sociology of stigma in interactions. Then we will explore Michel Foucault’s work on knowledge and power and the insights that it can provide to a larger, structural understanding of stigma. I then discuss Mary Douglas’

work on the cultural constructions of peril and its application to an explanation of the phenomenon of stigma. I examine how cultural understandings of danger and threat determine the discreditable characteristics and how otherwise credible individuals may be tainted with the stigma of those close to them. I also consider how gender may impact the transference of “sticky stigma” in our culture. Structural stigma is then linked to the language of risk, which is mobilised to intervene and govern those at the margins of society. I argue that the seemingly value-neutral language of risk disguises underlying moral judgements and stigma and is utilised to justify intervention on populations who may be constructed as posing a risk to themselves or to the well-being of others. The need for intervention, itself, sets the identified group apart from the “normal” and perpetuates stigma and stereotypes. Although the focus of this research is on the experiences of the families of incarcerated men, the discussion of stigma presented in this chapter is also applicable to many other groups who have been marginalised through discourses of risk.

Theoretical Foundations

Erving Goffman’s (1963) seminal work in sociology on the concept of stigma provides a grounded, experientially based exploration of how individuals are subject to stigmatisation and manage their discredited identities in interactions with “normals” around them. Hacking (2004) refers to this analysis as “bottom-up”, in the sense that it is “always concerned with individuals in specific locations entering into or declining social relations with other people” (278). Goffman was most interested in explaining how people are constituted, define themselves, and are understood by others in the context of

interaction. However, Goffman's work (and the symbolic interactionist tradition, in general) has often been criticised for failing to engage in unravelling the ways in which the social structures and institutions that shape interaction and the eventual outcomes come into being (Giddens 1997; Hacking 2004; Dennis and Martin 2005). The work of Michel Foucault, on the other hand, is directed at understanding discourse in a more abstract sense (Foucault 1969; Hacking 2004). Foucault attempted to neatly separate the products of human interaction (conversation, writings, recordings of events) from the actors who produced them and use them as data to analyse systems of thought (Foucault 1969; Hacking 2004). He was particularly concerned with the role of power in the construction of knowledge and discourse and its relation to the formation of social structures and institutions (Foucault 1977). However, Foucault's work is somewhat lacking in its consideration of the individual subject and agency. As Castellani (1999) argued:

“...while [Foucault] wonderfully illustrated over and over again how practice, as an interaction, structures the rules of formation involved in the construction of subjectivity and “truth,” [he] refused to acknowledge the important role interacting individuals have on this process, and was therefore unable to fully appreciate the importance of agency” (260).

In his article, Hacking (2004) admits that he is primarily interested in “filling out” Foucault's analysis with Goffman's study of face-to-face interaction and existential experience. My own tendency has been to emphasize the individual lived experience and the impact on social interaction first and foremost. This theoretical exercise is therefore aimed at completing Goffman's analysis and creating a new space for sociological theory that integrates the individual experience of stigmatisation into the larger macro structure of power and government and situates it within the larger cultural context. Specifically,

Goffman's micro-focus on interaction at the individual level is not sufficient to explore the larger structural and societal regulation of "discredited" individuals and that Michel Foucault's perspective on the production of truth, knowledge and power in interaction provides a useful conception for addressing the construction of stigma and its effects on individuals and groups. Mary Douglas' work on cultural understandings of purity and danger allows us to understand the underlying social mores that shape our definitions of deviance and drive changing reactions to stigmatised populations.

Stigma: A History of the Concept

The concept of stigma dates back to the ancient Greeks who physically marked the bodies of runaway slaves, criminals and other deviants by cutting or burning signs into the flesh to denote the disgraced status (Thucydides 1942; Goffman 1963; Shoham and Rahav 1982). Originating with the biblical mark of Cain referenced in Genesis chapter four, physical branding served an important symbolic and communicative function in denoting the bearer as ritually polluted, as a violator of civil and/or holy laws and as someone to be avoided, particularly in public. The practice of physically marking violators of religious and civic mores continued throughout the middle ages in Europe (Foucault 1979) and was carried to the New World by the religious puritans (Erikson 1966). Public exhibition and ridicule, branding, the removal of limbs, and the forced carriage of identifying marks were utilised to make deviant identities public for the purposes of retributive shaming, deterrence and incapacitation. The use of stigmatic symbols in the nineteenth century was immortalised in popular memory by the fictional examples of the Hugo's (1862) ex-convict Jean Valjean's yellow ticket, indicating his

conviction for thievery, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's (1850) Hester Prynne, who was forced to wear a scarlet *A* – the mark of adultery in her puritanical community. As recently as the Second World War, the Nazi's use of the six-sided Star of David worn on the clothing to mark those of Jewish descent can be considered an example of a stigmatic, literal and metaphorical brand.

Within the early Christian church, the term *stigmata* was used in reference to the markings of the wounds of crucifixion inflicted on Jesus Christ and their alleged reproduction on the bodies of holy men. St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) was the first recipient of the stigmata whose case was accepted as authentic by the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church in 1224. The use of the word to indicate the eruption of such marks on the skin eventually evolved into medical usage to denote physical marks on the body, characteristic of a defect or disease.

In its contemporary form, the terms stigma and stigmata generally have a negative connotation and their usage is most reflective of the original Greek origin. However, given that modern society has desisted in the use of physical branding to punish criminality and immorality, the term stigma today is primarily indicative of the disgrace itself, rather than a symbolic bodily marking and is used in a wide variety of situations in which individuals possess discrediting traits. The stigma is a “derogatory attribute imputed to the social image of an individual or a group” (Shoham and Rahav 1982:7).

Erving Goffman – *Stigma in Interaction*

The work of Erving Goffman is based in the Blumerian tradition of symbolic interactionism – the notion that reality is constituted through interaction and the use of

symbols to define objects and roles. According to interactionists, the individual is imbued with a subjectivity and agency that allows him or her to be an active participant in the creation of social situations and in the definition of his or her identity and role in those interactions. All individuals enter into an interaction with a relatively static set of characteristics that define, in whole or in part, the identity of the person, and limit the identity that he or she may portray to others. Gender, age, occupation, and social status are examples of some characteristics that may play a role in identity formation and in the presentation of the self to others. However, all of these characteristics are open to variable interpretation and definition by others that one comes into interaction with. As previously mentioned, some characteristics carry with them, by virtue of cultural or social expectations, a perception of discredit or stigma that can have an impact on one's interactions with others.

Goffman published his seminal book, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, in 1963. In it, he identifies stigma as “an attribute that is deeply discrediting” and that reduces a person, in the minds of others, “...from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman 1963:3). However, stigma is more precisely defined by Goffman not as an attribute alone but, in the tradition of symbolic interactionism, as the “relationship between attribute and stereotype” (1963:4). That is, an individual possesses a particular attribute (for example, the quality of having a conviction for a criminal offence) which is defined by others on the basis of stereotypes as an undesirable or negative characteristic. This attribute, and others' negative perceptions of it, result in avoidance or discriminatory behaviour directed toward the stigmatised person. This discriminatory behaviour is the observable evidence of stigma. Stigma is not

inherent in the individual attribute, but is realised in interaction with other (so-called normal) persons. Stigma need not be realised in overtly discriminatory action, but often operates on a sub-surface level, colouring interactions and creating tension or avoidance behaviour. The stigma, then, as it will be understood for the remainder of this work, is the negative implication of the “mark” embedded in the social consciousness that indicates to others the presence of characteristics that they define as undesirable, much as the branding of thieves and murderers in the Middle Ages marked those individuals as criminals and social outcasts. It must be emphasised that the mark, itself, is not the stigma as a single attribute may be interpreted very differently in various social and cultural contexts. Rather, it is the context or relationship in which the mark is manifested that determines the presence of stigma, most clearly observed in the actions of others, and it is within these negative contexts that individuals may be said to be *stigmatised*.

In some cases, the stigmatic characteristic is not immediately obvious to others in passing – the person is, in fact, not immediately discredited, but is *discreditable*. The individual is then faced with the choice of whether and how to reveal this discrediting information, and to whom. Goffman (1963) suggests that this hidden potential for discredit, while enabling individuals to avoid immediate and overt discrimination, becomes particularly problematic if the stigmatised individual is unwittingly accepted as “normal” by an individual who is prejudiced against the type of person that he or she may be revealed to be (42). *Passing* – the concealment of discrediting information – is one means for stigmatised persons to manage their social interactions with others and to positively define themselves in the context of the interaction. The phenomenon of “passing” is generally considered to be directly related to the visibility of the stigmatic

attribute. For example, a physical abnormality is readily evident, and it would be very difficult for a person so afflicted to pass as normal, while other potentially discrediting attributes such as a character flaw, deviant tendencies or relation to an already stigmatised individual, are, for all intents and purposes, invisible.

The concept of visibility is simplistic, however, and Goffman (1963) cautions that we should be cognizant, instead, of how evident or known-about a stigmatic attribute may be. In many situations, stigma in interaction and the ability to pass are more related to the context and history of the interaction than the visibility of the attribute itself. For instance, a stigma need not be visible in the physical sense to be known about in a small town or social circle where gossip is prevalent and others need not have personal knowledge of the stigma to know about it (Goffman 1963: 49). There are also situational contexts in which there is an expectation or a requirement to reveal a discrediting characteristic that might otherwise remain hidden. The families of incarcerated men often encounter these types of situations by virtue of their relationship to the offender. The experience of visiting a loved one in prison and interacting with the prison guards and staff contains an implicit power imbalance based on the guards' knowledge of the relationship to the prisoner. The fact that one has an imprisoned parent or spouse may also come to light in dealings with social welfare professionals, health professionals, educators and service providers. Thus, even though the stigma of an imprisoned family member is not a *visible* one, it is often known about or revealed in social and professional interactions, making passing a difficult accomplishment.

Situations do arise where passing is not only possible, but is the only viable option that does not presume upon the relationship a kind of forced intimacy.

Particularly with sensitive, or intensely personal invisible stigmas, there are many social situations and temporary or superficial relationships that do not warrant or allow for disclosure of such a personal confession (Goffman 1963: 74-75). As when an acquaintance's inquiry as to one's well being (*How are you?*) is responded to with a courteous glossing of the subject matter, regardless of one's true state of mind (*I'm fine, thank-you!*), this everyday form of passing through nondisclosure is generally unproblematic and allows for surface-level interactions to occur without concern for prejudice or discriminatory behaviour. In these common, impersonal situations, a full confessional is unnecessary and would likely be met with confusion or disdain. (Imagine the reaction if you were to tell the clerk at the grocery store exactly "how you are" the next time you have a bad day!) It stands to reason, then, that a discreditable person is not saddled with a continuous label, nor subject to stigma in every interaction. Most persons who possess an invisible stigmatising attribute also have a "normal" identity that they present in many social contexts, carefully managing the impressions that they give to others. However, the potential for discredit looms large in the consciousness of the individual and may colour his or her social interactions with caution, lest the secret be inadvertently revealed through words or mannerisms. The act of passing also creates a situation in which a person may be discredited if the stigmatic attribute should come to light in an unforeseen or "embarrassing" incident (Goffman 1963:75), and may perhaps become problematic and anxiety-producing if a more personal relationship develops without full disclosure. The discovery that a negative attribute has been hidden may have more disastrous social consequences than a stigma that is immediately revealed. In addition to the deleterious impact of the previously hidden attribute on the marked

individual's identity, he or she may also be perceived as duplicitous or deceitful in attempting to "pass" as normal.

Jones et al (1984) refer to the "concealability" of the mark and discuss the potential negative effects of guilt, shame, discomfort and the fear of discovery and catastrophic social consequences that may accompany the hidden stigmatic attribute. They further argue that the markable or potentially stigmatised person is often aware that they possess a characteristic that would be looked down upon by at least *some* persons. What the markable person does not necessarily know is if the specific individual they are in contact with would react negatively or not. According to Jones et al (1984), "This type of situation may very well be highly anxiety provoking, leading the markable to look constantly for evidence of denigration. This state of uncertainty may conceivably be more upsetting and disrupting to the markable than being overtly and recognisably stigmatised..." (31). A possible advantage of a visible mark, then, is that the stigmatisable person is immediately in a position to deal with others' reactions and need not concern themselves with the question of disclosure and whom to trust. Shears and Jensema (1969) suggest that "visibility of a disability could actually assist in reducing awkwardness since the need to explain deviant behaviour would be reduced and the perceiver would know from a distance what the encounter would require" (94-95). On the other hand, a markable individual with an invisible discreditable attribute has opportunity to gauge others' attitudes and reactions and to choose an appropriate time and place to make a disclosure, or may opt not to disclose to those who may be less than accepting. However, although significant study has not been conducted on this point, the data do suggest that stigmatised individuals who believed that others were aware of their

condition were less tense, less self-conscious and more comfortable than those who did not know if others around them were aware or not (Farina and Burns 1982, *cited in* Jones et al 1984).

The presence of a stigmatic attribute, however, creates a kind of power imbalance within the interaction, between the stigmatised and the “normal”, even if the stigmatic attribute is invisible and the “normal” in the interaction is unaware of the threat that they pose to the identity of the discreditable individual, should they discover the attribute. The power to accept or reject the stigmatised individual lies with the “normal” in the interaction, however the overall risk of being outed must be considered within the perceived focus or sphere of influence and disqualification that the stigmatic attribute exerts (Goffman 1963: 49-50).

Goffman (1963:4) initially distinguished between three types of stigma: (1) deformations of the physical body, (2) “tribal stigmas” of race¹, nation and religion, and (3) weakness of character, as exemplified by mental illness and involvement in criminal activity. Each of these types of stigma meets with a different response and level of comfort from “normals”, impacting the social risk of being identified as a stigmatised person. A physical disfigurement, for example, may render an individual less attractive and less capable in social situations without impacting others’ perceptions of his or her morality. Other attributes may have a broader and more general impact on the respectability of the individual and perceptions of his or her trust-worthiness or abilities.

¹ While the notion of “race” as a biological category is no longer considered to be a useful designation, the term is still prevalent in the social sciences. As I believe Goffman intended the term to be understood, and as I use it here, the term “race” is useful for demarking identities politicized around skin colour and geographical ancestry. See Carter (2000) for a lengthier discussion of the use of the term “race” in the social sciences. The term ethnicity, conversely, refers to variations in language and cultural practices. Goffman would have understood stigmatised ethnicities as a subset of “tribal stigmas”, but it is important to note their distinction from “racial” stigmas.

For example, in our current political and social climate, familial links to Middle-Eastern nations may have a detrimental effect not only on an individual's ability to travel and cross national borders, but on some persons' perceptions of his or her trustworthiness, patriotic allegiances and the level of risk that he or she poses. Having a parent or spouse in prison also seems to bring into question the personal morality and "riskiness" of the individual. It is often assumed by educators and social workers that the children of convicted criminals are, themselves, more likely to be delinquent and involved in activities of questionable moral status. Although many advocacy, government and position papers written about the children of incarcerated parents cite the statistic that the children of prisoners are five or six times more likely than other children to be incarcerated themselves (see, for example, Petersilia 2001; Children of Incarcerated Parents Project 2002), in fact, the research in this area is disputed² (Hagan and Dinovitzer 1999). However, the questionable moral standing of the parent is assumed to be an inherited characteristic, whether through genetics or socialisation. While there are difficulties associated with each type of stigmatic attribute, the effects of disclosure are many and discreditable persons may anticipate reactions of varying intensity from

² Claims that the children of prisoners are five times more likely to go to prison than children whose have never had an incarcerated parent have been based on surveys of the characteristics of incarcerated persons, such as Beck et al.'s (1993) nation-wide survey of state prison inmates in 1991. This survey found that 37% of inmates reported that a close relative had also been incarcerated. Only 7% reported having had an incarcerated parent, while 31% said that a brother had also been to prison or jail. Given that there are no solid statistics (only estimates) of the number of American children who have an incarcerated parent (Johnston 1995), it is difficult to understand how they are said to be five times more likely to be incarcerated. If it is true, as Nell Bernstein (2005) claims, that one in ten American children will experience the incarceration of a parent at some time in their life, then it appears that the children of prisoners were not in fact over-represented among incarcerated persons. Conversely, surveys of incarcerated juveniles have found that more than half have had an incarcerated family member, with 25% reporting an incarcerated father (Beck et al. 1988). It is uncertain whether this early over-representation in the justice system is sustained into adulthood. Interestingly, Beck et al.'s (1993) study also found that 26% of inmates reported having parents who engaged in substance abuse. It appears that being the child of an alcoholic puts one at greater risk of future incarceration than having a parent in prison!

“normals”, depending on their own interpretation of their stigma and their perception of its toxicity (May 2000).

Stigma that is related to character and morality appears to have the greatest impact in terms of levels of discrimination and acceptance from “normals” in the larger society. Goffman documents that physical stigmatic attributes are generally perceived as being beyond the scope of individual control and are reacted to with varying degrees of sympathy and acceptance in social contexts – not that these individuals are necessarily treated as “normals”, but that they are afforded a certain respect and leniency is given to their deficits (1963: 114-123). A blemish of character, on the other hand, is seen as a personal failure of the will and responsibility for this failing lies squarely within the individual. A stigma attached to character, then, while perhaps easier to conceal, is far more socially debilitating for those who are outed or who choose to disclose their situation. The later revelation of a hidden character flaw, such as involvement in criminal activity, brings into question the forthrightness of the individual as well as his moral standing and is likely to have a negative impact on relationships with those who were previously unaware.

A most interesting situation arises when so-called “tribal stigmas” (Goffman 1963: 4) or stigmas of belonging to a particular group become linked to perceived character flaws in a stereotypical manner. Goffman himself did not acknowledge this tendency which is certainly as old as tribal warfare and as common as inter-university rivalries. It may, in fact, be empirically incorrect to separate these two forms of stigma as the stigma of difference implied in Goffman’s designation of the tribal stigma is very nearly always associated with some perceived deficiency or weakness that goes beyond

the breadth of mere physical traits. The phenomena of racism and ethnic prejudice have commonly, however ignorantly, been justified by a rhetoric of moral or human failings. Goffman's distinction is useful nevertheless in that while tribal stigmas are most often linked to weaknesses of character, they require no evidence or example of said weakness beyond membership in the particular stigmatised group as demonstrated by one's parentage, skin colour, religious affirmations, etc. Generally speaking, the tribal stigma will be present from birth and beyond the control of the individual. A character stigma, on the other hand, is not hereditary, does not usually mark the body, and is often the result of some life-choice or action on the part of the individual that associates him or her with a group of discredited persons.

The personal convictions or moral uprightness of the stigmatised individual will do little to redeem him or her of the tribal or character stereotype unless others make an effort to know the person *as a unique individual*, rather than as a member of the group. To see the stigmatised person as an individual requires recognition of his or her agency and ability to act independently from and even in the face of cultural, religious or social prescriptions. It should be noted that on occasion, scrutiny of the individual may reveal that he or she in fact embodies the negative characteristics ascribed to his or her group. The opponent of stereotypes may argue that instances of such behaviour exist in other racial, ethnic or religious groups also, and that not all persons who belong to the group display these characteristics, therefore the supposition of stigma is not warranted merely by group membership.

Goffman's primary emphasis is to uncover the experience of stigmatisation in interpersonal interaction – he provides documented examples of individuals' techniques

and adaptive strategies for the management of a social stigma and a limited discussion of the impact of social stigma on the individual psyche. What is conspicuously absent (and, I would argue, lacking) in Goffman's analysis is a discussion of the phenomenon of stigma itself: where does it come from? How and why do some attributes come to be defined as stigmatic or discrediting in certain social contexts, while perhaps not in others? Who is responsible for defining stigma and what is its relationship to power, stereotype and discrimination? What is the role of stereotype and stigma as an organising structure in our complex society? More generally, as Hacking (2004) suggests,

“what is completely omitted by Goffman is the question of how institutions come into being, and what organizations of thought and statements have to do with our thinking of them as natural, as part more of the bound order than the order of things made by people” (299).

It is to these questions that I turn and propose that Michel Foucault's post-structural theorising may provide valuable insight into the macro-structural aspects of this complex phenomenon.

Michel Foucault – *Power/Knowledge and Structures of Inequality*

The root of Michel Foucault's intellectual project was to systematically uncover the history of thought and the structures that shaped and constrained human understanding of our world over time – the “archaeology of knowledge”. Over his career, he applied this framework to various topics of social and political concern: mental illness, sexuality, crime and punishment, and the government of populations. In considering each of these epistemologies, Foucault recognised that at any given point in history, there are substantial constraints on how individuals are able to think and conceive of ideas. Knowledge is limited, not only by language and terms of expression, but by

historical context and social structures that limit the human conception and imagination (Gutting 2005). For Foucault, the structures that form the context for thought in a given period are, in and of themselves, a useful object of analysis and can help us to understand how our understanding and social actions evolve over time.

Because of the primary emphasis that Foucault placed on systems of thought and social contexts, he can be said to have set aside or marginalised the individual subject in his work (Gutting 2005:33). Even in considering forms of knowledge that are applied at an individual level, Foucault maintains his concern with larger structural implications, rather than the impact on the individual. For example, in speaking of his work on psychiatry and “madness,” Foucault (1994) states, “I have tried to see how the formation of psychiatry as a science, the limitation of its field and the definition of its object implicated a political structure and a moral practice...” (116). However, Foucault never comes down to examine the experiences and resistances of those who are labelled and regulated by this political structure and moral practice. Individual thought and experience is limited only to the confines of what the historical and social structure of the time will permit, and intellectually interesting to Foucault only in terms of what light it can shed on the larger structural context of the system or society in which it was created. Foucault appears to eschew phenomenological and existential conceptions of human thought and agency, in favour of an emphasis on the structural and cultural origins of action:

I would say that if now I am interested, in fact, in the way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by the practices of self, these practices are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group (Foucault 1977:11).

I would suggest that Foucault's work could be greatly augmented by grounded ethnographic and existential examinations of the lived realities and agency of these subjects, within their respective cultural and social milieus.

If the archaeology of knowledge is concerned with considering what structures of language and knowledge impact on understanding, thought and agency, Foucault's genealogical project worked alongside to uncover the origins of these structures and the "history of the present". Foucault argued that in order to understand and evaluate the present situation, one must unearth the past and trace discourse and policy from its origin (Gutting, 2005:50). The notion is, in essence, to trace back claims of authority to determine their roots. An application of this genealogical framework to the concept of stigma would allow us to provide a structural analysis that Goffman does not approach – the origin of stigma, generally, and the specific contexts in which particular attributes were first defined as discrediting and stigmatic. There is an inherent tendency to argue the functionality of current thought and policies – that is, they evolved out of necessity to address certain deficits in our society. However, careful analysis of these policies in retrospect, and with the benefit of historical understanding, often finds them to be arbitrary and integrally linked to the preservation of systems of power rather than to the improvement of society as a whole. Foucault's genealogy of systems of punishment and government in *Discipline and Punish* is an excellent example of how benevolent improvements in a social structure (the penal system) are shown to be directly linked to the maintenance of power and government. Foucault demonstrates that while the neo-liberal system of "government at a distance" has the appearance of a retraction of control, in actuality it is merely a change in the form of regulation that disperses control into the

structures of everyday life and the psyches of individuals, thereby enabling the state to “walk softly and carry a big stick” (Foucault 1977; Braithwaite 1995).

Equally essential to the Foucaultian project was his conception of the intimate link between power and knowledge. Structures of power are able to shape possibilities of knowledge and those in positions of power have a certain amount of control over what is defined as “truth”. In this sense, when “truth” or knowledge is redefined, the redefinition is not the product of thought, but of power: “when thoughts change the causes are social forces that control the behaviour of individuals... power transforms the fundamental archaeological frameworks (epistemes or discursive formations) that underlie our knowledge” (Gutting 2005: 50). In this way, power both creates and constrains knowledge within a society through systems of truth. Foucault is primarily concerned with these systems and their perpetuation, rather than the individual agency that underlies them.

A characteristic shared by both Foucault and Goffman was the tendency to discount notions of objective “truth”. For Foucault, “truth” was necessarily relative to the structures of power that created it (Gutting 2005). That is, what is true for individuals in one space and time may not necessarily be “true” for individuals in a different social and historical context. In the tradition of symbolic interactionism, Goffman also takes a relative and micro-structural approach to the concepts of knowledge and truth. For Goffman, “truth” is negotiated within interaction. And yet, even two individuals engaged in a social relationship need not have the same truth or experience of that interaction. Further, he gives no consideration to systemic and institutional knowledges that may be at work, shaping individual perceptions of attributes and situations. While Foucault’s

analysis neglects the experiential aspect of truth, Goffman appears to ignore the larger implications of power differentials that exist in some interactions while at the same time failing to address the role of power and domination in shaping one's experience and definition of a situation.

For Foucault, power is not absolute and only exists as a relationship – thus, where there is power there is always potential for resistance. While Foucault acknowledged the potential for individuals to question knowledge and “truth”, and the human capacity for agency and imagination to work beyond the confines of knowledge/power, he did not elaborate on it to any extent. He placed far greater importance on institutional knowledge and looked at individual knowledge as merely reflective of larger operating structures. It becomes necessary, however, to differentiate between “knowledge” and “truth”. Individual experiences may constitute a form of “truth” without becoming knowledge and being integrated into the larger social structure of understanding, while power may create knowledge that is not in fact “true”. A common example of this phenomenon is the stereotype. A stereotype is a collective knowledge of a particular type or group of persons that, in many cases, is not an accurate reflection of particular individuals within that category. The individual experiences of marginalised persons may not be incorporated into the body of accepted knowledge, particularly if such experiences challenge existing structures of power and social policies or contradict accepted knowledges, such as stereotypes.

On the other hand, Goffman's near total focus on human agency and experiential subjectivity does not adequately address the aspect of power and its impact on knowledge and interactions. Although, following Blumer (1969), he acknowledges that “truth” is

negotiated and arrived at through interaction (Goffman 1967), he fails to explicitly set out the impact of power on interaction, beyond the face-to-face experience. Goffman (1967) refers only to the “asymmetrical rule,” which creates an expectation that “leads others to treat and be treated by an individual differently from the way that he treats and is treated by them” (52-53). Unlike Foucault, Goffman concerns himself only with this visible result of power differential and not with the origins of the asymmetrical rule nor the knowledges that are attached to it. The structural origins of power become particularly relevant when one begins to consider situations not in which individuals have gained power or deference by virtue of merit, but in which individuals have been *disempowered* because of some stigmatic attribute. Again, we see a space where these two perspectives can inform and complement one another. It stands to reason that overt displays of discrimination and stigma may sometimes serve a useful function in emphasising existing power differentials. Stigma may be not just the outcome of power, but in fact a tool utilised to perpetuate inequity in relationships.

A holistic understanding of the phenomenon of stigma in interaction requires the explanation of both the structural and experiential aspects. Goffman’s qualitative descriptions of individual struggles of identity management and shame need to be augmented not only with the experiences of “normals” who come into interaction with the stigmatized, but also with a genealogy of the social structures of normalcy and difference that create generalised stigma and attitudes of prejudice. Only by uncovering the cultural and historical origins of thought that create stigma can we begin to break down false stereotypes and barriers that lead to discriminatory policies and marginalise

entire groups of citizens. In this sense, like Foucault's studies of madness and sexuality, this is not only a theoretical project, but a political one as well.

Foucault's work would suggest that there is a need to uncover the roots of the stigma associated with relation to criminality and the incarcerated in order to understand and address the problem. Drawing on Mary Douglas' (1966) work on "pollution and taboo", the perception of risk or danger is commonly based on cultural understandings of purity and defilement. In North America, criminality (particularly predatory or violent crime and street crime) is considered to be one of the most taboo or immoral types of behaviour. The risk to be managed may or may not be a tangible risk, calculable in an actuarial sense³. What matters is that a risk of danger or defilement is perceived and reacted to in a way that is calculated to reduce or eliminate the possibility of the undesired consequence. With crime at the forefront of the public consciousness in North America, the families of prisoners are increasingly being identified by social agencies as a source of risk and it is this complex phenomenon that will be addressed.

Stigma as a Sociological and Cultural Construct

Research and conversations with marked or stigmatised individuals most often reveal that they have a conscious understanding of their discredited status. Described as stigma, discrimination, prejudice, a bad attitude, lack of understanding, dislike, hatred and a plethora of other negative sentiments, marked individuals are certain that they are treated differently, somehow, because of a particular attribute that they carry. As William Isaac Thomas (1928:572) argued, that which is defined as real is real in its consequences,

³ Ian Hacking differentiates between "real, figurative, metaphorical and symbolic" pollution. The same distinction can be made between forms of risk.

and the claim that stigma is an empirically real phenomenon is supported by victims' experiences and the impact of its negative implications on their psyches. However, while we might easily agree that such a thing as "stigma" exists, there is disagreement about the forms that it might take and the effects that it can have. Link and Phelan (2001) attributed the diversity of available definitions of stigma to two factors: first, the concept of stigma is quite complex and has been applied to a very wide range of populations, situations and contexts and second, the academic study of stigma is interdisciplinary, with contributions from sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and mental health practitioners, among others. In short, there are nearly as many definitions of stigma as there are people (and disciplines) talking about it and in order to have a collective understanding of what it is we are studying and attempting to explain, we need to set out an operational definition that will establish the parameters of what I will refer to as stigma.

The social process of stigmatisation is explained best by Link and Phelan (2001) as the convergence of five situational elements. First, an attribute is seen by society as salient enough that individuals with this trait can be identified and grouped together and labelled according to the dominant values and power structure of society. Second, this labelled characteristic is linked to a negative stereotype that enables the dominant group to view the labelled as significantly different. This differentiation then subsumes the individual identities of the labelled persons and they come to be viewed in terms of their negative attributes and are referred to by their label (ie. someone who has been convicted of a sexual offence comes to be known as a "sex offender"). Fourth, societal reaction to the label causes a loss of social status, resulting in discrimination at both the individual

and structural level. Finally, this entire process must take place within a context where the dominant or “normal” group has the social, economic and/or political power necessary to impose discriminatory or regulatory practices on the labelled group. As stated by Scheyett (2005), “without this power stigma doesn’t ‘stick’ and the labelled individuals experience no consequences from the label” (85). However, beyond this simplistic explanation of the link between power and stigmatisation, there is a more significant link between power and knowledge, made explicit by Michel Foucault. Greater than the mere ability to exercise discrimination, the use of social, political and economic power makes possible the construction of knowledge, which defines those characteristics that will be viewed in a negative light (stigmatised) and those which will be prized and valued. This “knowledge” is then translated into belief and action, filtering through the social structure and into the collective consciousness. In a cyclical fashion, “the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power” (Foucault, 1980). This view is consistent with the approach taken by symbolic interactionists and those who endorse a constructivist model of law and social control. Erving Goffman (1956), Howard Becker (1963), Albert K. Cohen (1966), Spector and Kitsuse (1977) and Edwin M. Schur (1980) all theorised about the role of power in identifying social problems, legitimising labels and creating laws that would differentially stigmatise or criminalise the deviant behaviour of the powerless while protecting the actions of the powerful from censure.

The basis of the symbolic interactionist perspective, as set out by Herbert Blumer (1969), can be summed up in three simple premises. First, “human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them...” Second, “the

meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows." Finally, "these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters." (Blumer 1969: 2). This view of the world is rooted in the explicit belief that the meanings of objects, persons, social roles and institutions are not intrinsic to these things nor are they immutable social constructs. Rather, meanings are negotiated by individuals in interaction and are subject to continued testing, augmentation and revision over time and in multiple spatial and corporeal contexts. For symbolic interactionists, meanings are "social products" (Blumer 1969: 5). It is the meaning of such objects, persons and social roles for individuals, in combination with cultural mores that dictate personal and corporate expectations of behaviour, including one's attitude, demeanour and actions in a social interaction.

Following from this interpretive view of the world, Blumer (1969) further argues, in the tradition of George Herbert Mead, that human action is not merely a *reaction* to antecedent stimuli, nor the inevitable product of cultural prescription or social situations. Rather, all conscious action is the product of an individual's awareness and evaluation of the situation in which he or she finds him/herself and follows from the individual's disposition to act. Thus, the symbolic interactionist perspective, like that of existential philosophy, makes individuals fully responsible for their interpretations, choices and actions and is critical of positivistic or instrumental explanations of human behaviour. The actions of individuals also cannot be viewed as the simple fulfillment of cultural expectations or structural precepts – "...the organization of a human society is the framework inside of which social action takes place and is not the determinant of that

action” (Blumer 1969: 87). Therefore, the symbolic interactionist would argue that functionalist analyses and social system perspectives distract one from the recognition of individual agency.

Returning to our present concern, then, when stigma is enacted through situations that are experientially perceived by the discredited individual as discriminatory, prejudicial, unkind or devaluing, the actor’s interpretation of the stigmatised status and the situational context disposes him or her to act in a stigmatising manner. It would be incorrect to assume that the individual is unreflexively re-enacting existing cultural or social prejudices. Rather, action in each instance is mediated by an evaluation of the circumstances and social facts that the individual brings to awareness, which may include existing beliefs and previous encounters with persons who share the discreditable status. The awareness of, or desire to, ensure that one’s status or position is clearly delineated in relation to another, less powerful, individual, may also drive stigmatising behaviour.

The presence of a label or stigma is often most clearly indicated by the affective responses of others to the stigmatised individual. According to Jones et al. (1984), “for the stigmatized individual, the reactions, observations and evaluations elicited from other people may be disproportionately negative. When this occurs, association with others becomes an ordeal, something to be dreaded and curtailed as much as possible” (111).

Situations do arise, however, where individuals are subjectively convinced of their stigmatised status, without necessarily having concrete experiential evidence of negative reactions from other, non-discredited individuals (Steele 1997; Major and O’Brien 2005). That is, they have successfully managed to conceal their discreditable attribute from

those around them (have engaged in passing, as Goffman (1963) refers to it), and yet are convinced that were others to become aware of their status they would be stigmatised or discriminated against. According to Major and O'Brien (2005):

Collective representations influence how the stigmatized perceive and appraise stigma-relevant situations. Collective representations can affect the behaviour of the stigmatized in the absence of obvious forms of discriminatory behaviour on the part of others, and even when no other person is present in the immediate situation (399).

This subjective sense of stigmatisation can result in a range of behaviours designed to minimise the potentiality of negative social experiences. Individuals may misrepresent themselves in order to conceal their discreditable status, voluntarily withdraw from social activities that might imperil their concealed identity and/or engage in behaviour and portray attitudes that would seemingly distance them as much as possible from their hidden identity (i.e. homosexual men who engage in “queer-bashing” and vocally and overtly reject the homosexual lifestyle as wrong, deviant, or unnatural).

This phenomenon of the subjective experience of stigma without basis in the actions of others, however, requires that one question the very origins of stigma. Where Goffman (1963) and others who built on his work (Link and Phelan 2001; Jones et.al. 1984) emphasised the interactive nature of stigma and its emergence in social relationships, there is ample evidence to suggest that those who are discreditable are not merely subjected to the stigmatising labels and definitions of powerful others but, at least in part, have internalised these social definitions and are engaged in perpetuating their effects. The negative self-conceptions of stigmatised individuals are often portrayed as originating in the negative attitudes and behaviours of others and developed in the individual's ability to see themselves through the eyes of what George Herbert Mead

(1934) referred to as the “generalised other”. Goffman (1963) asserted that “a necessary condition for human life is the sharing of a single normative expectation by all participants” (27). What is less explored is this taken for-granted element of shared normative order that allows the individual to have an understanding of the dominant perspective of others in his or her cultural milieu and to what extent then the perspective of the generalised other is in fact the stigmatised individual’s own outlook on his or her discreditable status.

Phenomenological sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1966) and others use the term “social order” to refer to the system of shared meanings and understandings that are negotiated within a particular historical and cultural setting and experienced by the members of the group, community or society as their reality. Although the social order is socially constructed in that categories and definitions of such things as normal and deviant behaviour are temporal and subject to redefinition, it also gains a certain amount of rigidity in its collective nature. As Douglas (1966) explains:

It [social order] has authority, since each is induced to assent because of the assent of others. But its public character makes categories more rigid... a private person may revise his pattern of assumptions or not. It is a private matter. But cultural categories are public matters. They cannot so easily be subject to revision (38-39).

The destructive impact of stigmatisation on the self concept of the individual is, at least in part, a function of the fact that the negative attributions which are linked to the discreditable mark are firmly embedded in the social order and have become a part of the stigmatised individual’s world view or culture. Without this shared social order, the internalisation of stigma-normal categories will not occur and the individual is unlikely to experience a negative self-concept, or a subjective sense of stigmatisation, in the absence

of other's negative responses. The rejection of a stigmatising category may even have significant implications for the individual's behaviour and performance with regard to the relevant stereotype. For example, Schmader et al. (2004) found that women who believe that stereotypes about female's relative weaker abilities in mathematics are true performed more poorly on a math test than those who rejected the prevailing stereotypes.

The effects of stigmatisation, then, may be significantly mediated through the individual's understanding of and concurrence with dominant cultural stereotypes. In fact, in the absence of shared normative assumptions, even if negative interactions and discrimination are encountered by the marked individual, they are just as likely to be attributed to some factor other than the discredited mark. Abdi M. Kusow (2004) uses the example of Somalian immigrants to Canada to illustrate the argument that stigma cannot be socially created when its cultural and structural contexts are disjunctive.

According to Kusow (2004), the Somalian normative order does not include a conception of discredit based on skin colour; rather, stigma in their culture would be tied to understandings of tribal or caste stratification. When Somali immigrants come to Canada, they arrive with their world view intact and encounter for the first time a culture in which they will learn that stigma-normal processes are organised along the divisions of skin colour. However, in his qualitative study of thirty Somalian immigrants, Kusow determined that while nearly all of the respondents had some understanding that their identities were devalued by the dominant culture of Canadians, the majority (60%) disavowed that the stigma was based on the colour of their skin and felt that they were discriminated against on the basis of their religion (Islam) and on international feelings about the conflicts in their home country. The lack of shared normative order allowed the

Somali respondents to avoid negative self-concepts based on skin colour and lessened the effects of self-censuring and avoidance behaviour that commonly accompany feelings of stigmatisation.

The role of shared social order is clearly an important one. For example, the inability of those with severe cognitive disabilities to understand and integrate the discreditable status of mental retardation into their social world insulates them in large part from the disapproval and social censure of others. They are not fazed by the stares or jeers of others. For Foucault, they are “the other” and belong to a different social order that has no concept of the stigmatisation of cognitive disability (Gutting 2005: 89). Young children who have not yet learned of negative stereotypes will also be unaffected in their interactions with others (McKown and Weinstein 2003; Major and O’Brien 2005). However, the vast majority of individuals do share the world view and stigma-normal understandings of those around them and their self-concept and reactions to the possession of a discreditable trait may be at least partly reflective of their own acceptance of the particular stigma-normal distinction made within the social order. Goffman (1963) refers briefly to this phenomenon of “acceptance”:

Those who have dealings with him [the stigmatised individual] fail to accord him the respect and regard which the un-contaminated aspects of his social identity have led them to anticipate extending, and have led him to anticipate receiving; he echoes this denial by finding that some of his own attributes warrant it (8-9).

For these individuals, marginality is an expected, if somewhat problematic outcome and justifies the use of avoidance and stigma-management techniques.

The basis of the stigma-normal distinction varies between cultural groups and is rooted in symbolic understandings of what Mary Douglas (1966) referred to as pollution

and taboo. Jones et al. (1984) have variably discussed the notion of cultural constructions of “peril” as comprising the primary normative order on which stigma-normal designations are founded. Regardless of the sociological terminology, it can be argued that those attributes which are selected as deviant or discreditable are collectively identified on the basis of the perceived threat that they pose to “normal” individuals in society. The essence of stigma is fear (Steadman 1980). Lehmann, Joy, Kreisman and Simmens (1976) have concluded on the basis of their research and examination of the literature that “the element of threat is more likely to lead to rejection than other aspects of deviance” (332) and Mary Douglas (1966) along with her co-author Aaron Wildavsky (1982) has clearly demonstrated that what one perceives as threatening or dangerous must be contextualised as the product of cultural understandings.

Stigma and Cultural Constructions of “Peril” and Threat

There are, in the literature, at least three different conceptions of peril or threat that can be seen as fundamental to the designation of attributes as stigmatic and lead to discriminatory or avoidance behaviour: a threat to physical safety (through violence or contamination), the threat of ritual contamination, or a threat to the social order (both literal and figurative) (Douglas 1966; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982; Jones et al. 1984). Within western culture, the threat to an individual’s physical safety can be best exemplified over time by the spectre of the violent criminal or volatile mentally disordered person whose actions may lead to the harm or even the death of another. Social avoidance of criminalised or mentally ill persons is indicative of the danger that is commonly associated with these groups of individuals. In recent years, threats to physical

safety on the road that are posed by impaired drivers have begun to manifest a new stigma against drinking and driving and threats of cancer and physical illness posed by second-hand smoke are leading to increasing stigma around smoking cigarettes. A physical threat may also take the form of physical contagion, as in the case of a communicable disease such as HIV or Hepatitis. Attributes which are linked to or associated with these types of physical harms are labelled as deviant and become stigmatised. For example, the association of homosexuality with the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and early 1990s served to exacerbate an existing moral-symbolic stigma against gays with the threat of bodily contamination.

The threat of ritual contamination is the threat of a danger that operates in practice on a purely symbolic level. The fear of ritual contamination is linked to notions of contagion that are unrealistic, in the sense that the blemish that is feared cannot be physically transmitted. In this instance, stigmatised individuals instead embody characteristics which may impute negative social status on those who associate with them. For example, one cannot “catch” mental illness or sexual deviance, but association with persons who personify these attributes may be utilised by others to make assumptions about one’s character or qualities. Goffman (1963) identified that some discrediting attributes appear to have the quality of being “sticky”: the stigma that accompanies it is spread from the stigmatised individual to those close to him or her (30). For Goffman (1963), the sticky characteristic of stigma is directly related to our social interpretation of the “with” relationship (47). There is an implicit assumption that the character and characteristics of an individual’s companions may be used as a source of information about the person. Those who are “with” discredited or stigmatised persons

are then marked by association with the discredited individual and may, in turn, pass the stigma to other close connections, twice-removed (Goffman 1963:30). According to Goffman (1963), “the problems faced by stigmatized persons spread out in waves, but of diminishing intensity” (30). This is the essence of ritual contamination and fear of a moral or character contagion that will affect one’s social integration leads “normals” to shy away from relationships and association with stigmatised persons.

Jones et al. (1984) argue that the most debilitating form of ritual contamination affects those who have a genetic or kinship relationship to a discredited person, particularly if the stigmatised attribute itself has a genetic origin (73). It is this form of “sticky” stigma that faces the families of incarcerated men. In many cases these individuals have had no personal involvement with the criminal justice system, and yet they are saddled with the burden of social and structural stigma by virtue of their relationship with a convict. This stigma attaches to spouses, children, parents, siblings, and even extended families (grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins), but as Goffman pointed out, the greater the degree of separation from the stigma’s point of origin, the less intense the effect. Lending further credence to the role of culture and social order in understandings of stigmatisation, May (2000) found in her discussions with the family members of convicted murderers that perceptions of transferred stigma are also shaped by their own sense of shame and the “suspicion of toxicity” (199). These feelings of shame and stigma are linked to their belief in the normative cultural assumption of western societies that bad parenting and negative familial socialisation are the root causes of criminality. The family, therefore, is viewed as somehow culpable in the deviation of the family member. Further, one might suggest that if bad parenting and bad families are

culpable for the criminal actions of a family member, then others who belong to that family may also be seen as susceptible to engaging in criminal acts, since they have been socialised in the same environment.

Gender and Sticky Stigma

More specifically, we find that sticky stigma, or ritual contamination, can be a gendered phenomenon, disproportionately affecting the wives, female partners, and mothers of incarcerated men, whereas the fathers and the male partners of female prisoners seem to suffer fewer social repercussions from their relationship to an incarcerated person. One might hypothesise that the greater impact of courtesy stigma on women is due, at least in part, to patriarchal social norms that link the identities of women to their families as caregivers and as an extension (property) of the male partner.

The case of prisoners' families is not the only situation in which we find that women are more greatly affected by the transference of stigma from a family member or associate. Although the potentially gendered nature of stigma has not been the focus of much empirical study, several recent studies of courtesy stigma have found that women may be more prone than men to the effects of associating with discredited or stigmatised persons. For example, in Gray's (2002) study of the experiences of parents whose children had high-functioning autism, he found that mothers were more likely to describe incidents of discrimination, avoidance, and hostility than were fathers. Gray attributed this to several factors. First, the mothers were more likely to be the parent who was actively involved in caring for the child and thus were more likely to be in public places with their child where they might potentially encounter stigmatising others. Second,

because of their traditional role as primary caregiver, Gray (2002) theorised that mothers would be attributed more responsibility for their child's behaviour and for their disability (743-44). Interestingly, Gray also found that the level of personal responsibility felt and shouldered by a mother was even higher if she was not employed outside the home, although both full-time mothers and those who worked outside the home experienced themselves as being more responsible, and therefore more at fault, for their child's disability (Gray 2002:744). This distinction between mothers who were employed outside the home and those who did not is again likely due to the fact that the full-time mother would be less likely to have a social identity independent of her role as wife and mother. Therefore, like the prisoner's wife or mother who does not have an alternative identity, her social value and identity are inextricably linked to that of her children and family.

Another example of the gendered transference of stigma appears in Kampf's (2008) study of women who were hired by the New Zealand Ministry of Public Health to trace and inform the past sexual partners of those who had been diagnosed with a venereal disease. Known as "contact tracers," Kampf (2008) argued that these women's professional proximity to known carriers of sexually transmitted disease had a negative social impact on their lives and marriage prospects if their occupation became known. By contrast, she asserted that the (predominately male) physicians who were in contact with and treated these same patients did not experience this courtesy stigma or social avoidance to the same extent (Kampf 2008). Similarly, Smith, Mysak and Micheal (2008) found that women who had contracted a sexually transmitted infection were perceived more negatively by others and more likely to encounter social stigma than males infected with an STD.

Clearly there is space for further examination of the role of gender in the transference of stigma, and/or “courtesy stigma.” However, based on limited studies there is evidence to suggest that women, on the whole, are more likely to be affected by stigma and are more vulnerable to the transference of courtesy or sticky stigma from discredited persons with whom they associate. Thus, an understanding of the gendered nature of sticky stigma and the mitigations of social roles is integral to comprehending the experiences of the female family members of incarcerated men.

Stigma as Threat to Social Order

Threats to the social order are perhaps the most complex set of perils that are associated with stigmatised categories. Threats to the social order arise when we are confronted with an individual whose circumstances challenge our understandings of the world and cause us to question the validity of our normative assumptions, thereby shaking the very foundation on which our conceptions of self and our place in the world are based. Such threats may be literal perils that endanger the organisation of the social structure, or figurative in their threat to the social construction of reality. For example, one of the most fundamental premises of western social order is what psychologist Melvin J. Lerner (1965, 1970, 1980) has referred to as the “just world hypothesis”. Lerner argued that as a society we cling to the delusion that people get in life exactly what they deserve. If they work hard and are good people, they will be blessed with positive outcomes, whereas those who find themselves in negative circumstances have, by this reasoning, done something to earn their sorrows. The belief in a just world lessens individuals’ anxiety by presenting an illusion of control - we can control the

outcome of our life by how we live – and removes the existential uncertainty of fate or random occurrences (Lerner 1980). When we encounter individuals whose negative life circumstances cannot be logically connected to their previous behaviour, our understanding of the world as a just place is thrown into turmoil. No longer do we have the certainty that we are safe from calamity so long as we comport ourselves in a careful and respectable manner. The plight of the individual who is stricken with disease, physical disability, or mental illness might well be our plight; it might well be my family member, raised in a loving and “good” home, who commits an unpredictable and random act of violence. This threat to our social world is more than we can bear and we are plunged into existential crisis – it is too painful and anxiety provoking to integrate the realisation that the world is in fact not a just place and that our life outcomes in many cases are unpredictable, random and outside of our control. The most efficient means of eliminating this crisis is to construct the offending individual as somehow “deserving” of his or her plight, in short, to offer an aetiology of the attribute that is linked to notions of rational choice or personal responsibility/causation so that the situation will sustain the original just world hypothesis. The ability to reframe the negative circumstances as just and the affected party as deserving and morally culpable absolves the normals in the interaction of the need to empathise or offer assistance and justifies the desire to avoid individuals who otherwise might force us to reconsider our social order.

More literal threats to social organisation include those who engage in radical or deviant behaviour that challenges the dominance of a hegemonic world view. This type of threat is embodied in activist and revolutionary behaviour that opposes, for example (in the western world), the domination of the capitalist economic system, the veracity of

the Christian religion, or such fundamental civic aspirations as the “right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. Thus communists, heretics, Muslims and criminals become understood as threatening to the dominant western social order and stigmatised accordingly⁴.

Cumulatively, these three constructions of peril (physical threats, threat of ritual contamination and threats to social order) indicate anything that jeopardises the way that people order their experience of the world can be considered a threat. Jones et al. (1984) argue that in western culture, death is the supreme threat. Since death is viewed as the ultimate disruption to the way that we order our lives, rather than as a continuation of the life course, they argue that “fear of death is the foundation of all threats to the normal ordering of experience” (Jones et al. 1984: 86). Schutz (1971) has called death the “fundamental anxiety” (228) and it is this fundamental fear that brings into perspective the anxiety that is provoked by marginal situations of all kinds. The construction of particular conditions as stigmatising is directly related to the anxiety that they bring to our lives.

They [stigmatised conditions] call into question the validity of our system of shared meaning and the typifications they entail. The fear and anxiety, the powerful affect aroused in us by people who are maimed, deformed, disfigured, irrational, ill, demented, or mentally handicapped, in part arise from the fact that such conditions stand as stark reminders of the very things we devote so much of our individual and collective lives to shutting out, ignoring, and avoiding (Jones et al. 1984: 86).

Those attributes and behaviours which are understood as threatening, then, are an integral part of the normative social order. Individuals who are a part of the social order are thus aware of the negative sentiments that are likely to be evoked by the violation of

⁴ Of course, the identification of perils to social order is not unique to the western world and a reverse process of stigmatisation is occurring concurrently in other societies, targeting values that are quite normal and desirable in western culture – the very systems and values that we, as a society, are trying to protect!

social norms and have a general acceptance of these expectations. However, as Douglas (1966) and interactionists such as Goffman (1963) and Blumer (1969) have argued, individuals are reflexive beings who are capable of engaging in critical examination of their social order. That is, human beings, as individuals, may alter their views to more accurately reflect their experience of the world. Those who find themselves suddenly belonging to a stigmatised category may become aware of a dissonance between the beliefs and values of their social order and the subjective reality of their experience. There are several ways in which individuals might go about relieving the cognitive dissonance that they experience as a result. The outright rejection of the stereotype and negative stigma associated with the category may be one method of reducing cognitive dissonance. In this scenario stigmatised individuals are resisting negative stereotypes and challenging the applicability of the labels to their group. This often occurs when stigmatised individuals perceive the stigmatisers as ignorant or misinformed about the reality of the situation (Jones et al. 1984: 127), and they may even engage in reverse stigmatisation by imputing negative qualities to those who would marginalise them (Kusow 2004). However, because individual perceptions are easily changed and the dominant group perceptions are much more static, rejecting the beliefs of the dominant group outright will place one into constant conflict with those who would enforce the existing social order. An alternative may be to accept the stereotype as having some basis in reality, while disaffirming one's own conformity to the negative stigma; to consider oneself an exception to the rule, while supporting the applicability of the stereotype to others within one's group⁵. This means of dealing with cognitive dissonance can result

⁵ This phenomenon emerged as common amongst prisoners' family members, particularly in reference to the question of trafficking drugs into the prison and issues of dependence/self esteem. See chapter V for

in divisiveness within the stereotyped group and lead to an internal hierarchy of the marginalised. This type of internal hierarchy is known to be characteristic of prison culture, in which the type of offence the inmate has committed will either give him status or mark him as unworthy of respect. Sex offenders are typically at the bottom of the hierarchy (particularly those who have offended against children) whereas those who have been involved in gang violence or violence against a peace officer will be treated with deference. The ability to differentiate oneself by affirming that “I am not as bad as he is” aids in maintaining a more positive sense of self and allows one to minimise the negative reactions of others. However, the creation of hierarchies of the marginalised may be more broadly problematic in the way that it gives legitimacy to prevailing stereotypes and fail to challenge stigma at a structural level. In-group divisiveness weakens the position of the group as a whole and reduces the possibility of mobilisation for effective social change.

Another option for alleviating the discrepancy between negative stereotypes and personal experience is to reframe one’s identity and experiences in light of the negative stereotype – in short, to accept and adopt the stigmatising identity. According to Jones et al. (1984:125), this scenario is most likely when the discreditable mark cannot be hidden and significantly impacts the individual’s daily interactions with others in a negative way⁶. In these cases, individuals engage in self-stigmatisation and contribute to their own negative self-concept through their failure to resist negative stereotypes. The acceptance of stigma by individuals can also be construed as validating existing inequities or

further discussion.

⁶ Jones et al. (1984) emphasise aesthetically displeasing and socially disruptive marks as those which are most likely to engender acceptance of negative stereotypes and result in self-stigmatisation.

discriminatory behaviour and in this sense is problematic for those who may wish to rally for social change and challenge marginality.

Stigma and Risk: Functional Marginality

Although stigma is portrayed as dysfunctional for those who experience it, the persistence of stigmatisation and marginalised groups throughout time and in various cultures around the world suggests that the existence of marginal groups is in some way functional for the larger, dominant social group. Durkheim (1938) theorised about the usefulness of deviance in society, arguing that “crime is normal because a society exempt from it is utterly impossible” (67). He asserted that deviance in society serves such functions as setting boundaries on acceptable behaviour, strengthening in-group bonds and rewarding conforming individuals by providing contrasting outcomes of punishment (Durkheim, 1938). More recently, social psychologists have debated the functions of stigma in society and have argued that the process of stigmatising others allows individuals to either enhance their own self-esteem or social identity in comparison (e.g., Tajfel, Billig, Bundy and Flament 1971; Cialdini and Richardson 1980; Wills 1981; Turner 1982; Crocker, Thompson, McGraw and Ingerman 1987; Wood 1989), or to justify the existing social, economic or political structure (e.g. Sidanius and Pratto 1993; Jost and Banaji 1994; Crocker et al. 1998). The justification of systems of stratification is described as accomplished through a form of “just world” philosophy that allows individuals to feel that the subordination of those who may be typecast, for example, as lazy, unmotivated, unintelligent or immoral, is natural and legitimate. Kurzban and Leary (2001), however, countered these approaches by pointing out that while the desire

to raise one's own self-image might play a role in stigmatisation, theories of social comparison cannot explain why *certain* groups are singled out:

Social comparison models do not provide a clear account of why particular kinds of groups are prone to stigmatization either within a specific cultural context or cross-culturally and historically... although self-esteem and stigma are intertwined in some fashion, these theoretical perspectives do not provide a satisfying account of why individuals discriminate against particular others (Kurzban and Leary 2001: 189).

Further, while the need to protect a particular social, economic or political structure might explain the stigmatisation of groups which can be construed as economically, socially, racially or politically divisive, this form of reasoning has a difficult time accounting for discrimination against groups who are not social dynamite and likely to challenge the social order, but are afflicted with an aesthetic or debilitating mark (Kurzban and Leary 2001). Kurzban and Leary (2001) have suggested that the origins of stigma are in fact evolutionary and that human beings seek out social interaction with those who will contribute positively to their life chances (through mating, cooperative exchange) and avoid interaction with those who are seen as a threat (to physical health by virtue of contamination) or as a social liability, unable to contribute or bear up an equal responsibility for the group's well-being. That is, the function of stigmatisation is to exclude particular individuals from certain types of social interaction, particularly reproduction and the establishment of social norms. Kurzban and Leary (2001) argue that this approach explains the ubiquity of social stigma directed at such attributes as disfigurement, disease and thievery as these characteristics would be seen, in turn, as potentially hereditary, contagious, and indicative of exploitive behaviour and it would be socially prudent to avoid intimate and cooperative interactions with these marked individuals.

Whether the origins of stigmas are seen in psychological processes or in social evolution, the emphasis is on understanding the use of stigma as an adaptive strategy to deal with specific social dilemmas. Increasingly, the pressing social dilemma of contemporary neo-liberal societies is the mitigation of risk (Douglas 1990). According to Ericson, Doyle and Barry (2003):

Risk is invoked as a defensive mechanism to protect individuals from encroachment by others. To be at risk is to be sinned against, vulnerable to the threats of imposing institutions, communities, or individuals...Risk codes danger as a threat to liberty. In so doing, it slips easily into enhancing liberty for some at the expense of others (68).

Risks may be divided into threats to individuals and threats to the collective, and risk theorists have spent considerable time and ink discussing the dispersal of collective risks to reduce individual liability and the governance of individuals through modern insurance schemes (see for example, Simon 1987; Beck 1992; Ericson, Doyle and Barry 2003; Baker 2003). However, as Hacking (2003) argues, there exist both personal and collective risks that cannot be calculated and distributed. These are risks to life⁷, liberty and purity, closely linked to the aforementioned perils and concerned with real and symbolic forms of pollution. The language of risk was originally developed around statistical and actuarial models that would allow professionals to accurately calculate the probability of an occurrence (Douglas 1992). However, as Douglas (1992) rightly points out, the term risk has become a synonym for danger in modern, western rhetoric. While perceptions of risk are based in “real” dangers, they are not necessarily calculable in an actuarial sense, nor are individuals necessarily rationally concerned with those dangers that are most likely to befall them (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). The question of which

⁷ “Life” and risks to the body may be insured, but life and health insurance cannot lessen the emotional and physical pain that are incurred by harms; only attempt to repay the sufferer or his survivors for monetary costs.

risks (read: dangers) will be selected for attention and response is a product of cultural values and shared understandings of peril that are embedded in the institutional framework of society. Thus, each social order presents a hierarchy of risks, prioritising those which are believed to be most dangerous within the context of established social norms and, by extension, rendering other dangers invisible⁸:

Each form of social life has its own typical risk portfolio. Common values lead to common fears (and, by implication, to a common agreement not to fear other things). There is no gap between perception and reality and no correct description of the right behaviour, at least not in advance. The real dangers are not known until afterward (there always being alternative hypotheses). In the meantime, acting in the present to ward off future dangers, each social arrangement elevates some risks to a high peak and depresses others below sight (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982: 8).

Risks are then based in social and cultural knowledge. However, sociologists from a variety of traditions generally agree that knowledge is itself constructed as a function of power and influence in society. Those in positions of power and legitimacy (whether conveyed in the specific cultural context by religious position, scientific expertise, wealth, age, or some other characteristic) are able to present their views as “truth” and to have this truth encoded in institutional practices (see Foucault 1984; Becker 1963). Thus, the creation of knowledge and social order is inherently political. However, as Michel Foucault (1984) and Mary Douglas (1992) would argue, although knowledge and truth are constructed, this is not to say that they are inherently unreal. In fact, reality is not a question of concern for either of these theorists. Rather, what is key is to understand how knowledges and truths are constructed in a fashion that is useful for legitimizing the existing social order and mobilising action to eliminate threats to social institutions.

⁸ Douglas and Wildavsky’s (1982) original project was to understand the basis of America’s preoccupation with environmental pollution and technological disasters in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Risks are especially subject to politicisation because they are based in fear. As with stigma, fear is at the root of understandings of risk and when risks are constructed in such a way as to arouse public fear then risk threats justify the use of institutionalised controls to mitigate and intervene on the risky (dangerous) object. As Douglas (1992) suggests:

Note that the reality of the dangers is not at issue [...] The argument is not about the reality of the dangers, but about how they are politicized. This point cannot be emphasized too much [...] it is easy to see that dangers (real dangers) are being used to give automatic, self-validating legitimacy to established law and order (29).

When risks are identified and accepted as real, society is faced with the problem of how to manage or minimise the risk in order to protect the integrity of threatened persons' lives, liberties and purity. The identification of a risk necessitates a response and the failure to act to prevent the occurrence of future calamity is seen as irresponsible. Public effort and practices are focused on reducing the risk to acceptable levels – however these are defined. The concept of risk, then, based in shared culturally constructed knowledges and linked to fear of peril, becomes a useful political tool to focus attention and action onto particular forms of danger, while detracting public scrutiny from other potentially destabilising risks. In his application of Douglas and Wildavsky's (1982) framework of cultural risk selection to the issue of crime in modern society, Jonathan Simon (2001) argued that institutions "select those risks that allow them to valorise certain people and behaviors while mobilizing disdain for other people and behaviours. In short, a particular risk is attractive because of who or what it allows people to blame" (23). Here we come back to link the concept of risk with the phenomenon of stigmatisation. I would suggest that in modern, western cultures, the

ideology of risk gives a seemingly “scientific” support to those fears and perils that underlie stigmatising behaviour.

In pre-modern societies, such as those studied by Mary Douglas (1966; 1992), when populations are stigmatised in response to cultural constructions of peril, the reactions of “normals” are seemingly confined to avoidance and ritual cleansing behaviours. As the rhetoric of risk has evolved in modern, neo-liberal societies, and with it, the expectation of risk management, the ability to identify these stigmatised populations as risky or dangerous legitimises more active forms of intervention in the name of risk management. The new, institutionalised risk-management strategies aimed at stigmatised populations are designed not only to limit contact between stigmatised and normal persons (avoidance) but to induce conformity (control) among those who are perceived as deviant and to reduce the risk of harm to the larger population (see Foucault 1973; 1977 for discussion of approaches to manage the mentally ill or criminal populations, respectively). The forms of intervention for stigmatised populations act in two ways, consistent with neo-liberal forms of government; first, through technologies of the self and the encouragement of self-regulation of conduct “at a distance”, and second through coercive strategies of discipline that target risky populations to prevent deviant or problematic conduct.

One of the key notions taken from Foucault’s work on rationalities of government is the idea of “government at a distance” as it is demonstrated in liberal and neo-liberal societies. According to leading governmentality theorist Nikolas Rose (1996),

advanced liberal strategies of rule ask whether it is possible to govern without governing *society*, that is to say, to govern through the regulated and accountable choices of autonomous agents – citizens, consumers, parents, employees, managers, investors – and to govern through

intensifying and acting upon their allegiance to particular “communities” (61, emphasis in original).

Thus, one of the defining characteristics of a modern, liberal society is its conception of the citizen as an autonomous, responsible agent, capable of exercising a considerable degree of choice. It is through these autonomous choices that the citizenry govern themselves in accordance with the expectations of state and society (Rose 1996). Integral to the success of such arms-length regulation is the establishment of mechanisms that have the effect of translating the goals of the social order into a collective consciousness that can affect the choices of individual agents (Rose 1996: 45, 57-58). Thus, truths and knowledges put forward by legitimated experts are increasingly disseminated through the channels of education, media, marketing and organised religion, enabling the proliferation of the tenets of acceptable lifestyles. Individual choices are further shaped by increased individual reliance on the advice of those who are perceived as experts, both state licensed and unlicensed, in everything from financial and legal matters to health and intimate family life (Rose 1996: 46). The neo-liberal rationality of government at a distance depends on the ability of social institutions and state sanctioned experts to shape attitudes, loyalties, values and choices in a way that is conducive to the orderly practice of social life. For instance, at a young age, children are taught in schools to follow rules, to respect authority and to value education. Moreover, they are instilled with the importance of competition that drives the capitalist economy. Children who internalise these values, along with others imparted by family and media, grow up to be model citizens, capable of self-regulating their behaviour to conform to accepted standards of conduct. However, a small minority will grow up to reject these values or find it difficult to live their lives according to them. It is here, in the need to deal with challenging and

deviant populations, that there is a crucial divergence in the rationality of neo-liberal government.

For the vast majority of individuals, the stratagem of government at a distance is adequate to produce a citizen who is “able and willing to conduct his or her own conduct according to the norms of civility” (Rose 1999: 233). There exist however, a minority of individuals who, whether for reasons of mental or biological disorder, poor integration into the social order, or personal choice, are unable or unwilling to conform to practices that are socially acceptable within the dominant society. This class of so-called deviant individuals pose a threat to the social order and are subject to stigmatisation and designation as “risky” individuals. Deviant populations may be further divided into those who can be modified, through programs and training, to play the role of the active, responsible citizen, and those who are thought to be beyond redemption, who require appropriate strategies of regulation to manage the risk that they pose to the larger society. For those deviants who are unrepentant or whose pathology is considered intractable, disciplinary strategies of punishment and incapacitation are seen as necessary to preserve the safety of other individuals and the order of society. The marginally deviant are to be assisted in the following ways:

...through their [own] engagement in a whole array of programmes for their ethical reconstruction as active citizens – training to equip them with the skills of self-promotion, counselling to restore their sense of self-worth, and self-esteem, programmes of empowerment to enable them to assume their rightful place as the self-actualizing and demanding subjects of an “advanced” liberal society (Rose 1996: 61).

The aim is to restore the deviant person to the realm of self-governance in order to reduce the risk that he or she poses to others and to the social order. Increasingly, stigmatised populations are the targets of institutionalised intervention strategies to minimise their

risk to others and to themselves. Their stigmatised (risky) and marginalised status justifies the use of interventions, which serve to emphasise the risky character of the population and, in a vicious cycle, perpetuates the cultural conflation of stigma and dangerousness, even in situations that do not, statistically, engage significant levels of risk. In the next section I discuss how the use of a rhetoric of risk contributes to and perpetuates existing stigmas.

Stigma, Risk, and the Government of the Margins

...The marginalized have values that can meaningfully challenge our own and needs that could be plausibly satisfied within our society...the claims of the marginal are based on critiques of specific features of our society that can be modified without total overthrow” (Gutting 2005: 89).

The experience of individualised, symbolic stigma is a common one for many people who belong to marginalised groups. While it may be experienced as hurtful, most often individuals are able to successfully negotiate symbolic stigma⁹. For the most part, symbolic stigma remains primarily a psychological or emotional concern that is limited to the individual person and is addressed through individual coping techniques and identity management strategies. The issue of symbolic stigma becomes one of sociological concern when it is symptomatic of stigma at a structural level: when stigma is systematically applied by agencies, institutions and individuals to a particular group of people or population as a whole – moving beyond stigma as a perception of an *individual* attribute, to a wider, stereotypical concept of stigma that taints an entire group and pushes them to the margins of society. This dissertation explores this dyadic and mutually

⁹ There are many studies that discuss negotiations of stigma and stigma management in interactions. See for example, Bruckert, 2002; Corrigan and Lundin, 2001; Goffman, 1963 and others.

reinforcing relationship between stigma and marginality at the symbolic and institutional levels.

Foucault's concept of the marginal is a useful place to begin consideration of the situation of the families of incarcerated men in Canada. Preliminary research and discussion with service providers suggests that this particular group of people is subject to a myriad of difficulties and yet is rarely the target of any concerted assistance efforts. In his later works, from the 1970s onward, Foucault theoretically differentiates the situation of the marginalised in our society from that of the abnormal or "other". For Foucault, the marginalised are still a part of the larger society; they speak the same "language" and share many of the same values as mainstream society. They also often play essential social and economic roles and yet they are perpetually on the borders of society because either their identity and life is significantly defined by values that are counter to the mainstream, or they belong to a group whose welfare is systematically subordinated in favour of the welfare of the larger, mainstream group (Gutting 2005). The families of offenders fit into each of these categories.

Whether correctly or incorrectly, depending on the situation, the family members of those who have been convicted of a criminal offence are generally associated with an image of a criminal lifestyle and a subculture that runs counter to accepted standards of behaviour. Community perceptions of these individuals' morality, trustworthiness and risk level are coloured by their relationship to a convicted criminal. The level of marginality experienced is related to others' perceptions of the centrality of the criminal lifestyle and risk level and whether or not the individual has other significant, mainstream roles in the community through which their identity can be framed. For example, the

children and unemployed spouses of prisoners are likely to encounter the greatest amount of stigma due to a lack of other pro-social roles and identities that could lessen the relationship to the prisoner as a defining characteristic. Similarly, as mentioned previously, marginality is also often a gendered phenomenon when stigma is transferred from a male partner to his spouse on the basis of that relationship and patriarchal expectations of the man as the head of the household and his status is therefore seen as reflective of her lifestyle. This identification of prisoners' families with criminal values and lifestyle places them on the margins of social life and creates avoidance and discriminatory behaviours amongst "normals".

Stigma, Marginality, and Risk

In addition to the association with criminal values, the families of prisoners are also defined as risky in the sense that they are presumed to be more likely to be involved in criminal activity themselves and thereby victimise other people. Because they are considered to be a risky population, the families of prisoners may be the subject of intervention designed to minimise their risk to the general population. For instance, children with an incarcerated parent often exhibit acting out behaviour and difficulties in school and may find themselves involved with child welfare services, mentoring programs, and other social development programs designed to reduce the risk of future offending (see, for example, Virginia Commission on Youth 2002; Withers 2003; House of Hope 2003). While these interventions are meant to improve the child's current and future welfare, there is no doubt that there is a stigma attached to being singled out as a "problem child" or "future criminal" in a classroom or group of children and

interventions may exacerbate the acting out behaviour by causing the child to internalise the negative label and stigma.

The incarceration of an individual places causes much strain and difficulty for family members, however the welfare of that individual family is sacrificed for (presumably) the well-being of the general population and to serve the needs of the justice system. I do not argue here that the use of imprisonment itself as a tool of social censure is necessarily unjust, merely that families experience what Julian Roberts (2006) has termed “collateral punishment” through the institutional practices of the criminal justice system and are marginalised by virtue of their relation to someone who is convicted of an offence. The involuntary separation of the family by incarceration and the difficulties that ensue are sometimes necessary for the maintenance of social order and the protection of the public, however, the lack of concern for the unintended consequences of incarceration for families can be seen as justified by stigmatic attitudes about the character and worthiness of these families. In discussions of encountered difficulties, the experience of stigma and discrimination is one that is frequently mentioned by the family members of incarcerated men (see Goffman 1963; Bakker, Morris and Janus 1978; Fishman 1990; Johnston 1995; May 2000; Braman and Wood 2003). Experiences of stigma often contribute to emotional difficulties, social withdrawal and isolation, and sometimes even exacerbate financial hardship, such as when individuals are denied work or housing. Certainly, the families of prisoners constitute a marginalised group in North American society and the stigma associated with having an incarcerated family member itself perpetuates the problem by keeping these individuals hidden in the general population. However, more problematic than the

experience or perception of symbolic stigma in the general public is the mobilisation of such stereotypes of prisoners' families to perpetuate their marginalisation at a systemic level. In the following section we will discuss the phenomenon of what I have termed "structural stigma" and its relationship to stereotypes and the language of risk.

Structural Discrimination vs. Structural Stigma

Link and Phelan (2001) use the concept of *structural discrimination* to define a situation in which policy makers and administrators do not consider and are therefore unaware of the negative consequences that certain policies may have for a particular group of people. This lack of awareness leads to systematic discrimination and hardship for the negatively impacted group. On the other hand, my conception of *structural stigma* is the inverse of this notion, with similar consequences. Structural stigma arises out of an *awareness* of the problematic attributes of a particular group of people and is based on an intent to manage a population that is perceived, on the basis of the stigmatic attribute, to be risky or morally bereft. It is here that the symbolic meets the structural in a way that causes an inherent disadvantage to a group of people – in this case, prisoners' families. Drawing on Link and Phelan (2001), I refer to this stigma as "structural" because the difficulties that arise from it are not so much a product of the stigma itself (the interaction between the attribute and symbolically negative attitudes toward it), or any inherent problems that arise from the condition, but of the institutional and conceptual structures that surround it. An individual who is the family member of an incarcerated man will be the recipient of structural stigma regardless of whether any individual person treats him or her in a discriminatory manner because of a stereotype

about the (im)morality of offenders' families. Instead, "stigma has affected the structure around the person, leading the person to be exposed to a host of untoward circumstances" (Link and Phelan 2001:373). It is structural stigma that drives the perpetuation of marginality, and creates marginal populations in our society, as Foucault has defined them. Recalling that the marginal are held at the borders of society by their (stereotypical) association with anti-social or negative value structures and in the necessity to subordinate their welfare for the larger good, we can understand that marginality in modern society is essentially the by-product of risk predictions. Collectively, the prediction of risk, based on stereotype, and the marginalising responses to said risk, in an effort to manage or mitigate the perception of danger, can be conceived of as a structurally-based stigma.

The concept of structural stigma is differentiated from discrimination and structural discrimination then by virtue of intent on the part of the intervener or "normal" in the interaction to manage the risk posed by the discredited individual. Structural discrimination, as it is conceived by Link and Phelan (2001) has no aspect of intent to harm or disgrace or target a specific population, but results from a lack of care and forethought as to the consequences of bureaucratic policy or practice for that group of people. For example, in the United States, the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 allows for the forced termination of parental rights after fifteen months in foster care. The average prison sentence in the United States is eighteen months, meaning that many incarcerated parents may lose their children completely while they are in custody, despite the non-voluntary nature of the situation (Travis et. al. 2003; Virginia Commission on Youth 2002). Although this law was never intended to target

incarcerated parents, but to protect children and enable the state to find stable home environments, its unintended consequence is to unfairly disadvantage incarcerated parents who do not wish to relinquish their parental rights. Thus, this policy may be said to discriminate at a structural (rather than individual) level against incarcerated parents and their children.

Structural stigma, on the other hand, is the result of the identification of populations who are believed to present a risk to other individuals and to the social order. Interventions are carefully calculated with the intent to manage these individuals, based on the risk that they are perceived to present, either to themselves or to society at large. A structural stigma does not imply intent to *harm* the individual or the population. In fact, the intent is often to help or improve the situation of the individual. However, by presenting the need for assistance as though there is something inherently different, risky or tainted about the person, stigma is created and perpetuated in the very agencies who are supposed to be providing help and the conditions for the Foucauldian “marginal” population are fulfilled.

Traditionally, discrimination and avoidance behaviours were the pre-modern, visible reactions of symbolic stigma and occurred without the intent to manage a particular person or population, but rather with the intent of separating that person or group from the “normal” and to impart shame or disgrace. However, under the new risk society, our organised stigmatising reactions are rarely so overt. Stigma is buried in the language of risk, and risk management techniques become the new visible evidence of moral judgement, couched in claims of reducing the risk of negative outcomes for the managed individual, or for society at large.

For example, many spouses of partners of incarcerated men are afraid to approach social services or child welfare workers for assistance because of the (often justified) fear that they will be judged by social workers for being the partner of an incarcerated “criminal” and that their children may be taken from them (House of Hope 2003). The removal of the children from the home is justified, not by evidence of poor parenting or abuse, but in order to “reduce the risk” posed to the children by association with criminal lifestyle. In other instances, programs of assistance for the children of incarcerated persons have received government funding by utilising the rhetoric of crime prevention. Requests for funds are justified through use of psychological, neurological and social factors that suggest that the children of incarcerated parents are at greater risk of becoming criminal themselves and need to be treated in order to improve their future possibilities and to protect the public from cyclical criminal behaviour (House of Hope 2003).

As mentioned in the first chapter, President George W. Bush has mobilised the notion of intergenerational criminality in his initiative to offer intervention services to the children of incarcerated persons in the United States. By labelling these children as future criminals in order to justify support and assistance for them, a structural stigma is being created, based on the notion of risk to the general public, and stereotypes about the discreditable nature of prisoners’ families are being perpetuated. The children of prisoners are singled out from other children who grow up in single-parent families and in difficult financial circumstances as particularly risky due to perceptions of the contagious nature of criminal and moral pollution. Rather than mobilising the language of citizenship and humanity to construct these children and their families as deserving of

assistance to mitigate the collateral effects of imprisonment, the notions of risk and danger to the public serves to raise concern about intergenerational criminality and maintains social distance between so-called “normals” and the families of prisoners. Instead of normalising and integrating these families into social networks of support, they are further stigmatised, isolated and singled out as risky and in need of intervention.

Although the Canadian Families and Corrections Network (with the support of the Chaplaincy Division of Correctional Services Canada) is endeavouring to improve services to families of prisoner, the primary motivation and justification for support continues to center on crime prevention. It is argued that offering services to prisoners’ families will reduce crime by reducing the risk of intergenerational criminality and by improving family ties to aid in reintegration, thereby reducing the risk of recidivism (Withers 2003). Constructing the need to provide services to prisoners’ families as a form of crime prevention or risk reduction defines the families of prisoners as a population in need of risk management. By offering services to prisoners’ families, the state is able to effectively manage risk and encourage this population’s ability to “... take responsibility... show themselves capable of calculated action and choice... [and] shape their lives according to a moral code of individual responsibility and community obligation” (Rose 1996: 347). Regardless of whether the risk of criminality is real (actuarially calculable) or symbolic (based in preconceived notions of crime as a defilement passed through contact)¹⁰, I argue that defining prisoners’ families as a collective risk in this manner serves to increase stigma at both symbolic and structural levels as these families negotiate social service agencies, child welfare agencies and the correctional system.

¹⁰ See Douglas (1966)

Throughout the following pages, the stories of women (and men) affected by the incarceration of a loved one reveal the reality of symbolic and structural forms of stigma attached to the families of incarcerated men. The sense of being targeted as “risky” persons and subjected to scrutiny and intervention is not just a theoretical supposition, but an everyday reality for the family members of incarcerated men who are interacting with the correctional system and social welfare agencies. They are profoundly aware of their marginal status in the community and its relationship to stereotypes of deviance, criminality, and risk. Family members describe the collateral punishment that they experience as a result of their stigmatised and marginal position and the sense that, as a society, Canadians have turned a blind eye to the effects of incarceration on families, content with the illusion of a specific punishment that effectively reduces the risk of victimisation to the general public. In chapter three I will detail the methods utilised to explore this everyday reality faced by the families of incarcerated men in Canada.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY: THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF THE RESEARCH

*Focussing on the world from the perspective of the margins allows us to see the world differently and, in many ways, more authentically.
Kirby and McKenna (1989:33)*

This chapter will set out the philosophical and methodological approach utilised in collecting and analysing the data for this research study. I will first discuss the context and research questions and the epistemological approach that I have chosen. I will then describe the research methods utilised and detail the sample, along with some of the issues and limitations raised in conducting this research. Finally, I will conclude with a description of the process of data collection and analysis, leading into the substantive analyses presented in chapters four through six.

According to Van Manen (1990), "...to become more thoughtful or attentively aware of aspects of human life which hitherto were merely glossed over or taken-for-granted will more likely bring us to the edge of speaking up, speaking out, or decisively acting in social situations that ask for such action" (154). In conducting this study I have come to believe that the lack of existing research on the situation of prisoners' families in Canada is both symptomatic of and has contributed to the marginalisation of the issue and consequently to a failure of political and social organisations to respond to the needs of this population in a consistent and compassionate way. As mentioned, the only previous study conducted of the impact of incarceration on families in Canada was a joint effort of the Correctional Service of Canada and the Canadian Families and Corrections Network (2003) that provided a broad, quantitative, overview of issues, without delving into the

lived experiences and subjective realities of those who struggle with these problems on a daily basis. For this reason, I felt that it was important to engage in an exploratory, qualitative study that would give a voice to a group of people who are often forgotten in discussions of crime, corrections, and social policy in Canada.

Epistemological Concerns

The epistemology of symbolic interactionism is grounded in an understanding that lived experiences – our realities - are interpreted and mediated through individual subjectivities. That is, human knowledge of the world is necessarily the product of experience and interpretation. However, the founder of the school of symbolic interactionism, Herbert Blumer (1969), was quick to clarify that the empirical world is no less “real” for having been negotiated and understood from a particular perspective. In his words,

...the empirical world can “talk back” to our pictures of it or assertions about it – talk back in the sense of challenging and resisting, or not bending to, our images or conceptions of it. This resistance gives the empirical world an obdurate character that is the mark of reality (Blumer 1969: 22).

The symbolic interactionist does not, however, fall into the trap of arguing, as a traditional realist might, that the “real” character of the empirical world is somehow fixed or immutable and that it is the discovery of this ultimate reality that should be the holy grail of social science research. Rather, reality is recognised as accomplished and existing only in the present and the “real” character of the world is responsive to changing discoveries and understandings (Blumer 1969: 23). Any attempt to know the real world, outside of direct experience, is then filtered and coloured by the standpoint of the

perceiver. The supreme challenge for the researcher who approaches a subject as a symbolic interactionist is to set aside his or her preconceived notions and stereotypes of the empirical world under study in order to privilege the perspectives of those who have lived this reality. Only through careful observation, using exploratory methods, can we hope to gain a greater understanding of the world as it is experienced by those who live it.

It is this challenge that I have taken up in the present study – as an outsider, to understand the world as it is experienced by the family members of prisoners and to frame that experience in light of established theoretical and empirical knowledges in a way that is sensitive and does not appropriate the experiences and knowledges of the subjects. Blumer (1969) describes this process metaphorically as “lifting the veils that cover the area of group life that one proposes to study” (39). He goes on to elaborate: “the veils are not lifted by substituting, in whatever degree, preformed images for firsthand knowledge. The veils are lifted by getting close to the area and by digging deep into it through careful study” (Blumer 1969:39).

As suggested at the outset of this chapter, in uncovering the lived realities of marginalised persons, one is then placed in a better position to understand and react to them in a compassionate manner, and to mobilise politically for change, if necessary. Critical sociology is oriented toward progressive change and there is an expectation that as researchers we should be politically aware and be conducting research, not just for the sake of knowledge alone, but as a technology of action that manifests itself in praxis by providing the impetus to personal and political change. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), “persons choose to do research because they have a dream that somehow they will make a difference in the world through the insights and understandings they arrive

at” (15). From the outset of this research have found myself driven by this dream: the desire to affect change in societal reactions to prisoners’ families, to aid in alleviating the distress that I often found myself party to through the stories and emotions of my participants. While large-scale change is rarely the immediate outcome of academic research, such research is a vital first step toward creating awareness and improving public empathy for the experiences of marginalised others. To this end, the present study was driven by several research questions that needed to be answered in order to improve our understanding of the effects of incarceration on the families of Canadian prisoners.

Research Questions

A qualitative, exploratory study is particularly useful for examining questions of *what* and *how*; that is, what is happening within a particular context and how this context or situation is experienced by those who live it. As I have discussed, in Canada there has been very little exploration of these types of questions with respect to the effects of the use of incarceration on families, either by researchers or practitioners and policy-makers. In fact, the family members of the convicted person are entirely ignored in decisions about criminal sentencing and have therefore not been addressed practically or politically. Therefore this study was constructed to answer some very broad substantive questions about the experience of seeing a loved one sent to prison and to broaden our understanding of the collateral effects of imprisonment.

Where empirical, qualitative research tells us about the *what* and *how* of a phenomenon, theory is about the *why*. By contextualising the experiences of prisoners’ families within a theoretical framework, the questions posed and the answers provided

give a better understanding of not only the lived experiences of these people, but perhaps *why* they face the challenges that they do and *why* their struggles are allowed to go unaddressed. Theoretically, I have located the historic neglect of prisoners' families and the difficulties that they face within an understanding of the stigma that is attached to criminality and the tendency for this stigma to be transferred from the convict to his associates. Uncovering the theoretical roots of such a phenomenon is key if one hopes to have any chance of initiating real change, addressing the underlying problem rather than just blindly treating the symptoms. With these theoretical and substantive issues in mind, this study was designed to answer the following questions:

- What key issues or difficulties do prisoners' families face in dealing with the incarceration of a loved one?
- What are the practical and social impacts of incarceration on families and how does gender effect these outcomes?
- How (if at all) does the stigma attached to criminality affect the family member's experience of negotiating the imprisonment of a loved one in social and institutional settings?
- How and why do families maintain relationships despite the barriers of imprisonment and involuntary separation?
- How are families reacted to by the correctional enterprise?
- What is the impact of gender on family members' experiences of stigma and their interactions with the correctional system?
- How do families negotiate the process of release and (re)unification of the family unit following a carceral sentence?

- What services are available to assist families throughout the process of incarceration and release and what services would best meet the aforementioned needs?
- How can we understand the experiences of prisoners' family members within the current Canadian cultural, social and political milieu?

In my attempt to “lift the veils” that obscure these lived experiences of prisoners' families from view, this research utilised three qualitative methods of data collection, consistent with the established practices of triangulation (Berg 2004) - interviewing, focus groups, and textual research. The use of multiple methods is advocated as a means of validating data, refining and extending concepts, and broadening one's understanding of the issues by integrating various perspectives (Berg 2004).

Textual Research

In order to garner an understanding of the experiences of individual actors, these experiences must first be situated within their social, cultural and political contexts. Therefore, I found it necessary to investigate current social, political, and correctional responses to the families of prisoners and the impact of incarceration on families in Canada. Knowledge of these macro contexts was gathered through review of government reports and correctional policy documents and information provided by non-profit organisations. The available documentation revealed few organised efforts to address the impact of incarceration on families at the national level and the existence of scant local resources directed at this population. Ongoing struggles for funding and stability were a constant theme and it was clear that no level of government had identified the intersection

of families and corrections as a priority for intervention. While small, piecemeal projects had been instituted and the federal Correctional Service of Canada was involved in a consultation process with the non-profit sector (CSC's Joint Working Group on Families of Offenders), no sustainable changes seemed to be forthcoming at the level of government policy.

As I will discuss, this seeming apathy toward the struggles faced by families of prisoners is directly linked to family members' experiences of isolation, shame, and stigma. The stories that I would later hear from family members of being unable to access support, unaware of available assistance, and turned away from victim services rang true, given the paucity and geographical clustering of programs that I discovered. While some of the small, local programs offered excellent services to families, too often they were limited in their capacity for outreach by small budgets, lack of staff and/or a narrow client purview. Services were commonly duplicated within specific regions (ie. areas such as Kingston, Ontario or Moncton, New Brunswick which each contain several federal institutions and large prisoner populations), and completely unavailable in other areas, leading to a disparity of access. Clearly, far from being a national or correctional priority, services for families of prisoners were available only where a few particular individuals were concerned and caring enough to ensure their provision. In the absence of these visionary persons, needs went unmet.

Although the textual research is not a large component of this study and was not employed as a primary methodology, it was invaluable for understanding the inconsistent nature of government and social responses to this issue. This context largely frames my

analysis of the structural aspects of stigmatisation as they relate to prisoners' families and provides the backdrop against which to consider the participants' stories.

Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine individuals who work in the provision of social services and assistance to prisoners' families¹. Eight of these individuals worked for non-profit agencies who offered services, support programs, and assistance that were tailored specifically to the families of incarcerated persons, although only three of the agencies offered these services as their primary focus, while the others were involved in various aspects of criminal justice based services and offered the family programs as just one aspect of their work. The ninth was employed by the Correctional Service of Canada, Chaplaincy Division and was engaged with the National Working Group on Families of Offenders. Participants were asked if they would be comfortable with having the interview recorded and seven of the individuals agreed. The recorded interviews were transcribed and I took detailed notes when a tape recorder was not used. The interviews ranged in length from forty-five minutes to two hours. The responses to the questions were used to refine the interview guide and topics to be discussed with family members and to sensitise the researcher to potential issues that might arise while interviewing family members. The service providers were asked if they were comfortable with providing information about the study to their clients and to act as a point of contact for the researcher. I also requested permission to hold focus groups in these agencies, during which the clients would have an opportunity to meet me, learn more about the research study and to opt to participate in an interview.

¹ See Appendix A for interview guide for service providers.

Like the documentary research, the interviews with professional service providers were intended to provide context and analytic insights with which to understand the stories of the family members. The professionals' tales of working in isolation with few resources and constant struggles for funding mirrored and substantiated my reading of the documentary data. Their experiences in offering support and assistance to prisoners' families also provided valuable insights into the potential difficulties and pitfalls of conducting research with this population. As I discuss later in this chapter under issues in participant recruitment, this advice was very valuable in positioning myself in relation to the participants and early consideration of the issues of trust that surround marginalised populations allowed me to circumvent potentially problematic areas of discussion².

In a second round of interviews, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seventeen individuals, fourteen women and three men, whose family members were (or had previously been) incarcerated. These individuals were contacted through a variety of channels, but primarily through referrals from service providers and those who participated in interviews or focus groups³. Two participants responded to a posting by the researcher on an internet message board for individuals dealing with the incarceration of a family member. The interviews ranged from one and a half to four hours in length with an average time of two and a half hours and were conducted most often in the participant's home. All but two interviews were conducted in person and often involved substantial travel. The two interviews that were not conducted in person were held over the phone due to time and funding constraints which did not enable the

² The question of asking family members to disclose the type of offence that their loved one committed was one area that the professional informants assured me could potentially cause family members to put up barriers and derail the interview process. I discuss this issue further in the coming pages.

³ Two individuals participated in both a focus group and an interview, bringing the total number of family-member participants to 28.

researcher to travel to meet with all participants. The participants were asked if they were comfortable with having the interview tape recorded and all of the interviews, save one, were recorded with the permission of the participant and transcribed for the purposes of analyses.

An interview guide was used to ensure that the discussion incorporated the same range of issues for all participants⁴, however the interviews were allowed to develop conversationally and the order in which the issues were addressed varied. Key topics were often raised spontaneously by the participants before I asked about them, underscoring their significance to the subjects and allowing the participants to identify to me those issues that were most pressing and troubling. Epistemologically, the interview is viewed by the symbolic interactionist as a process of constructing meaning, rather than as a positivistic, fact-finding mission, and the interview respondent is viewed as an active subject who is engaged in interpreting and communicating his or her experience; in essence, meaning-making (Holstein and Gubrium 1997). The in-depth interview offers the researcher access (though mediated) to the subject's own interpretation of his or her experience, and a very flexible and informal approach to interviewing requires the researcher to abdicate the role of "expert" in order to privilege the stories and voices of the participants as expert accounts of their experiences (Flick 1998; Fontana and Frey 2000). While the experience of stigma was of primary interest in this research, I refrained from using the term in interview questions and in comments in order to avoid imposing my own analysis and interpretation on the participant, unless she first characterised her experience in that way. Traditional, positivist researchers would refer to this as the avoidance of leading questions which shape the participants' responses, whereas the

⁴ See Appendix B for interview guide for family members.

symbolic interactionist would emphasise the interpreted nature of lived reality and the need to respect the subjects' own understandings of their experiences. Semantics aside, there is a realisation that the subjectivity of the researcher inevitably does shape the collection and analysis of the data. Every attempt was made to avoid the imposition of the researcher's standpoint onto the participants so that their voices can be heard despite the mediation of interpretation and analysis. For this reason, I deliberately included lengthy quotations from interview participants to, as much as possible, allow the family members to speak for themselves.

Focus Groups

Three focus groups were held, one each in Kingston, Montreal and Calgary. Each focus group involved four or five women (total $n=13$) who each had a husband/partner or son incarcerated. The focus groups were set up in the context of existing family support groups and the women who participated were already acquainted with one another and accustomed to discussing issues around their loved ones' incarcerations. The women were provided with information about the research study by the facilitator/service worker and informed that I would be coming to a group meeting in advance of the date selected. This allowed the women the opportunity to opt out of the study by simply not attending that meeting. At the beginning of the focus group, I went over the informed consent letter and again described the purpose of the research. Although the issue of confidentiality was emphasised in the consent form and participants were asked by the researcher to keep one another's comments and stories within the context of the group, I quickly discovered that

the family support groups each had their own “code” of confidentiality and that the respect of one another’s privacy and confidence was keenly observed.

The focus group discussions were initiated using the question “what are the biggest issues that you have had to face in dealing with your loved one’s incarceration?” and ranged from two and a half to four hours in length. The longest focus group (four hours) was held in the evening over a meal and the women took turns sharing their experiences and commiserating with one another’s stories. The informal nature of the evening resulted in a very comfortable interaction and elicited a wealth of data. The focus groups were not tape-recorded, but the researcher took detailed notes of the conversations and engaged in writing reflexive field notes following each discussion.

Focus group interviews are an excellent means of obtaining a range of views on a single topic very quickly and often highlight areas of divergence of perspective or experience (Berg 2004). The informal and conversational format of the focus group allowed the women to feel free to comment on one another’s stories, to offer corroborating or differing opinions. As Berg (2004) has suggested, the focus group can be a very dynamic interaction, stimulating a larger number of ideas, issues and topics than an individual interview or conversation; he refers to this interplay as a “synergistic group effect” (124). The use of focus groups not only allowed me to obtain a wide range of experiences and opinions relatively quickly, but it was also an economical way to speak with a larger range of participants when extensive travel was involved. Setting up a focus group virtually guaranteed that I would be able to speak with several family members and could sometimes generate a second, individual interview. According to the service providers who acted as liaisons in setting up the focus groups, the women seemed

more immediately receptive to speaking with a researcher in a group setting that they were comfortable with than to agreeing to be contacted as individuals for interviews. So the focus group format seems to have drawn a group of participants who may not have consented to be interviewed as individuals.

The Participants

The voices presented in this study represent a range of ages and relationships to incarcerated men, from grown children to young wives and partners to aging parents. Among my sample of male prisoners' family members are wives and female intimate partners⁵ ($n = 15$), parents ($n = 8$; four adoptive and four biological, two fathers and six mothers), children ($n = 2$; one son and one daughter) and siblings ($n = 3$; all sisters), ranging in age from mid-twenties to late sixties. The participants describe a wide range of experiences with varying levels of institutional security and in different regions of Canada. The majority of participants ($n = 15$) had loved ones who were incarcerated in Ontario region, while four participants had loved ones incarcerated in Quebec, four in the eastern Canada region and five in western Canada. The individuals also represent varying occupations and income levels, from unemployed persons on disability pensions to post-secondary students, to professionals working for non-profit organisations and small business owners. The vast majority of the respondents ($n = 25$) were white Canadians of European ancestry; one respondent was an aboriginal Canadian, one an immigrant from Nigeria and another had emigrated from Cuba. I will discuss the limitations of this sample later in this chapter and in the conclusion. The sample was also overwhelmingly

⁵ I did not seek to exclude gay males from this study, however, none self-identified as supporting an incarcerated partner.

female ($n = 25$), with only two fathers and one son representing the male perspective. The incarcerated loved ones of these individuals had engaged in a range of offence types, although disclosure of the offence was not required for participation in this study⁶. Of those who chose to disclose their loved one's offence, eight indicated that their loved one had committed sexual assault, four had committed murder, three assault with a weapon, one conspiracy to traffic in narcotics, and one family violence. In only one case was the sexual assault perpetrated against an immediate family member. The sentences served ranged from two years to life sentences and one man was facing a possible designation as a dangerous offender⁷. The mean length of sentence was seven years⁸. Twenty of the participants' loved ones were still incarcerated while eight had been released on parole or were past warrant expiry. An acknowledged weakness of this sample is that it is not a controlled or representative sample however it does provide a diverse cross-section of snapshots into the lives of Canadians who are coping (or have dealt in the past) with the incarceration of a loved one. Since this is an exploratory study with a self-selected sample that is not statistically representative, we must therefore be somewhat cautious about making empirical claims. This is particularly true of the data drawn from several subsets of individuals with unique circumstances. For example, in one case the incarcerated family member had been convicted of sexually molesting his own daughter and yet the wife and other siblings had maintained contact. Understandably, this is a somewhat less common situation. In another case, the convicted husband was facing a

⁶ I was told by service providers that family members are often reluctant to discuss their loved one's offence and wary of those who ask about it. However, once interviews had progressed and the interviewees felt comfortable, many volunteered information about the offence as a means of clarifying their situation and helping the researcher to understand the issues/concerns they described.

⁷ Designation as a dangerous offender, under Canadian law, entails an indefinite sentence of incarceration with no statutory eligibility for parole.

⁸ Life sentences, which do not have a warrant expiry date in Canada, were included in this calculation by using the length of incarceration prior to parole eligibility, although release was not assured.

dangerous offender designation for repeat violent, sexual offences. Dangerous offender cases are relatively rare in Canada (there are only 385 dangerous offenders in the entire country), and this type of situation would certainly not be representative of the majority of prisoners and their families. Therefore, the data presented in this study are drawn from the experiences of some families, but cannot be said to be an exhaustive representation.

Issues in Participant Recruitment and Field Research

While offenders are one of the most frequently researched populations in the social sciences, their families are conversely a relatively unresearched group, both in general and especially in Canada. One of the specific challenges that arose in researching the families of prisoners was the question of how to access what is essentially a hidden population. Public avoidance and denunciation of those involved in criminal activity often leads family members to experience a sense of shame about their relative's incarceration and to hide the fact of the conviction from all those who are not on a "need-to-know" basis. As Goffman (1963) and others describe (see, for example, Bruckert 2002; Falk 2001; Miller and Kaiser 2001), non-disclosure of an invisible discrediting trait is a common technique used by the stigmatised to manage their identity and "pass" as normal. Fear of stigmatisation and labelling prevents many individuals from self-identifying as having an incarcerated family member, even to helping agencies, and consequently isolates them from those who may offer assistance and prevents an accurate enumeration of the scope of persons impacted by incarceration. The best guesses at estimating the number of family members who are collaterally affected by incarceration are based on extrapolations from the demographic data on prisoner populations, but even

these would not provide an exact number as the Correctional Service of Canada has not compiled information on the number of prisoners who have wives, children or living parents.

A researcher who wishes to study the impact of incarceration on families confronts an immediate problem in attempting to identify and locate persons who have experienced the incarceration of a family member due to the invisibility of such persons and their reluctance to self-identify. This issue of access is not unique to the research of such families, but is characteristic of so-called “hidden populations” who are wary of their “deviant” or discreditable status and prefer to pass for “normal” whenever possible. Dunlap and Johnson (1999) wrote of their difficulties in accessing drug sellers/dealers and their families and in winning their trust and co-operation. They note the importance of finding the right person to act as the “go-between”, linking the researcher as an outsider to the individuals of interest and providing an introduction and legitimization, of sorts, to demonstrate that the researcher is “all right” and can be trusted not to “rat on” or “out” the dealer to the authorities (Dunlap and Johnson 1999).

A similar dynamic is at play in accessing the families of prisoners for research. The majority of the individuals who participated in this study were contacted through their established relationships with local service providers who offered practical and emotional support in dealing with the impact of incarceration. Service providers who were contacted were, for the most part, supportive of the research as they saw the potential results as an opportunity to add corroborative data to future program funding applications and thus they encouraged their clients to participate in the study. In some cases service workers went so far as to arrange for me to meet their clients informally in

order to present the scope and aims of the research study and request their involvement. These informal meetings served to break the ice and provided opportunity for potential participants to become comfortable with the researcher, paving the way for increased rapport during the interview process. Developing trust with the families of prisoners is often a difficult task, and was mentioned by all of the service providers as a salient issue in working with this particular clientele. Family members often do not trust those in authority and are concerned about the potential of stigma or negative reactions amongst members of the general public who hold biased and perhaps distorted views about prisoners and their families. Thus, without the assistance and referral of trusted service providers, the recruitment process might have been more difficult than it was.

Service providers also offered advice for interacting with family members, based on their own experiences and challenges. The need to tread carefully in building trust and rapport was mentioned repeatedly, as was the suggestion that I should avoid any appearance of connection to the correctional enterprise. In fact, although I am not in any way affiliated with Corrections Canada, one service provider even suggested that I should be careful to refer to myself as a sociologist, rather than a criminologist, in order to avoid the connotation of a link to correctional or government-supported research and to underscore that my interests were in the experiences of families, rather than in the nature of the family member's offence.

Locating the Self and the Other

The advice given by the professional informants on strategic positioning in relation to the family participants was very valuable and my resultant decision not to

inquire about the nature of the family member's offence seemed to encourage the participants to be more open. The majority voluntarily disclosed enough information about the offence to allow classification and analysis of their responses on this basis, while some, unbidden, went into great detail in describing the circumstances, suggesting that I had gained enough of their faith to be considered trustworthy or treated as a sympathetic other, what Goffman (1963) refers to as "the wise" (28).

To be counted among the wise is perhaps the greatest honour and confidence that a research participant can bestow upon the researcher. As Goffman (1963) describes, the "wise" are:

...persons who are normal but whose special situation has made them intimately privy to the secret life of the stigmatised individual and sympathetic with it, and who find themselves accorded a measure of acceptance, a measure of courtesy membership in the clan. Wise persons are the marginal men [and women!] before whom the individual with a fault need feel no shame nor exert self-control, knowing that in spite of his failing he will be seen as an ordinary other (28).

In accepting the researcher as wise, the participant is creating a space in which the researcher has the freedom to inquire deeply about lived experience and to engage the participant as co-conspirator and collaborator in presenting that reality in a way that others can understand. To this end, the participants are largely to be credited for their bravery in opening up to a stranger to tell their story and risking judgement or stigmatisation. My position as an outsider, despite my interest in their situation, created a potential threat to self-esteem and identity, should I be unsympathetic. As suggested by Renzetti and Lee (1993), "it is not unusual for the powerless or the disadvantaged to treat the researcher with scepticism, fearing that cooperation will bring in its wake only their

further exploitation” (101). This was clearly a concern for at least one prisoner’s wife who was very blunt in her assessment of the situation:

Isobel: If you feel like judging, just tell me.

Stacey: Okay.

Isobel: Tell me that’s what you’re doing cuz I’m sure you will have some judgements, but I want you to tell me, not just smile and say, “yeah”.

Stacey: I can do that.

Locating myself as a sympathetic other was clearly a vital aspect of developing rapport with the participants and encouraging their trust and candour. A part of this process entailed listening carefully, without passing judgement or imposing my own values on the narratives that were presented to me. In some cases, selective self-disclosure assisted in reassuring the participants that I would be non-judgemental of their situation. For example, in several instances where the incarcerated loved one had committed a sexual offence, family members were more open and forthcoming when I disclosed that I work on a volunteer basis with released, high risk, sex offenders through a community reintegration program called Circles of Support and Accountability.⁹ In another case, an adoptive parent whose son suffered from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome was surprised to learn that I could relate to this, as my own brother is also adopted and has struggled with the long term impacts of maternal prenatal alcohol consumption. I was careful to display the hallmark characteristics of a good, active listener, trumpeted by texts on qualitative methods, to smile or laugh when appropriate, to express concern, to commiserate on issues that I could relate to and to ask the tough questions in a sensitive and hesitant manner. In short, although my emotional responses and interactions with the

⁹ See Hannem and Petrunik (2004, 2007) for more detailed information about Circles of Support and Accountability.

participants were most often genuine, I was constantly aware of the need to maintain a positive interaction in order to continue the flow of desired information.

Because interviews are a reciprocal process of exchange and are impacted by the verbal and non-verbal behaviours of both parties, in many instances, it is likely that the informants were also practicing a careful management of identity in order to present themselves to me as trustworthy, knowledgeable and non-deviant persons. Powerless or marginalised persons will often place a high priority on being “believed” or accepted by others whom they perceive to be in a position of authority (Goffman 1959, 1967). My role as a university researcher who would be presenting their stories and writing about their experiences clearly created these stakes and provided the participants with an incentive to engage in impression management or face work (Goffman 1959, 1967). Goffman (1969), in speaking of these sorts of “expression games,” argued:

Just as it can be assumed that it is in the interests of the observer to acquire information from a subject, so it is in the interests of the subject to appreciate that this is occurring and to control and manage the information the observer obtains; for in this way the subject can influence in his own favor responses to a situation which includes himself (10).

The phenomenon of impression management and strategic forms of interaction in which individuals engage creates an interesting dilemma for the naturalistic or symbolic interactionist researcher. Often, as qualitative researchers, claims are made to “truth”, based on the narratives of informants, when in fact, as outsiders and subjectively located others, we have no means of ascertaining an objective truth (if indeed such a thing exists) from a strategic representation or managed version of the truth. Fielding (1993) has argued that from a naturalistic perspective, researchers are expected to be “appreciative” of their informants narratives and to accept them on the basis of mutual trust, rather than

approaching the interaction with a sense of scepticism or the idea that the participants should have to earn the researcher's trust. He goes on to point out that this approach is much easier to accomplish if the researcher has a pre-existing affinity or identification with the subjects and is extremely difficult if one is researching a group that one believes to be problematic or deviant in some way (Fielding 1993).

While the issue of researcher hostility or negative preconceptions of the subjects was not a problem in this case, the question of how to collect and interpret data on subjective experiences without making claims to objective truth is certainly an issue that all qualitative researchers must grapple with. I find myself falling back on to the epistemological roots of phenomenology and existentialism to argue that while I cannot claim to present *the* truth about the effect of incarceration on families, I can present *a* truth that is faithful to the mediated representations of those who have experienced this reality. Thus, respecting the trust and confidence placed in me by the participants, I have endeavoured as much as possible throughout the data collection and analysis to present their voices as accurately and as empathically as possible, to do justice to their experiences, all the while being cognisant of my own impact on the data through my methodological and reflexive interaction.

Dealing with Data Collection

While referrals from service providers and snowball sampling proved to be a somewhat effective means of recruiting participants, this methodological and strategic choice is one of the crucial research decisions that affected the resulting sample. As previously mentioned, the perceived (or real) stigma associated with having a family

member in prison leads many individuals to conceal their situations and they may either choose not to access available services, or be unaware that such aid exists. Consequently, many prisoners' families are not associated with local services and would not be contacted in this way. One may surmise that the sub-populations who are most marginalised by virtue of racialised identities (eg. aboriginal families and some recent immigrants) and extreme poverty are least likely to have the resources and connections to seek out assistance where it is available, and are most likely to live in under-served communities where no help is forthcoming. These individuals are also most likely to have encountered previous difficulties with persons in authority and are therefore most likely to be wary and mistrustful of service providers and to choose not to identify themselves. This phenomenon, along with language and cultural barriers, is one likely explanation for the under-representation of racial and ethnic diversity in the research sample. Several individuals were recruited from postings on on-line message boards for individuals with incarcerated family members and those with an interest in issues of corrections and imprisonment. This method of enlisting participation requires a certain level of computer savvy on the part of the enlisted individuals, as well as access to a computer and the Internet, which would also have a tendency to exclude particularly impoverished or marginalised persons. As a result the sample utilised in this study may be critiqued as under-representing those who are most marginalised by virtue of their racial or ethnic identity or class and thus most likely to be adversely affected, financially and socially, by incarceration. However, the diversity of the sample in terms of age, education, profession and income level does underscore the reality that individuals from all walks of life can be, and are, negatively impacted by the incarceration of a loved one.

The data collection process was completed when it seemed to have reached the point of theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 2008). That is, interviewees were raising the same themes and issues, their narratives validated one another's experiences and new information was no longer forthcoming. While the point of saturation is conveniently defined as the point at which "no new categories or relevant themes are emerging" (Strauss and Corbin 2008: 148), there is much debate as to how the researcher will know that this crucial stage has been reached and how one can argue that continued sampling and data collection would reveal no new categories or themes. I do not argue here that continued purposive sampling of variations of ethnicity and class would not have revealed differing experiences, but simply that theoretical saturation was reached in terms of the limits of the self-selecting sample and that continued efforts to recruit participants would be unlikely to access a more diverse population, for the reasons indicated above. Theoretically, a qualitative researcher may continue to collect data indefinitely, as the uniqueness of individual experiences will always yield variations of context, new properties and new dimensions to add to the theoretical concepts. This is certainly the case here; however, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) have suggested, "eventually a researcher has to say this concept is sufficiently well developed for the purposes of this research and accept what has not been covered as one of the limitations of the study" (149). Thus, while I cannot claim that this research is exhaustive in its scope, I am confident in the concepts and themes presented and in their representation of the lived experiences of many Canadian prisoners' families.

Dealing with Data Analysis

To assist in preliminary analysis and in order to preserve my thoughts and reflections on the research process, I kept a journal in which I wrote about my personal experience of the interviews and other informal encounters with informants¹⁰. Corbin and Strauss (2008) have alternatively referred to these writings which include analytical insights, thoughts about the process, and methodological notes as “memos” (124), and encourage the process as a part of the conscious and subconscious organisation and analysis of data. Feminist researchers also argue that that process of journaling about the research process is an important tool for recognising the impact of researcher subjectivity and positioning on the collection and analysis of data (Reinharz 1992). My reflections were often emotionally charged and I found myself attempting to relate to and understand the positions in which these individuals found themselves. The creation of these notes was in many ways an attempt to preserve as many memories of the fieldwork experience as possible, knowing that any single moment or musing could be a key part of the puzzle of understanding the lived experiences of the participants. As Coffey (1999) has written: “...ethnography is about experiencing and remembering; ordering and giving frameworks to our memories. Our fieldnotes form part of our world of private memories, and are often used as triggers for memories we did not write down” (127).

As the research progressed over the period of nearly two years and my own life situation changed, rereading my journal entries was a process of remembering and re-

¹⁰On several occasions I received invitations from service providers to attend informal gatherings at which family members were present, including a candlelight vigil held to commemorate Prisoners' Justice Day, a workshop on “scrap-booking” organised for a family support group and weekly dinners that were hosted by a family support organisation. Although interactions and conversations at these events were not recorded as data, and statements made by family members were not quoted, I did write reflexively about these encounters as I often made observations of attitudes and interactions that were useful in thinking about themes and categories of experience.

evaluating the exchanges that I had had with the participants. My journal entries, combined with the changing present, often elicited new insights and comprehension and I was better able to identify with the struggles these families faced. For example, an excerpt from an early journal entry following a lengthy interview with a prisoners' wife read:

When I realised that Anne's twins were conceived and born AFTER her husband was incarcerated, I was floored! Imagine going through all of that alone - knowing that your husband couldn't be there for the birth, wouldn't be able to help with raising the children. In some ways it is incomprehensible that a woman would choose to do this on her own, particularly given the length of her husband's sentence. She is clearly a competent and independent woman, and I admire her strength, but what a choice to make. I have to admit that I don't entirely understand why. Her children seem to have dealt quite well with their peculiar circumstances. When I met them at their home they were sweet and well-behaved, if curious about my presence. Ordinary ten year olds I guess. Cute that they wanted to show me their rooms...(September 4, 2006).

Sixteen months later, and now three months pregnant with my first child, at the age of twenty-eight, I reread this entry during the process of analysing and coding the interviews and field notes. Suddenly, pieces of the interview began to fall into place and her once incomprehensible decision began to make sense to me:

So Anne was in her late twenties when her partner was sent to prison. Try to imagine that the man you love has just been sentenced to life in prison and you are facing life on your own. At the very minimum he will be in prison for fifteen years. By that point you will be over forty and it's too late to have children then – it's not like waiting for him to come out is an option. So you are faced with the decision to either leave him and move on with finding someone else or to just go on with life and deal with the circumstances that you find yourself in. She described him in the interview as her "soul mate" – for her, leaving was not an option. OF COURSE she wanted the children. In some ways they probably represent what is left of her "normal" life. She also mentioned that her parents have had health difficulties and this is the sort of thing I have noticed that makes one think about their own mortality and biological clock. It must have been a very difficult decision. I certainly don't envy her having to go through pregnancy and childbirth without his physical support. But, it

must also be worth it to have a part of her husband with her in the children when he is so far away...(January 7, 2008).

The longing that I had felt for my own child and the difficult decision to sacrifice some prospects for career advancement and financial stability had placed me in a better position to understand Anne's choice¹¹ and the context of her reality.

The process of journaling and recording my reactions to the interviews and focus groups was extremely helpful in identifying and organising many of the themes that arose and assisted in the process of analysis. In addition to writing about my own reflexive experience I also recorded physical details such as descriptions of places, people, demeanours, body language, and the general mood of the interaction that were useful in generating accurate transcriptions. This was better than relying solely on my memories of the experience as the transcriptions were often completed weeks or months after the interview.

The analysis of the data began with the process of transcription. Completing my own transcription of the interviews and field notes, though time consuming, allowed me to revisit the interactions and to familiarise myself with the material. I tried, as much as possible, to note the tone of voice, demeanour, hesitations and recalled body language or gestures in the transcripts in order to accurately convey the intent of the speaker and to allow the analysis to go beyond *what* was said to *how it was said*. These are aspects of the interview experience that could not have been recorded had I hired someone else to complete the transcription for me. Furthermore, two of the interview participants agreed to have their interview tape recorded with the caveat that I would transcribe their

¹¹ In fact, Sue, another prisoner's wife, had mentioned her own longing for a second child and her plans to conceive in the near future, before her husband's release from prison. Her statements at the time had been equally difficult for me to understand until I placed them within this new context.

interview myself, as they expressed concern for how the recording would be used and discomfort with the idea that a stranger to them might listen to and record their thoughts and feelings, or that they might be identifiable by the details of their stories. Therefore the choice to complete my own transcription was both a methodological and an ethical consideration.

In the interests of protecting the confidentiality of my participants, all identifying information was altered or removed in the process of transcription,¹² including changing/removing the names of places and institutions and providing pseudonyms for the participants and others who were mentioned in the interview. The participants were also provided with copies of their transcripts and offered the opportunity to review and delete any material that they wished or to clarify their statements if they felt that their experience was not accurately represented. In short, I believe that every reasonable effort was made to protect the confidentiality of the participants and to ensure that they did not feel misrepresented in the construction of the textual product of the interview.

The transcribed interviews and field notes were manually coded, with the use of NVivo qualitative analysis software as an organisational strategy. I did not rely on word recognition or other automated functions to sort the data, rather the texts were carefully read and reread to identify themes and sub-themes, to categorise, compare and contrast the participants' experiences. NVivo allowed for ease of handling the several hundred pages of transcription and facilitated the sorting of the data into salient categories and sub-sets. I engaged in expressly analytical coding, which is based in interpretation of the meaning of the text and creating conceptual categories (Richards 2005). The first round

¹² See Appendix C for the letter of information and consent form which details my assurances to the participants of confidentiality and anonymity.

of analytical coding identified major themes that had arisen in interviews and focus group discussions and I attempted to exhaustively classify the issues that had been raised into manageable, thematically distinct categories. In the second round of coding, I carefully reviewed the themes that I had identified and reread the coded material to ensure that it fit. Some information was recoded, some themes were collapsed into broader categories, while other themes were eliminated entirely and the material recoded into new or existing categories. In a third and final round of coding, I reread the sorted data in an attempt to identify relevant variables that would impact individual's experiences as they related to the themes and to identify contrasting experiences within single categories. For example, the sub-theme of "parental responsibility" (for a child's offences) was conceptualised in relation to questions of biological or adoptive parenthood. Throughout the third round of coding, I created theoretical memos about the categories, detailing my insights and interpretations of the categories and highlighting particularly relevant or strong quotations from the interviews and field notes. These memos became the basis for the final written analysis that is presented in the following chapters.

Now that the research has been theoretically and methodologically located, we will move on to an examination of the substantive issues that arose as I studied the lived experiences of prisoners' families in Canada. Chapter Four engages with the process of negotiating the practical difficulties associated with an imprisoned loved one, Chapter Five discusses the negotiation of symbolic and structural stigmas and Chapter Six will detail the processes of negotiating the release of an imprisoned loved one and the (re)unification of the family following incarceration.

CHAPTER IV

NEGOTIATING IMPRISONMENT: THE EVERYDAY DIFFICULTIES OF INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

My conversations with the family members of incarcerated men revealed a wide variety of struggles, complaints, and both negative and positive outcomes. What is immediately obvious is that there are indeed many difficulties that are directly related to the incarceration of a loved one. The myriad of problems faced by the families of incarcerated men are not solely pre-existing issues associated with poverty and family dysfunction, though these are certainly present in some cases. Many family members reported seemingly normal, middle-class home lives and relationships prior to their loved one's incarceration and all of the family members and support workers interviewed stated that they had experienced or encountered problems directly related to the imprisonment of a family member.

While they are complex and often intersecting, the difficulties experienced by the families of the incarcerated can be loosely divided into four categories: financial and other practical difficulties; emotional difficulties; social difficulties; and difficulties stemming from the experience of regulation and/or criminalisation¹. The importance and intensity of each of these difficulties varies among individuals and across time. Understandably, the temporal location of an issue, how recently one has experienced the difficulty and how pervasive the issue is, will shape one's perception and understanding of what is most problematic and its level of importance in the overall scheme of one's life. However, family members were speaking both of current experiences and in retrospect identified these four categories of experience as the most salient. Throughout

¹ These categories are theoretical and utilitarian distinctions only and it will be demonstrated that in praxis and experience they are often closely linked.

the course of the data collection, these issues were repeatedly mentioned by family members as concerns that merit social understanding and action. The first two categories, financial and emotional difficulties, appear to be most tangibly related to negotiating the logistics of involuntary separation from a loved one and these will be addressed in the coming pages. These are the personal negotiations that are made by prisoners' families to cope with everyday life and their own feelings about the crime and incarceration. The latter two categories of experience are characterised by the need to negotiate *others'* feelings about criminality and imprisonment and the social marginalisation of those who are deemed to be associated with these discreditable attributes. In short, they are about negotiating the stigma that accompanies relation to a prisoner. These experiences will be taken up separately in the chapter following.

In their own ways, however, all four of these categories are related to the stigma that is attached to criminality. The link to stigma is less overt when individuals are not the direct targets of discrimination or avoidance, nevertheless the marginalisation that results from stigma can take many forms. Community neglect and the failure to respond to the troubles of a marginalised group are symptomatic of a symbolic stigma at a societal level that defines the affected group as unworthy of assistance. The difficulties described below are the product of this type of wilful neglect and, as I argue, stem from public perceptions of the families' perceived links to criminality.

Financial and other Practical Difficulties

The financial burden of having somebody incarcerated is phenomenal. Already there's a single income family... single parent family... and you're adding to that travel expenses... sometimes to include car expenses... long distance expenses... I mean my husband is in an

institution where it's not long distance to call, but he has to call me collect and it costs me two dollars and fifty cents every time he calls (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

The experience of economic marginalisation is not unique to the families of prisoners, however, regardless of the economic standing of the family prior to the incarceration of their loved one, imprisonment appears to be directly linked to a negative change in the financial situation of the household. The participants in this study came from a variety of economic and occupational situations. These ranged from one interviewee who was unemployed and on a physical disability pension through to others who were middle-class professionals and business people. Nevertheless, all talked about the financial impact that their family member's legal situation and incarceration had on them. The collateral costs of incarceration may include the loss of a second income, the cost of keeping in contact through visits, telephone calls and relocation, the cost of providing various financial supports to the incarcerated family member (including the provision of spending money and luxury items), difficulty finding employment and the potential impact on property values.

The Cost of Lost Income

The first and most obvious financial impact of imprisonment, which affects the wives/partners and children of prisoners most directly, is the loss of a second income when the husband/partner/father is unable to work due to his incarceration. This problem has been noted repeatedly in previous studies of prisoners' families (see, for example, Morris 1965; Fishman 1990; Girshick 1996; Comfort 2008). Although just two of the women that I spoke with reported that their husbands had been the sole earner of the

family income prior to incarceration, other studies have found many more families who engaged in a traditional gendered division of labour that saw the female partner work only in the home. The imprisonment of the primary income earner poses considerable financial hardship that has lasting implications for the family:

I had one credit card...with a... pretty hefty... well, for me, a pretty hefty amount on it... and then I started gettin' more. They'd send me something in the mail about getting a card, you're pre-approved, and I got it... And, or...I liked it better when they phoned because I didn't have to lie to them on the phone... cuz they wanted to know, like, are you in the same situation... and uh... on the phone, I'd just say yes, I am... you know... they didn't specifically say financial! And, you know, and there were certain words that if they said, I was okay. If I had to lie to them then... no... I'd say...I would tell them that... but you see he was here for a year and a half [before he was sentenced to prison]. Still making money. So I got as much as I could. And he went right away and got a line of credit...like, on the Friday. This was on Wednesday that the cop came [...] he by Friday had gone and gotten our line of credit increased as much as he could. He didn't have to tell any lies, cuz he still had his job and everything was the same. And, uh... as I say, even after he left... when I got a job, it wasn't a great job... but it was a job. And... I... got [...] Like I was in trouble, financially... we were in debt (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

The financial hardship created by the incarceration of a primary income earner is a profoundly gendered phenomenon that is linked to the marginalisation of women in the workforce and the cultural expectation that the man will be the bread-winner in a heterosexual relationship. When a woman is sent to prison, this type of financial difficulty is rarely visited upon a male partner, who is most likely not dependent upon his female partner's income. Consequently, the imprisonment of men can be seen to cause disproportionate financial hardship to women who are left to raise children and meet financial obligations on a single income or on social assistance.

Although the majority of the women that I spoke with had an independent source of income at the time of their partner's imprisonment, several made a point of mentioning

how much easier life would be for them with a second income to assist in paying bills and maintaining a household.

Life goes on and you're by yourself to pay for everything. But... and there's very little support that they can give you because, when you make \$6 a day you can't (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

It's not a main issue, but one is the financial. You know, I make good money, but it would have been far better if we had two incomes (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

Some women even remarked on feelings of resentment toward their partner when they considered the heavy responsibilities that had been placed on them due to their partners' incarceration. They felt that the financial hardship and associated stress was theirs alone and recognised that the incarcerated partner's basic needs were taken care of by the correctional system, while the needs of his family were ignored. It seemed to them that the incarcerated partner was divested of his responsibility for the family welfare by virtue of his incarceration and that, by contrast, the women and children left behind paid a far greater price:

He doesn't have to worry about how he's gonna pay the rent, buy groceries, pay the huge phone bill...sometimes I think he's got it pretty easy being in there...compared to us (Daphne, a prisoner's wife).

The financial hardship that is visited on women and children when a man is incarcerated is a perfect example of the collateral punishment that Julian Roberts (2006) first identified in his studies of the use of house arrest. Although legally innocent, the families of prisoners experience the period of incarceration as punitive and it has a profoundly negative impact on their quality of life. However, the marginal location of women and children in relation to men obscures these difficulties from the view of the public and the correctional system. The family is seen as merely an appendage of the

incarcerated man. Either no consideration is given to the effect of his imprisonment on those who are left behind, or the difficulties faced by these families are glossed over as being the fault of the offender, rather than the result of our choice as a society to utilise prison sentences. From an insensitive public one might hear, “he should have thought about his family *before* he committed that crime!” The impact of incarceration on families is not acknowledged by the public or by the government as an area of social responsibility to be addressed.

The Cost of Maintaining Family Contact

As a society we appear to be wilfully ignorant of the fact that when we choose to incarcerate a husband and father, we create what is, in effect, a single-parent household, with all of the financial strain and hardships that are commonly understood to accompany that status. As women adjust to their new situation, they are also forced to juggle financial and occupational responsibilities with the care of dependent children. Compounding the financial issues that are inherent in a single-parent family, there are added costs that are a direct function of coping with family separation due to imprisonment. The costs of keeping in touch can be substantial, and yet the wives and partners of incarcerated men maintain that these costs are absolutely necessary expenditures if they are to preserve the family unit and allow their children to continue a relationship with their father. Although the wives/partners and children of male prisoners are most affected by these added costs, a parent or sibling will often also incur additional expenses in maintaining a relationship with her incarcerated son or brother and in supporting him throughout the period of incarceration. Elderly parents and others who are

on a fixed income often find that the costs prohibit them from having as frequent communication as they may wish.

A common complaint is the cost of telephone communication with an incarcerated loved one. Men are often incarcerated at some distance from their family, requiring long distance phone calls to maintain contact. In addition, prison regulations in Canada require that all inmate phone calls must be made collect to the recipient of the call, and prisoners are unable to receive incoming phone calls from their family. According to Bell Canada, the largest telecommunications provider in Canada, collect calls are considerably more expensive than direct-dialled long distance phone calls and the exact charges depend on the rate schedule of the specific telephone carrier chosen to offer the service. The fees charged on collect calls are not regulated and are not subject to the pressures of competition as inmates are a literally captive market who cannot opt to utilise an alternative telephone service. Jackson (2007) has argued that telephone providers who contract with prisons are well aware of this fact and that they have no incentive to suggest or implement alternative, less expensive, methods of controlling outgoing calls from prisoners, though the technology is certainly available. Telephone companies who contract to prisons are gladly profiting from this closed market.

Although less expensive options for calling are available to the general public, prison regulations have prohibited inmates from using other means of billing, such as direct bill calling cards, “call-home” cards and pre-paid long distance calling cards. This restriction is justified by the need for institutional security and the fact that collect calling allows prison officials to have a record of exactly who the inmates are calling, but has the

unfortunate consequence of costing prisoners' families thousands of dollars in phone bills each year. This policy is, once again, experienced by families as punitive.

Well...all phone calls are collect... that's the first thing. So... um... they're about a half an hour, like you can speak for a shorter amount of time, but... you don't see the person, so it's basically all you have. For us... and he's not that far, it's about \$6 to \$7 per call... (for half an hour?) Yeah. (wow) Yeah. Um... and we, so... there was a point where, before the kids were born, we didn't really limit ourselves, and I ended up with phone bills like \$700 a month. I put a stop to that. I told him I can't afford it... You can't apply a plan to collect calls. (no) There's no plan at all that applies. And I've tried all the phone companies, all the new stuff, like the wireless thing and everything, nothing... nobody gives you a break on collect calls (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

I think there has to be done something to do with the calling system. I'm fortunate right now, where he's at, it's not considered long distance, but when I was in [another city] and we were only calling once, maybe twice a week and we only got 20-30 minutes a call and my phone bills were \$300. Now, I had a good job where I could pay that... many people don't have that kind of job... I should be able to go down to Wal-Mart and buy one of those fifty-dollar calling cards to use, because that provides you with however many hundred minutes... and that will be far cheaper than him phoning. But you can't do that. And so I think, I think that's one service that Corrections Canada needs to look at. Now, albeit, apparently there is some kind of chit system supposed to be coming out next year, what that is I'm not sure, but it's supposed to help that, the calling and staying in touch (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

And the long distance expenses... I mean my husband is in an institution where it's not long distance to call, but he has to call me collect and it costs me two dollars and fifty cents every time he calls (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Families are left with a difficult choice: either to make sacrifices in other areas to be able to pay their phone bills or to cut back on telephone contact with their loved one. There is a general feeling among family members that the cost of telephone calls impedes their ability to maintain effective family ties and that the management of the Correctional Service of Canada has not given adequate consideration to the impact of its telephone policy on the families of inmates. The use of collect telephone calls is rendered even

more senseless when one realises that this is hardly a foolproof method of controlling inmates' communications. As Francine, the mother of a prisoner, revealed, the availability of three-way calling means that inmates need only use an approved number as a link to other individuals:

Oh my god! [My phone bills are] Unbelievable! Which is another, you know, it's another thing with corrections with this system that they have, which I have made many inquiries about. Um, I think the technology is just a little bit ahead of them every now and then because the answer that I got that they couldn't use one of these "call home" Bell cards was the security issue. Like everything is security. But, you see, what people can do now is that they'll call and you can do a three-way... so they can call anybody they want to call anyway...okay? The idea was that if they had a phone number and they had a pin number then corrections would have that on record that that was the only number that they were calling and they could, you know, check out who that person was calling, you know... and whether they were growing pot in their basement or something or other, you know... but as I say... people can call and do a three-way. And people with cell phones now... um... you can do a three-way to a cell phone... So why not let them have a call-home card? Because my bills... I mean, I can show you them... I could probably buy a mansion! [...] You know? Two hundred dollars a month or more... that just... Well I even spoke to [the phone company] about it... I said, look, you know, this is the story I'm getting from corrections, what's your story? And the last time I talked to them I was really impressed because the guy said, look, I don't know the answer, and he said, I'm going to get my supervisor to come and talk to you. And I'm thinking, oh! Okay, somebody who really cares, you know!? So, the supervisor was really, really nice and he said, look, um... we've suggested ways to get around it, and he said corrections is just not interested... Isn't that fascinating? And he said, you know, um... what they say is that they have to be able to monitor the calls and control who people are calling... which, I thought... okay... Now if [the phone company] has offered ways to deal with this, why aren't they doing it? But you see, they don't like change. They don't want to. I think the other thing is they really don't want to accommodate people and their families. They could care less (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

Many of the family members that I spoke with had, understandably, become quite cynical about Correctional Services' claim to value inmate-family relationships. They felt

that if CSC truly valued the families as supports for the inmates then the institutional policies would reflect that position by making family contact easier and less costly.

It's really frustrating to have those kind of restrictions and I think if they really believe that family contact is important and every situation is different, you know? And some situations it is better for families to be apart or maybe it's safer or whatever... but don't make that blanket decision for everybody and every person's family because every situation is extremely different and people should have an... innocent victims like families should be able to make those decisions within a better framework of options than are available. So, why should, like I personally have to pay so my husband can phone me? He has no way of paying for that. All that does for inmates as well is to help them to be institutionalized, to feel guilty, to feel like they don't have any responsibility it doesn't do anything to build any kind of family unity when they've become, y'know, in a really, really imbalanced relationship. Those are things I think that Corrections should revisit and not bother saying "families are important" (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

The costs associated with the telephone system are not a new problem. The 2003 consultation on issues associated with families and corrections that was conducted by the Canadian Families and Corrections Network in partnership with the Correctional Service of Canada concluded that "the mandatory use of collect telephone calls is a quality of life issue for families affected by incarceration that requires an immediate resolution" (Withers 2003: 73). Among the recommendations to come out of that research, the strategic policy document urged CSC to replace the existing telephone service "at the earliest possible date" with "a telephone system that allows families to benefit from the same long distance cost savings enjoyed by other members of the public" (Withers 2003: 15). When this research was begun in June of 2006, I spoke with a member of Correctional Service of Canada's Working Group on Families of Offenders who were responsible to respond to the recommendations of the 2003 report. The member informed me that changes to the telephone system that would make phone calls more affordable for

inmates and their families were slated to be implemented very soon. At the time of writing in July of 2008, these promised changes had not yet materialised, although I was assured by a CSC representative that a pilot project allowing inmates to use prepaid phone cards would shortly be available in Ontario and Quebec regions. The seeming recalcitrance of the Correctional Service of Canada to effect changes to the inmate telephone system is just one example of how the families of incarcerated persons are forgotten by the system and their quality of life is sacrificed in the name of public safety.

Visits to the incarcerated family member are another important aspect of maintaining family contact that can cause considerable expense for families. When a man is convicted of a crime, he is often sent to a penitentiary that is located in a different city than the family home. While the Correctional Service of Canada will make every effort to place inmates in the most suitable institution that is nearest the offender's point of origin, restrictions on security level and the geographic dispersion of penitentiaries throughout Canada often result in offenders being incarcerated at some distance from their families, requiring extensive travel to visit. Women that I spoke with reported travelling anywhere from two to ten hours by car to visit their loved one. The cost of transportation, hotel and meals can make the expense of visiting prohibitive for many families on a fixed income.

I didn't go to [the penitentiary].

Stacey: No? Too far?

Yeah. I just didn't have the money. You know, if I coulda just had the money. But you have to look at it... do I borrow money to go to [the penitentiary]... I still had kids in school... um... what do I do? You know, do I... and at the time air flights weren't so cheap, even that few months ago you didn't get cheap flights as much as you do now. Or at least I didn't, I wasn't aware of them. And I couldn't... I didn't know if I could justify it... I just didn't think I could justify it (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

Um, there's the driving back and forth (um hmm), which we don't do as much, but it... you know, like especially with the prices of gas going up, it's an expense. Depending on where they are... and there might be a hotel bill. And then there's everything else. Life goes on and you're by yourself to pay for everything. But... and there's very little support that they can give you because, when you make \$6 a day you can't... and you get charged room and board, and you have to pay for your clothing, you have to pay for... any kind of treat you want to have, like... food wise... (right). Thank goodness my husband does not smoke, neither do I, so that's one expense that we don't have to pay... but it gets to be expensive (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

It's cost me about twenty thousand dollars. Me personally, it has... when I was living in [a different province than the prison] for the first fifteen months I went out there every seven or eight weeks for a week. So it was a plane ticket... (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

In order to offset the cost of travel for families and to provide transportation for those who do not have their own means, charitable organisations such as the John Howard Society and the Salvation Army sometimes offer scheduled transportation to nearby prisons for a small fee. The Salvation Army of Toronto, for example, has a weekend shuttle service to prisons in Kingston, a two and a half hour drive away.

The cost and logistics of travel are even more problematic for families who live in remote areas of Canada, such as the northern territories or Newfoundland and Labrador, where there are no federal penitentiaries. For example, families living in Newfoundland are facing the cost of an eight hour ferry ride², in addition to the cost of gas or bus fare to the closest federal penitentiary in Springhill, Nova Scotia, a four hour drive from the ferry. The John Howard Society of Newfoundland sponsors a family visiting program to cover the costs of transportation, accommodation and meals for selected Newfoundland families to visit loved ones incarcerated at federal institutions throughout the Maritimes (including Springhill, Atlantic, Dorchester, Westmorland and the Nova Centre for

² 2008 rates: \$79.50 per car, plus \$28.00 per person over the age of 13 years and \$14.00 per child 5 to 12 years old (children 4 and under are free). See <http://www.marine-atlantic.ca>

Women). However, due to limited funding³ the family visiting program cannot accommodate all of the families who apply for assistance. The program assists just 15 people each year (10 families in 2006-07), fewer than half of the applications received.

Even families who live relatively close to the prison in which their loved one is incarcerated may have difficulty travelling to the institutions which are often either not accessible via public transportation or do not co-ordinate their visiting hours with public transportation schedules (Withers 2003). Family members on a fixed income may not have access to a vehicle or be able to drive themselves and must rely on the kindness of friends for transportation to the prison, or pay the cost of an expensive cab ride. The family members of prisoners who reside in Kingston often depend on Bridgehouse, a local non-profit organisation which provides hospitality and support services to women and children affected by incarceration . Bridgehouse staff provide daily transportation for visiting hours, to and from Kingston's seven institutions (Millhaven, Bath, Joyceville, Pittsburgh, Collins Bay, Frontenac and Kingston Penitentiaries), with round-trip fees ranging from twelve to twenty-two dollars. Bridgehouse is also one of four⁴ hospitality houses in Canada that provide short-term accommodation at reasonable rates for individuals who are visiting incarcerated family members. The hospitality houses charge an average fee of twenty dollars per night and offer family members the opportunity to use kitchen facilities to cook their own meals in order to further cut the cost of visiting.

³ The 2006-2007 budget for the family visiting program was just \$11 000. (<http://www.johnhowardnl.ca>)

⁴ The others are: Mountain Top House, located in Dorchester, New Brunswick, within walking distance of Dorchester and Westmorland Institutions; Spring House, located in Springhill, Nova Scotia, serving Spring Hill Institution and; Family House in Abbotsford, British Columbia, which is nearby to eight prisons in the Abbotsford area. A fifth house, Residence Bon Pasteur in Port Cartier, Quebec was closed in 2002 due to lack of funding.

However, these organisations are plagued by unstable funding and often find themselves scrambling for grants to keep their services in operation.

In July of 2007, Bridgehouse found itself in crisis when its two core funders, the Correctional Service of Canada and the City of Kingston, failed to renew its funding for the following fiscal year. The clients and members of the board of directors of Bridgehouse instituted a letter-writing campaign⁵ to the City Council of Kingston, urging them to reconsider. The City of Kingston did provide interim funding and reinstated Bridgehouse's funding in the 2008 budget. However, the loss of CSC's financial support keeps the organisation in a precarious financial position and has necessitated a reduction in the support programs offered.

If family members manage to afford to travel to visit and/or avail themselves of existing services, there are still pitfalls which may render their efforts a waste of resources. Institutions may be put into lock-down and visiting hours may be cancelled with virtually no notice and families who have travelled long distances to visit their loved ones will be turned away at the gate. One couple, the parents of an imprisoned man, recalled having travelled four hours by car to visit their son on several occasions, only to be told that visiting hours were cancelled due to concern for institutional security. Additionally, two women reported being denied entry to the institution and having their visits cancelled temporarily due to testing positive for drugs on the ion scanner or being singled out by the drug dogs, although they stated that they were not carrying drugs nor intending to introduce contraband to the institution. Many families can scarcely afford the costs of visiting, so to spend the money and have no visit at all is an extremely frustrating

⁵ I participated in this letter-writing campaign.

experience. Family members also do not want to disappoint their imprisoned loved ones who look forward to visits:

I travel hours to see my son, and I become anxious until I get there as, I don't want to disappoint him. He has had enough disappointment in his life (Linda, a prisoner's mother).

I know that he really looks forward to the visits. It's not that it's anything wonderful, it's just that he has no visitors. I think it could be King Kong and he would want him, you know? So I'm not tryin' to build myself up in any way, I'm just saying that he... I know from the things he says he loves those visits and he would tremendously miss them if they took them away from him. And, uh, he's told me almost as much (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

The private family visit is an occasion that many families look forward to; the opportunity to spend seventy-two hours alone with your loved one in a trailer or small cottage on the prison grounds. The private family visit provides important bonding time for families in an environment that is unmonitored, except for scheduled inmate counts. The situation allows them to interact in a way that simulates normal family life, including cooking their own meals and eating together.

Yes. Absolutely, the family visits are helpful. They would have no relationship with their father otherwise, right? There's only so much you can do with phone calls, letters and... so yeah... it's absolutely necessary to have them, I think for us as well as for him. It's... we're his link to society... so... (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Although this experience is considered to be an important one for maintaining family ties, and particularly father-child relationships, it too comes with a cost. It is the responsibility of the inmate and his visitor(s) to provide all food and any toiletry necessities for the weekend. These items must be purchased from an approved grocery store and delivered by the store directly to the penitentiary to be scanned and approved for entrance to the institution. These items cannot be brought from the family home and any leftovers cannot be removed from the institution. Women mentioned that this is

particularly irritating for them when it comes to condiments and staples such as butter, sugar, salt and pepper and ketchup. They may choose to purchase these things, knowing they will not be fully used and will have to be left in the trailer for future visitors. However, they argued, if you choose not to purchase everything that you want or need, gambling on someone else having left theirs behind, there is a chance you may have to do without if there is none! The inmates are also prohibited from taking any leftover food back to their cells, so, for example, if a package of cookies or potato chips is not entirely consumed during the PFV, it will have to be thrown out and cannot be kept by the inmate or taken home by family members.

Women also report that sometimes their husband or son will request special meals or luxury items that they cannot get on the inside. Sometimes wives and mothers oblige, even if they cannot afford it, because they feel bad about their loved ones' lack of freedom. As one wife put it:

So, he'll ask me, 'can you order steak, or seafood?' things that he loves, you know, but they don't get that kinda stuff in prison. And I'm going, 'yeah sure, like I don't even eat those things out here... I can't afford them!' But I save up... or I use my credit card, because I figure he doesn't have much in there (Megan, a prisoner's wife).

Other family members may refuse to extend their budget to accommodate the cost of the private family visits:

If he wants them, he can save up and pay! I just don't... have the money for that, an' I visit at regular visiting anyway...so it's enough (Lorna, a prisoner's mother).

Despite the associated costs, many of the family members that I spoke with made concerted efforts to visit, if not regularly, then at least as often as possible. They considered the costs of visiting a necessary expenditure to maintain the family

relationship. In some cases families went to great lengths to ensure that they would be able to visit on a regular basis. A few underwent prolonged struggles with the Correctional Service of Canada to have their family member transferred to a penitentiary closer to home. This is a particularly likely scenario if the family member committed his crime in a different province from his home and was initially incarcerated in the province of conviction:

When my son was sentenced, it was recommended that he be moved to his home province. It took a year and a half before he could be moved "home"...When he was transferred he was so happy to come home. We were ecstatic. We could see him more often (Linda, a prisoner's mother).

Kim, the sister of an incarcerated man, told me that her mother had hired a lawyer to try to persuade CSC to move her brother to a prison closer to home. Although they lived less than twenty minutes from maximum and medium security penitentiaries, her brother was incarcerated nearly five hours away in another province.

Some family members, like this prisoner's wife, complained of the lengthy amount of time that it took for their loved one to be transferred closer to home once a request had been put in.

They told me he would be transferred to (a nearby institution), but it's been almost a year now and I'm still driving back and forth! Five hours! I've called and asked, but they just tell me there's nothing they can do to speed it up (Kathy, a prisoner's wife).

Others were willing to make financial and social sacrifices and relocate in order to be closer to their incarcerated loved one. They believed that geographic proximity was necessary in order to be able to foster their relationship and maintain contact in a significant way. This is particularly true of women whose relationships were still in a relatively fledgling state at the onset of incarceration or who began a relationship with a

man who was already in prison. The relative novelty of the relationship and the desire to “make it work” seems to motivate these women to make considerable life changes.

I had to pay, because I asked to move here through work, I had to pay for my move... I had to buy my own computer and my own office equipment...[...] And because I've made the decision that if our relationship is going to work, and it will, I believe it will in my heart... I have to be near him. And so, I moved. I can't live in another province and see him twice a year and expect this relationship to just flourish and be incredible. And talk to him once a week because that's all I can afford to... so in making the decision that our relationship is a priority to me, I had to move. And so financially it set me back, but what that did is then it put me in communities where I don't know anyone, and so... I don't have a lot of social contact with people and.... And...yeah, I'm pretty alone (Brenda, the partner of a prisoner).

When we decided to get married I was still living in [a city eight hours away from the prison].

Stacey: So you moved out here? you had to find a new job...

Yeah, uh... it was an interesting time of my life because I just, there was one job that... um... that bookstore that I was working at... they closed up shop, they went bankrupt and so I was out of a job for a while. And then I picked up a new job, you know, at a call centre there and, then yeah...it wasn't charging me that... Yeah, so I just left that and came out here (Erin, a prisoner's wife).

In other cases, women may make the decision to move in order to ensure that their children will be able to maintain a relationship with their father.

[I take my daughter] almost every time. Maybe once a month I have, we have one [a visit] on our own. Because we have had to pay a babysitter. And you know this gets costly...plus that was the whole idea of us moving down here, which was that she could establish a proper relationship with her father. That's why I quit my job with a good salary and a company car. I could have kept my job back home and continued coming down here every other weekend, but it was too hard on her. I'd load her up in a car on Friday night and drive back again on Sunday night. That is no way to build a relationship. Let's face it. Driving three hundred miles, the odds were that I'd get into an accident or something, you know. So... it's worked out much better this way. Even for us, we can get to see each other more, so that makes it nicer (Sue, a prisoner's wife).

Moving to a new city is an expensive undertaking that can be socially isolating and often results in the need to find new employment. Unfortunately many women discover that their acquired status as the partner or wife of a prisoner has devastating effects on their professional and economic lives. Some women report difficulty in finding and keeping employment when employers are made aware of their status as the family member of an incarcerated man. They may find themselves in the unenviable situation of having to move to find employment or affordable housing.

I had to move a lot... I had to move a lot because things weren't always affordable...and my income only stabilized probably in the last... eight years... I had to go back to school and those kinds of things (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Difficulty Finding and Maintaining Employment

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what forces are at play when an individual applies for employment. However, four of the wives/partners that I spoke to felt very strongly that their status as the family member of a "criminal" had a negative impact on their occupational opportunities.

I went back to school and took a business course and had opportunities to apply to law offices and things like that... and my own family members were calling and saying "oh, you know, she's married to... a prisoner"... and you just don't, you don't get the opportunity in law offices to work when you're considered the other side of the fence (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Several other family members felt that if potential or current employers were aware of their family situation they would be discriminated against and possibly risk the loss of their job. Consequently they choose not to disclose their status and are then forced to either come up with other explanations for needing time off work when they, for example, want to go for a seventy-two hour private family visit or to arrange their visits

around their work schedule so that they will not need to ask for additional time off. It is not at all clear that these fears are always well-founded, since four women in the sample reported having made their employer aware of the circumstances and having no difficulties at all in obtaining time off or changing schedules to enable them to visit the prison. However, it is evident that the families of prisoners are very sensitive to the possibility of social reactions and stigma and choose to manage the potential for stigma through selective disclosure (Goffman 1963).

There are cases in which the potential for stigmatic and discriminatory responses are very real, particularly if the offence was a violent or sexual offence and community members are aware of the identity of the offender and his family. One woman from a small community was told that she could not return to her place of employment because the family member of one of her husband's victims also worked at that location:

It was about a month after everything happened that I was invited to go to a re-entry meeting for my job, which actually wasn't a re-entry meeting, it was a "you're not gonna have your job back" meeting. So that was a horrific experience for me because the whole time I was just thinking, "okay, at least I have a job that I love and that I'm good at and that I can get some kind of routine back in my life in order to be able to think about what the next steps are going to be." And then all of a sudden, that was taken from me and that, there ensued a huge set of financial problems and just really devastating to my character as a person and my professional identity. But when that happened, I phoned this police officer [and said] "I just don't know what to do, like I – is there anyway that anyone there can help me? Like, someone to go to the school and say, 'look, she had nothing to do with this'" And the irony is that at the [workplace] – the [boss] – had just accepted ten thousand dollars in funding to do a restorative justice training program for all the [employees] at the exact same time that I was being treated this way and I didn't do anything wrong. And so I thought, there must be a way that can somebody, like the [workplace] liaison officer go and say, "it had nothing to do with her" ...[...] I had to apply for a disability claim because I couldn't go back to my job but I also felt I wasn't really well enough to start a whole new job. Plus I had this plan to come to do my master's, so that um, psychiatrist helped me with my application for, ah, he diagnosed me with

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and helped me make a claim, which took months to get any kind of settlement from my insurance company. It was helpful, but it certainly didn't... like, I still have a lot of financial losses for sure from, y'know that were problematic from this so... (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

Transferred stigma can clearly have ruinous consequences for an individual's livelihood and financial circumstances in addition to its potentially devastating impact on self identity.

Potential impact on property value

If the family member's crime took place in the family home, community stigma could also have a significant impact on the property value of the home, and consequently on the financial position of the family if they need or want to sell their home. One woman related how her husband's crimes of sexual assault took place in their home and her fears that she would be unable to sell her house in order to move on with her life, though she no longer wished to live in that community.

Ah, I never had anybody approach me...um, but my house was pictured on the front page of the paper and um, it, y'know the media basically made it sound like William had just been released from prison – a monster ready to commit other crimes... that's how they made it look. [...] I had a father of a friend of mine just phone me and say y'know, it was just like a few days after and said "obviously he was just a really sick guy and you need to move on and do you have your house up for sale yet" and those kinds of things. People are very quick to judge me on or say "oh I could never go back" but nobody knew, nobody could know what it was like. But now, like I still own that house, eventually I thought that I couldn't live within [that city] anymore, um, I was very paranoid about going out in public, um, especially as spring came. Almost, for some reason, in the winter, it was better because it was darker and I felt more covered up like maybe people couldn't recognize me. But in the springtime, I started to feel more and more vulnerable and I was getting closer to making a decision about coming away to do my master's degree, feeling that my whole career had been ruined, as a result as well, so I put my house up for rent, I just wasn't ready to sell it at that point. But now, I see that I'm sure that I will sell it

but I am afraid that as the court process starts up, my home could be very stigmatised if a lot of the graphic details of the crime are released to the press, I [fear] won't be able to sell it (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

Danielle's fears are not entirely unjustified as instances of geographic stigma associated with the site of criminal activity are well documented and the phenomenon is generally recognised by criminologists who study the relationships between spatiality and crime. Since the early 1900s, Chicago School theorists recognised the correlation between social disorder in a community and lowered property values (see Park 1915; Park, Burgess and MacKenzie 1925; Park 1952). Houses located in neighbourhoods identified as "high crime" or dangerous places will sell for less than those in nicer or safer neighbourhoods. The stigma of criminality can also be associated with specific residences such as those which are known to be "crack houses" or drug "grow-ops" or those where a particularly infamous and heinous crime has been carried out. Fifty-Seven Bayview drive in St. Catharines, Ontario was the former home of Paul Bernardo and Karla Homolka, where teenagers Kristen French and Leslie Mahaffey were sexually assaulted and murdered. Following the arrests of Bernardo and Homolka and the completion of the police investigation, the home was bull-dozed to the ground. The structure erected on the lot was even given a new municipal number, in order to disassociate it from the horrific killings (Jennifer Kilty, personal communication). Although this particular case is admittedly a very extreme one, the detrimental effect of the stigma of criminality on property values in general is just one more example of how the families of prisoners may find themselves in difficult financial situations.

The Cost of Supporting the Incarcerated Loved One

Occasionally it has been argued that incarceration can bring financial reprieve to some families, particularly in the United States where the removal of the male from the home entitles the lone-female-headed household to welfare benefits and results in one less mouth to feed (see Liker 1981; Fishman 1990; Girshick 1996). In Canada this kind of improvement of financial circumstances as a result of imprisonment would be rare, since welfare eligibility is based on economic need only and does not require the absence of an able-bodied male in the household. However, imprisonment in any case does not necessarily entirely absolve the family of financial responsibility for their loved one. Many families continue to provide financial support to their loved one throughout the incarceration. Most common is the deposit of money to an institutional account from which the inmate can access funds to purchase such things as snack foods, toiletries, stationary and cigarettes from the prison canteen or store.

Stacey: Hmm. Do you provide financial support to Karl⁶ while he's in?
Uh, some, yes. Yes. Now...he... he was actually working while he was in the last time... um... they have this program... they can do some work there. But because Karl has an ongoing problem with his back where he has degenerating discs, he can't stand or sit for long periods. And um, the doctor there said, well, you know, he didn't want him to work anymore. (mmm) So, yeah, I help Karl when I can, which, you know... is... a little difficult. I'm on a pension, and... um... I mean Karl does his best, but... that the, the thing is that, in spite of what they say, you do need money. And again, the more money you have in jail, the better... Not that I send him thousands of dollars! But they do buy things, you know, like toothpaste and... and, um... personal items like that... to me, they're basic things that people should be provided with (Francine, the mother of a prisoner).

Stacey: What do you think were the biggest issues that you had to deal with throughout the trial process, the incarceration and the aftermath?

⁶ Note that this name, and the names of all incarcerated family members mentioned throughout this dissertation have been changed to protect the privacy of these individuals and their families.

[...] and I think probably having... providing enough spending money for Peter... I can't remember, but it seemed they had the opportunity to buy stuff, treats and things...but he'd have to have money. So...we had to put money in there, doing that (Helen, the mother of a prisoner).

A particular issue that emerged in relation to lengthy sentences was the need for the incarcerated person to have new clothing when old clothing no longer fits. One woman reported that she was unable to purchase new clothes and bring them to her husband. Any clothing purchases had to be mail-ordered direct from the store to the penitentiary, ostensibly to avoid the possibility of family members smuggling illegal substances in purchased clothing. However, this institutional requirement excludes the possibility of being able to shop for discount prices or sale items in order to cut costs.

I can't bring him anything like, clothing wise, I did that when they first came in, when he first went into the system. I asked when, when it was ten years that he'd been in, we asked, could it be renewed? Because... he gained weight and you know... he went from a 27 year old to a 37 year old... like your body changes unfortunately, and um, the answer was no. He can order clothing from Sears, I think they do... and um... so I could send him money, which I did. I have occasionally... he doesn't like me to do that, he wants me to keep the money for the kids, but uh... yeah. You can... I think there's a limit that you can give anyways. Where they can't have more than some... I think it's \$500 in their savings (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Family members were sometimes resentful of the fact that they had to provide money for things that they considered basic necessities, such as toothpaste, deodorant and other toiletry items. They felt that it should be the prison system's responsibility to provide these things and that inmates should not have to ask their families to send money. Items at the prison canteen are not subsidised or priced in relation to the small "salaries" that inmates earn for institutional jobs and attending programs. Thus the amount that the inmates earn is sometimes not sufficient to provide for their everyday needs and to enable them to purchase small luxury items such as chocolate bars and soda. However, there is a

sense amongst family members that their loved ones already suffer the pains of imprisonment and that they should not be denied such small comforts, so efforts are made to provide funds whenever possible.

Another potential financial difficulty that families may encounter when a loved one is accused and convicted of a crime is the burden of paying for legal representation. Although none of the individuals that I spoke with had personally encountered this difficulty, one woman had watched her parents spend their savings and mortgage their house to pay her brother's legal expenses. Several others mentioned that it was very fortuitous that their loved one was able to qualify for legal aid, otherwise they would have found themselves in similar circumstances.

I don't think really we send him more than another child. Now... if we'd have had to pay his legal bills, if he had had significant legal bills or something, well... But...or if he had other responsibilities, you know? Like, let's say he had a family, and then he has no work... then I would think suddenly, you know, you're gonna take in your grandchildren and you're gonna take care of them, raising them and stuff, you know. But in his case... there was none of that (George, the father of a prisoner).

In one case, the wife of a prisoner chose to file for a legal separation from her incarcerated husband so that he could obtain legal aid, rather than face financially crippling legal bills.

I don't have any idea what the time schedule is on this- on the court process because we got, had to get a lawyer in some way, I also had to get a lawyer to- I'm legally separated from William cause I wanted... the house was always in my name and I wanted to protect my assets. I didn't even know, I barely even knew what it was to be married so I didn't y'know, I... anyway, we- my sister is a lawyer and she did a separation agreement for us so that all of my assets would be protected and then William could access legal aid 'cause there's absolutely no way that we that could pay for a lawyer, or that he could pay for a lawyer, so... So we separated to protect ourselves that way and um, but y'know, it's just like not something you think you're gonna do or be doing after you've been married for a month, searching for a lawyer or especially two lawyers

and anyway, the one person we found to take his case unfortunately ended up being somebody who never, ever communicated with us and really seemed to want to put everything to trial, which is the opposite of what William would have wanted to do. Like he, y'know, there's no reason, there's just no reason to go to trial (Danielle, the wife of a prisoner).

In their writings about the families of death row prisoners in the United States, Sharp (2005) and King (2005) discuss the expenses of legal bills and lengthy appeals which have cost many families their entire life savings and their homes and plunged them into debt. Even successful appeals are often hollow victories, leaving families with crushing debt and little chance of recovering their former quality of life. The outcome is even more devastating when the appeal is lost and their loved one is executed, a scenario that the families of prisoners who are incarcerated in Canada are mercifully spared.

Social and Community Response

Social supports to aid families affected by incarceration with their financial difficulties are limited in Canada. While some families may qualify for welfare or social assistance payments, many make do with a single salary and stretch their budget to accommodate the additional expenses of visiting, phone bills, and supporting their incarcerated loved one. Sometimes families received temporary assistance from churches and other charitable organisations:

There's not a lot of financial help out there for families, other than the regular social assistance and food banks and, you know, Christmas time, those kinds of things. The other thing that was helpful is that Christmas time, Bridges of Canada would send gifts and food for families, and you'd get a food box from them and you'd get a gift or two for the child and even one for the spouse, but mostly the children. And that was very encouraging because Christmas is always a tough time as a single parent. [...] I've been very fortunate, I have a church... a church group, a community of faith... and they've been instrumental. I mean, I've had to go to food banks, not very often... um... I was unemployed for a while, so I was on UIC for a while because I just lost jobs because of the stigma attached... I

um... I've received gift certificates from my church in terms of, for food... Christmas time... you know.... Community chaplaincy gave us a fifty dollar gas voucher to travel to a marriage conference... Monty Lewis, Bridges of Canada paid for our hotel to participate in a marriage conference... there's been many volunteers... I had volunteers drop, you know, pickling and vegetables and things off, just to help out... um... those kinds of things (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

The organisation Prison Fellowship International partners with local churches to offer a unique form of assistance to prisoners and their families. The Angel Tree program provides Christmas gifts for the children of prisoners “from” their incarcerated parent. At the request of the incarcerated parent, volunteers from local religious and charitable organisations purchase and deliver gifts to children on their parent's behalf. This program not only ensures that children will receive a gift for Christmas, but it helps in maintaining the relationship between the incarcerated parent and the child, giving the child a sense that his/her father cares and has not forgotten about him/her.

Although these services are helpful, they are generally piecemeal and are not necessarily available to all families. Assistance with transportation to prison visits and affordable accommodations are not available in all communities that house penitentiaries. Programs like Angel Tree and other charitable organisations depend on local volunteers and are not widespread. There is no national or government organisation in Canada that is funded to provide financial assistance to prisoner's families, other than provincial welfare and social assistance programs that are available to all families facing economic hardship. These programs do not take into account the additional expenses that families affected by incarceration encounter.

In light of the dearth of available assistance, extended family and friends may offer financial aid to assist with bills and expenses. Three of the women that I spoke with

mentioned that they had at least once received gifts or loans from family and friends to help with their day to day living expenses. While well-intentioned, accepting this assistance can be difficult for the women, who are often embarrassed and uncertain of the obligations that may accompany the money.

Some people sometimes, some of my family, about four people, at Christmas time would send me a cheque for a hundred dollars or a hundred and seventy-five dollars was the most I ever got, but... um... would send me a cheque at Christmas time, just for extras. And... I was in a real bind, do I pay those people back? And I asked one of them, I said, how would you feel if I... you know, cuz I feel this way, I don't know what to do, And the person said I'd feel totally... insulted. Is what they said. And I said okay, I can accept that (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

The acceptance of “charity” can itself be a difficult situation for those who are used to being self-sufficient. The actions of well-meaning friends or relatives may underscore the inequality of their relative financial positions and pose esteem or identity difficulties for the receiver of financial assistance. As the quote above from Isobel illustrates, by refusing to consider the money a loan and stating that she would be “insulted” to be paid back, the giver of assistance has, in effect, taken from Isobel the option of asserting her own identity as a self-sufficient individual through repaying the money when she is able. While the intent of the giver was likely to absolve Isobel of concern for repayment, the failure to leave that option can have the effect putting Isobel in a position of lower status than the giver and reinforcing the power imbalance that accompanies financial means. It is unfortunate that the lack of a systematic response to the collateral financial impacts of incarceration places family members in positions where they must rely on charity from friends and family in order to meet their needs.

Predominant societal indifference to the economic hardships that are created for families when an individual is imprisoned is symptomatic of the marginal position of

prisoners and their families in the community. This marginality is perpetuated by the social stigma that accompanies criminality. There is little concern to invest public funds to ease the hardships of those who, by virtue of their association with a convict, appear less than deserving. Although imprisonment is generally intended as a punishment that is specific to the individual who committed the crime, alleviating the unintended consequences of imprisonment for innocent citizens whose life and family relationships are affected by incarceration is not seen as either a social or a political priority.

In his 1984 essay, *The Needs of Strangers*, the social philosopher Michael Ignatieff articulated the distinction “between needs which can be specified in a language of political and social rights and those which cannot” (13). Ignatieff (1984) argued that there are certain inalienable, basic needs that are granted as rights by virtue of citizenship in the human race. Thus, even the most cold-hearted conservative will rarely argue with the belief that human beings have the right to such basic necessities as food, shelter and clothing. Yet, Ignatieff argues, there is more to us as human beings than the physical body; that the claim to dignity should be just as inalienable as the claim to life, and there is more to respect than just basic human rights. He refers to the tendency of civil society to follow “rights” to the letter, while denying the fundamental dignity of respect:

In the best of our prisons and psychiatric hospitals, for example, inmates are fed, clothed and housed in adequate fashion; the visits of lawyers and relatives are not stopped; the cuffs and clubs are kept in the guard house. Those needs which can be specified in rights are more or less respected. Yet every waking hour, inmates may still feel the silent contempt of authority in a glance, gesture or procedure. The strangers at the door may have welfare rights, but it is another question altogether whether they have the respect and consideration of those officials who administer those rights. [...] Money cannot buy the human gestures which confer respect, nor rights guarantee them as entitlements... (Ignatieff 1984:13).

Like Ignatieff's example of the inmates, the families of inmates also feel that they are treated as second class citizens and allowed to endure hardship that belies the rhetoric of rights.

Section 71(1) of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, which governs Canada's federal prison system, pronounces the "right" of the offender to "reasonable contact" with family and friends via visits and correspondence, subject to limitations which are deemed reasonable for the protection and security of the institution and involved persons. While families have the legal right, then, to contact with their loved one, this "right" is not automatically extended as one that is necessarily affordable or easily exercised. The families of prisoners are not guaranteed to be treated with dignity nor given the freedom to exercise their right to reasonable contact in a way that is convenient and financially viable for them. The additional expenses and financial costs placed on families of incarcerated men that are directly related to imprisonment are often justified by the priority placed on institutional security. Phone calls must be made collect to allow the correctional officials to control whom the inmates are contacting. Groceries for private family visits and clothing items for inmates must be delivered direct from the store to the penitentiary to eliminate the possibility of smuggled contraband. Visits may be cancelled without notice and travel funds wasted. In all instances, the financial well-being of prisoners' families is subordinated to the goal of maintaining a secure penitentiary and, by extension, ensuring the safety of the public. As Foucault suggested, this is one of the hallmarks of a marginalised population: the subordination of its well-being for the convenience and security of the majority.

The marginal status that association with criminality bestows allows the public the luxury of indifference to the plight of these families. In this case, marginality is inextricably tied to blame-worthiness and to the stigma that accompanies moral deficiency. The neo-classical belief that criminal behaviour is the result of rational choice is a popular conception that justifies blaming the prisoner for his own criminality and for the resultant impact on his family. The male prisoner, as “head” of the household is deemed responsible for the family’s ensuing difficulties. Since the family’s hardships can be tied directly to the immoral actions of the prisoner in breaking the law, there is a sense that society is divested of responsibility and is under no obligation to limit the impact of the criminal justice system on the lives of the family members of prisoners.

Consequently, as we have seen, families encounter a myriad of financial and practical difficulties related to the incarceration of a loved one. They may experience a loss of income, added expenses of communication and visits, and the cost of supporting of the incarcerated man. The perceived association with criminality may exacerbate these financial issues by causing difficulty in finding and maintaining employment. In some cases, families may be unable to sell their home or may find that the value of their property has been negatively affected. The financial difficulties that family members face are viewed as acceptable collateral damages in the war on crime. The realisation of societal indifference to these struggles weighs heavily on the families of prisoners and also serves to exacerbate the emotional and social difficulties that they often face alone, with little or no support. As a result of the financial difficulties, some wives of incarcerated men may even face the internal conflict of resenting their incarcerated spouse for his role in their hardship and his freedom from the responsibility of supporting

and the family. While the financial and practical difficulties associated with the incarceration of a loved one can be very problematic, the emotional consequences are often more devastating. In the following section, I describe and examine the emotional turmoil that accompanies the incarceration of a loved one and the barrier of stigma that prevents families affected by incarceration from finding support and assistance in their communities.

Emotional Difficulties

You try to find anything at all that you can relate to and there's just nothing. The closest in all of my searching for some kind of comfort or understanding, the closest I got was a book about people who commit suicide and their families. So, and that's the closest that, of course, they all have the situation of where their loved one is gone and it's permanent whereas we're in the limbo of, you know, I don't know if I will ever, if my husband will ever be released from prison in the particular situation that I'm in. So it's a very complicated type of loss because often it does feel like suicide, but he's there, he's still alive (Danielle, A prisoner's wife).

The families of prisoners overwhelmingly report experiencing significant emotional turmoil and hardship as they deal with the day to day reality of their loved one's offence and incarceration. The pains of involuntary separation are not unique to prisoners and their families. The emotional stress of involuntary separation has probably been most thoroughly studied in the context of military families who are involuntarily separated due to the member's active service or overseas deployment (see, for example, McCubbin and Dahl 1976; Trustram 1984; Wood, Scarville and Gravino 1995; Burrell, Adams, Durand and Castro 2006). While the family members of military members and incarcerated offenders both fear for their loved one's safety, miss their physical presence and look forward to their return home, the similarities end there. The family members of

prisoners do not benefit from the same level of community support and understanding that accompanies family separation due to military service. Where the military member's absence is viewed as heroic and self-sacrificing, the imprisonment of an inmate is most often a shameful and stigmatised event that does not warrant social sympathy. The family members of deployed servicemen and women in Canada are offered free postage to send care packages and the cost of phone calls home is covered by the Department of National Defence, whereas the family members of prisoners pay unusually expensive rates for phone calls and are offered no financial assistance to maintain contact with their loved ones. The public tend simply to be neither concerned about nor generally sympathetic to the emotional difficulties that accompany the incarceration of a family member and this social indifference often exacerbates the effect of the emotional turmoil that family members experience.

Disbelief, Sadness and Grief

The initial shock of discovering that their loved one has committed a crime can leave family members reeling. Every family member that I spoke with who had an existing relationship with the incarcerated person at the time of the offence described the days following the discovery of the offence as being characterised by disbelief and confusion.

We got married last Thanksgiving weekend and uh, one month later, I was away at a conference and a police officer came to my door of my hotel room and said that my husband had turned himself in to police after [committing a violent sexual assault]. And he, yeah, and so it's um, right... it was just basically like an explosion happened. There was no warning, no warning signs at all and uh, you know, it was in fact one year ago, this time of year. You know, the only thing I could think of to say was like, "what happened to you, William" like I just you know, just such a

shock. I never, ever saw him even get angry in our relationship so, ever... remotely. And so, that basically like, he was taken to the prison right away and he was placed in solitary confinement where he remained for almost ten months (Danielle, the wife of a prisoner).

When it all happened...there was so much devastation in everyone's lives. And there's a lot of confusion, there's a lot of loss of any kind of security or happiness and that sort of thing... and you find you have really two ways to look at it. You can either try and deal with it or you don't. And not dealing with it isn't a very good option, it wasn't for me anyway. So... you know, early on... I guess I had a couple of different ways to deal with things and... I made only one decision for the first fifteen months and that was not to decide. Because I was so vulnerable in every aspect of my life that I couldn't make any kind of decisions that would affect my life without being able to think clearly. It was very important... he was still very important to me, and how he was coming along... and he has two beautiful little children that were a big concern in everything... and his family...needed support and that sort of thing. But... I couldn't make a decision to walk away... (Brenda, the partner of a prisoner).

In some cases the disbelief centres on the incongruence between the offending behaviour and what the individual believed that they knew about their loved one. There may be a feeling of foolishness for not having seen the potential for victimising behaviour, a feeling that sometimes borders on guilt. One woman whose husband was convicted of sexual assaults on their children had a very difficult time reconciling her husband's behaviour with the persona that he had created for himself:

Some members of the family didn't want to deal with what John had done... and I would make them think about that. But I would like to have made them...I would have liked to go there...and...to tell them... there's only one person that knows the extent of what he's done. But there's other people that know part of what he's done... and they hear it... 'oh that's okay we love John so much, he's such the greatest guy,' oh yeah. That's what everybody thought. Oh my god, how many people did I know that said 'my kid can only go on this function if they get to stay in his hotel room!' (crying) 'If they can't stay with John then they can't go!' Because he lied and everybody loves him...or did. And of course, I would never allow it to happen if I was in the room! I don't even think he'd allow it to happen, but I don't know! I don't know him! I thought I did! (Isobel, the wife of a prisoner).

Family members sift through their history, searching for clues that might have prevented the crime or allowed them to predict their loved one's behaviour. Although it is often an unreasonable expectation, a feeling of not having done enough to identify or prevent the incident seems particularly common amongst individuals whose family members have committed violent and sexual crimes that appeared out of character with their previous lifestyle. Family members wondered if there was anyway they could have known.

All I really wanted to do was go home. And I thought that I wanted to, someday, if I just went through everything in our house looking for clues, like "what was wrong with him" like, "was there any way of knowing" or ... and I just needed to be there and I needed to be in the space that we had lived in for some sense of normalcy...(Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

Many of the individuals that I spoke with also reported experiencing feelings of loneliness, sadness and loss. Some family members reported that during the initial period of adjustment to the imprisonment of a loved one they had difficulty controlling powerful emotions and experienced symptoms of depression. One prisoner's wife in this sample was diagnosed by mental health professionals as suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, while two others were treated for clinical depression.

I just think that it's very easy for a psychologist or psychiatrist or an intervention worker or someone to tell me how I'm supposed to recover, but they never went through it. And they never went through, they never stood in front of that mirror for hours every day looking for any sense of spark...in my eye... or any kind of emotion other than complete sadness and loss. I... for the first 15 months or so I had a very very hard time and emotionally...looking back on it now because even then I thought I was doing well, but emotionally I wasn't necessarily stable in the sense that... I mean, I was stable, but I cried the whole time. I cried for everything. And then you'd listen to some sad old country song and you'd bawl even more (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

It was very very very difficult... and uh... I just thought I was gonna die. (crying) And that's all I wanted... you know those people that... you know those people that kill their whole family and then kill themselves or kill themselves at the same time... I totally understand that. I feel it. Like, I know exactly how they feel. They aren't doin' it cuz they don't like them. They're doin' it cuz they're takin' them out of pain... that's what they're doing. People don't see it that way, but that's the way it is. Lot of things you don't know about 'til you get there. And not many people have... I always tell people, you don't know the darkness... you don't know what it's like until you've seen the darkness. You just don't. Anyways... (crying) I made it through... and I don't know for better or worse. I'm still here (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

Of those family members who were not diagnosed with depression, most described generalised, day to day feelings of sadness. These emotions become most acute during major life milestones such as a wedding, birthday, anniversary or the birth of a child. Experiencing these momentous occasions in the absence of one's husband, partner or father brings up feelings of regret, longing and sadness that are easily understood.

You know, I don't mind to be alone, but... you're alone a lot and when something good happens in your life, you can't share it right away. And you might not even be able to share it that day because he might not get a call to you. When... and when something bad or sad happens you don't have that support right there with you. And so those kind of things are hard (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

He wasn't there when our son was born... I went through it all alone. The pain, the excitement, the first time I held him. He, he missed it all. And that was sad. Sad because he doesn't have that memory (Daphne, a prisoner's wife).

Holidays that emphasise the coming together of family or the notion of romantic love, such as Christmas, Thanksgiving and Valentines Day have a similar effect.

I have my moments. Like Valentines Day when you see all the couples going out and you're like, 'oh, shoot. Here I am again.' Like I'll have my nice dinner with the kids and then, nine o'clock comes around and I'm like, ugh! That's not how it should be! But... I try to...to keep busy... um... mostly with the kids, I get them involved in lots of things, so we're always running around from one place to the next, and...um...I try to fill my life,

so I have no time to think that I'm lonely. But it does hit me sometimes, yeah (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

The feelings of loss that the family members expressed were complex and varied, yet unified around the theme of mourning for lost possibilities. Some women mourned the loss of a 'normal' life and a 'normal' relationship and struggled with wanting to remain faithful and supportive to their partner while longing for a different life for themselves.

I think I lost a lot of self-confidence because of it. I started to ... doubt myself more... not really as to who I feel I am, but how other people perceive me. I started to kind of question that. Um... I used to feel that I could do anything and I could get anything to go my way. I've come to realise that it's not always the case. Even if I put all the efforts into it, it doesn't necessarily go my way... And... I think it's a combination of getting older and the situation... like I kind of long for a more normal, regular, middle of the road lifestyle... and I have to come to grips with the fact that, and find a way to deal with the fact that it won't happen any time soon... It's, lately it's been more difficult to deal with. (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

I'm not cold and I'm not heartless... and sometimes I just wish people would have that kind of same respect for me because... in all this, because I was the girlfriend... people didn't really respect what I'd lost. And even... even his mom was saying to me when I was out there in the spring time, she said... "well your life didn't really change that much, did it, in all this?" Like she just couldn't understand, well how would your life change? And that's probably the one thing, you know, that I wish people would sit back and say, like, "she was a woman that was in love with this man and her life changed in every aspect too". Like my dreams of being married two years ago... didn't happen. You know.. building a home together and having big family Christmases and barbecues and coaching the kids' soccer... all that stuff fell by the wayside too. And... I lost.... I probably lost more friends than anyone... because...Including Tom (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

Many family members framed their feelings of loss as a sense of bereavement, comparing themselves to widows and those whose loved ones were the victims of tragic and sudden death.

I'm only thirty-one years old. The day, also the day that the crimes happened, I think that I had a miscarriage, it was an unconfirmed pregnancy, but I thought that I might be pregnant and that actually was the last thing I said to William. So, for me, like, at this point in my life, I thought I would be having a baby right now, not talking to you about this, you know? I mean in a kind way. There's just that, a huge kind of rebuilding and reshaping of who I am and what my life is like. But that always comes second, even though it should be first, it comes second to dealing with all of those other things I just said...It's a huge, huge loss and it's really complicated too, because I don't... often I feel like a widow. In terms of my day to day life, I am widowed. But, and you know, widows really go through also the guilt of like, "how am I gonna go on and live my life?" or "can I ever be with anybody else?" That's even like, but at least you can imagine that your loved one is in heaven or wherever. But I'm always knowing that William is in this prison, which is horrible and it was even worse before when he was in solitary confinement where he was only allowed out on this little balcony for fifteen minutes a day. To reconcile how can my life run forward from here? How is that gonna work? How am I ever gonna be a mother or those things that are so important to me? And there's still, obviously, a huge number of questions (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

I guess it was... fear probably, and uncertainty, emotions... and sadness, but, I don't know, you're kind of preoccupied with trying to get through it, so the sadness is... you know... cuz there's no end to it. I often said... I shouldn't say it... but, I mean, at least with the death of a child... you know, there's a finality to that, you know... but when you go through essentially you're losing a child, that's what it feels like when you go through this. But it just doesn't stop. It's a continual, I don't know... kind of desperation (George, a prisoner's father).

They [his sisters] really suffered, because he's the eldest... and one of the girls I thought put it very succinctly because she said...that... when someone dies it's terrible, you mourn...and you get over it... but when someone keeps going in and out of jail, you never get over it. So it's like having that person die a hundred times over. And I thought, you know, that is how it is. You can't get over it, because you're just... you're waiting for the next time and it doesn't get better... I think that one of the biggest is the impact on the rest of the family... Um... it's very difficult because it's not like... well, as my daughter says, it's not like somebody died. You know? It's not like somebody having a bad accident... um... it's not a situation where... it... garners a lot of sympathy from other people, unless they really know what's going on... in society. It's um... it's a very isolating thing I think... unless you talk to other people who are in the same situation. Um... and not everybody wants to talk about it. I mean, it's not something you go around saying, oh! You know, my son's gone to jail!

You know, whereas if somebody has a serious illness or something like that it's... there's not the same... stigma, I suppose you would say. Yeah. So, yeah, it's isolating, it's um... it's very difficult, uh... if... I've always felt I had to keep everybody else going. You know, and say it's going to be alright... and this is gonna happen and that's gonna happen and, uh... So that's stressful (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

As Francine points out, however, the responses of others do not sustain the metaphor of bereavement for the family member of a prisoner. The sympathy and support that one would expect in the event of a death is often conspicuously absent when a loved one is sent to prison. When friends and family pull away from the individual who is left behind, the loss experienced in the wake of the loved one's incarceration is magnified and has a profoundly isolating effect on family's social integration.

I lost many friends after I made the decision to stay with Tom, I lost many friends the day it happened and people never bothered to phone. You know... some, they may have said, it may have been because they didn't know what to say... I have no idea because I never heard from them. And I struggled with that an awful lot. It took me a long time to accept that I can't change their opinion of me any more than I can change what happened that day... I'm strong enough now to accept that people aren't going to support me. Because I never asked them to support what happened, I only ever asked people to support me. And I'm okay now if they can't support me. You know, you can be a great friend if all you're doing is having lunch or going out drinking and dancing on tables and going on weekend shopping trips or whatever, but there's more to life than that... and sadly I found out the hard way (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

Anger and Frustration

Sometimes, feelings of loss turn to anger and frustration at the reactions of others. Some family members reported feeling let down by the people who should have cared and offered support when they were struggling.

I think for a while I was quite angry with them because I just couldn't understand how they'd walk away from me when I needed them the most... so, you know, I think towards those people I'm a little hard. But, in

general, and I've done this my whole life, is I try and stay positive... on anything (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

And his brother-in-law, his sister and brother-in-law had said they would come [to the sentencing hearing], which they didn't. And they, oh they felt bad... they felt so bad when they found out that our friends Val and Gord had come and they hadn't. None of his family showed. Not one of them.... Nor have I seen one of them since... I saw them once... that's not true I didn't see them. I went to their dad's funeral, I went to his dad's funeral. And his sister... one of his sisters was extremely nice to me. But the others... I don't want them anyways. The one, I told her to... I just told her, I said, you can go and fuck yourself. I don't give a damn about you. And I don't think I ever will, so don't bother to phone me. You could have phoned me three years ago, but don't bloody well phone me today. And I, I'm not a foul-mouthed person... but nowadays, darn doesn't do it! (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

Frustration and anger are also common responses to perceived unfairness in the correctional system that now dictates the terms under which they may have contact with their family member. Family members often feel that the rules for visiting at the penitentiary are not consistently enforced and they notice when others seem to be exempt from the rules. They complain that the dress code and rules for physical contact in the visiting room are particularly inconsistent and seem to depend on the mood or whim of the guards. Wives and partners mentioned that they had watched couples have sex in the visiting room without repercussion, but had been chastised for far more chaste behaviour, such as “kissing too long,” putting a hand under a husband’s sleeve or sitting on his lap.

I'm not saying they should let people do whatever the heck they want, but it would be nice if... they should at least be consistent... Those of us who obey the rules get screwed. I'd like to neck with my husband in the visiting room too! But we're not supposed to, so we don't... but if I did it, you can bet the guards would say something (Megan, a prisoner's wife).

The other time... it was a very very very hot summer day and I had, um... a tank top with straps, but like about this thick [indicated about 1 inch] but it went up to here [indicated about 2 inches below her neck]... like it was like a square neck, and then the straps... and yoga pants, like loose yoga pants...nothing very sexy... just got up in the morning and ... and I

was told that I needed to wear my sweater on top of this tank top because it had spaghetti straps.... But you couldn't see anything because it came up to here! But still they decided that mine was too revealing... but other people, they had thicker straps, but they had it down to here [indicated mid-cleavage]. But not me... those straps bothered them! And then you see other people walking in with very very short skirts, and that was okay! But then again, they didn't tell me off because of what I was wearing at the bottom that time, it was the top, so... so, but only twice. I don't really dress that revealing to start with, so it's not really a problem. (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

None of the women I spoke with admitted to having engaged in illicit sexual contact in the visiting room themselves, although one did share that while her husband was incarcerated at a minimum security farm institution, they had snuck out into a field to have sex and were caught by a guard!

Like I just go along, I follow the rules. It's good now, so that's fair to me. You do what you're supposed to do for however long you're supposed to do it, and uh, that's it. I think there was a couple of times where we didn't! (laughs) But, uh...

Stacey: You didn't follow the rules?

Oh yeah! I guess a couple of time we didn't... we got our visits suspended one time... We went...um... we decided, I was just visiting there at the farm and we decided we wanted a little bit more action! (laughs) And so we decided to go out and Ian was working on the farm, and they have all the fields out there and he said, 'you know, nobody's ever gonna see' or whatever, and we went out to the field... And you know we had... anyway... I was silly enough to park my car at the very back of one of the fields and so finally Ian got called on the radio or whatever and... (laughs) and one of the guards came out looking for me and, like, I was crawling through the grass (laughs), towards the car! Anyway... so... Yeah... but that was, I was still visiting, I was still living in [another city] at the time... and so it wasn't any sort of big deal to have the, uh... visiting rights suspended for six weeks or whatever it was because that was about how long we weren't gonna see each other anyway. And I don't think they cut our, I don't think there was any restriction on the phone or anything like that, so... anyway... but that was still, you know... you break the rules, you pay the price, right? And that was just a little thing, so... And the one guy now who was looking for me in the field there, I still see him around town here and (laughs)... there's never... each time we see each other, I was lucky because he is such a nice guy... and he's always smiling and each time I see him he's always smiling. And so that's the first thing, I'm

sure, that crosses our mind is, 'oh, I know where I know you from!' (Erin, a prisoner's wife).

When the rules are clearly stated and fairly enforced and the potential consequences understood, family members that I spoke with seemed to have little problem accepting the outcome if they intentionally violated institutional regulations. Frustration and anger at the system emerges when the rules are seemingly arbitrarily or variably enforced and when the expectations are unclear. These types of situations can lead to involuntary confrontation between family members and institutional staff when family members unwittingly breach institutional rules. Catherine described how the rules governing the use of the private family visiting trailers were not made clear to her and how she felt blamed and punished for her husband's breach of protocol and her own lack of information:

We had a PFV one time and... we were outside of the front of the PFV and it was attached... it was a duplex so there was another family in the next yard and we were out there and just kind of chatting and the seg unit was facing the PFVs and it was summer, they were calling out... yelling back and forth. Well, you know what... I didn't know any different. Like, I mean, yes, my husband knew, yes the other gentleman in the other PFV knew you shouldn't be doing that...but these guys are in prison because they don't obey the rules! Okay? So all the sudden I hear this "Hey! If you don't get back in your PFV you're gonna lose it now!!" And I'm going "oh, my god", you know? And he spoke to us like we were prisoners... there was no education done. We weren't told... so I had to... and this was an upper management individual, in upper management in the institution... and I just couldn't let it go. There needed to be some awareness here. Corrections can't leave the guys to tell us what the rules are, that's ridiculous! So I wrote a letter and we ended up having to... we spoke with the guy... and it was all sorted out and he apologised. But I said, "you don't speak to family members like they're offenders! That might go on inside, and I'm not going to tell you what to do in there, but I know, out here... when I'm involved, I don't appreciate that. And so that... it was straightened out and we never had another problem. But it was V and C's (Visiting and Correspondence), it was their responsibility to educate the families and that wasn't happening. So those kind of things, those kinds of things (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Frustration and anger over the inconsistent application of institutional rules is in part due to family members' awareness that the institutional staff hold a great deal of power over their ability to have contact with their incarcerated loved one. Although they are innocent in the eyes of the law, these individuals are subject to the regulations of the institution when they enter the penitentiary to visit a loved one. The breach of a rule could potentially lead to the temporary or permanent suspension of visiting privileges and family members are very cognisant of the fact that they hold very little power in the institutional setting against the bureaucracy of the prison. Family members realise that they have lost a significant amount of control over their relationship and their interactions with their loved one. Their visiting privileges are precious and the only means that they have of providing support and comfort to their loved one in a situation where they have little ability to impact the circumstances in a positive way.

The rules change from officer to officer... they apply them differently, all of them... um... so it's very hard to figure out what and how you're supposed to do something. Um... some of them, like you're supposed to register for a visit 48 hours in advance... some of them it's up to 48 hours, others it's no less than 48 hours, so it's like, which one's the correct one? So, um... and they don't apply the rules to everybody the same way. I'm lucky because they've been positively flexible for me. I've seen people turned away for, because they tested positive on the drug scan, where I've never been turned away. Even though I tested a couple of times. Three or four. So... But um... I think more consistency would be good, and... try and include family, instead of... we seem to be another problem that they have to deal with... it might be good if they saw us as another tool they have to reach the person instead (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

It was hard though, because you can see that he's not... he's having a hard time. You can see the physical results of that. And when you're a parent and there's nothing you can do. Like, I guess that was one of the biggest things that, um... I experienced because I always figure as a father that I can fix things and I have some degree of control in most situations. But once the justice system gets involved it's like you're... what you say doesn't matter. Who you are and all that stuff just doesn't matter, because

it's... so you're just sort of like a bystander at that point. (George, a prisoner's father).

Fear and Anxiety

The fear of losing their visiting privileges also prevents some family members from speaking up about perceived injustices. They will put up with rude behaviour on the part of correctional officers or inconsistent enforcement of rules in order to 'fly under the radar' and avoid being targeted. Other family members, conversely, will insist that they be treated with respect because they are not prisoners. For some family members, emphasising their distinct identity as an individual, separate from the incarcerated man, is an important aspect of maintaining respect and challenging the sticky stigma of their loved one's conviction. The wife of one prisoner recalled her feelings on challenging a female guard's disrespectful behaviour towards her:

In some cases, some of the people won't [stand up for themselves] because they are capable of losing their visits. They lord this over you. You're told that a visit is a right, not a privilege, or it's a privilege, pardon me, not a right. So at any time those privileges can be suspended and take away... because of security closed visits, or none whatsoever. And I guess some people are afraid of that. They don't realise that there are laws. And these people still have to follow within the guidelines of the law also. And I in no way threatened her, and I did not use course language with her. I simply stated a fact point and everybody said afterwards, 'oh, did you ever have guts to stand up and say something like that!' You know, to me it didn't even cross my mind. I was standing up for my rights. But a lot of people don't think you have any because of where they are. Like I say, I'm not a prisoner. I have rights, you know, whether it be in there or on the street, you know. Some of them, they're young, you know. There are some very young people coming in. Nineteen, twenty year-olds. They're just out of high school! What do they know? And I think sometimes the staff try to intimidate them. And take advantage and intimidate them (Sue, a prisoner's wife).

Anne, quoted below at length, recalled the fallout of her altercation with a correctional guard and remarked that many people will not stand up for themselves because of the power differential and the fear of losing visiting privileges or standing with the prison.

I was at a community visit and... working, like I don't make a fortune, I'm not rich, so I thought, I'll try to save a phone call, a long distance call, and I asked this very very nice guard who was in charge of, um... hobbies and visits and things like that, right, I asked him to call the visits department and make a reservation for the next week for me. I saw him do it. I saw him on the phone and he came back and he said, it's done! No problem, you have a reservation for next week... For some strange reason, that next week, I called because I thought... hmm... what if they didn't make the booking? And... they had no booking for me. And... I asked. I said, you know [Mr. Doe]... had phoned the person at visits last week, last Saturday, made the reservation, I saw him, he confirmed it to me. He said, 'he had no business to do that.' I said, no, I realise that, he did it as a favour to me. Because he knows that there are a lot of financial expenses with having a husband, a family member in prison. And he wanted to be nice! He just did it as a favour. But I saw him do it! And I don't know why it's not there! I don't understand! And he said, well you have one now, and he hung up on me. You have a booking now and he hung up on me. So that was the morning. So the afternoon when I showed up I... he said, oh, how are you, blah, blah, and he looked at me, and I said, 'oh, now you want to know how I am?' And he said, 'well, what's wrong?' And I said, 'you hung up on me this morning!' And he said, 'well, you have a reservation, that's what's important.' I said, 'listen... I know that's what's important, but at the same time, you work with the public, you're working at the visits department. We're the public, I'm not a criminal! If I ask you a question I expect an answer and not to be hung up on!' And he started telling me that he had other people on hold, other people walking in. And I said, 'look, you could have put me on hold... and explained it to me later.' And he said, 'well you shouldn't even complain, and you should consider yourself lucky that you're getting a visit.' So I started telling him that he has no business being at that department and I raised my voice. And so... he was still sitting down... somebody behind him stood up, came to the window, so I had one person's chest and one person's face facing me...and... then I turned around and people were coming in. So I said, oh, anyways, it's not worth finishing this conversation and other people are waiting, so please let me in. And then my husband came and I told him, I said, I just yelled at that guy. And he said 'what happened?' And I explained it to him. And he said 'oh, that's it, nobody's... like, nobody, he has no business being rude to you'. And he went in and he yelled at them after that! So we both got reports! (ugh) Yeah. And my report said that if I continued that way, I would not be considered as a good resource for my

husband any longer. Which really kinda... that was what really hurt I think. Cuz it's like, wait a minute... I can't even say anything, otherwise I'm a bad resource? I can't really see that... I mean, in society you have to fight for what... like if you get treated poorly, you have every right to complain. That's where I'm from. I'm not from, like, just shut up and take it because you're an inmate. I'm not (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Here, Anne is emphasising her legal and moral innocence, which is juxtaposed against her continued contact with the carceral institution and her marriage to a convicted man. Correctional officials seemingly tend to treat family members as though they were subject to the same power differential as their incarcerated loved one, without acknowledging their position as free and equal members of society. The association with a convicted criminal deprives the family member of an independent identity in the eyes of corrections, who treat the family, bureaucratically and in interactions, as an appendage of the incarcerated man. Family members must actively resist this stigma at an individual level in order to assert their right to respect and dignity. The constant need to reassert one's identity as a legally innocent civilian can be stressful and frustrating.

Family members sometimes find that their ability to maintain a relationship with their incarcerated loved one is hampered by institutional policies that do not make sense to them or by lengthy processing times. Waiting on bureaucracy can be yet another source of frustration.

We actually were hoping, we applied for a private family visit, which was denied because of the outstanding charges. I'd hoped to actually be able to spend some real time with William, to be able to talk, but we won't have that privilege. Get this, I was talking to his parole officer, 'cause he sent me a letter saying, "I'm really sorry, but they've denied it", William sent me this letter saying that they'd denied my application for a private family visit. If you have any questions before you get in touch with me, you can call my parole officer... and I called her and I had never spoken with her before. And, she actually didn't even know that William had turned himself in to police. She only knew what his charges were and he had been there for two months and y'know, she just kind of, she said, "well I

just don't know why William isn't pleading guilty and why his court process is taking so long." And I said, "well, he turned himself in to police, this is not the problem. The problem is the lawyer" and she had no idea. She had no idea what had happened or anything like that. And then she launched into, "well, you seem like a really person, you should really take some time for yourself... don't worry about him." And I just felt like, get away from me! It's just so frustrating to see that the, everything moves at the pace of the glacier. And whatever seems normal to me and my professional environment doesn't apply and that's really, really frustrating. Everything from, y'know, going to the courthouse and sitting there while the court secretary reads a cookbook and y'know, just waiting and waiting and waiting for things to happen to situations like that where they have full custody of him. I'm trying to move forward with my life and figure things out and they can't even be bothered to take the time to read his file. If, and then they don't read it and pass this judgement on to me based on the list of charges... so, it's really um, it's really frustrating. So unfortunately, when I go home at Christmas, I'll spend whatever time I can with him, but it will just be a regular visit (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

In many cases the lack of control over the institutional setting and the inability to assist their loved one results family members experiencing feelings of anxiety for his safety. In some instances there are concerns about physical safety. A woman whose husband was convicted of sexual assaults against her children was understandably concerned that other prisoners might learn of her husband's status as a "paedophile" and physically or sexually assault him.

[I was] very worried.... Being in Clearwater was... uh... I wasn't near so worried, but when he was in Stony I was petrified. Because what the parole officer had put in his plan was to go to Stony and then, just go there, basically do the intake there and then go to, I think it's called Rockwood, or Rocky...? Rocky something? I think it's called Rockwood. It's right beside the other one, and it's a minimum. And the parole officer recommended that that's what they do. And that's where I thought they'd put him. I mean he's no threat to anyone. And, um...and they know it. But they don't care. So he got put in... fortunately he didn't get put in the general population in Stony cuz that's a terrible, terrible place. And, uh... he got put on a place, a mental place... so, uh,um... it was much better for him than anywhere else because he saw a psychologist at least once a month. That's not enough, but... and sometimes he saw him, you know, maybe two or three times a month... and, um... um... that was a whole lot

better for him. And on that ward it was very unlikely... it was a much safer ward for somebody to be than... somebody that had chosen his crimes to commit. Um... you know, he'd of been dead probably if he was on general population in Stony... In, uh... Bowden... he was in general population. That... there are so many people like him... he had some troubles there... some guys hassled him and tried to get what he was in for... but he just said computer fraud. Cuz he was told that from the beginning from the first parole officer, whatever, that he met, was, 'don't tell anybody what you're in for, lie. Make up something and keep, stick to it.' So just out of his mouth came computer fraud. And because he was so good on the computer, he helped lots of guys with their computer, they accepted it. Or most of them did. There was a few people that knew. Cuz what one guy wrote him a letter, something about his radio and then at the bottom put "you goof". You know what that means? You know what that means. So, he knew obviously. But, um... didn't do anything about it, you know. He was never attacked... that I can think of. But, but, I was very worried about that... and his son... you know we only had one boy and he was petrified... just petrified (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

Francine described how her son reported being assaulted by the correctional officers of a provincial jail while he was in remand awaiting trial. During the interview she produced photographs of her son's injuries from the alleged attack and revealed that she was understandably concerned for his physical well-being. She also believed that her son had not been given access to adequate medical treatment in the aftermath of the incident and that this might have long-term ramifications for his health.

I want to show you these, because... January... 2005... Karl was there, he had not been to court, he hadn't been found guilty of anything... charges were pending... okay... but supposedly until you're found guilty, alright... And I'm sure you're aware of this, [the provincial facility] has been overcrowded. So they were shipping people to other institutions over the weekend, okay, so that people who needed to do weekend time could have those spaces, alright? Now this particular weekend, Karl had court on the Monday morning. So shipping him out didn't make sense, okay? So I had the... incident that Karl mentioned Karl called me and asked me to contact the lawyer straight away... that he had been assaulted at the [provincial facility] because he refused to be shipped out. He lay on his bunk and said "no, I'm not going because I have court on Monday..." and he said, could I call the lawyer to confirm it? They wouldn't let him call the lawyer... Karl managed to get a phone call to me, and I've never heard him so distraught. I mean he's a guy, he's a man, he's big and he was distraught.

They forcibly sent him to [another city], right? When he got there... the, I don't know what you call them, the guy who does the intake anyway, got the superintendent to come down and take a look at Karl, and they asked him what happened. And Karl said that he'd been assaulted, but that he would not give any further information until he talked to a lawyer. The people at [the institution] thought he'd been assaulted by an inmate. So they cheerily go taking pictures! [...] Now those are copies. They're not the real pictures, they're the copies that this woman called a favour and got them for me. I don't know whether you notice there, but one of Karl's eyes is bloodshot... I've talked to two doctors, okay... what they both have told me is that blood vessels get broken in your eyes from this (She puts her hands around her neck). It increases the pressure and that breaks the blood vessels, okay? But these are the only pictures that we can get out hands on. So I have to take these back to the lawyer. Isn't it funny how they disappeared though? [...] And the guards are still there that were involved in this... they are still there. So, I said, get him out of there. Send him to [another institution], send him wherever you're gonna send him, but get him out of there. And his own lawyer called and said, get him out of there, because it's too risky (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

While the risk of physical injury is always a reality in correctional facilities, several family members reported feeling more concern for their loved one's mental health than his physical well-being. They mentioned the negative impact of periods of segregation on their loved one's demeanour and were concerned about the use of psychotropic medications in the prison. They also express concern for their loved one's general well-being and worry that he might be lonely or depressed.

I don't worry so much anymore, like when he first went in I certainly did. He has no problems with the guys inside... for the most part he doesn't, he's not buddy-buddy with anyone... 99% of the guys inside there are all there on heavy drug-related charges... and it's a world he can't relate to. And so he doesn't get buddy-buddy with anyone, but he doesn't ostracise himself, like he'll, "how's it going today", he's friendly right? But, you know, one of the things that he did right from the start that helped him is... when people found out that he's not in there to do with anything with drugs and that he has me coming in all the time, they tried to get him to get me to bring stuff in... and he told them right off the bat, "No. And don't ask me again"... and they don't. And they don't ask him and he doesn't smoke, and he won't buy tobacco for anyone, right, like if they run out of money. He'll buy someone a pop or whatever, chips, sort of thing... but he won't buy tobacco or that because that's where all the problems

start over those kind of stupid things. So, for the most part, I'm okay. I don't worry about him too much. I do worry when... here they have quite long lockdowns sometimes... they just got off of one this summer that was 5 weeks, almost 6 weeks long. So everyday for 6 weeks with the exception of about twenty minutes they're sitting inside a cell. They got no books, there's nothing. So it's very very hard to keep your mind from thinking and from not thinking and different things and I worry about those things because after a lockdown you can see a difference in him... (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

Yeah, I do [worry about my husband]. It's awful. I mean it's a horrible place to imagine your loved one. It's just horrible, like I really try to not think about it that much because you could just easily drive yourself downwards very easily. But uh, I don't worry as much about his safety because for one thing, like, he survived his prison sentence before. He has some very, very good coping skills in that way he doesn't get involved with y'know drugs or gangs or gambling all those things that put people at risk. And he's in a population of mostly sexual offenders so um, I just have to trust him that he'll be able to look after himself and not put himself in harm's way. Just as he has to trust me. Like, we can't look after each other anymore. But I worry about his emotional state, I worry about him becoming institutionalized as he was in some ways before, but... yeah. And just the loneliness, I guess... horrific actually to think about...that kind of pain for somebody else. But it's a process of sort of, letting go a bit and trusting and just, there's nothing I can do about it other than just try to trust (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

Confusion and Stress in Family Relationships

The incarceration period requires that families continually adapt to stress and attempt to reconcile themselves to their situation. For many wives and partners this requires a reorganisation of their identity and relationship. A new relationship that takes into account the loved one's status as a convict is negotiated around the rituals of prison visiting and limited contact. One's identity as a wife may be questioned in light of the relative absence of 'normal' marital interaction. While visits, and particularly private family visits, are eagerly anticipated, the reality is often negatively experienced as a stark contrast to expectations of a cosy and intimate family reunion.

When I think about my future I can't picture myself with anybody else... but... and when, before I get to see him, in my head I have all these ideas of things we could do and how we could spend our time, and how, how can we get away from the kids, even in this small little apartment thing. And when I get there I get... I can't deal with anything. I just sit and... he can go to sleep... I can't. Which is something new, it's something that's happened within the last year or so. Um... it started with an argument with a guard... and... for some reason I haven't been able to get over it. That place freezes me up completely. I can't deal with the fact that they're coming to check on me. And some of them check on him... most of them check on me... and that hurts me. They want to see if I'm all right. And I'm not that kind of person who would stay there if I wasn't. And, for them not to see that, it really bothers me for some reason, which is a silly little thing, but over time it's gotten to me to a point where I flip. It's like, no. I don't want to have anything to do with anybody. Just leave me alone. So... our relationship is... I know I love him. I know I want him to be a part of our life. But I'm not much of a wife. I'm a very good mother. But I'm not any kind of wife right now. Which is not fair, but... I don't know how to get over it. I have to figure that one out (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Families are forced to compact all aspects of their lives into a mere seventy-two hours. Everything from sexual intimacy and family bonding time to discussion of child-rearing issues and family financial problems must be either accomplished or left until the next visiting opportunity. Family roles must also be adjusted to the circumstances of incarceration, sometimes resulting in confusion and stress.

Well, okay... the PFVs are a positive thing, corrections does a fairly good job at trying to simulate the family unit and spending time... and daily, regular daily things like sharing of meals and TV and movies and those kind of things, okay... however... as much as they're positive, they're extremely stressful... because in 72 hours once every two months or once every 5 months or whatever it is, you have to cram in family time... couple time... intimate sexual time... you have to deal with whatever problems came up that you never had the privacy to discuss over the last two months... any problems in the family home outside of the institution have to be discussed... um... any case plan issues or any meetings with chaplains or psychologists or whatever that has to happen... um.... I mean there's just so much in 72 hours, it's not enough time. It's just not enough time... so again... the environment is simulated and so is the time spent together. It's still simulated, it's not real. Because you don't have the time to invest that you need to to put that marriage on solid ground. It's all

dealing with stuff and issues, problems, you know...(Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Parenting issues also become salient in private family visits. The incarcerated father is a 'part-time dad' who is not around for the vast majority of the day-to-day events and changes in the lives of his children. Parent-child relationships sometimes become strained as the incarcerated father struggles to adjust his interactions and expectations with a child who is growing up without him. The full-time mothers seem to adopt the role of primary parent and disciplinarian, allowing the incarcerated father to play the role of friend or buddy to their child(ren).

My son loved them [the private family visits]. Cuz I was a single parent most of my life, so my husband was the only dad role that he knew, other than my own Dad... and it was fun for him. He got to play video games, and they played games and cards and one-on-one and watched movies and, you know, went out in the yard and played football with my husband. And they're very close now. However there was a time when David, when he came into...young teenage years, 13, 14, 15... my husband had a very difficult time with parenting, an extremely difficult time... Because he did, as most parents... the older they got the more they tried, the tighter they hung on and tried to control, and that's the time where you need to start letting go. And at one point I had to say to him, "look – you're still in prison, there's no need for you to be a disciplinarian... the best thing you can do is to develop a relationship with kindness, love and friendship... where you discuss things that are familiar and the parenting will be left up to me," because I was afraid and what was happening was that he was, my husband was destroying my son's self esteem. And... you know, that's another thing... that's a lack of parenting... there's a lack of...let me get my thoughts together here.... Materials are available for parenting... but there's a lack of opportunity to apply the skills. Once every two months isn't enough. You can't apply parenting skills in VNC... You can give little time outs, you know? But you really don't learn to be a parent in a two hour session in the visiting room. So... now they're very close but there was a time when they weren't and my son's self esteem was being destroyed and I just had to step in and say, "no, you're not gonna be parenting this way. If you don't like it, I'm sorry, but that's the way it is...and you either have to learn how to have a better relationship with him in another way or you won't have one...it's that simple" (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Well... I think they [the children] have a good relationship with him. I don't think... they don't see him often enough to, to argue with him, which is a good thing. Um... it's kind of frustrating for me, cuz they're always happy when they see him and they get bad later (laughs), but I think that's normal.... They're coming to an age where, the older they get the harder it's gonna be for him, I think, because... around their age he was separated from his family... so, um, he had to grow up a lot faster than they did... than they do. Um... and...school wasn't a priority in his life, whereas it is in mine. And I hope it's gonna be in theirs, so... I'm trying to get him to, when they bring homework, help with their homework and things like that. It's more than...he is their Dad and they do see him as somebody that has that authority over them, but I think he's more of their buddy, because of the situation. I think it would be completely different if he was with us, I think he'd be more of the disciplinarian of the two, but because of the way things are he's more like the buddy. (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Well, actually, Bob signed up for a course that's been listed up there, about parenting and that. Well, I thought it was a great idea because I'll tell you, a lot of these fathers, what I call part-time daddies, they don't want to give any sort of reprimands. Bob used to be terrible for that. 'Oh, his little princess, his little girl; how could you get mad at her? Look at those gorgeous big eyelashes and eyes.' And, like, I'm ready to throttle this child and you're sitting there praising her and... I told him 'you have to learn to be able to chastise when she misbehaves and give her guidance and direction. You can't leave it all up to me because I'm like the ogre and you're the good guy sort of thing. He's got much better now since I've pointed it out to him. But even now he slips back. Like he'll be stern with her and she'll be sitting on his lap and she'll look at him and she'll go (bats her eyelashes) and he just melts. And a lot of these guys don't know anything about parenting (Sue, a prisoner's wife).

Experiencing family strain throughout the incarceration leads many women to think beyond the period of incarceration to the eventuality of release. The roles and routines that have been negotiated to cope with family life during imprisonment will inevitably be disrupted and require extensive renegotiation in order to live as a family in the community. The wife who remains on the outside often becomes more independent and self-reliant, making it difficult for the spouses to return to their former roles

(Furstenburg, 1995). Catherine, the wife of one prisoner, talked about her husband's release on parole, before it was revoked, and the difficulties that they encountered:

It was strained.... Um... it was... we were in marriage counselling. My husband had difficulty with his sense of belonging... sharing of space was difficult... Well he was in a halfway house, but he was home... he was allowed home every night and on weekends... sooo... you know, the sharing of space was there... um... who plays what role, you know? In our tradition of faith, you know, the man is the head of the household, but there's no way that he's gonna be the head of my household just getting out of prison after seventeen years. You know... so... who plays what role. Um... expectations were different... our expectations were different, and, you know, we started to blame each other instead of looking at our own roles, so it was very difficult. And there was no help! Even the marriage counsellor who helps in a hundred marriages didn't understand what reintegration was about and sent him back to his counsellor that he had seen when he was inside. You know, which he never even... which he didn't do. And he wasn't... because he wasn't feeling successful, except at work, that's the only place he felt successful... because he wasn't feeling successful he was afraid to try new things. He was struggling and he wasn't letting anybody know, people were reaching out to him and he wasn't accepting the help, because he was afraid that if he told them he was struggling he was gonna be sent back (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

While some families are able to successfully reintegrate, an unfortunate reality of the impact of incarceration on the family is that many marriages do fail, whether during the period of imprisonment or in the aftermath. Lopoo and Western's (2003) study of the impact of incarceration on marital stability found that the rate of divorce among incarcerated men following the first year of incarceration is sixty-seven to one hundred percent higher (depending on age and number of years of marriage) than the rate of divorce amongst men who have never been incarcerated. They concluded that incarceration has serious deleterious effects on marital stability. Two of the wives that I spoke with whose husbands had been released from prison (one on parole and the other at statutory release) were experiencing marital difficulties and neither ruled out the possibility of divorce. A third whose husband was serving an indeterminate life sentence

had filed a legal separation and was uncertain of her ability to remain in a relationship with a man who might never be released from prison. The issues associated with the post-incarceration (re)unification and (re)integration of the family will be addressed in greater detail in chapter six.

Societal Responses: Aloneness and Isolation

Complicating all of these issues is the fact that many families deal with the stress and trauma of imprisonment in isolation. As has been suggested, the incarceration of a family member is a situation that does not usually garner sympathy amongst the general public, and many family members of incarcerated men sometimes find that they are shunned by those who were once closest to them.

My cousin looked at me... my cousin couldn't believe it...he said, 'you're beautiful, you're smart, you have everything to offer... how could you let yourself be sucked into something like this?' And, like... I wasn't seventeen... it just happened and it could happen to anybody. And he said, 'no, it's usually women that have no self esteem that get sucked into these situations, not people like you.' And I said, no way, you can't make a judgement like that. So that was kind of the end of that relationship. I saw him at a couple of funerals afterwards, but we were never as close as we were (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

When everything happened I lost many many friends. I lost many friends after I made the decision to stay with Tom, I lost many friends the day it happened and people never bothered to phone (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

I've, you know, lost job opportunities and...friends... and family relationships because of this... um... the decision to plan a life with Ron and, you know. So... So that was difficult and the people that you're closest to are the ones who are placing the stigma on you... and the rest of the community just follows suit (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

The tendency of significant others and community members to sever ties with families affected by incarceration can be traced to the social stigma that accompanies

criminality and the propensity for stigma to be transferred from the convict to his family and friends. The stigma of criminality is used to justify the social and political marginalisation of prisoners' families and enables the community to disregard the impacts of incarceration on family members without guilt.

It's the ion scanner when you're innocent... the issues of the intrusiveness of corrections... the disrespect from staff, I mean... nobody in the community understands it. They don't wanna understand it. When the judicial system imposes a sentence... people in the community go "there now, he got what he deserved... lock the door, toss the key..." and we in the community forget about him, forget about it. And part of that is we forget about the family. So... these women are families with no faces... they have no standing in the community. So when they want to talk about loving someone who's in this circumstance and the struggles that they're having... most of the people in the community go "so leave"... "what's the problem? You'll find somebody else, there's more fish in the sea". Those kinds of comments are not helpful (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

The experiences of isolation and the stress and stigma of supporting an incarcerated man can have devastating effects on the self-image, social integration and coping levels of family members. One wife, Anne, discussed her increasing struggles with self-doubt and coping as her husband's prison sentence went on:

I think I lost a lot of self-confidence because of it. I started to ... doubt myself more... not really as to who I feel I am, but how other people perceive me. I started to kind of question that. Um... I used to feel that I could do anything and I could get anything to go my way. I've come to realise that it's not always the case. Even if I put all the efforts into it, it doesn't necessarily go my way... And... I think it's a combination of getting older and the situation... like I kind of long for a more normal, regular, middle of the road lifestyle... and I have to come to grips with the fact that, and find a way to deal with the fact that it won't happen any time soon... It's, lately it's been more difficult to deal with (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

The question of how they are viewed by outsiders is one that troubles many family members of prisoners as they negotiate their loved one's incarceration. The stigma and contempt that many members of the public feel for criminal offenders is transferred

to their loved ones and exacerbates many of the logistical and emotional pains of forced family separation. As I have described, the use of imprisonment clearly has many negative financial, practical and emotional implications for Canadian families that are currently not being addressed. The very fact that little or no effort is being made to alleviate these problems for families affected by incarceration is evidence of their marginal status in society. Isolated, piecemeal initiatives have been unsuccessful in breaking down the barrier of stigma that is associated with criminality to reposition prisoners' families as a group who are deserving of assistance to meet their financial and social needs. A pervasive social and cultural stigma ensures that the reality of the collateral effects of incarceration on families remains suppressed in the public consciousness and that prisoners and their families are viewed as undeserving of assistance.

Chapter Summary

As we have seen, the families of men incarcerated in Canada are faced with many difficulties and challenges. These run the gamut from financial struggles with loss of income and added expenses of travel and telephone bills to the emotional pain of separation from a loved one and strained family relationships. The private family visit provides opportunity to spend time together as a family, but these brief hours place the family under pressure to replicate "normal" family life and may emphasise the non-traditional parenting roles and family interactions. The financial, emotional and familial difficulties that families of incarcerated men face are exacerbated by the lack of community understanding and the absence of social supports. Families affected by

incarceration are often isolated in the community and hurt by the breakdown of friendships or family relationships. Stigma is at the root of the neglect and isolation that these families experience and perpetuates their marginalisation. We will explore this phenomenon further in the following chapter.

In Chapter Five, I will examine the phenomena of symbolic and structural stigmas as they impact family members' experience of dealing with incarceration and the carceral institution. I will describe and address the difficulties that family members of prisoners encounter in negotiating these stigmatising attitudes and the lack of societal concern for their situation.

CHAPTER V

NEGOTIATING STIGMA: SYMBOLIC AND STRUCTURAL STIGMAS IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF PRISONERS' FAMILIES

The families of prisoners may encounter a range of social situations that impact their daily lives in a negative way. These troublesome experiences are generally based in either actual or perceived instances of stigma. As discussed in chapter two, the effects of stigma are interactive in the sense that because stigmatic attributes are culturally defined, and the families of prisoners are socialised into the dominant North American cultural value system, they share the values of their communities. As such, family members have a tendency to anticipate that others will respond negatively to their association with criminality because, were the situation reversed, they might feel similarly and engage in stigmatising behaviour. Therefore, it is not just the actions of others that contribute to the symbolic stigma and isolation that family members experience, but in many cases their own preconceived notions about how others think and feel. Each of the family members who participated in this study brought up the concept of stigma and utilised this term without prompting to describe their experience, even if they could not identify particular instances of discriminatory or demeaning behaviours. However, the majority gave examples of specific experiences that could be described as stigmatised encounters and could illustrate the impact of stigma on their personal lives.

In this chapter I engage with the phenomenon of stigma as it is experienced by the family members of prisoners. As discussed in chapter two, stigma reveals itself at both the symbolic and structural levels and is rooted in larger cultural constructions of contamination and danger. Family members often experience distressing events that can

be viewed as being linked to the sticky stigma of criminality that plagues their identity. Sometimes, as we have seen in Chapter Four, stigma is not the *cause* of the troubles, but rather social stigma allows these difficulties to persist by rationalising the social neglect of collateral damages. In other situations, however, stigma is at the root of negative experiences. The symbolic form of stigma is manifested in individual interactions characterised by avoidance, discrimination or disrespectful behaviour that is perceived by the marked individual as hurtful or as damaging to her identity. The structural form of stigma reveals itself in risk-based policies and interventions designed to manage marked populations. Structural stigma may also be perceived as discriminatory and unjust, and often perpetuates stigma at the symbolic and social level. Family members' experiences of each of these forms of stigma will be discussed.

The Implications of Sticky Stigma

Rachel Condry (2007) suggests that there are five means by which stigma may be attached to the family members of prisoners through a social understanding of contamination or culpability: association, genetics, omission, commission and continuation. By virtue of the association that is understood to be present in a kin relationship, and the support that they offer to their incarcerated loved one, the family members of prisoners are often perceived as condoning or supportive of the criminal behaviour, and are tainted by that which is most loathed and feared in our society: criminality. They are, in essence, marked by association to a convicted man. In the following sections I will explore each of Condry's (2007) means of stigma transference individually, in light of the experiences related by the research participants in this study.

Association

The stigma of association with criminality need not be based in a kin relationship; often friendship or social connection with a convict is enough to provoke suspicion or unease among those who become aware of the relationship. However, the bond of kinship is given a particular significance in our society, especially in light of patriarchal understandings that construct the female partner and her children as an extension of the incarcerated man. In this research I found that women, and particularly the wives of incarcerated men, were more likely to identify and internalise the stigma of association than men (fathers/sons of incarcerated men). These women found their identities to be more definitively linked to their husbands' in the eyes of others and even in the absence of enacted symbolic stigma were more likely to be concerned about others' perceptions of them than were men. Clearly, the stigma of association with criminality involves an asymmetric gendered relationship whereby women are more likely to be the victims of sticky stigma transferred from a male partner.

It's different, because you're the wife, you know? People think that I support or agree with everything he does because we're still together. But, um, you know, it's just not that, not that simple. Just because I love him, doesn't mean I agree with what he did. But people don't see that, they don't get it. They think if I... if I know it's wrong that I should not be with him anymore. [...] Yes, it's my choice to stay with him, but it doesn't make me an evil person. Does it make me evil because I love him? (Daphne, a prisoner's wife).

Even the correctional institution is guilty of this form of gendered judgement and transmission of stigma when women are constructed as likely to be manipulated or controlled by their incarcerated male partners. Jane, in one example, talked about the correctional staff's suspicion that she was being controlled and manipulated by her then boyfriend, who became her husband. She described her irritation and amusement at their

insistence that she be subject to a psychological profile prior to her husband's parole hearing:

He come up for parole during the time that we were seeing each other. And in order to do that they had to do, they did one of those community assessments. So they did that and that came back, was fine and everything else and then they asked me to come in because he was considered very violent. So they asked me to come in and I had to, actually had to have a psychological evaluation done on myself. [...] I came into V & C and went into one of the rooms off V & C, and the psychologist, one of the psychiatrists, whatever, from the prison came down and we did an interview for about two hours. Just so you know, I am sane! But I thought it was really funny because he was, at the time I was going to college and I was going for the behavioural science program. And, uh, he was, like he was trying to trip me up here, the whole nine yards, trying to get me to. Cuz one of the things he asked me, he asked me how I made decisions. So I said to him, well I base on all the facts and decide which way I'm gonna go. And he said, well do you ever talk to John about that? And I said, well I'll ask his opinion. And he said, oh, so you do what he tells you to. And I said to him, (laughs) I said, no one tells me what to do. I said, I'm the one that has to pay the consequences for my actions so therefore I'm gonna do what I wanna do. I listen to his thoughts, but if I don't agree with him, I'm not gonna follow it. But it was that sort, all through this two-hour interview was this all sort of thing, right? [...] I think that they thought that he had to have some sort of control over me in order for me to be there for him (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

By virtue of her association with a convict Jane's very identity and, indeed, her mental health was called into question! Wives and partners, unlike the parents, children and siblings of incarcerated men, are often viewed as having made the choice to remain in a relationship with a convict and therefore their morality and perhaps their sanity are in doubt. Their continued association with the convicted man is viewed as proof that they are different than others who would choose to end the relationship and they are seen as condoning the crime through their support. However, even if the relationship is a matter of biology rather than of choice, family members are not exempt from suspicion.

Eight of the wives/partners mentioned their concern for the potential impact of their partner's criminality on others' perceptions of their children. Each of the two (grown) children that I spoke with described feeling that others may expect them to be involved in deviant behaviours. This research corroborates previous findings that the children of prisoners are often labelled as potential troublemakers. The parents of other children may prohibit their offspring from befriending or spending time with the children of prisoners, possibly believing that they are likely to be a bad influence or somehow endanger their child. Two of the prisoners' wives who had children described this very phenomenon in which children may be ostracised due to their connection with a convicted criminal:

Jocelyn once told friends when she was... she was in first grade, I think. And the daycare worker grabbed me and she said, 'I don't know if it's true, I don't care, but your daughter's been saying this, that her father is in prison, and just so you know... you might want to have a talk with her because some parents will pull their kids away if they think it's true. So, I spoke with her... she ended up going back and saying, 'oh.., you believed me? That's stupid! That was a joke!' type of thing. But, uh... after that they haven't said anything (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

The people that you're closest to are the ones who are placing the stigma on you... and the rest of the community just follows suit. So that was tough... that was rough... you know, David, my son... he was afraid of people knowing about his step-dad because they... you know, parents wouldn't let their kids play with him and those kind of things... that was very... very difficult (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Parents anticipate that their children may be subjected to discriminatory or stigmatising behaviour and worry about the effect that it might have on them. However, sometimes even they seem to perpetuate the common belief that children of prisoners are more likely to become involved with the criminal justice system as they worry about their children's future.

You know, there's always that worry about how they're going to grow up... and...if it's ever going to come back to haunt them, in a sense... you always hope that somehow through everything they're going to be able to grow into adults that are going to be happy... that are going to... contribute.... That they are going to stay out of the system itself. You worry that... in the next couple of years they're going to be entering a grade and an age-group where it's hard without having to deal with this. And you hope that some kid in the playground doesn't say something and you hope that they're not ostracised in that sense...that's an issue that you deal with (Brenda, the partner of a prisoner).

One mother pointed what she felt was the negative impact of exposure to the prison system on her son, giving voice to the fears of negative influence that cause the children of prisoners to be shunned by others:

One of the things that was a negative effect, that had a negative effect on our family is that my son became extremely comfortable in the criminal justice system... and, um... that was okay, I mean he was comfortable in a wide variety of different social settings... but he was very comfortable going into prisons. And, you know, offenders for the most part are fairly good with children when it comes to the socials and visiting rooms and things like that... the sex offenders know not to go near children of other offenders and all that kind of stuff, there's that kind of politics that goes on in the prison population, but for the most part... so when he was older, probably 16 or 17, you know, he was very comfortable with criminals and attitudes and those types of activities, and came close to being round about those....those types of people on the street and at school and things. So there was a time for a couple of years where he... I wasn't sure what he was doing and what he was up to and why he was hanging out with these people. And, um... he turned around when my husband went back inside this time... it turned him around. That's a positive thing that happened with his incarceration, it turned him [my son] around. And he just stopped doing what he was doing, so that tells me that he probably shouldn't have been doing it in the first place, but as a parent, sometimes with a teenager you're the last to know (Catharine, the wife of a prisoner).

The parents of other children and youth may interpret the risk of contamination and learning a criminal lifestyle as a threat to their own child's well-being and future and instruct their child to avoid the children of incarcerated individuals.

Genetics

The issue of genetics further complicates the transmission of sticky stigma. The unsettled debate over the impact of nature and nurture on human behaviour allows the popular notion that a genetic predisposition to deviant or criminal behaviour exists and may therefore be passed from parent to child. In this way, even children who have had little or no contact with an incarcerated parent may sometimes be viewed as contaminated by virtue of their genetic link, although there is little possibility of the social transmission of criminogenic values.

The issue of the genetic link concerns not only the children of prisoners, but also the siblings and parents. A young woman whose brother was in prison discussed her concern that other people would think less of her if they knew that her brother had been convicted of a crime and spoke of feeling immense pressure to “do better”, to succeed in school and in her chosen career path, in order to make up for the blight of her older brother’s incarceration on their family.

Personally? Um... in a way I see it as like, I have to, I don't wanna be like them, so I do well in school, I wanna make my parents proud and so the impact would be that pressure that I feel, that I have or that I put on myself to do good. Like, for a long time my parents wanted me to go to law school and even if I don't wanna go I feel like I have to go just so they'd be like, 'okay, yeah, my daughter did something good...' because of the pressure or, so the impact would be a pressure to not be like them. On me I think that's one of the biggest consequences on me (Kim, the sister of a prisoner).

Four of the parents in the interview sample were adoptive parents and had no genetic link to their incarcerated sons. Several of them speculated on the possibility of an organic predisposition to crime inherited from the biological parents:

If you had to pick a group of, a culture, a group of people, where it's [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome] a higher percentage, it the native people. Peter

is native. He has his status, he's a status Indian and...his [biological] mother is an alcoholic, drank all the time before he was born...and, so he had many difficulties... (George, the father of a prisoner).

Our family is just not, just not like that, you know...my other children, like they have good jobs, nice families... my grandkids are wonderful. But Mark has always had these, um... problems I guess... from the time he was small, just a little boy and he would get into trouble. And you gotta wonder, where does it come from? Did I treat him differently? Or was he just, um... different, I guess, to start with? (Mary, the mother of a prisoner).

Where the genetic link is problematic for natural families, the adoptive parents of incarcerated men that I spoke with seemed somewhat insulated from feelings of guilt or responsibility associated with their sons' criminal behaviour and seemed less concerned with the problem of social stigma. Biological parents, on the other hand, generally internalised more responsibility for their sons' actions and were more concerned about possible stigma. They sometimes questioned how a child that they had borne and raised could turn out so badly:

We couldn't figure out what was going on with this kid because I had three other children, um... you know, who have professional jobs... (Francine, the mother of a prisoner).

We wracked our brains, you know... wondering. Did we do something wrong? Did we not give him enough, you know... boundaries I guess...? Could we have done it different and what would have happened? I love my son... but it's been really difficult and you can't help but feel that people blame you (Pauline, the mother of a prisoner).

How could one of my children take another life? He wasn't brought up that way...What didn't I do? (Linda, the mother of a prisoner).

The notion of a genetic predisposition to criminality has been discounted by most social scientists and criminologists. However, the nature/nurture debate has never been conclusively settled and many members of the public continue to maintain their belief in

the genetic transference of behavioural characteristics. The stigma of a genetic link to a convict is still a powerful one in the social consciousness.

Commission and Omission

If one discounts the notion of an innate, genetic basis for criminality then one is acknowledging that crime is rooted in the social and is a learned behaviour. It has been suggested by some that the parents of convicts may be somehow responsible for the actions of their children and the tragic outcomes. This is Condry's (2007) sin of commission; that the parent has in fact done something to lead to their child's criminal behaviour, generally characterised as bad parenting or abuse. Social expectations of parental responsibility for their children's behaviour are reflected in recent policies and legislation which aim to hold parents legally liable for the criminal actions of their minor children. The parents in my sample struggle with these notions of culpability and often have difficulty reconciling the deviant behaviour that their offspring exhibits, particularly if one child has turned out to be very different from his siblings. One mother recalled a vindicating moment early in her son's delinquent career that underscored the limits of her responsibility:

Karl actually had, I would say maybe two or three [teachers], who were, interestingly enough... from out of that town. They actually drove into that town to work...okay? And they tried to be supportive of Karl, tried to help him, you know, they did their best, but there were other teachers who had, because of the... publicity is the only word...you know, I can use, because of that publicity had formed in their mind what kind of a kid he was before he even got into the class. And an interesting little story that I've told parole officers and whatnot when they ask me these questions about what do you think about this, what do you think about that, and I say, well, you know, for so many years, I used to think 'oh my god, what did I do? What did we do wrong?' And I remember that...and it was the same week, which made it really really interesting... on Monday I got called in by one of Karl's teachers and this guy says to me, 'look, you know, he's a this, he's

a that, you're not doing this, you're not doing that... he needs more discipline at home, he needs more this that and the other'... and okay, well... you know? On Wednesday I got called in to my eldest daughter's teacher and my eldest daughter was in, you know the gifted program, I mean, she's a whiz kid, and this teacher says 'you are certainly doing some great stuff at home with your daughter, she's so good, you know, she needs to be put up into this because she needs to be challenged. And I came out of there and I thought, how can I be this less than good mom on Monday and on Wednesday I'm doing a great job?! (Laughs) Like, hello!? And that's when I decided, you know what, I've done my best... that's it! I do my best and that's all you can do. But that stuck with me for a long long time. And it was like, you know what, a little message from heaven! Monday you're this, Wednesday you're that, it's just not possible! So... that's what I thought... well, you know what, I've done my best and that's all you can do. And yet you've got these different kids (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

The feelings of blame and guilt are not unique to parents of prisoners. The mere existence of a relationship (association) is often linked to perceptions of culpability in the offence as family members, including those related only by marriage, are often perceived as having responsibility for the actions of their kin. Rachel Condry (2007) has argued that the family member's culpability may take the form of sins of commission, omission and/or continuation. There is a sense that the failure to identify and to prevent or stop a family member's abusive or criminal behaviour constitutes a culpable omission on the part of the parent or spouse. In this sample, particularly the wives of men who committed sexual offences seemed to feel that they are blamed for failing to identify and prevent their husband's sexual deviance. Because of the intimate nature of a marital relationship, there is a belief that the partner will become aware of any sexual dysfunction or deviant proclivities. As Danielle suggested, others may be sceptical of the wife's claim to ignorance:

I was never, never remotely questioned about being involved, I thought except, of course people, certainly there were rumours, like well, 'she must have known something was wrong with him' or 'she must be a

terrible counsellor if she could have picked this guy to be with'...like there were certainly a lot of um, discrediting my person. Um, or that only ever reached me through rumour (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

Isobel's daughter was sexually molested by her husband and she related feeling that police and psychologists and even her own daughter did not believe her when she said that she did not know what was going on:

I think that people think the mother always knows... and... can I tell you another story? There are a lot of people who are well educated, that don't know any of this stuff... now... one of my daughters went to a counsellor and was told that the mother always knows...and...when we went to this place (another counselling organisation) she was told that no, that's not true. But she didn't believe it. She left our home and went to live with some people she didn't even know [...] Oh, it was horrible. Horrible, horrible, horrible! The counsellor she went to told her that her mother knew. 'Of course she knew!' She told other people. They say, 'of course your mother knew. How could your mother not know? She lived in the same house'. I didn't. When John got out...we went to counselling...the guy said...how did this come up.... we were talking about someone else, or he was talking, there was a story about someone else... and he said... something about... 'of course the mother knew'. It wasn't a story about me, it was a story about someone else. And he said, 'well of course the mother knew.' I looked at him and I went like this and I said 'are you saying that I knew?' And he took a step backwards... and he said 'that's not what I mean, meant to say. But you're right. That's what I said.' I said, 'is that what you believe?' And when I asked him first, 'do you really believe that?' And he said yes. And I said, you really believe that... and I was as quiet as a church mouse. You could have heard a pin drop. It was, I was gagging... I almost threw up on him I was that upset and that disgusted by what he was saying to me... there was no more counselling to be had (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

By suggesting that Danielle and Isobel must have been aware of their respective husbands' penchants for abusive sexuality, they are in fact being blamed for failing to prevent the offences that their husbands committed. They are stigmatised as women who allowed others to be victimised through their perceived negligence or wilful blindness. The sin of omission constructs the prisoner's family member as evil and culpable in condoning criminal behaviour.

Continuation

The culpability of continuation (Condry 2007), the choice to continue one's relationship and to support an incarcerated loved one, also has implications for social identity. Some participants pointed out that their persistence in maintaining a relationship with an incarcerated person was seen as an indication of their own negative character or poor judgement. This is particularly true of the wives and intimate partners of prisoners who are seen as choosing to maintain the relationship voluntarily, rather than being tied by blood relation and family obligation as is the case with parents, children or siblings. Brenda, the partner of an incarcerated man, felt that others were harder on her than on her partner's parents and judged her choice to remain in the relationship after her partner committed a violent offence:

Tom has some very good friends that come and visit him or keep in touch with him or phone me to find out about him. His parents have some, their friends never walked away ... But those people, they couldn't choose to leave the situation. And I could and I didn't. And I lost probably more people than those guys all together. And people just don't understand that my life changed sadly too, and they don't respect that. But... can't change that either. (Brenda)

Friends, family members, and sometimes complete strangers, often cannot understand how these women can look beyond the crime that was committed to care about the individual. The ability to love one's husband or partner, despite his crime, leads others to question the wife's remorse or her sense of moral outrage about the offence. That one is able to hate the crime while continuing to care for the offender is a concept that many people who have not encountered the situation will struggle with. So the continuation of a relationship with a convict opens one up to transferred stigma that could be avoided through termination of contact with the offender.

I definitely think that if I had never gone to visit him, I'm sure that I would still have my job. I'm sure that's where the problems lay if that I can have compassion for somebody who'd done these things, some people just can't handle it [...] (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

In some circumstances one might reasonably surmise that the reservations expressed by friends and family to these unorthodox relationships are born of concern for the women's well being. Three of the women expressed outright that they felt the reactions of significant others were due to the fact that they "wanted better" for their daughter/sister/friend rather than due to a more general animosity for prisoners or the stigma of criminality.

Stacey: So even your friends who know you're married will try and fix you up? *Yeah, because they all think that I should, that I deserve better than what I'm getting.*

Stacey: Right. Do they say that to you?

Oh, absolutely! Absolutely.

Stacey: How does that make you feel?

Ummm... at first it was really bothering me, but at some point I realised that.... I don't think they're attacking him, per say, I think they're attacking the situation. . I think if he was out, he'd be friends with everybody I know. I don't see him having a problem with anybody... although, some people, if they knew where he came from might have a problem with him. But, um... so I don't think it's an opinion of him, as much as it's an opinion of... raising the kids all alone, dealing with my parents, who are not doing so great, by myself, and working, running around...and...yeah (Anne, the wife of a prisoner).

When we got serious, then I told some very close friends and my best friend actually said to me, she says, 'I really don't approve, but I'll stand by you, sort of thing'. And actually since, she and John are really good friends now. But she put him through the wringer when he came out and she met him she just, wanted to make sure that he wasn't gonna do anything that was gonna hurt me or anything else, so... yeah. (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

More puzzling than the negative reactions of family, friends and acquaintances are the reactions of strangers. Several of the women mentioned that complete strangers

felt free to judge them and question their relationship. Sometimes this would occur in the context of a helping relationship, such as with a counsellor or service agency. In other cases, the interactions took place in random and unrelated contexts. Anne described her most recent encounter with a representative of the Canada Revenue Agency:

The only thing that ever happened was with the income tax... Every year they, cuz I list myself as married, but I also list myself as living by myself, with children. So they call. Every year. (laughs) I'm like... can't you put a note in the file? And they're like...well... no... we... yes... but it won't necessarily show up... and the last lady that spoke to me asked me why I wasn't getting a divorce! And I told her, I said, not that it's any of your business, but I don't want a divorce! [...] I think she was well intended, but...well meaning, but...No! She doesn't know me at all! (Anne, the wife of a prisoner).

The four women from Montreal who participated in the focus group mentioned that one agency in Montreal that offers programs for families of offenders is notorious for telling women to get out of their relationships and move on, rather than supporting them in their choice to maintain their relationship and family throughout the incarceration. They felt that this was very “judgemental” and not helpful for women who are trying to cope with the incarceration of a loved one. All of the women that I spoke with who chose to remain in relationships with incarcerated men emphasised how judged they felt when others devalued their relationship and encouraged them to leave. They seemed to feel strongly that this approach was not productive and was likely to isolate the wives of prisoners from support networks. They strongly resented the need to justify their continued support of the men that they loved.

I had a father of a friend of mine just phone me and say y'know, it was just like a few days after and said “obviously he was just a really sick guy and you need to move on and do you have your house up for sale yet” and those kinds of things. People are very quick to judge me on or say “oh I could never go back” but nobody knew, nobody could know what it was like (Danielle, the wife of a prisoner).

When you want to talk about loving someone who's in this circumstance and the struggles that you're having... most of the people in the community go "so leave"... "what's the problem? You'll find somebody else, there's more fish in the sea". Those kinds of comments are not helpful. So you stop talking [...] Well, [my family] didn't react positively at all. They didn't want me to marry him, they didn't come to our wedding, they pretty much just.... Said no. We don't support this, and we don't think you should be doing it and we can't, we can't celebrate with you. I said 'that's fine, you don't want to celebrate with me, that's good, that's cool. But since they've gotten to know my husband... since they've got to know him, they realised that he's not a monster, first of all... and you know they've often said that they regret their decision not to participate in our wedding... (Catharine, the wife of a prisoner).

I think, it's my choice, you know. It's not like I'm some teenager who doesn't have a clue! I'm a grown woman... pay my own bills, I make my own choices... and I love this man. People just don't understand. But I shouldn't have to justify this to you. Or anyone... now if it was a bad relationship, well then I could understand. I wouldn't want, you know my friend or my sister to be in a bad relationship...but it's not like that. Dan would never never hurt me... (Megan, the wife of a prisoner).

Sticky Stigma and Fear

The sticky quality of stigma, then, as Condry (2007) claims, may be seen as linked to one or more of these categories of association, genetics, commission, omission and continuation. However, identification of the origin of this transferred stigma does not answer the question of *why* others are so likely to react to the revelation of a kinship link to criminality with avoidance or discrimination. Here, I move beyond Condry's (2007) categorisation of how stigma is transferred conceptually to examine the structural (institutional) nature of stigma in its application to marked groups and individuals and its relation to marginality and the experience of discredit.

The family members that I spoke with shared mainstream cultural understandings of criminality and the danger that it poses. While they occupy a marginalised position in

the community, these individuals are not strangers to the dominant social norms. Many family members are well aware of how others might perceive their loved ones' criminal activities and why they may be subject to discrimination and avoidance. Individuals that I spoke with point to the reality that many negative reactions can be attributed to fear: fear for one's safety, or fear that one's life may be similarly disrupted by circumstances beyond one's control.

The notion of fear can be understood as a motivating force behind other's rejections and avoidance of families affected by incarceration. As discussed in chapter two, the fear of symbolic contamination may lead 'normals' to engage in avoidance behaviour. One wife, Danielle, attributed others' reactions to their fear and to a sense of disbelief and uncertainty that accompanies the discovery that you have spent time with someone who was capable of committing a terrible crime. There is a sense that one's safety has been violated through proximity to a potential victimiser. The knowledge that one could have become a victim of someone whom they knew and trusted is a difficult revelation to accommodate.

But I think that this is a case where [...] where it's just unimaginable that this person who everybody knew and loved that could be capable of these terrible crimes. So that I think in some ways increases the stigma because it really shakes people's understanding of safety and feeling of safety and other things like, y'know it happened, the crimes happened at a store in the middle of the afternoon, not in a dark alley or late at night. So, you know, I really understand people's fear... (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

However, even in circumstances where the actions of the offender did not pose a threat to others' perceptions of their physical safety, the family members of many prisoners may also, inadvertently, pose a dilemma for others and challenge their understanding of the social order.

In a 'just world' (Lerner 1965, 1970, 1980), the tragic events that lead to the criminal conviction and incarceration of a family member would only befall "deserving" families – those who are morally corrupt, involved in marginal and questionable activities and lacking in character. The fact that many families who are affected by the incarceration of a loved one are, for all intents and purposes, "normal," hard-working people, calls into question the belief in a just world. Rather than grapple with the idea that the tragedy of a violent or criminal offence could just as easily happen to them or involve one of their kin, individuals are induced to explain away the anomaly by casting the innocent family member as equally culpable or searching for character flaws that would provide a justifiable explanation for the situation they are facing.

I found that my husband's crime was my crime... and that's how the greater community sees it. I mean there were people in my own faith community that said "I just don't understand why somebody would do that..." I mean, people stopped talking to me in my own church... and they're right, they didn't understand it. They did not understand it and didn't want to.... And because people don't understand it they think that there's something wrong with you... you know? They think that you're not intelligent, they think that you're a mess, they think that your life is out of control. There's all kinds of things that people think...when they don't understand something. And most of it comes from their own fear... but instead of dealing with that, their own fear and identifying that, it's easier to place it elsewhere (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Y'know, there are people that are kind and love you and there are people that don't want us anywhere closer and would prefer to pity me or think that I'm crazy or delusional or co-dependent or whatever other things they'd like to call me to make sure that I'm different from them because it could never happen to them (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

The threat that prisoners' families pose to others' feelings of safety and insulation from the world of criminality has the effect of inciting reactions of avoidance, discredit and blame. The fear that is perhaps rightly directed at the offender is deflected to their family by virtue of their relative exposure. Danielle emphasised that the fear and anger

displayed by her friends and acquaintances had a much larger impact on her than it did on her husband who was incarcerated and isolated from the unkind words and judgements of others:

... It was all directed toward me. Like, no one ever wrote a letter to my husband saying "I hate you, how could you do this?" but people wrote letters to me, like friends or y'know just emails, just saying "how could you ever go and see him?" or um, "I don't ever want to hear his name". I was really the person who paid a huge price for his actions. And there were really times when I wish that someone would come and take me and put me in solitary confinement and let me have the time to think and the safety from the outside world and make him come and deal with the fallout from his actions. Not that I wish that on him, and not that I wanted to go to prison, but that was certainly after I had all this, totally and completely vulnerable to the judgement of all of society (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

It is important to note that not all individuals react negatively toward the family members of incarcerated men. In the minority of instances ($n = 3$), family members reported receiving support throughout their ordeal from community members and extended family and not feeling stigmatised. George, the father of an incarcerated man, shared that he and his wife were initially reticent to disclose their situation to others, but as they became more open about their son's incarceration they were met with understanding and compassion, rather than the stigma and rejection they had anticipated:

It probably bothered us more, wondering what people were thinking and all of that, but... well, what I found out though, through that, that if you... people are more nervous to ask what to say to you. They want to be supportive, but they don't know what to say. So when you get that silence, you kind of think... well you can think a number of things, but a lot of times you think, oh they're just... maybe they don't want to talk to you...or something... What I found was that if I opened up first that they would talk. And what I learned from that is when someone else is now in that situation, I don't keep silent. I go and show my support, you know. Because I realise, you know, how... how valuable it is to the people that are going through it to know how that all their friends and neighbours and family, really care, praying about it, and thinking about it. Yeah. No, I think our community was pretty good. I mean, I never heard anything, directly anyway. But it is harder. It's easier to lose yourself in a big city.

It's harder around here. But... The tendency I found was to, myself, was to kind of withdraw... and I found that that's not the best way to deal with it. Because it doesn't get any better, the feelings you have. It's better to talk about them (George, the father of a prisoner).

The majority pointed out that reactions to their situation tended to be mixed and while some of their friends, family and acquaintances were supportive, many were not.

Some people I found just really rose to the occasion and the challenge of being fully compassionate and other people just um, y'know, were so fearful and angry that it was all taken out on me...(Danielle, the wife of a prisoner).

Since family members report that not all individuals react toward them in an overtly negative manner, it is possible that the community members who are most understanding and most likely to be accepting are those who have themselves experienced an undeserved tragedy and borne witness first hand to the fallacy of a just world¹. For example, the family members of other prisoners are particularly likely to be understanding and to recognise that the offence does not necessarily reflect on the offender's family.

Um... yeah, my friends, they were... well, cuz I also, cuz of the neighbourhood that I grew up in, so I kinda knew a lot of people, most of my girlfriends, their brothers, like I have another girlfriend, my best friend, her brother is in jail for murder and he's gonna be in there for a long time. Yeah, so my best friend she understood. She wouldn't say, she understood and didn't criticise me or, like, look at me any different (Kim, the sister of a prisoner).

When we came to [this city], my eldest daughter was talking to us and she went to a friend's family and they were asking her about her brothers and sisters and whatnot and she said, you know, I was so tired of saying 'oh yeah, everything's fine' and she said, 'yeah well, you know, my dad does this and my mom does this and you know, I have a brother and a sister, and I have another brother who's in jail.' And she said, I could have fallen off the chair because all the people said was 'oh, oh that's too bad, your

¹ The scope of this research does not allow further exploration or comment on this phenomenon, but further study of public views toward stigmatised individuals could provide insight into the role of personal experience in the assignment of stigmatising values.

poor mom, you know, we have a cousin who's in jail... ' and she said it was like... nobody's fault. Whereas, she said, where we lived before, it's like you wouldn't dare say anything like that because that was just the end of the world (Francine, the mother of a prisoner).

This phenomenon is reflective of other studies of prisoners' families in marginalised communities in which the commonality of imprisonment mitigates the experience of stigmatisation. For instance, Schneller's (1975, 1976) study of "the social and psychological effects of incarceration on the families of Negroes (sic)" found that social stigma was not a significant problem due to the prevalence and normalisation of criminality and incarceration in the ghettoised black community. Although the sample in the present research was not large enough to reflect this, one could assume that a similar trend of normalisation might be found amongst families on aboriginal reserves and in urban, ghettoised communities with high rates of criminal conviction and incarceration.

The Internalisation of Culpability and Stigma Expectation

The tendency of others to assign blame or culpability for criminal behaviour to family members manifests as self-blame when these family members wonder in retrospect if they could have "done something" to prevent the offence (discussed in the previous chapter). The feelings of family members about their own roles in the trajectory of the offence often demonstrate a tendency to internalise a certain amount of culpability. Even when they do not take responsibility for the situation directly, their conflicted emotions and self-doubt may reflect the common social and cultural expectations that, as family members, they should have had knowledge of their loved ones' activities and bear some responsibility for them. For example, wives and partners may question how deviant or suspect behaviour could have been overlooked, while parents may blame

themselves for failure to identify abuse or problems early in their child's delinquent career that may have contributed to future delinquency. One mother discussed an early history of abuse that went unnoticed:

Karl went to a training school. I mean, I couldn't believe it... for a stolen license plate [...] And when we actually went down to pick him up from the institution to bring him home we saw a person by the name of Dr. Poisoner... which would turn out to be a very appropriate name, because when we saw her, we answered all these questions and what not and she said, 'are you prepared to take Karl home?' And we said, well, yes, of course. And she said 'oh, well, we've actually decided that it would not be a good thing for him to go home right now... we want to do this that and the other' and well, what do you do as parents? You're up against a system, you know. So we said, oh, well okay. And she said, well, we will handle it. We will tell him that he's not going home. And we didn't know until later and we wondered why Karl was so angry... so angry when he came home. What they told him was we didn't want him... and this is a kid! So he started using drugs and we couldn't figure out why! (crying) And I have the letters from the lawyer right now...and the statements claim he was abused! And there were many young boys who were abused... (Francine, the mother of a prisoner).

Another mother speculated on the effects of an undiagnosed disability on her adopted son's difficult upbringing and future behaviour:

I think if we had known that he had Foetal Alcohol Syndrome as an infant, a lot of things would have changed, because public school, school environment was not a good experience for him, but maybe that would have been totally different if we had of known... That was a learning experience for us, even to get that diagnosis [...] I think under the circumstances it was just a matter of time before something happened. Whereas if he'd of had right, as soon as he left our place, had that circle of support, yeah, I think it would have prevented what happened there...I do. Because we know the triggers that kind of were there, and he knows them now too. It's idle time, for one thing... and, I don't know... When, then when you're not... you know, when you have nothing to think about then you think about things you shouldn't think about... you start spinning back into that and... but when you're a person who doesn't understand consequences, like a Foetal Alcohol Syndrome person... how can you... you know, calculate the risk and make those decisions? (Helen, the mother of a prisoner).

While clearly neither of these mothers could be held responsible for these circumstances that may have contributed to their sons' offending, the sense of self blame and feelings of culpability seemingly contribute to the wariness that many prisoners' family members feel about sharing their situation with others.

Because they often take at least partial blame on themselves, family members often assume that others will also view them as culpable in the crime. They expect to encounter symbolic stigma in their interactions with others. These feelings of culpability are reinforced and compounded when expectations are realised and they are met in the community with negative social experiences of rejection, condemnation and avoidance behaviours. Family members often find that even friends and relatives react negatively to them in the aftermath of their loved one's offence, exacerbating feelings of loneliness, guilt and sadness through their failure to offer support or to reach out at the time of most need –when families are struggling to cope with the reality of the offence and impending period of incarceration.

I've, you know, lost job opportunities and...friends... and family relationships because of this... um... the decision to plan a life with Ron and, you know. So...so that was difficult and the people that you're closest to are the ones who are placing the stigma on you... and the rest of the community just follows suit (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

I mean it's up to us if we tell people or if we don't. But she guessed. She totally guessed. And it was a yes or a no. And I had to say yes... And she just... who she had... been here... she'd been here so many times... they had no money, she came for many meals, she stayed overnight... we helped her with her kids... like just on and on, we did whatever we could for her... instantly, she was gone. After that time she came, laid on our couch, found out what John had done... years ago... she never returned. Ever (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

The reality of symbolic stigma in the community and family members' anticipation of these negative experiences means that they are required to make choices

about how to deal with the possibility of stigma. Most often, as discussed below, the negotiation of stigma relies on selective disclosure of the stigmatic attribute and the careful selection of trustworthy associates.

Negotiating Symbolic Stigma: To Pass or Disclose?

The experience of rejection and feeling of stigmatisation can have a detrimental effect on the social integration of prisoners' family members. A common means of negotiating the possibility of encountering discriminatory or stigmatic reactions is to keep the discreditable attribute (in this case, the incarcerated family member) a secret whenever possible. Goffman (1963) refers to this strategy as "passing" – "the management of undisclosed discrediting information about self" (42), and many individuals who possess an invisible stigmatic attribute find passing to be an effective means of decreasing negative social interactions. All of the family members in the sample reported at least selectively choosing to keep their situation a secret from others, or feeling that it was not relevant information that needed to be disclosed in many situations.

In the community that I live in now, no one knows. So... I haven't had any repercussions that way, and I haven't felt anything socially (Brenda, a prisoner's wife).

Stacey: Are you comfortable to talk about it, like, do you tell people, or...?

No. No, oh gosh! Especially studying at [the university], straight A student and like, no... I guess, for me it's, um... it's nothing that I ever wanna talk about. Um, no... nobody knows here. I don't have a lot of close friends [here] either, so I don't see, feel the need or see the need to tell them. But, uh... no... not comfortable. Here no. It's a different environment, I find that when I'm [here] and not [at home] it's a very different environment, I'm here for school and, um... and that's pretty much it. But when I'm [at home] I go out, I see people that knows my brother or knew him or... um, people that knows my family, that's a little different. I have to deal with

them, but here I don't even have to worry about it or think about it because it's not...yeah.... So I, no... nobody knows about it here (Kim, a prisoner's sister).

Umm... some people...[I tell] some people, you know, but most of the time we sort of just, you know... well, he's out of town or whatever, because it's easier (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

I told myself, as long as my parents are alive I wasn't going to say anything, and then I had the children and so, I have now two conditions... I'm not going to say anything while my parents are alive and until my children tell me that they're willing to have everybody know. If it was just me I wouldn't care so much... but because there are other people around, I decided to keep it quiet.

Stacey: What do you tell people?

That he... he's not around. Like, we're just not together. Which is hard cuz he's... it makes him seem like a total bad person, cuz he gave up his children... (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

I just sort of went and did my thing and... went home and lived my life and it was like living two lives. You know, that sort of like, the gate that kept him from me was the gate between my two lives, my two halves of my life. And a lot of my friends didn't know that I was going into a prison and doing this... um... where I lived, just before he got out, the woman across the street was a guard. And before she became a guard we used to go out, sometimes we'd go out to the bar and we'd drink, like she was a friend of another friend of mine. And then when I started, I went in one day and she was there. And she just looked at me and went, 'oh my god!' you know? 'What are you doin' here?' sort of thing. So that was a little weird. But um...

Stacey: Did she go out with you after that?

Well I never really, she wasn't really a good friend of mine, she was a friend of another friend of mine, so I never really saw her, whatever, but after that she sort of avoided me. Which was fine. But, uh, yeah... cuz a lot of people didn't know (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

However, the same use of 'passing' that makes day to day life easier also has the effect of isolating many families. Choosing to keep one's situation a secret entails that one is unable to share day-to-day experiences and to interact freely with co-workers, friends and other acquaintances. While passing may be a very functional choice for dealing with the immediate potential of stigma in occasional impersonal interactions, it

may in fact be counter-productive in the long term and for continuing relationships. Family members who choose not to disclose their situation to those with whom they interact with on a daily basis find that the very act of passing to avoid marginality and social stigma perpetuates their own isolation and avoidance behaviours. These individuals are not willing to risk the potential of negative reactions and so end up forgoing the probability that some people will react in a supportive and compassionate manner.

It's um... it's a very isolating thing I think... unless you talk to other people who are in the same situation. Um... and not everybody wants to talk about it. I mean, it's not something you go around saying, oh! You know, my son's gone to jail! You know, whereas if somebody has a serious illness or something like that it's... there's not the same... stigma, I suppose you would say. Yeah. So, yeah, it's isolating (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

There's a great feeling of isolation at times. You really don't fit into those stereotypes that a prisoner's wife is supposed to be, and I hope to God I don't fit into that stereotype or that people don't put me into that stereotype because, I mean, I have university education, I've worked, and that sort of thing [...] I did go back to work again part-time...and isolation comes in that you really don't fit in with your workers because they're talking about oh, their husbands or men are doing this tonight or that tonight...they'd come in on the Monday morning you know and so and so and I went here, and we did this... and of course there was a little bit of envy on my part, you know, sort of thing. Or they would all get together, some of the husbands and wives would get out together and of course I was never asked to go along, so there's the feeling of isolation and separated from them and that (Sue, a prisoner's wife).

Wives, in particular, report a tendency to self-isolate and to withdraw from social situations in which their undisclosed status as the spouse of an incarcerated man may become problematic. Concealing the fact of an incarcerated son or brother may be easier since parents and siblings commonly live relatively autonomous lives and casual acquaintances would not expect them to be present. However, a woman who has to make

up excuses for the absence of a partner is placed in a much more difficult position. For example, if acquaintances or co-workers are unaware of the woman's marital status, or believe perhaps that the individual is separated or estranged from her spouse, they may offer to introduce her to eligible mates in the hopes of making a match. This can be a potentially embarrassing and troubling problem for a woman who has chosen to remain faithful to her incarcerated spouse. Two women spoke of the impact of their hidden marital status on their social lives:

I think the only... the only negative repercussions I think I put on myself, where... um... I consider myself as being in a couple, although I'm by myself all the time, so that kind of pulled me away from... like I don't go out with whatever single friends I still have left... because I don't, I'm not trying to meet anybody... and those that are in a couple relationship, they usually, if they invite me it's usually to try and fix me up with somebody, so I've kind of pulled away from a lot of, um... not, I don't pull away from the relationship, but from social occasions. I've become more of a recluse because of it (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

I've had co-workers who were, like, 'I know this guy and he'd be just great for you...' and they don't know about Paul, so that's... awkward, you know? And so, um, I guess I just prefer to...well not avoid...but I usually don't, don't go out if they invite me or whatever... it's just easier not to you know, get into a situation if it might be embarrassing (Daphne, a prisoner's wife).

Consequently, many prisoners' wives find themselves in self-imposed exile, isolated from unnecessary social interaction. They are not isolated by others' avoidance, but instead by their anticipation that others will react negatively to their situation.

The double-edged sword of identity management and selective disclosure is that it serves to perpetuate feelings of marginality and stigmatisation in individuals who are unwilling to be forthcoming about their situation. Their assumption that others will react negatively to them is never challenged and is thus strengthened. Conversely, three of the family members (one wife and two parents) were quite open with community members,

neighbours and friends about their loved ones' incarceration and felt that this was an empowering experience that lessened the emotional burden of secrecy and shame.

I reached a point where I was tired of living a double life, tired of living a lie... you know, the secrecy was just... it was counter to my whole belief system. So I struggled with that for a few years and reached a point where I just wasn't going to hide it anymore. And, uh, got involved in a support group for women of, women who have family members incarcerated and... it just, it was such a freeing experience. Just to not hide[...] I've been very fortunate in that I've worked in ministry for a long time... probably since... ninety-seven, I'm trying to think, ninety-seven, ninety-eight... so they've been very supportive... Even in times when I didn't know what I was doing. I was confused and I didn't understand corrections, my community of faith has been extremely supportive, as much as they can be. They don't understand it any better than... well they understand it less than I do... um... but they really don't understand, but they've tried, they've made an effort. So I've been extremely fortunate that way. But I think my openness, too, has been a part of that. People don't necessarily like secrecy. I don't think that they respect it. And the more open I am, the better understanding that people have. So I've been very fortunate that way (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

While Catharine acknowledged that being open about her situation did not result in supportive and positive reactions from everyone she encountered, the net effect on self-esteem and coping seemed to be a positive one. She described the ability to be honest as “freeing” and felt that candour was the key to avoiding the feeling that other wives described of always living two separate lives:

When I hear people talk about the fear that they have and about living the double life, I go, 'oh...I wouldn't go back there.' But it's very hard to get them to understand that there's freedom... you know, because not all of them work in ministry and don't have... don't have the understanding or the empathy or compassion from people.

Stacey: It's risky for some people.

It's very risky! And I get it. It's just, you know, I just couldn't live with it like that... I had to make the changes (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Some individuals do find great personal benefits of freedom and improved self-esteem by being open about their loved one's incarceration. However, as Catharine

acknowledged, not all family members are so fortunate in their life situations or brave enough to risk the possibility of being hurt or rejected. Some may also discover, as did one young wife, that honesty and forthrightness about one's situation will not necessarily enable others to embrace the situation, even if they are not overtly demeaning:

I had a whole set of friends there, hey, I was in the tribe and... once I switched my mode of thinking there, they just totally... you know... I mean one of them actually knew Ian from school as well... um... and another one, uh... they thought, I think they all thought that they could deal with it, they all thought they could handle it, you know, cuz I was, uh, trying to be, um, open about it and saying listen this is where I, you know, I'm visiting and blah blah blah... but, um... it just didn't... you know they just didn't, couldn't accept it. In the end they just, you know... Like, I don't know, they just sort of try and process it in their own way. But it was never the same after (Erin, a prisoner's wife).

Culturally accepted stereotypes and fears associated with criminality are not easily dispelled and some outsiders are simply unable to breakdown their prejudices and offer the kind of understanding and compassion that family members are looking for. Those family members who choose to selectively disclose will generally take a carefully measured risk to open up to those who seem most likely to be accepting. It is a risk, nonetheless, as family members cannot always predict how others will react and friendships are placed in jeopardy, at the mercy of the other's tolerance. Sometimes the gamble will pay off with improved support.

There was also another couple that lived across the street from where I moved into and I met them almost as soon as I moved here and about six months after I moved here, because we were very good friends and I was feeling bad about lying, cuz I just can't do that... I won't tell everyone, but sometimes you have to still stick your neck out there and trust.... I sat down with both of them one night, about six months after I met them and told them everything. And part of that was, one, just out of respect for them as people and as very good friends... and two... to help me out cuz I couldn't lie. And I was gonna start tripping up, right. So... I was very fortunate that they were amazing.. I mean they didn't know me before this

and they continued to stay to be very good friends of mine (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

Accepting the risk of disclosure also opens up the possibility of increasing awareness in the community about the difficulties faced by prisoners' families and making changes in societal responses. As suggested earlier, Canadians are generally ignorant about the effects of imprisonment on families and a general social apathy to the issue has resulted. It is possible that were the general public better informed about the issues that over time a more sympathetic and supportive social environment may emerge. However it is equally probable that in disclosing their situation, even to strangers, family members may encounter those who are unsympathetic and demeaning, as the following excerpt from the researcher's field-notes describes:

In August of 2006, shortly after beginning this research, I was invited by the women who attend the family support program at Bridgehouse in Kingston to accompany them at a candlelight memorial vigil on 'Prisoners' Justice Day,' a day of remembrance established by incarcerated prisoners to honour the memory of those who have died in prison, whether due to violence, neglect or natural causes. The women, wives and mothers of prisoners, and a few children spent the late afternoon constructing placards and posters describing the cause and listing the names of prisoners who had died inside the walls of Kingston Penitentiary. The vigil was to take place later in the evening on the downtown steps of Kingston City Hall. A summer festival drew large crowds to downtown Kingston and the women and children with their candles and posters drew attention from passersby, some curious, some disdainful. A few stopped to read the lengthy list of names, many drew near to read the signs and turned away. One of the young children complained that she needed to use a bathroom and her mother got up to take her to a nearby coffee shop. As they turned to leave, the little girl, about seven years old, held out her sign, a sheet of Bristol board, to me and asked "can you hold this for me?" The sign read in brightly coloured marker and glitter, 'We support our loved ones in prison. I love you, Daddy'. I smiled at her, 'Sure,' took her sign and propped it up in front of my knees where I sat on the concrete steps. Several minutes after they left a well dressed woman, in her late forties approached the building. She appeared pleasant and she made eye contact with me as she neared to read the signs. She took in the sign at my knees and her demeanour

immediately changed. The smile left her face, her eyebrows arched and her lips pursed. My heart dropped into my stomach. ‘Hmph. Prisoners’ families,’ she said to a female companion who had approached her from behind. She gave me a look that could only be described as one of contempt, turned on her heel and walked away. I was incredulous. I felt as though I had been slapped. I felt at once embarrassed and angry. How dare she judge me! And I don’t even have a father in prison! In disbelief I turned to Laura, the executive director of Bridgehouse. “Did you see that?” She smiled sadly at me. “Now you see how it is. This is what these ladies deal with all of the time.”

There are then, both benefits and drawbacks to disclosure and the decision to “pass” is one that each family member must make for his/herself. Fear of negative reactions keeps many family members from seeking out available services which might identify them as supporting an incarcerated loved one. This serves to hide the impact of incarceration on families from the larger community since many people will never meet anyone who has an incarcerated family member and those who do may not even be aware of the situation due to the families’ fears of stereotypes and marginalisation. And these fears are not ungrounded, as evidenced by the negative reactions encountered by many of the participants. The negative stereotypes which are known to be particularly associated with “prisoners’ wives” are often held even by the wives themselves and they emphasise that they do not want others to think that they are “like” the stereotypes and involved in a criminal lifestyle.

[I] really don't fit into those stereotypes that a prisoner's wife is supposed to be and I hope to God I don't fit into that stereotype or that people don't put me into that stereotype because, I mean, I have university education, I've worked and that sort of thing, held, you know, responsible jobs. And like now I'm on Social Assistance and so it's a bit step down to me, sort of thing. You know, I'm not used to that. (Sue)

There is a sense that, especially in the public and professional world, association with a convicted criminal will lessen one’s credibility and change others’ opinions of the

individual's performance and ability. Three of the wives that I spoke with had held jobs in areas related to criminal justice and/or the helping professions and they pointed out the irony of their situation. As professionals, it was considered perfectly acceptable for them to spend time working with delinquent and criminal individuals, but to be involved on a personal level with a convict had a negative impact on their professional identity and called their competency into question.

By coincidence of the small town that [I live in], one of them [her husband's victims] is the wife of one of my colleagues. So one of my colleagues from my work, sorry, my volunteer work and her stepson was a student at the school that I worked in. I actually wasn't ever allowed to go back to work the board took away my position at the school because they basically really stigmatized me and um, I, y'know, to make a long story short, I went on Unemployment Insurance even though I was a really well respected person who actually worked with young offenders that's the irony of it, is that it was totally okay for me to be somebody that worked with young offenders in my professional life, but as soon as my personal life was touched by criminality, nobody wanted to have anything to do with my professionally (Danielle, the wife of a prisoner).

People automatically have that stigma that, um... well, you know... they must.... They're all, they must be down this road, right? So it doesn't matter.... I remember when... I'll put it this way. When I used to give talks and John and I would go and talk and we would always say, do not introduce us by our last names, just by our first names. John's gonna talk about this, she's gonna talk about this, whatever... um... so John would do his spiel and do all the stuff and I would come up and talk about families and everything else. And in my introduction, I would always say, I'm a mother, I'm a mother, wife, I go to school, I got my B.A., I did this, dah dah dah, and I'm married to him. And you would see this (gasp), like this whole, 'oh my god!' you know? And it was like there's this very intelligent woman and everything else and she's married to this guy who was in prison, you know? And I said, if your idea of who I am has changed, then you need to look at that. Because it would. It automatically would. And I know at work, I would say that John was going in to do, into the prison, to do an AVP or some other sort of thing. And they were saying, 'what's all this? Is he going to prison?' I said no, no, he's going into the prison to do this thing. It was just this 'oh,' cuz it was like, okay we work, part of the organisation that I work with works with young offenders who are incarcerated. So it was like, so it was something that I've never told. It's just that, that line, right? So even now, it's eleven years later, you

know...so my co-workers, one of my co-workers knows that he was in prison, but she doesn't know anything just besides that. I don't give that information. It has nothing to do with me as a person. So... but the stigma still is there. Eleven years later (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

Jane's husband, now released from prison, brought coffee in for us while I was conducting the interview and asked to contribute an additional statement about his wife's experience with stigma in the workplace:

Can I make a statement?

Jane: Yes.

One of the reasons that Jane left her [previous] job was the fact that, this was a woman, I want you to know, that was considered, um, a leading authority on families and corrections. Uh, but when the new people came in she was just an ex-con's wife and lost all credibility...with them... uh... and uh, the people that stood by us were, that actually made these statements backed off because she was an ex-con's wife, when the crap hit the fan. And this, this was... these are people in ministry, these are people who are supposed to know what's going on and things along this line, and again, I have another victim, because she's a victim of a crime she never committed (John, Jane's husband: an ex-prisoner).

While some family members have experienced discrimination in the workplace that is overtly related to their association with a convict, others express concern that their status may impact future employment opportunities or limit their options. Two of the participants, a sister and a mother mentioned concerns about the implications of their family members' records for government security checks.

I worry that people will just look at me as in like, associate me with him and say that's her brother, I mean, that's his sister, she's... I don't know... I worry about people thinking bad of me or...hate me...or um... yeah [...] I also worry about school. Like also because I wanted to apply for CSIS after my bachelors, and uh, that's probably not an option that's very...um... well because they said that they do a family background check and stuff like that, so I'm worried that I might not get the job because of that. CSIS and the RCMP too, that's if I don't go to law school. So those are options and I'm worried that I might not get the job. Cuz like I said I have other brothers too, not just him. So, yeah... (Kim, a prisoner's sister).

Because my husband worked for the government and he travelled overseas...um... he had to have a very high level security check. And I remember this one security check that they were going to do on him and he was so concerned that Karl's, uh, behaviour would impact on this security thing. And he said, look, you know, I just don't know how this is going to go... I don't know whether I'm going to get this clearance to go here, there and wherever he had to go and, of course, you know, I'm an optimist... and I said, well, you know you're just gonna have to wait and see how it goes, but it's YOU that's having the security check... not Karl... it's You. And I'm thinking, oh, please god, let me know what I'm talking about. And I mean, you can reason that out, but it was a valid concern (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

In the previous chapter, Catharine, the wife of a prisoner, recalled her difficulties in finding employment in law offices which she attributed to being “on the other side of the fence”. Sue, another wife pointed out that many employers may not be willing to accommodate the need to take time off for private family visits.

I have a life outside of the prison walls, you know. And in some respects we do our own form of prison sentence, I believe, because we are limited to certain avenues. Some jobs probably wouldn't take you when they knew you wanted to have time off every three months for trailer visits. I've been very fortunate. The jobs that I was offered, or the jobs that I had, there was no problem with that (Sue, a prisoner's wife).

Again, it is not at all clear that these types of concerns are grounded in probability, since most family members report no difficulties in obtaining the time that they need to visit their incarcerated family member and Francine's husband got his needed security clearance, but the fears of stigmatisation do perpetuate the desire to maintain secrecy. Due to the possibility of stigmatisation, the majority of family members disclose as little as possible unless it is absolutely necessary. In the following sections we discuss situations in which disclosure is required and family members are most vulnerable to stigma: their interactions with the criminal justice system.

Stigma in Interactions with the Criminal Justice System

There are some situations in which the link to the incarcerated family member is immediately obvious and “passing” in order to maintain face is not an option. Interactions with the criminal justice system and related services open family members up to the possibility of stigmatic reactions and provide little room for identity management. The majority of family members in my sample related instances of negative treatment by criminal justice agencies that can be directly related to stigma.

Several of the family members that I spoke with searched for support and assistance in the immediate aftermath of their loved one’s arrest. Because there are so few services available for the families of prisoners, often times they would approach local victim service agencies, only to be turned away and informed that they were “not victims”. Two wives spoke specifically of the demeaning treatment that they received from victim service workers:

I did make a call to victim services and I was told that I was not a victim... and therefore couldn't get any help... Yeah, well... I'd like to sit there in front of someone and tell them... because they... victims come in every kind and every sort and at the end of the day our lives were also turned upside down and you have to struggle to find a way to accept things and deal with things... and you're ostracised... Like my boyfriend's family, they've been very good and very supportive, but they still know when they go out people are looking at them. So, yeah, I think victim services needs to really review things because there's all sorts of victims and for them to be able to have said to me "you're not a victim" when my world crashed... for something that I didn't do... is completely inaccurate and unfair (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

I had also a very, very negative experience with victim's services at the police station. Because I am actually a named victim in one set of the crimes, like at...there was all those crimes that happened in that day but what actually was a little bit leading after that[...] So I was named [as a victim] in one set of charges, which is the only thing that I actually hope that will help me because I'm going to write to the Crown attorney to ask for a publication ban on anything to do with me - anything that would help

*me be further stigmatized or my husband. I don't know if they will recognize that [...] I just thought, maybe I could go to victim's services and there's something that they can do to help me because everything is just getting worse and worse and worse. And so, I went to victim's services and the person who works there, it's only one person, she never tries to even talk to you, basically was like, *snide voice* "well what are you here for?" you know? And I just tried to explain and it was just made pretty clear to me that unless I wanted to hate William, there's nothing that she would do for me. And then she said, "just to let [you] know, the two victims have asked about you and how you're doing" and I said, "please, I think about them everyday and please, pass that same thing back, like I'm always..." And this victims services person said, "I won't do that, they don't need to hear from William's arena." Y'know? So it's just like... it was horrible. Horrible way to treat me. So I just felt totally vulnerable (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).*

One of the most salient encounters in which passing is impossible is the experience of entering the penitentiary as a visitor. Nearly all of the family members in the sample had visited the prison where their loved one was incarcerated ($n = 27$) and all but one reported that their interactions with correctional officials were negative at least some of the time. Only one wife felt that she was consistently treated well by the guards. Another wife and one parent reported that their treatment was predominately positive, with the exception of a few negative moments. However, the vast majority of the family members reported multiple incidents of rude or demeaning treatment perpetrated by correctional guards in the visitor centre and many reported a general feeling that prisoners' family members were not respected by the corrections staff or treated courteously. This phenomenon was consistently reported across the country, with marginally better treatment reported in Atlantic Canada than in the central or western regions.

Maximum, medium and minimum... and halfway house... community... Um... it's intrusive because... most of the staff see you through the same glasses as they see the offenders. They see you as the offender as well. There's very little respect given to families. And interestingly enough, the

higher the security level the worse it gets... I remember one time I was standing... there had been an incident in the maximum and I was waiting to go into a PFV... and um... I was signed in... and you know, most of the staff know who you are and you have no idea who they are, there's just too many of them... And one staff member, they were talking about videos and, you know, watching videos that night and... one staff member asked the other, "what are you gonna watch for videos tonight?" and he said, "oh, I think I'll get [name of a porn video with the interviewee's first name in the title]... which is a common porn video, and because of my name, my first name... um... you know... so it was directed to me. And... like, families just don't deserve, nor do they expect that kind of disrespect. So, and that was in the maximum (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

I think they have their moments when they decide, like, we're gonna target this person, cuz... they seem too comfortable. Sometimes it really felt like this, cuz I saw with other people too... the moment you start to look like you're doing okay... something happens. So... I think that... I don't think they really target the family member... they probably target the inmate, where... wait a minute... you look too happy, you're supposed to be in prison, we're gonna make your life a little bit more difficult (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Once in a while, somebody would just say something. Like I would be going through security and the guard would say, "how are things going" and I'd say well, "one day at a time" and then he'd say "well you know he's never gonna get out". So people would just feel very free to give their comments. That's everyone from random members of, like people that I knew or if I would run into somebody or...even the chaplain said to me once, the prison chaplain, "oh, are you still coming to visit him?" y'know, like "let me know when you're not coming anymore." And um, so it just was very unsafe experience because I could never tell who was safe for me to be around and who wasn't. Like, emotionally safe. And I never knew where the next, sort of, blow was going to come from and it felt like being a punching bag with people (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

Um... sometimes you get guards who are, you know, just polite and do their job and then other times you get people on that, I don't know whether you know, but when you go in there's a... what do you call it? A box...a glassed in box and sometimes the people in there can be really... Abrasive... you know...I have seen people be really badly treated, like one time I saw a lady go there and um... I mean she wasn't a girl, she was, you know, probably a mom... and when she asked to see her...son...and went away to put her things away and then came back and said, 'oh, um, I meant to leave some money,' and the guy behind the glass said, 'Look, there's the notice. You're supposed to do that before you do anything else!' Well, okay... yes the notice is there, but I don't know,

maybe she'd never been there before... um... and that's stressful going to a place like that. I mean I think he could have just said, oh, well, next time, you know, could you do that before you do anything else? And that kind of response to people I think is unnecessary. And it creates bad feelings with people who are going there. So, um... I think that you know there are some people who should be selected for the front line, shall we say? (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

They're crappy at [the prison]. Really crappy. Um... I can't tell you exactly how because it's... it's more a feeling, a condescending, patronising type of thing than... than anything. It's not like you can give a story and say, 'well, they did this, or they did that.' Uh... it's like when we go down to... it depends on the guard. Some of them are miserable as hell. They'll wait til everybody's checked in before they'll let one of us through. You know, some of them will let four at a time go. Others don't care. And other are the same. And that takes a good twenty minutes off your visit (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

The negative treatment that family members often experience when entering the prison to visit can be very demoralising and in some cases results in family members choosing to visit less often or not at all. Even the inmates will sometimes choose to forego visits in order to spare their loved ones the embarrassment and stress of prison visiting.

I went to visit him at... I went to visit him when he was at [the first prison], I think about 5 times ... and I probably visited him, maybe three or, I don't know how many months he was in [the second prison], maybe it was only two. But I went up about three times, I think. Or maybe more. I don't know. It's very different at [the second prison], the visiting. The visiting isn't the same and the guards are really, really asinine, and... He told me, he said, 'don't keep comin' up here,' he said, 'don't worry about it.' He said, 'I just stick to myself,' he said, 'you don't have to put up with their shit. Much as I like seein' you, I know you're just down the road,' and uh... So anyways, I didn't go to see him in [the second prison] as much as I thought I would (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

Well, this is the thing, is that when he has been in prison he doesn't want me to visit. He just has always said it's not a place I want my mom to come to... which makes it difficult because, you know, you're relying on letters and telephone... and it's a thing, it's a respect thing, he said, I don't really want my mom... you know... and that's okay (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

I go for my private family visits, but I... unless there is a very long time in between community visits or private visits and the next event I try not to go to regular visits. Because the time it takes to register, go through the drug scanning machine, the dog, then... have him come out... you're sitting there for like an hour. And I find it's a lot of... stress creating events just for that hour. And I'm having a hard time dealing with prison right now. It's not a good experience. Which surprises me, cuz it's never been a problem in the past. And I've always prided myself as so strong, but it's getting to me [...] just the atmosphere mostly, the guards and the general attitude (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Family members do acknowledge that the treatment that they receive varies, depending on the individual staff members with whom they interact. Some correctional officers who work at Visits and Correspondence (V&C) are viewed as being more respectful and better to deal with than others and the family members seem to genuinely appreciate these individuals for treating them with respect and courtesy.

There's some very very nice people. And there are some very very very bad people. Yeah. Well, it's like in the world. But, um, some people are there for the pay. And a possible... success and advancement and... um... the potential of power that's there... others are there to make a difference, usually they don't last a long time, unfortunately. But when they do... either they change... or they burn out (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

We had also at [the prison], we had this one chaplain that just saw me as a pathetic woman who comes to visit her husband in prison, like "how pathetic". There was this other chaplain who was, and remains, even though William has moved from that prison, we, once in a while we're in contact... just truly compassionate and beautiful and helpful to us through the death of William's mother, that's where we got to know this person. I never felt judged, I felt really supported, I felt valued, as an intelligent and strong woman. Um, y'know, so the range of experience was extremely broad and still is, y'know? Because he has now this CXQ officer who is so compassionate, but his parole officer who I talked to for the first time the other day, I can tell, she just really thinks that I must be crazy and it's a horrible feeling to feel pitied. It's truly awful. So it's very, very wide-ranging (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

Gender in Criminal Justice System Interactions

Gender seems to play an interesting role in these interactions with correctional officials. Four female family members (both wives and mothers) mentioned that they prefer to deal with male correctional guards at V&C, rather than female. They surmised that female guards in a male prison are constantly challenged by the male inmates and their colleagues and feel the need to “act tough” in order to maintain respect. This approach to their work is then transferred to the visiting room and manifests itself in the rude or abrupt treatment of visitors.

We have all female [officers]. We're the only institution that does. All the rest have men.

Stacey: In the visiting area?

We used to have all male. It was wonderful, it really was.

Stacey: It was wonderful having all males?

That's right. They were very nice. They, "Hi, how are you?" you know, treated us like human beings. Now we have females, four females. The head of V & C is a male. He is very nice, but four females? It depends what kind of a mood they're in. Sometimes you'll get a hello out of them, sometimes you'll get nothing. You'll get the book shoved at you to sign in and that's the way it is. Um, I sometimes think it's a power trip with them. We're the women and we're in charge of the men and you're going to do what we say whether you like it or not. And if you don't like it, we'll just end your visits. So that they lord it over you. We never had half the problems when it was all men in our V&C. Never (Sue, a prisoner's wife).

Um... I've had mixed... I mean, you know, in a letter it's not... they're not seeing me face to face, I know... but that's, you know, I mean they do talk to me on the phone... which is kind of... you know... and I don't think I sound like a wingnut, so you don't... I've had a couple of guards out at [the institution] really really helpful, very helpful. Um... you know, I asked one of them a question out there and he said, look I'll get you the phone number, you know, he was very helpful. I've had other guards, and I hate to say this, but um... probably two of the worst I've had were females. It's like... they have to prove something... And I don't understand it because I really believe, and not just my own bias, but from talking to some of the guys... and I mean I've met some of the people that Karl knows and, like, we've gone downtown, for example, to appointments, and someone, "Hey Karl!" You know, so Karl introduces me... and, you know, sometimes we've had a coffee, and so I'm thinking... okay... but it's, you know, it's

okay. And I've gotten from these guys, as well, that... they would respect these female guards even more so if they were just normal, just not throwing their weight around. That they don't need to do that... you know, and I don't understand it... So it's, as I say, I would say two of the worst were females. And they were very... uh... almost sneering I would say...there's one out there at [the institution] who just... I swear she's there to make people's lives just miserable! (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

The idea that male guards may, in fact, treat women better is not a new hypothesis. The chivalry or paternalism hypothesis suggests that women in the criminal justice system receive better treatment from (predominately male) officials in deference to their position as the “weaker sex” (Pollack 1950; Thomas 1907; Reckless 1961). Males are argued to feel paternalistic and protective of women and to manifest this in chivalrous behaviour, both in everyday life and in the criminal justice system in particular. Although the chivalry hypothesis was originally put forward to analyse the treatment of female offenders and to explain gender ratio differences in criminal convictions, the perceived link between prisoners' family members and criminal lifestyle indicates that family members may be ‘lumped in’ with their convict loved one and treated in a similar fashion, which makes the application of the chivalry hypothesis to analyse guards' treatment of family members and visitors quite useful. While research outcomes on the phenomenon of chivalry in the criminal justice system have been mixed, the most recent analyses of the chivalry hypothesis have been nuanced to study the effects of gender stereotypes, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Anderson (1976), for example, is very critical of the notion of chivalry and suggests that it is better characterised as a form of paternalism that infantilises women and subjects them to more intrusive and insidious forms of control in the guise of protecting their interests and well-being. Later feminist criminologists have pointed out that the chivalry hypothesis does not apply equally to all

women involved in the criminal justice system (Chesney-Lind 1978, 1999; Crew 1991; Rafter 1990). As Meda Chesney-Lind (1978) argues:

paternalism accrues only to women who conform to a sex role which requires their obedience to men, their passivity and their acceptance of their status as the sexual property of only one man. Should they step outside of this boundary...chivalry is replaced by harsh exploitation and harassment (p. 204).

Thus, the more feminine and passive that a woman appears, upholding dominant gender stereotypes, the more likely she is to be the recipient of deferential treatment. Conversely, stereotypically unfeminine or deviant behaviour is more likely to be responded to with censure and denigration. Ethnicity and socio-economic status have also been recognised as having an impact on chivalrous behaviour insomuch as their manifestations are related to predominant societal conceptions of “emphasised femininity” (Messerschmidt 1997). That is, middle and upper-class white women who dress well, are well-spoken, and behave in a “ladylike” fashion can expect to be treated with more respect and sympathy than lower-class minority women who may be perceived as less feminine and refined and therefore less “deserving” of protection and aide (Worrall 1990). Similarly, women who are outspoken, assertive and vocal about their expectations may find themselves at odds with those in authority.

The women who had predominately positive experiences with correctional staff invoked their own “polite and respectful” behaviour at the prison to explain why they did not encounter difficulties, while they observed the disrespect faced by those around them.

The staff here, with me, are very very good. And, like I said, I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that neither Tom nor I are any risk for drugs. We don't cause any problems and... when they found out that I'm a professional, what I do for a living, that changed a lot of how they looked at me. And I think... it sort of made them think to themselves, “Jesus, this could happen to anyone” (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

Um, I was treated mostly fine. Um, because I'm a really nice person, y'know? (laughs) I always would just be really polite and really kind and um... so y'know some people were really, really nice to me, especially the longer I went, the better it was (Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

The women who described themselves as more vocal about perceived injustices or who mentioned being willing to point out disrespectful attitudes and inconsistencies tended to also report greater levels of dissatisfaction with their treatment and more conflict with correctional staff. This suggests that, as per Chesney-Lind's (1978) observances, their "unfeminine", assertive, behaviour and aversion to passively giving up their rights may have contributed to the guards' harsh responses.

The Intersection of Social and Structural Stigmas

Clearly, the negative or disrespectful treatment of visitors is not part of official Correctional Service of Canada policies, which are purportedly based on a core value of "respecting the dignity of all persons". However, the seeming prevalence of antagonistic encounters between correctional staff and visitors at penitentiaries across Canada, and at various levels of security suggests that the phenomenon may be more institutionally pervasive than merely based in the prejudices and attitudes of certain individuals. It is likely that the attitudes of the guards are reflective of a larger social stereotype of prisoners and their families as risky individuals who pose a danger to institutional security and possibly to the general public as potential perpetrators of crime. This assumption is embedded in the structure of the institution and its security policies which appear to direct disproportionate scrutiny at visitors and family members, while neglecting to inspect the behaviours of staff, volunteers, suppliers and professionals to the

same degree. Family members are keenly aware of this discrepancy and describe a feeling of being targeted and treated “like criminals”. The commissioner’s directive with regard to the searching of visitors to federal penitentiaries states that “In all facilities except minimum security and Community Correctional Centres, there will be a routine non-intrusive search of all visitors upon entering the institution” (Correctional Service of Canada 2004a: 3). However, the precise nature and procedures for these searches are determined by the Institutional Head of each prison who is required by the directive to establish an Institutional Search Plan that is unique to the security needs of the institution (Correctional Service of Canada 2004a). Likewise, although the directive states that there is also to be a protocol for searching staff upon entry to the prison, policy allows the Institutional Head has a substantial amount of discretion in dictating the scope and types of searches that will be utilised. This discretion is exercised in a way that is consistent with the belief that prisoners’ family members are a threat to introduce drugs into the prison and they are subjected to greater scrutiny than either staff or those who are designated as “professional visitors” or volunteers.

Professional visitors or volunteers are screened for a general visiting list and enter the prison as representatives of a religious or charitable organisation who will interact with the prisoners for therapeutic purposes. They may, for example, address such criminogenic needs such as alcohol and drug addiction, as in the case with AA or NA volunteers, or promote the social integration of prisoners, as with various visiting programs such as M2W2 or the Infinity Lifers’ Liaison Group. Professional visitors or volunteers cannot be on the visiting list of a specific inmate and cannot have family visiting privileges. If a volunteer develops a personal relationship with a particular inmate

and is placed on his or her specific visiting list, volunteer visiting privileges will be lost and the individual will only be able to enter the prison for the express purpose of visiting the inmate who has requested the visits. Two of the women in the sample who met their men during his period of incarceration had previously been volunteer visitors and were forced to stop their volunteer involvement when they wished to pursue a relationship with an incarcerated man.

When I started seeing, I decided I wanted to see more of Jim, I had to give up [my volunteer work]... I wasn't, they don't allow people to visit one person and volunteer at the prison. Not even at another prison, which I don't really understand. I'm not sure what they think I would do! It's pretty stupid really, cuz I enjoyed the, the volunteering, the work (Megan, a prisoner's wife).

Although I could not find evidence of this policy in any written CSC documentation, it is uniformly observed. According to informal conversations with CSC executives, the purpose of not allowing family or personal visitors to volunteer at the institutions is to reduce the possibility of these individuals being used to assist prisoners in exchanging contraband or trafficking drugs into the prison. The reason that they cannot volunteer at another institution is to prevent the possibility of cross-contamination, or drugs being moved from one prison to another via the volunteer/visitor. The women who had previously been volunteers noted that their treatment at the institution changed with their newly acquired status as the personal visitor of an inmate. They noted that they were more frequently subjected to the use of the ion scanner and they subjectively felt that the guards' respect for them had decreased.

The Correctional Service of Canada is aware that family members and friends of inmates are sometimes placed under a great deal of pressure by their incarcerated loved one to bring illegal drugs and other contraband such as prescription medications and cash

into the prison. In many cases, the family member has not previously been involved in this type of illicit behaviour, but believes that her loved one will be in physical danger if the contraband is not obtained, and so is compelled to act out of care and fear. This places the family member in a precarious situation in which discovery of the trafficking can result in the permanent loss of visiting privileges at best, or criminal charges and jail time at the worst. Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner, started a support group for the families of prisoners and she spoke of the reality of the problem of families trafficking in drugs and some of the situations that she encountered. She made the point that some prisoners are willing to use and manipulate their family members for their own gain, without regard for the safety or well-being of their loved ones. Women who are involved with these men may be in unhealthy and controlling relationships:

There's families that bring drugs in. I mean, for me they're saying, oh that would never happen is like, yeah right. Right? They do... Well one of the things that we tried to do was educate, you know. You take that drug into your husband, it's not only going to affect him it's gonna affect everyone around him. If someone knows he has drugs in his cell... or whatever, then he could end up killed for the drugs, right cuz of someone else, or else he could end up, um... killing someone else's husband who you are also a friend of. So we do that sort of education. Plus, if you get caught, what's gonna happen to you? Um... we had a number of women who had gone through that, got caught and so we assisted, we provided support through, like going to court with them and everything else and helping them because a lot of them got house arrest and then a period of time where they, I mean... where they um, had to do some community services, they had to do other things, they had to go for counselling. [...] we had one lady who took money into the institution, right? He was at a minimum security, so he was allowed to have money, so he said, well, I can have money, so you can bring me some. And so, when she told me this I said, well did you give it to the guard? Well no. Well did you give it to anybody in authority inside? No, I just gave it to him. I said, that's illegal. I said, you can be charged with bringing something into a federal prison, I said, and that, you can get a nice little sentence for that. She said, well, no no no, you know? There's nothing wrong with that because he can have money. I said, IF it's given to him by the guards. And then it has to be in five dollar increments and dah dah dah. So she went back and she asked

him and he said, well yeah, but you would, it would only be a slap on the wrist for you. She ended her relationship. Because, she said, if he was gonna put it... that slap on the wrist that he's talking about is a big thing. I woulda lost my kids, my home, my job, everything. And it was nothing. So I wasn't that important. So she ended her relationship. Ended up moving on. Got married and the whole nine yards to somebody else, to somebody else who was not even involved in the prison system. So that was better for her (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

Jane also described a situation that she personally encountered and the irony of the Correctional Service's Response to women who are faced with this kind of pressure to carry contraband or risk their loved one's safety:

I know that when I was involved with John and people found out that I worked in a pharmacy I was approached myself about bringing things in. And they said that they were gonna mess with him. So... John called me that night and I said, 'I just want you to be prepared,' and he goes 'why?' I said, 'because someone found out I work in a pharmacy, they want me to supply them with drugs, I'm not doing that, so you'd better be watching your back because they said you're gonna end up hurt.' He said, 'don't worry, I'll take care of it.' I said, 'that's good cuz I'm not, whatever...' So, and I was lucky, cuz whatever he did on the inside, because that was not my issue, that was his issue. Right? That's the way I looked at it. That's a prison issue. That has nothing to do with me as a person. Um... but I mean, it was scary being approached, by I mean, people you don't even know come up to you because they figure you can do something for them, right. But I said, I woulda lost my job, I woulda lost my children, um, I woulda lost everything, just to do that sort of thing. Um...so...I understand the pressure that some of these families are under, um... but I also believe that they need to have a way out and sometimes they don't have that way. Because if they tell... even if they went to CSC and told CSC okay, I'm being pressured to bring drugs in, the first thing CSC's gonna do is stop their visits. So they lose, right? But they'll bring them in, then they have to do it the next time, the next time. So, I mean, so it's there, yeah. You have to do it in a way that these women are not gonna lose, or be under suspicion if they do... or report the ones that they know are bringing them in (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

The correctional response to the issue of pressure placed on family members to traffic drugs and other contraband into the prison prioritises the preservation of institutional security over the well-being of families. As Jane pointed out, there is little

recourse for a family member who is faced with this kind of scenario as reporting the situation to CSC will likely result in the loss of visiting privileges, at least temporarily if not permanently. CSC rationalises the removal of visiting privileges theoretically as the easiest and most expedient means of ensuring that the family will not succumb to the pressure to introduce contraband and protecting the family from any recourse that may result from refusal to comply. In practice, this policy is perceived by family members as punitive and reduces the likelihood that family members will report such a situation to CSC because they do not want to lose their visiting privileges. This places family members who are approached or threatened in a difficult position of weighing the legitimacy of the danger to their loved one with the possibility of criminal sanctions if they are detected attempting to bring drugs into the institution. For women who are involved with controlling or manipulative men, the institutional response may have the effect of solidifying or exacerbating that control, as there are no safe options for reporting that will not jeopardise family contact. Ironically, the very policies that are intended to stymie the flow of drugs into the prison may place family members, and particularly wives of prisoners, in a position where they feel that they have no palatable recourse but to cooperate with their loved one's demands. The structural stigma that marks prisoners' family members as risky to the security of the institution entails that any attempt to report perceived threats or pressure to traffic in contraband is perceived by prison staff as confirmation of elevated risk and reacted to in a punitive way through removal of visiting privileges.

The correctional services' attempt to respond to the known pressures placed on family members and other visitors to transport drugs into the prison has been to institute

the use of mechanical screening devices to detect trace amounts of chemical and drug residue at visitor security. The Ion Mobility Spectrometry Device, or “ion scanner” as it is commonly referred to, is a constant source of frustration for family members who visit the prison on a regular basis. The ion scanner was introduced to Canadian federal correctional institutions in 2004 and all but three² of the sampled individuals had encountered the device. Two of the wives specifically identified the introduction of the ion scanner as having profoundly changed their experience of visiting at the prison in a negative way. They characterise the use of the ion scanner as assuming criminal involvement where often none is present and feel that they are treated as potential, or actual, criminals.

Um... then they put in that ion scanner and for the first little while they were gauging their thing and it wasn't putting up the small quantities of whatever they pick up... I wasn't ringing and in my head I was like, 'well I don't do drugs, I'm not in contact with drugs, I'll never ring.' And then all of a sudden I started. I started to ring. [...] But... it wasn't regular, and it wasn't like, some women I know, they rang almost every week when they went. It never got like that with me. But, I started to really resent the fact that I was treated like I had done something wrong when I hadn't. And... I'm so straight it's crazy! I'm probably straighter than three quarters of the employees in there! I do nothing! Nothing! I sit home and take care of my kids, I have no time to do anything else! And to be looked at that way, I started to really get... yeah... (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Certainly at the start... I felt like everyone was looking at me. I was very leery of the ion scanners and... I got frustrated, not... yeah I got frustrated I guess... because for the first few months I tested positive, for... all the time. And I didn't... I've never used drugs... and because I just moved here and I didn't know anyone so I never went to anyone's house and no one came over to mine and I always showered right before I got in my car to go see him... and I couldn't understand it. And once it was very high and it was high three times and ... so they got someone out and spoke with me... and my visits were never cancelled... but now it hasn't happened for

² One, a sister, had not encountered the ion scanner because she did not visit the prison and the other two were wives who had visited the prison but their loved ones had been released prior to the introduction of the ion scanner in 2004.

a year, I guess... But there was... there's a lot of nervousness going into it...(Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

Family members who are taking prescription medications often find that they will set off the ion scanner. Three of the interviewees recounted instances where their use of legally prescribed medications caused them difficulties and anxiety at institutional security. These types of stories were also a common topic of discussion during the focus groups.

I found out a little while ago that I was taking an anti-fungal for my athlete's foot that was recurring. So I was taking both the cream and the capsules, and one nice person at the drug, the ion scanning machine, he was nice enough to explain to me that, yes, that can have it ring for heroin. Uh, yeah. Cuz apparently they're both made with opiates. So, um, I rang positive, but he looked at it and he said that the ratio... of some kind of chemical versus the other kind of chemical showed him that it was probably not drugs... and my son said, 'oh it must be the pills you're taking.' And I said, "David, I'm taking an anti-fungal, it can't be that!" And the guy said, "yeah it is" [...] And he gave me the name of the product that I was using, without me naming the product (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

You know, the first time I was introduced to the ion scanner was a social at a medium security institution, and I had had an intolerance to dairy products...and I had taken a lactate pill... which is, you know, to help process lactose... before I went in, because I knew they were serving pizza, that was on the menu and there was cheese. And they scanned my hands. Well that was before they knew not to scan hands, okay, and it came up a barbiturate. Okay? And it was at that point that I realised that if you have anything on your hands, that ion scanner is going to identify it to the closest possible chemical that it can relate to... so that was my first experience. I haven't had too much difficulty with the ion scanner... one time a lady went before me and tested positive for cocaine and I went behind her and I tested positive for cocaine. Well, you know, they're supposed to change all of the... they're supposed to change their gloves and they're supposed to change the insert that goes into the scanner and they're supposed to use a new swab every time, but you know what? These people are human and they don't know enough about this machine anyway. So... when they tested me the second time, they did all that and tested again and I came up clean... but, yeah... the ion scanner is... you know... I don't think that they're... they know enough about it. And I'm

not sure. I mean, I know they need something to try and prevent the transfer of drugs into the institution because of security and many other factors... but I'm not sure that the ion scanner is the way to go. It's not accurate enough. It's just not. So... that's intrusive, you know, when you test positive and you know full well that you're not a drug user and never have been (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

While correctional staff can use the ion scanner readings to distinguish between the higher levels of drug content consistent with illicit drugs and those lower readings that are indicative of a legal medication, individuals often find that the reaction of the staff is not understanding or sympathetic in these instances of “false positives”. In fact, correctional service personnel will not use the term “false positive” to describe these instances where a visitor registers a positive reading on the ion scanner, although they are not carrying drugs. CSC maintains that the ion scanner is a machine that merely scans for the presence of chemical particles and therefore is not capable of error. According to CSC policy, a positive reading on the ion scanner that exceeds the predetermined minimum threshold requires the completion of a Threat Risk Assessment (TRA), which entails a second test on the ion scanner (on a different article of clothing or another part of the body), an interview with the suspect individual, and possibly a manual or strip search, which the individual has the option of refusing if they choose not to enter the institution (CSC 2004a). The minimum threshold for incurring a TRA varies, depending on the particular type of drug, but is set at zero tolerance for hash/marijuana and opium (CSC 2004b).

Even when legitimate prescription medications cause a positive reading on the ion scanner, family members are treated as suspect and are often detained for lengthy periods of time while the TRA is completed, taking away from valuable visiting time. While the correctional service's need to prevent the transfer of drugs into the prison is a legitimate

cause, family members who are not involved with drugs, but who scan positive often feel that they are treated in an arbitrarily harsh manner rather than being processed in a professional and efficient way.

I thought... um... I was positive for some drug thing. They have an ion scanner. I don't take, I take prescription drugs, that's the only drugs I take. And uh, oh one time they said I was takin' cocaine and another time it was marijuana... another time I forgot what it was, heroine or something. And of course I never touched anything like that. And I was scared stiff. And I had to sit there and wait until they got somebody, um... to come and say it was okay for me to come in there, or do a strip search, or whatever the hell they were gonna do. And so I sat there for an hour and a half. Finally they got the guy on the phone and he just said, 'oh, just let her in. That's fine.' So I had half an hour [left to visit] (Isobel, a prisoner's wife).

Anne interpreted the rude treatment by correctional staff in the aftermath of a positive drug scan as a form of humiliation, meant to shame her for her relationship with an incarcerated man. The lack of explanation and information increases the anxiety and fear experienced by family members and results in frustration with the correctional staff.

It's very frustrating [when you test positive on the ion scanner]. And then, if you get somebody that doesn't explain anything to you, you go sit down and you're like... I don't understand...and then the guard at the visit will say to you... he goes, 'oh, you rang!? [Sarcastic tone] I mean, nobody else did.' Like aahhh! Hey listen, I know I don't do anything! And if I can ring that means if you were tested, you would probably ring! You know, like... give me some credit. But you don't get it, because you're involved with somebody who, in their eyes, doesn't deserve it. And that gets to be frustrating (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

There is not a lot of education given to family members about policy or procedure in terms of corrections. They're just told what to do and if they don't do it they get refused visits. There's no explanation as to... security... security issues. Families don't know what the guys are living inside... they don't know the kinds of things... I mean, we only know what our husbands or boyfriends or sons or, nephews tell us... okay, and that's their perception of things. So, we don't know what they're involved in... what they should be staying away from and perhaps are not... So... you know, there's no open communication between staff and family members, which is very, is extremely difficult. Because family members do not want

to be embarrassed, they do not want to be made a spectacle of... they do not want to be punished like they're little children... and have done something wrong and they don't even know what they've done wrong. So... it's... it needs to be improved upon... the communication between staff and just, you know, families need to be respected just because they're humans. And it doesn't happen (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

In focus groups, the women described a general sense of feeling targeted and under suspicion as the main focus of Correctional Service Canada's drug prevention policy. In fact, the guidelines for the use of the Ion Mobility Spectrometry Device prescribes its use for scanning visitors to the institution only, who are defined as "immediate member[s] of the family (mother, father, sister, brother, spouse or common law spouse); anyone who has been approved to visit the inmate; or any other member of the public entering the institution that is *not a CSC employee*" (Correctional Service Canada 2004b:2, emphasis added). There is no reference to scanning employees and contract staff on a regular basis. The institutional emphasis on visitors as a potential source of drugs creates a divisive, in-group/out-group mindset between the correctional staff and the visitors which serves to exacerbate the stigmatic attitudes that individual staff members often present to prisoners' family members. Most of the family members emphasised that the problem is not the routine drug screening, as they understand the requirements of institutional security, but the suspicion and disdainful treatment that they feel they receive as a result. Family members, on the whole, do not believe that the correctional staff members are adequately screened for drugs and that undue blame is placed on visitors for the quantity of drugs available in prisons.

Well, let's get it this way... you can, a person coming in can't bring a heck of a lot in, for the amount of drugs that are in prisons. So think about it, the suppliers, the people that are bringing in the meats, that sort of thing, um... the guards. I mean in KP if you look at the thing that happened, well ten fifteen years ago in KP where they had, um... they had massive, I think

there was ten guards that were named, the two that committed suicide, whether they actually committed suicide or not, that whole thing was drug related. Um...I mean, John said himself that when he, his father died when he was in prison and one of the guards came up and gave him a drink. Actual liquor, said, you probably need this... it should not have been in the prison, right?[...] so I mean you're not gonna, the only way that you could have zero tolerance in a prison is that you test everybody (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

To me, the only difference between some of the guys in there and the guys who are guarding them is a uniform. Which is pretty sad. And when Karl was being released this time, he went before the parole board. And, uh... they said to him... so where do you think the drugs come from in prison? And Karl looked at them and said, your own people. And they said, well how can you say that? How do you know that? And he said, well, because just this week one of your guards was let go because he was one of the main carriers... he came in with a lunch pail and they, for some reason, checked his lunch pail...and there he had this big parcel...And Karl said they didn't say anything. That was the end of that discussion. And his parole officer sat here and said "I can't understand why anybody would do drugs in jail...Why would you want to do drugs while you're in prison...?" (Laughs) They just don't get it! [...] But the other thing is that it's also the... the, um... the monetary system in the jail. The guards bring it in, the guards make a lot of money... on a lesser level, um... a carton of cigarettes is way over the top, like a hundred bucks or something like that... (Francine, a prisoner's mother).

Most recently, the 2007 Correctional Service Review Panel reported that they were informed by “staff and unions that visitors are considered one of the major sources of drugs coming into the penitentiaries” (Correctional Service of Canada Review Panel 2007:31). Notably the role and interest that union and staff members may have in protecting the reputation of the Correctional Service of Canada and its employees was not questioned nor remarked on, and the panel did not recommend any changes to institutional policy with regard to the screening of correctional staff. However, they did recommend the enhancement of visitor screening, and included the advice of the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness that “any visitor convicted of attempting to

transport illicit drugs or narcotics into institutions be banned for life from entry upon CSC premises...” (Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness, as cited in Correctional Service of Canada Review Panel, 2007:31). They recommended the increased use of drug dogs, ion scanners and searches of visitors to the institutions. This narrow focus on visitors as the primary source of drugs trafficked into the prisons, which seemingly excludes CSC staff and contractors from suspicion, reflects a stigmatic view of prisoners’ family members and associates as a risk to institutional security and, by extension, to public safety. Conversely, the correctional staff are perceived to be protecting the public from the dangers associated with criminality and drugs and are therefore themselves not risky, nor subject to suspicion. Power, then, shapes official knowledge about the sources of drugs in prison, and affects institutional policy in a way that overtly blames prisoner’s family members for introducing drugs into prisons and ignores the possibility of staff involvement in the institutional drug trade.

The family members in the sample were not naïve to the reality that some family members do attempt to traffic drugs into the institutions. In fact, interestingly, fifteen of the seventeen interviewees remarked on the risks posed by other family members, while differentiating themselves from the stereotype. They justified the need for institutional security and drug screening policies in terms of others’ risky behaviour and emphasised that although they did not personally use or traffic in drugs, certainly others did.

There are people who come in to visit these guys who are unscrupulous, and there are drug dealers, there are all kinds of people trying to get in there and do stuff. And, I mean, whatever you can imagine. There’s more that people would try to do. ... so there’s good reasons for all of that stuff. I mean, I know it makes us feel, because we don’t have those motives, but it made us feel like sort of second class citizens I guess (George, a prisoner’s father).

I went in here to visit Tom and there's been girls in front of me, as they're talking I can see the pills in their mouth. And they go in and they are rude and think the staff just pick on them, but I'm like, "well you've got pills in your mouth when you're talking to me for Christ sakes," you know, if you don't want to get caught then don't bring them in. That's just how I am. Right or wrong, that's how I'm looking at things (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

I don't do drugs, okay? And I would never, ever, never even imagine trying to, bringing them in. But I know there are some who do. Um, they put them in their bras, down their pants. Even up inside, you know... in their vaginas, sometimes. So the ion scanner, they need it. For sure. But it just seems unfair when, you know, when I get a hard time and I don't even touch the stuff (Daphne, a prisoner's wife).

The unfortunate reality is that the actions of a few visitors who attempt (and sometimes succeed) to import drugs into the prison affect the treatment of prisoners' families as a whole. The rude and disrespectful treatment that family members often experience, does not directly contribute to institutional security, but it does serve a useful function in reinforcing the hierarchy of the institution which places staff above visitors and inmates. The institutional policies which focus risk management disproportionately on visitors allow individual staff members to justify the stigma that they place on family members and perpetuate negative interactions between family members and staff on an individual level. This intersection of institutional security policies and the treatment of visitors exemplifies the complex, dyadic relationship that exists between structural and symbolic forms of stigma in which one reinforces the other in a continuous, hermeneutic circle. It is the symbolic stigma of association with criminality which initially prompts the definition of prisoners' families as risky individuals, justifying increased surveillance and risk management responses. The risky identity and associated danger to institutional integrity that is assigned to family members then prompts the maintenance of an in-group/out-group division which allows correctional staff to deny prisoners' family

members basic respect and courtesy, manifesting in increased symbolic forms of stigma at an interpersonal level. Family members rightly argue that were staff subject to the same levels of scrutiny and suspicion upon entrance to the institution that they would be more likely to recognise that the individuals entering the prison are not uniformly “risky” and would treat visitors as individuals, reacting to risk on a case by case basis, rather than prejudging families on the grounds of their association with a convict.

In-group Stigmatisation as Identity Management

The tendency of the family members in the sample to verbally differentiate themselves from the dominant stereotype of prisoners’ families as risky and problematic people may be viewed as a form of identity management in a situation where passing is not an option. The very act of applying for permission to visit an incarcerated man identifies them as a discredited individual. In their interactions with the correctional staff and system, families are often striving to be seen as individuals who are worthy of respect and consideration. Much of the frustration that they experience in entering the prison seems to be linked to the fact that their personal qualities are subsumed and rendered invisible by a stigmatic, stereotyped character that is imposed by the institution. As Anne so succinctly put it:

Well, I think it all comes down to one issue. It's that families are being considered as criminals. Where we're not... so we're being treated negatively to start with, we're being looked at in a negative light to start with. I think if they saw that most families are, um... just like them. Like normal citizens, it would change their entire outlook and... they would treat us completely differently than they do now (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

Anne similarly spoke of feeling offended that the correctional staff felt the necessity to check on her safety during her private family visits with her husband. She conceptualised herself as a strong, independent woman who would not stay in a problematic or abusive situation and she described her irritation that the correctional staff did not recognise this quality:

I can't deal with the fact that they're coming to check on me. And some of them check on him... most of them check on me... and that hurts me. They want to see if I'm all right. And I'm not that kind of person who would stay there if I wasn't. And, for them not to see that, it really bothers me for some reason, which is a silly little thing, but over time it's gotten to me to a point where I flip (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

The desire to hang onto even the smallest shreds of individual identity in the face of a system that categorises persons by risk and association lends itself to the perpetuation of in-group/out-group divisions that are designed to showcase one's difference from others who are similarly labelled. The families of prisoners, and particularly the wives, seem to create a hierarchy amongst themselves that serves to perpetuate the existing stereotypes. Women talked not only about their belief that some of the visitors were disreputable and involved in drug trafficking, but four of the wives also described a general disdain for other family members as “troublemakers”, or characterised them as “complainers”, while another remarked on the lack of self-esteem and independence portrayed by many prisoners' wives.

There are some women I wouldn't want to be seen with and I stay clear of those sorts of people. Some of them... I'm pretty much a private person, but there's some of them that I've talked to and that [...] I've found these little groups where the prison wives get together, there's too much chattiness going on. You know, my husband said this, your husband said this...some of them don't have the same needs or the same outlook on certain things [...] It turned into one of those moaning and groaning about what your husband said and, and my husband said this and, you know, bickering about individuals instead of pulling together as a joint union,

trying to get change. And somebody to listen. It was just like me, me, me. Well, that's not going to change anything (Sue, a prisoner's wife).

I know a lot of those girls on, in that group, like online, they're always, there's always something that seems to be that's, you know, they're up in arms about with the guards or scanners or, you know, stuff like that...It just doesn't interest me (Erin, a prisoner's wife).

I went on that website [...] I haven't necessarily found that to be a helpful site with the women or the families that chat there. And maybe it's just that I look at things different, I'm not sure. I find that there's a lot of real... I don't know, maybe bitching or complaining and I'm just not into that. If someone was going to say let's start a self-help group where every Wednesday we're going to go on and chat, or these are some of the issues, what can we do to try and fix them? I'd be all for it. But for someone to sit there and say, "you know, I went in there and the guard told me something and I sure put him in his spot when I told him to f-off", and I was like, "well what would I want to communicate with you for?" That's just my way, right? (Brenda, a prisoner's partner).

I went into that chat room, but I was really afraid at that point, like I made this fake name for myself 'cause I was so, y'know, just had, had this terrible experience. I didn't really want to have anything to do with it because I just, I really didn't – I don't know, it just seemed like it was kind of, it wasn't really highly functioning, it was sort of, just, from reading other people's comments, it was always like, just people ranting about this thing or that thing or "awww my boyfriend has to serve six months, blah, blah, blah" and I just felt like, "I'm so far away from that" [...] Like I just felt, sure, I could relate to people just based on the fact that we have a loved one in prison, but beyond that, I'm, y'know, I didn't know who I could relate to. We're not involved in drugs or alcohol or gangs or a lot of the other reasons why people are in prison...(Danielle, a prisoner's wife).

A lot of them did not have very high self esteem, they were not, they didn't think very much of themselves, they didn't have their own... um... mind. I know that doesn't quite sound what I mean, but, but a lot of the direction that they took in their life they received from the guy that was inside. Um... I'm just tryin' to think of a for instance for that.... Um...it's like basic, you know, just like, "Well I want you to be home by a certain time, I'm gonna be calling," that sort of thing and then that was the mentality. I didn't live by that mentality, if I was home, I was home, if I wasn't, oh well, too bad! Sort of thing, but, um, and one of the things that I found was that a lot of these women were not very empowered (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

Jane also described a tendency for the men's "prison issues" to filter into the wives' interactions in support group meetings. She mentioned that wives often labelled one another based on the offence that their husbands had committed. The wives of sex offenders would be most stigmatised and reviled by the others, presumably because they are thought to have been wise to their husband's deviant sexual tendencies and failed to act to prevent his offences. The wives of sex offenders and violent offenders would, conversely stigmatise the wives whose husbands had been convicted of drug offences as the type who are most likely to be involved themselves with trafficking and other forms of criminal behaviour. These hierarchies of marginality function for the wives as a means of saving face or preserving self esteem, in comparison to other women who are perceived as "worse" than they. However, as Sue emphasised, the divisions amongst the women and perpetuation of the stereotypes do make it difficult to present a unified front and to argue for change at a structural level. In striving to emphasise their own unique qualities and difference from the stereotypes in order to gain more repute and respect at an individual, symbolic level the women inadvertently perpetuate the existence of the very stereotypes that they are labelled with, which does nothing to challenge the prevailing structural definition of prisoners' family members as a risky population. As with service agencies that mobilise funding to offer assistance to prisoners' families as means of preventing inter-generational criminality, an attempt to make a positive impact for individuals by intervening upon them may serve to further justify the dominant societal understanding of the group as a whole.

Chapter Summary

The issue of the sticky stigma of criminality, then, is a problematic and complex difficulty that faces prisoners' family members. As we have seen, stigma may be transferred from the point of origin (the convicted man) to the family on the basis of association, genetics, commission, omission and/or continuation. Sticky stigma is manifested at the symbolic level in individual interactions through avoidance, discrimination and generally negative treatment of prisoner's families. Fear is a primary motivator for stigma and in the case of prisoners' families fear is based in a perceived threat of victimisation, or in the disruption of individual's understandings of a "just world". The cultural meanings of this stigma are often internalised by the family members and result in the expectation that they will encounter stigmatised reactions. As such, family members choose to manage their identities and practice selective disclosure in order to limit their potential exposure to negative interactions. As a result, family members are often isolated and unable or unwilling to seek assistance and support.

At the structural level, families are identified by criminal justice agencies and by correctional officials, in particular, as posing a risk to public safety or institutional security. Policies are put in place to manage this risk which single out prisoner's families and perpetuate the sticky stigma of association. While, structurally, policies may not be perceived as individually stigmatising, they do perpetuate and justify stigma at the symbolic level, resulting in an increase in instances of negative interactions for individuals.

Throughout these phenomena, gender plays a significant role in the transference of stigma. Consistently, stigma is more easily transferred from men to women due to

patriarchal values that construct the woman as an appendage to her male partner. Her identity is more closely bound to his and is more susceptible to be linked with his behaviour.

In the next chapter we will look at the impact of incarceration on the long-term well-being of the family. The problems that these families face and the stigma that they fight do not end at with the release of the prisoner from incarceration. When an incarcerated man returns to his family they are faced with a new set of challenges that they are often not prepared or equipped to deal with. Chapter seven describes these challenges and their links to the social, symbolic and structural stigmas that have been discussed thus far.

CHAPTER VI

NEGOTIATING THE HOMECOMING: THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF THE EX-PRISONER'S FAMILY

The difficulties experienced by the families of prisoners do not come to an end with the completion of the carceral sentence. A man's release from prison signifies the beginning of an entirely new period of emotions, adjustments, and unanticipated consequences for his family. For some families, it is a delicate dance of re-establishing the family unit and re-negotiating the family structure. Others are experiencing full-time family life for the first time with children who were born during the period of incarceration, or dealing with the creation of a blended family due to a relationship initiated while the man was in prison. Each of these situations poses unique challenges and can create new stressors for the family as they look forward to the release of a family member and set about creating a new life together.

Collectively, the role of the family in the re-entry / reintegration process and the impact of the ex-prisoner's (re)unification with the family is an area that is sorely neglected in the literature. Fishman (1990) addresses a brief chapter to the issue, but the period of (re)integration and the adjustments that are required has not been studied in a deep or systematic way. Although the process of (re)integration and the (re)unification of the family was not the focus of this study, accounts of difficulties and the lack of support during this period emerged as significant narratives in family members' tales of negotiating the incarceration of a loved one. Although only eight of the twenty-eight family members that I spoke with were in the midst of the post-carceral experience, six others had experienced the prior release of their loved one on parole and his return to prison due to a parole violation or new offence. These latter family members were

concurrently anticipating their loved one's re-release and apprehensive about what could go wrong. The issue of the release and reintegration of the incarcerated man was a concern mentioned by nearly all of the participants. Some were eagerly anticipating nearing release dates while others had literally years to wait, but most admitted to having spent time contemplating the future and wondering what would happen when their loved one was released. This suggests that the issue of prisoner reintegration is one that looms large for families and that concern and preparation for the release begins long before the parole board makes its decision or the warrant expiry date is reached. This chapter will discuss common concerns about the impending release of a loved one from prison, the challenges of negotiating the role of the family with respect to the Correctional Service of Canada's release planning and parole system, and some of the difficulties that families often encounter in negotiating the post-incarceration (re)unification¹ of the family. The conclusion will consider the lack of support for families in the re-entry / (re)integration phase of incarceration as an extension of the general lack of concern for prisoners' families. I discuss the failure of the correctional system to recognise the importance of ensuring family stability and protecting the family unit from the collateral damage of incarceration. This neglect and marginalisation is characterised as reflective again of a social stigma that legitimates the disregard for the well-being of prisoners' families.

Pre-release Concerns and Preparations

The twenty family members whom I spoke with whose husbands, sons and brothers were still incarcerated did not assume that the end of their loved one's prison

¹ I use the terms (re)unification and (re)integration to encapsulate the experiences both of families who have previously cohabited and maintained a role structure and those who have never had the experience of living under one roof as a family.

sentence would result in the end of their difficulties. While they retained hope for improved lives and the resumption of a normal family structure, they seemed, for the most part, aware that the transition would not be immediate and would require work. Half of the family members mentioned a concern for their loved one's adjustment and wondered if he would be able to "make it" on the outside, even with support and assistance from the family.

We're worried about him being there [in prison] and getting out and once he's out, hopefully, yeah, we... we don't know if he's gonna go back to his old lifestyle or yeah... cuz he, like I said, he always had problems with the police. It's not the first time (Kim, the sister of a prisoner).

All the time I was thinking, like, down the road, you know... okay, when he gets out, what are we, what's next? You know? What are we gonna do next? And uh, that uncertainty was a big, big burden. But you've kinda gotta wait and see [...] The biggest trouble is that he needs artificially created boundaries because he doesn't understand his own natural putting in those boundaries. He doesn't get that. So society or someone has to put those boundaries in place. And the justice system will do that quite well for you if you mess up! They give you an eight by ten boundary or an eight by six boundary, you know? (George, the father of a prisoner).

I have one family who I'm still friends with. And it was a mom, a daughter and a granddaughter, okay. The daughter, the mom was married to the guy that was inside and his daughter and then the grandchild. And one of the things, he came... um, they were very disempowered. Very much living for him to come home. And I said, well, what's he gonna come home to? There's no basis there. Right? And one of their fears was that he would recommit a crime and then go back in and they would end up going through this whole cycle again. And that's what happens. It's like doing life on the instalment plan. And the family is doing it along with him, right? (Jane, an ex-prisoner's wife).

The nature of the offence appears to be significantly related to family members' concerns. Offences related to drug addiction, sexual paraphilias, or chronic anger management problems appear to incite the most apprehension about the ex-offender's chances for a successful release and reintegration, probably due to the cyclical and

psychological roots of the offence pattern. This concern is, in many cases, well-founded since offenders who have engaged in a pattern of deviant behaviour, rather than in a single, impulsive or situational offence, are statistically at greater risk of recidivism. In most cases, the concern about the ex-prisoner's ability to cope and alter his lifestyle is related to his past behaviours, but sometimes worries may be exacerbated by other factors such as mental illness or disability. The mother of one incarcerated man related that there is little support for individuals such as her son who suffers from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome². She was concerned about finding support and assistance for her son on the outside when his sentence was complete:

Even before Peter was arrested there seemed to be no support for a young man in his situation. He was on a disability pension, he had his own apartment, but he really didn't interact anywhere else, you know? Well... we would go once a week and I would take him grocery shopping to get his groceries, but he spent most of his time in his apartment on the computer. Watching TV and on the computer...And he's the type, I know there's lots of other young men or women, especially with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, there's no way he can manage on his own...the rest of his life... He has to have some kind of support. So when his probation is over, what happens? (Helen, the mother of an incarcerated man).

Family members also express concern for the general well-being and self-efficacy of the ex-prisoner, particularly as related to his ability to obtain employment and sense of self-worth. Being aware of the stigma attached to a criminal record, several family members mentioned the fear that their loved one would be unable to find work and that this rejection would have a profound impact on his self-esteem and adjustment to life on the outside. Again, this concern is often related to the nature of the offence, with high

² Also commonly referred to as Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is a range of cognitive and physical disabilities that result from prenatal exposure to alcohol during pregnancy and have life-long effects on the development of the child. See Sokol, Delaney-Black and Nordstrom (2003) for an overview of FAS/FASD, its causes and effects.

profile violent or sexual offences being more likely to result in social rejection of the ex-offender.

I guess another issue is, and it's not one we deal with right now, but... how is he going to be when he comes out. Like he still has all these dreams of going back to his working life that he had before, and is he going to be able to? So you hope that down the road he's still able to feel good about himself... I guess... (Brenda, the partner of a prisoner).

I worry about it, like, what will he do when he comes out? What if no one will hire him? There's not a lot of people who are accepting, you know, of things like that, what he did...and it's awful, I get that. But he's a person, you know, and he deserves a second chance. He's not the same, but people will treat him like he is and I don't know...that's pretty shitty. It's like he's hardly got a chance before he even gets out. (Daphne, a prisoner's wife).

The parents of imprisoned men that I spoke with, in particular, seemed to put a great deal of effort into preparing for their sons' release. They mentioned having spent time setting up medical and psychological or psychiatric appointments, looking for support services and substance abuse programs, and seeking suitable housing, if their son was not going to live with them. On the whole, the parents did not have faith in the correctional system's ability to adequately rehabilitate or reintegrate their sons successfully and seemed to take personal responsibility for ensuring that their sons would have the best possible chance at success upon release. Francine, the mother of an incarcerated man, described her feelings about the system at length:

The rehabilitation thing, I mean, I do think... um... as I say, it's lip service. It's almost like some of the parole things are set up for people to fail... Um... you know, it's like saying to somebody, trust me, tell me when you use... would you trust somebody and tell them that you used a drug if you know that... you know, three weeks ago they said 'you use drugs and I'm sending you back to jail'? You know, you can't say things like that and expect people to trust you. So... they've got to get it... I mean really trying to rehabilitate people and if you're trying to rehabilitate people you don't have this kind of thing happening [gestures to photos of her son after he had been allegedly assaulted by correctional guards]... because what you're teaching those people is to be harder... and I'm talking about

people as inmates. You're teaching them... what's that old, you know... um... the stronger you are... so they're teaching them violence, that kind of thing teaches people violence. And it brings people out of prison with the wrong attitude. They come out with a chip on their shoulder, and rightfully so. So, how is that gonna help society? And there's something wrong... what is going on? You know, I wish that they would find what is going on that people come out and they can't cope... and then they go back to prison because that's the system that they know.

Francine also detailed to me how she had put considerable effort into making a series of medical and psychological appointments for her son prior to his release, only to have him returned to prison on a breach of parole for using drugs. She was understandably frustrated with this turn of events and concerned about having to obtain new appointments for her son's impending (re)release when the waiting lists were often very long. The care and concern that parents exhibit for their sons' reintegration seems to be a natural extension of the parenting role and parents will often take a personal, active interest in trying to prepare for and ensure their child's successful return to the community. This was true regardless if the parents were natural or adoptive.

Wives and partners with dependent children living in the household seemed most concerned about the ex-prisoner's ability to integrate into the family structure and how he would interact with the children and handle parenting duties. Of the nine wives/partners in the sample who had children, five were in a situation where the returning partner/father had never lived with the children. In two cases this was because the relationship had been initiated while the man was incarcerated and the children were from a previous relationship and in three cases the man was the natural father of the children, who had been conceived and born while he was in prison. For all of these women, the anticipation of uniting the family for the first time brought a mixture of emotions: excitement and hopefulness, worry and trepidation, and in some cases, fear. Anne, whose husband had

been convicted of a violent offence against a child, described the conflict between her trust and love for her husband and her devotion to her children and their safety:

Stacey: Does it concern you to have him come back and live with your daughter and son in the house, does that ever...

I think that's part of the stuff that's been playing in my head for the past year or so... um... I don't see him ever, ever, ever hurting one of our children... I know that when I think about the man I know, I don't see him ever hurting one of their friends either. But I am their mother before anything else and... I don't know what happened that night. So, uh... as much as I do trust him with my own life... is it fair that I take that chance, I don't know. It's... when I think logically... I think of the man I know, no... I'm not scared, but there are moments when I get more emotional and yeah, I think about it (Anne, a prisoner's wife).

There are extreme cases, such as this, but the majority of the concerns were far more mundane and revolved around perceptions of the incarcerated father as having been a “part-time dad” who was not prepared to take on the role of the full-time father and to participate in the day-to-day raising and discipline of the children. This concern was especially salient if the children were older and/or if the returning prisoner was a step-father, as this created a situation in which the children may not be receptive to instruction or discipline from their “new dad”. As discussed in Chapter four, the availability of private family visits can provide an opportunity for inmates to practice parenting skills and to develop relationships with their children, but these experiences are in some ways simulated and truncated and do not allow the incarcerated man to take on the role of a full-time parent. Jane spoke retrospectively of the adjustments that took place in her household when her new husband came home to live with her and her teenaged children and mentioned that it took a considerable amount of time for her children to accept their new step-father. She emphasised that it was important for her husband to be patient with

the children and to wait for them to offer him respect and to realise that he was not in a position to simply demand that they obey him and treat him like a father.

He was placed behind the children, in the sense that he, just because he came out and he was a male figure he wasn't a father figure. He had to wait for them to elevate him to father figure. That took a number of years to do. [...] That's one of the things that we had talked about before he even came home was the fact is that the kids came before him. And if it was gonna be the kids or him, it would be him gone. It wouldn't be the kids. Um... and so they knew they had that power. The kids knew they had the power, and so I think it was a lot easier for them in some, in that way. They didn't have to worry about, well, you know, Mom's gonna choose him over us. That's not gonna happen (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

The issue of family roles and the negotiation of the man and the woman's place in the household was also a concern for some wives/partners. After prolonged periods of separation, the women who are left behind to manage the household, to raise the children, and to live their own lives often find that they have acquired a certain amount of independence and are reluctant to relinquish their control and to return to a traditional, patriarchal role structure. In some cases, the women anticipate the possibility of role struggle, while others find themselves blind-sided by their partner's demands and behaviour upon his release from prison. One wife who participated in a focus group recalled that when her husband had been released from an earlier sentence (he had since returned to prison on new charges) he wanted to resume care of the family finances. She had become accustomed to living on a strict budget in order to make ends meet and was furious when, several weeks after his release from prison, her husband spent their grocery money on a video game machine, requiring her to go to the food bank to get groceries to feed their young children. She recalled this incident as one of the most embarrassing and devastating things she had ever experienced.

I couldn't believe it! Here, I was working... as many shifts as I could get and he was at home cuz he couldn't find a job yet. And then he just goes and spends, I think it was almost two hundred dollars on this thing! When I asked him why he would do that he said he needed something to do at home all day, and I was, like, 'why not go get a job then? Pound the pavement a bit!' And then he went off on how he was a grown man and could make decisions for himself, when I mean, he was not doing it. Not making good decisions. I was so... just angry... I remember I had to go to the food bank, and I was so embarrassed. I never had to do that before. I mean, we weren't rich and sometimes I didn't have much money, but I always made sure there was food (Lynn, a prisoner's wife).

Another wife recounted her husband's desire to parent their young son and his anger when she disagreed with his use of corporal punishment as a response to disobedience.

I don't spank my kid... I just don't believe in that. And I know he grew up with that, his parents would spank him and it was no big deal to them. But to me it is a big deal and I don't wanna teach my son that it's okay to hit people. And when I stopped him from spanking Jonathan he was so angry. Said that I was disrespecting him and, I don't know, taking his authority so the kids wouldn't listen to him. So we had a huge fight about that (Theresa, a prisoner's wife).

Prisoners' wives are not the only women³ to encounter these types of situations in which roles and expectations are challenged. For some time, those who study the reunion of soldiers with their families following a period of deployment have recognised the renegotiation of family and spousal roles as a key issue to be dealt with (see Boulding 1950; McCubbin, Dahl, Lester and Ross 1975; McCubbin and Dahl 1976; Metres, McCubbin and Hunter 1974; Rotter and Boveja 1999; Sullivan-Kwantes, Febbraro and Blais 2005). Many of the women in this study whose partners were not yet released from prison were cognisant of potential difficulties and often described attempts to mitigate problems by initiating discussions with their partners in advance of the release date. The

³ Men can also experience a reluctance to give up newfound parenting and household roles following the absence of the female partner. While the majority of studies of family separation and reunion in the military have assumed the male partner as the deployed soldier, increasing numbers of women in active service have led to the consideration of the reverse situation (see, for example, Kelly, Herzog-Zimmer and Harris 1994).

six women who had experienced the process of incarceration and release before would be described by Laura Fishman (1990) as “oldtimers”. These women, who had the benefit of previous experience, were determined to make their expectations clear and to avoid earlier mistakes.

Gender plays a clear role in these types of conflicts and the female partner’s desire to maintain her own independence in the face of traditional notions of a gendered division of labour and household hierarchy. A man who is returning from prison has, in many ways, experienced a profound loss of power throughout the term of incarceration - what some might describe as emasculation - and may often feel the need to reassert his own masculinity by resuming stereotypically gendered roles and behaviours (see Messerschmidt 1997), including his position as “head of the household”. The female partner, who has been forced by necessity to take over this role in her partner’s absence will often resist this imposition of authority and struggle to maintain her own self-efficacy and control in the relationship, leading to conflict.

Who plays what role, you know? In our tradition of faith, you know, the man is the head of the household, but there’s no way that he’s gonna be the head of my household just getting out of prison after seventeen years! You know... so... who plays what role (Catharine, a prisoner’s wife).

As far as I’m concerned, I’m very independent. I’m used to being on my own. I mean, making decisions myself... something as little as the way the furniture is arranged. And I’ve told him, ‘don’t you think you’re going to walk in here and be the lord of the house, all of a sudden, and I’m going to have to take a back seat!’ And you know, number one, Lee (my daughter) won’t be used to it. And I certainly won’t be used to it! It’s going to be a gradual working in progress by all three of us, or four of us, if there’s four of us by that time... (Sue, a prisoner’s wife).

While pre-release concerns such as these may weigh heavily, they are often tempered by feelings of excitement and hope. Related to the feminine role of caregiver

and the central position of the wife and mother figure to the family (Girshick 1996), the desire to (re)unite one's family and to move on with a new stage in life is one that many women express. The release is then a much-anticipated event, and several of the women mentioned that they spent time with their partner as a couple to plan future activities and trips and to dream about the life that they would have post-release. This was particularly true of women whose husbands/partners were serving relatively short sentences or nearing the end of a lengthy sentence. Much like descriptions of life pre-incarceration, the language employed to describe the hopes and plans of couples involuntarily separated by imprisonment is often romantic and reminiscent of that of a much younger couple, just beginning a life together.

It will be so nice when we can be together full-time, you know. No more trips to the pen. No more dealing with the guards and the scanner. We talk about it all the time, what we're gonna do, the places we're gonna go. The garden we're gonna plant behind the house, you know... just little things, but it helps to remember that it's not always gonna be like it is now. (Daphne, a prisoner's wife).

When the sentence is very long, such as a life sentence, there is still hope and anticipation, but it tends to focus on shorter-term goals and milestones and on positive changes that contribute to the health of the relationship and improved chances for success upon release. Brenda, the partner of an incarcerated man who was sentenced to life in prison without parole for fifteen years, described their journey together and her coping strategy of emphasising small gains:

I've sort of accepted, because I have to, that this is what I've chosen [...] I've sort of, I don't look at it as I've got ten more years like this... I look at it as in the next couple of months we're going to go down to medium, and then hopefully in the next couple of years we'll go to minimum, and then... little steps... that help the whole time seem not so long. And I've sort of said, okay, now it's up to me to make sure that he's, that we both have the support that we need and that we both have a home so that when he can

come home he's got a home to come home to. So...Our relationship's very strong. I think probably the one positive is that... like I was mentioning earlier, our communication is amazing... because that's one of the things that we know we have for sure right now. And you're forced to talk, and you're forced to talk about your emotions and your fears and your dreams and what happened today that was good and what happened today that wasn't, and your frustrations and...I think this whole thing taught us, taught both of us that we really have to make sure that we communicate very well because a lot of stuff that happened with him happened for lack of communication I think. With his ex-partner. And that can never happen again (Brenda, the partner of a prisoner).

The children of incarcerated men may also anticipate their homecoming, particularly if they have never lived in a home with two parents but have spent their entire lives visiting their dad at the prison. If the sentence is a lengthy one and/or the release date is uncertain, as with life sentences, children may look forward to a parole hearing with expectations that their father will be released and return home, only to be disappointed. Anne's twin children were ten years old at the time of our interview and they had never lived with their father since they were born after he went to prison on a life sentence without parole for twenty-five years. She described how her children were eagerly awaiting their father's judicial review or "faint hope clause"⁴ hearing (which was still several years away at the time), and how she tried to emphasise to them that their father may not be released at that time in order to lessen the possible disappointment:

They're kind of... they're (the children) looking forward to 2009 and we're trying to...make them understand that 2009 is not a given. Far from it. But, yeah, they are. They are.

The months and even years preceding the incarcerated man's release are spent in anticipation, preparation and hope for the future. The reality, however, is often very

⁴ The judicial review or "faint hope clause" hearing allows a prisoner serving a life sentence without chance of parole for twenty-five years to have his case and progress reviewed by a judge for the purposes of re-evaluating his parole eligibility. If the judge determines that the individual is no longer a risk to reoffend, he/she may reduce the time to parole eligibility and allow the prisoner to apply for an earlier parole. The faint hope clause hearing is held in year fifteen of the life sentence if the prisoner wishes to apply.

different than what families imagined. Before (and after) their loved one is released, the family must negotiate the policies and bureaucracy of the Correctional Service of Canada and its release and parole planning.

Negotiating Correctional Policy

One of the most common complaints heard from family members about the process of release and reintegration, regardless of their relationship to the incarcerated man, was the Correctional Service's disregard for the family and failure to effectively incorporate the family into release planning and parole considerations. Of particular concern were the lack of communication with the family and the lack of services and information provided to families who would be supporting an incarcerated loved one upon his release. Several of the family members who had been through the release process mentioned feeling like the Correctional Services and parole officials were happy to use family members as a source of information, or as a part of the risk assessment, but that no reciprocal information was provided to them. Catharine, whose husband had been released on parole and then returned to prison, described her experience:

Um... I guess... when an individual, when an offender is trying to get out... the whole case management team is focused on all the things that the offender needs to do prior to getting out and gaining credibility and all of this kind of stuff. And it's very offender focused. Okay? And building community support and work releases and getting jobs and all of that kind of thing... but... once he got out... the family members, the family are no longer valued... and the input is no longer valued. As a matter of fact, if I were to call my husband's parole officer and say, "what's going on with Ron?" They use the family members to gather information, but they will not include them and give information. So the family members are isolated in the most important step of reintegration... and that's access to the community [...] So there's a real... throughout the process families can be included if the offender wants them to be, but at the critical stage of, after being released, families are no longer valued. It's very interesting and I've experienced that first hand this last time when my husband was

reincarcerated... I mean, he was up to no good... the half-way house staff watched it happen... they didn't even call his parole officer and they had the right to and responsibility to... and of course, I was not informed... And I would have had more influence on my husband's behaviour in that time frame than anybody else he had come in contact with because he was afraid of being up front and honest for fear he would be sent back. But yet, I was kept out of the loop and not... my opinion was not valued... or my role was not valued... they wanted my opinion, but only to gather information, not because I was a respected part of his success.

Sometimes family members described a feeling of being “on parole” along with their loved one, even when they hadn’t done anything. Francine, whose son came to live with her when he was released on parole (and was subsequently returned to prison), described her uneasy relationship with the parole officer and her frustration at having to schedule her own life around the parole officer’s visits. She recalled instances of having to cancel friends’ visits in order to accommodate her son’s meetings with the parole officer in her home and she expressed her irritation quite succinctly: “*I’m not the one on parole here!*” As discussed previously, Julian Roberts (2006) has commented on similar issues of collateral punishment when an individual is sentenced to a conditional sentence⁵ with movement and reporting restrictions. Roberts, Malloney and Vallis (2003) have argued that families are put in a difficult position by having to accommodate the needs and restrictions of conditionally sentenced family members and that, in effect, these conditions also apply to the innocent party who, when faced with a choice, will often give up opportunities for such things as travel or outings, rather than leave the conditionally sentenced partner behind. Although the restrictions in cases of parole may not be overly onerous, they may still prevent the families of parolees from having full discretion over their own movement and activities. Erin did not find her husband’s parole restrictions

⁵ Sometimes referred to as “house arrest”.

overly problematic, but mentioned that they sometimes created a barrier to family activities:

Like you're only supposed to go so far... like, at least when he first got on parole, he was only supposed to stay within 15 kilometres within [the hometown]. So if we wanted to go to [a nearby city] one day then you couldn't, but now... In [the province] you don't need a travel permit or whatever... just when we go back to [visit family in another province] and that's just a matter of sort of getting it done (Erin, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

In addition to the imposition of parole restrictions, families often feel that they are expected to play a role in ensuring the offender's compliance with the court-ordered conditions. In the context of conditional sentences, Roberts (2006) questions the ethicality of placing these expectations on families; a sentiment that was echoed by several of the women in my sample.

They use you to get information, but yet they expect you to police the activities of the offender... and they can call it what they want... they can say "oh, no, we don't expect it, oh, no" but the families are the first ones parole officers call if things go awry. The offender is the one responsible. And it's not realistic to expect families to report to parole. It's not their role. It's not their role... That is a huge, huge mistake, to use families to gather information and expect families to police offenders. First of all their emotional capacity isn't going to permit them to do that, their emotional involvement will not permit them to police their loved one... but they do have the most influence... (Catharine, a prisoner's wife).

Francine described how her son's parole officer seemed to expect that she would report on his behaviour and act as the "eyes and ears" of the parole office and police while he was living in her home. In her opinion, it was blatantly unfair to ask a mother to turn in her own son when she felt that he needed assistance and treatment for drug addiction, not to be sent back to prison:

He actually was released in the end of October and, uh, he was just breached on his parole for... uh... drug usage... and I went to parole and I spoke to them... and I'm not advocating that people use drugs by any

means, but my view is that if you're trying to rehabilitate somebody and... you know, as a member of the public, I see that parole's thing is to help rehabilitate and to protect the public. And somebody using drugs, or not using drugs is not a big... deal. It doesn't make me feel any safer or any less, you know, concerned... and the thing was that we had all these appointments lined up that I had set up while Karl was in jail so that when he came out... I mean, I'm not kidding... I could show you the calendar, we had like three, four appointments a week... and somehow that was a step backwards... and um... the parole officer said, you know if Karl doesn't confide in me, I don't feel that I can trust him... Yet, when he came home they said 'you know if you use drugs it's straight back to prison.' The rehabilitation thing, I mean, I do think... um... as I say, it's lip service. It's almost like some of the parole things are set up for people to fail... Um... you know, it's like saying to somebody, trust me, tell me when you use... would you trust somebody and tell them that you used a drug if you know that... you know, three weeks ago they said 'you use drugs and I'm sending you back to jail'? You know, you can't say things like that and expect people to trust you.

The very presence of the parole officer in the family home can also be an uncomfortable experience for partners or other family members who are very conscious of the power that the parole officer has over their lives. Wives and mothers realise that a negative report from the parole officer or a suspicion of breach of conditions or deteriorating behaviour can result in the revocation of parole and the loved one's return to prison, plummeting the family back into involuntary separation and all of the emotional turmoil that accompanies it. Family members may also find that they do not relate well to the parole officer, in part due to the power differential that exists and perhaps tied to the parole officer's role in assessing the behaviours and interactions of the family as a potential risk factor for recidivism. The institutionalised view of prisoners' families as risky follows the family from the prison into the community via community corrections. The structural stigma that correctional policy and concerns places on families of prisoners can play out interactionally through awkward or stilted encounters between families and parole officers. Erin described a feeling that her husband's parole officer took a

stigmatising attitude toward ex-prisoners and their families, rather than accepting them as ordinary people.

So, you know, Ian is supposed to, he's supposed to check in, or she's supposed to come to the house, I don't know how it's supposed to work...but, she's supposed to come to the house and see Ian, or I don't know if she's supposed to see both of us, or... it used to be clearer than this. Ian has to go down to the police station to check in, but the parole officer comes to the house.

Stacey: So what's that like for you when the parole officer comes? Does she talk to you?

Well, she's just, she tries to be friendly and you know, she's just... doing her job I guess, but she's in a different world. Yeah... she tries to relate, you know, tries to be, um... she tries to relate, and you know, like you bring up conversation about, you know, the eighties or whatever growing up, and something in university and blah blah blah, you know, that kind of thing you talk about... and so she'll sort of relate whatever her little story is and... try and kind of fit in or whatever... so... But you know that she's just... She just can't cross the line to be on this side, you know? It's just not working. She should be a peace officer, not a parole officer. That's the mind-set she has. There's 'us' and then there's 'them'... Yeah... do we look like them? (laughs) Who are they?

Another correctional process that families must go through which entails a judgement or risk-based assessment of the family is the community assessment – an inventory of the support and resources available to the inmate, the strength of the family relationship and the suitability of the family environment for rehabilitation. The community assessment is conducted when families apply for private family visits and periodically thereafter and can be a stressful experience for family members. Anne described the process of completing a community assessment and answering questions about hypothetical situations that might arise if her husband was released from prison and returned to her home. She too felt the expectations placed on her by the system to ensure

her husband's safe reintegration. She described the fine line between honesty and telling the correctional officials what they want to hear:

They met with me and they asked me questions. Do I know about the crime? Do I know about his past? And... um... what would I do if he came home and decided that he was going to take drugs or do a crime... how would I react? Um... would I turn him in? I think that's one of the major concerns. Um... I told them that my initial reaction would probably be to try to convince him not to do anything and that if he decided to do it I would tell him that I wasn't gonna have anything to do with him, like... as long as you're doing crimes, get out of my house, type of thing. And... would I turn him in? If I thought it was gonna be something that was going to do harm to others, probably, if it was something that was gonna do harm to him, no. I would let him deal with his own problem. But I wouldn't be involved in it. And I would hope that the thought of losing us, well me initially, and then us, would be enough to... gear him back... but... um, I found that you have to be careful. If you make it too rosy, if you give them everything they... that you think they want to hear... It's not necessarily gonna work to your advantage.

Stacey: So, they can see through that.

Yeah, I think they can... Like 'oh, of course I'm gonna turn him in! Right away!' I don't think that's gonna... like they asked me, will you have liquor in your house. And I said, 'well... I drink wine on occasion and beer on occasion... so yeah!' And what if he decides to drink? 'Well I'm gonna remind him that he's not supposed to and if he does it's his decision and if he tests positive on a test for alcohol, then he's going back!' I can't be responsible for everything, but it's not like I drink every week or every day. Like, it's on special occasions and I think he's old enough to be responsible and not do it if he knows he can't do it.

The women who participated in one focus group described the process of the community assessment as being like a kind of test that they had to pass in order to continue visiting their imprisoned partner and to have him returned to the community. There was a great deal of anxiety wrapped up in giving the "right" responses: honest answers that didn't appear to be fake or overly accommodating and that would portray them as stable,

supportive influences for their partners⁶. The women were aware of the potential power held by the correctional official responsible for the assessment and reported feeling that if they “failed” the community assessment, they would be responsible for their partner’s failure to get parole and perhaps might even lose their institutional visiting privileges. Although the Correctional Service of Canada claims to be concerned about family functioning and the situation of families of offenders⁷, family members experience this concern in a very different light. They interpret the community assessments and interaction with the family merely as a means of collecting information that is designed to assist the correctional service in calculating and managing risk rather than as an intervention designed to aid the family. There is a sense amongst family members that the correctional service pays lip service to the idea of family support, but that genuine help is not forthcoming.

CSC will say they’re doing a ‘family assessment’, well they’re doing an assessment of the family situation perhaps, but for their purposes, not for the family. I guess that’s what’s, you know, being lost in that... It sounds like they’re doing something for the family, but they’re not... (Isobel, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

In addition to the pressures placed on family members by parole officers and CSC employees, family members may be used by the system in other ways as well. One woman in the sample reported that the National Parole Board itself is not above using family members for their own purposes. She described an incident that occurred at her husband’s parole hearing when seemingly a member of the parole board tried to make her husband angry by insulting her:

⁶ Parents of prisoners also mentioned going through the process of community assessment, but did not appear to be as concerned about the impression they were giving as wives or partners were.

⁷ The Correctional Service of Canada’s website has a link dedicated to “Families of Offenders” on which they post information about the various programs for families to which they have contributed funding.

During the parole hearing they came out and said that the only reason he was with me... because they couldn't get him mad at this parole hearing, and they were trying so hard to get him mad and I was there as support. And so they decided to attack me. And they said to him, well they said to me, uh, the only reason that he's with you is for sex... right out of the blue! And I'm sitting there and so... and I'm kind of, I'm not really outspoken but it just sort of hit me. So I said, 'if that's the case when am I gonna get some?' And they were just like, they weren't very impressed. But I'm sitting there going, like he's in prison! How am I gonna have sex with him when he's in here if I'm not getting PFVs? And he's gonna be here for whatever... another year or so, unless you let him out, so... it was... but they were trying to get him mad and he was just shocked because I'm the one that responded, right? But I guess they were trying to push his buttons to see if he would get angry and everything else and when they didn't do that they thought okay well we'll...use her, I guess (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

Jane felt very strongly that this was a deliberate attempt on the part of the parole officer to provoke her husband to anger as difficulties in anger management had contributed to his past offences. This exchange, in particular, but much of the interaction between institutional correctional officials and family members, appears to be highly gendered in nature. By suggesting that her partner was only using her for sexual purposes, this male member of the parole board was drawing on the notion that a woman would be offended and hurt by the suggestion that she was being used for sex, whereas a man may have found the same type of comment to be amusing or even flattering. Were the tables reversed and the incarcerated partner female, it is doubtful that a member of the parole board would find it useful to attempt to provoke her by attacking the honour of a male partner. This entire exchange relied on the traditional gender roles of the woman as defenceless and the man as protector as the parole board member attempted to illicit an angry or violent response from the prisoner in order to justify his continued incarceration. Jane's feisty and quick response challenged these expectations, resulting in a "shocked" member of the parole board, but many women would not have had the presence of mind

nor the personality to respond in this fashion. Similarly, parole officers and correctional officials may assume that female partners and mothers are more easily pushed into compliance, where a man might defend his rights and be able to more effectively resist the imposition on his life.

The Correctional Service of Canada does not offer support services or assistance for family members upon the release of their loved one from prison. As Catharine suggested earlier in this chapter, the parole services are focused exclusively on the needs of the ex-prisoner and on assessing his risk to the community. Ironically, the presence of a stable and cohesive family unit has long been identified as an important factor in reducing the risk of recidivism and assisting ex-prisoners to successfully reintegrate into the community. Yet, as has been demonstrated throughout this study, Correctional Services does very little to facilitate the maintenance of existing family relationships through the period of incarceration and they do not incorporate the family into release planning in a meaningful way that would assist both the ex-inmate and his family to adjust to their new lives together. The lack of support and assistance from CSC contributes to a situation where families often experience significant difficulties in negotiating the (re)unification of the family unit. These difficulties sometimes result in marital conflicts and family breakdown. Although correctional officials are aware of the problems that families often encounter in the post-carceral period, the correctional service has not been implicated as responsible to address these issues and provide support.

Negotiating Release and (Re)unification

Of the four wives that I interviewed who had experienced their partner's release from prison (and in one case, his return to prison), two were in the midst of a serious deterioration of the marital relationship. In one case, the released husband had engaged in an extra-marital affair while on parole. In the other, the relationship had deteriorated following release to the point where the couple were no longer communicating with one another. However, conversations with service providers revealed that these were not unusual situations and that marital difficulties following release are quite common. Not all relationships deteriorate so severely, and as with any relationship, difficulties can sometimes be worked through in order to salvage the marriage, but the divorce rate amongst male ex-prisoners is significantly higher than the national average⁸. Catharine linked the breakdown of her marriage to a lack of support and assistance and her husband's fear of admitting that he was struggling. She described his fears of being returned to prison if he were to reach out for help, which, ironically, were eventually realised anyway as his extra-marital affair was interpreted by his parole officer as a "deterioration of behaviour".

Our expectations were different, and, you know, we started to blame each other instead of looking at our own roles, so it was very difficult. And there was no help! Even the marriage counsellor who helps in a hundred marriages didn't understand what reintegration was about and sent him back to his counsellor that he had seen when he was inside. You know, which he never even... which he didn't do. And he wasn't... because he wasn't feeling successful, except at work, that's the only place he felt successful... because he wasn't feeling successful he was afraid to try new things. He was struggling and he wasn't letting anybody know, people were reaching out to him and he wasn't accepting the help, because he was afraid that if he told them he was struggling he was gonna be sent back. Now that sounds like an excuse... but... and you know what, it is for the most part... but the reality is that the fear is real. The fear is real...

⁸ Refer to Lopoo and Western (2003), cited on page 155 of this volume.

The phenomenon of institutionalisation and the after-effects of imprisonment create an entirely unique set of circumstances that may not be understood by the average couples' therapist. Catharine rightly highlights the need for professional assistance from those who have a grasp of the complex effects of imprisonment on both the prisoner and his family. Unfortunately, due to the general lack of consideration for these issues in our society, mental health professionals and counsellors who are knowledgeable in this area are few and far between. Couples and families are thus left to work through their own struggles, often with less than positive results. When asked about her plans for her husband's eventual re-release Catharine had this to say:

I'm a little smarter this time! [laughs] I've got more wisdom...and in the role that I played as well, in terms of the wife of somebody who's been incarcerated for, it will be 20 plus years by the time he gets out next... you know... I didn't realise how... programming... affects an individual. You know, it's not about saying what's right or telling people what they want to hear. You know, it's about being real. ... and he's got some things that he's gonna have to do differently as well...um...but yeah, I'm a little wiser. And I'm not going to accept being isolated by parole or the halfway house... that's not gonna happen. Um... and I'll give them a whole host of reasons why it's not gonna happen. 'It's my life, why should I trust it to you...? We've already experienced that you don't care enough about me to make the right decision... you may care about the halfway house, you may care about.... The offender, I don't know if you do or not, but there's a real lack of caring for families with reintegration' It's all about risk management and community safety. And families are not part of that. Unless they're gathering information.

While she had not written off her marriage entirely, Catharine was uncertain about the future and about their prospects for long-term reconciliation. She was continuing to visit and to maintain contact with her husband since his return to prison.

In Isobel's case, the nature of her husband's offence had contributed to their post-incarceration marital difficulties and the eventual complete breakdown of the

relationship. Isobel's husband had been convicted of sexually assaulting one of their daughters and consequently, upon his release, Isobel was not comfortable with the idea of his returning to the family home.

I can't honestly say that I could put into words why I didn't want him here. Because he was welcome to visit any time. And if the weather was bad or whatever he was welcome to stay overnight... down there... we had a spare room. But felt that if he lived here.... I don't know what I felt. I'm not sure. I just thought it would be too much like before he left, except that... you know... you don't have a platonic relationship with your husband, this living in the same house. It's not gonna happen... if he lived here. At least I don't think it is. And... um... I didn't want it to be anything other than that... and I just didn't... him staying there we woulda had to be careful about any children coming over, we woulda had, my own daughter now has a grandchild, she didn't at the time. Or has a daughter. We'd have to, you know... her, she's separated from her husband and they'll likely be getting a divorce in a few months... so she'll probably be living here for quite a while and... she wouldn't of had that option if he was living here. You know, it just wouldn't have been a consideration and it would have made her life miserable... and I don't... I don't even put the kids anywhere near the same level... or I don't put him anywhere near the same level as I do the kids.

Although Isobel was the only person in the sample who reported that the loved one's crimes had been perpetrated upon a family member, one can safely assume that in cases such as this there will be considerable apprehension about the prisoner's return to his family. In fact, many families will cut off contact with the convicted member when they have been the victims of physical or sexual abuse.

In this case, Isobel attempted to maintain a relationship with her husband. When Isobel and her husband sought marriage counselling following his release they similarly had the unfortunate experience of encountering a therapist who was not sensitive to the needs of family members who choose to maintain a relationship with a convicted man⁹. The misguided therapist insinuated that Isobel had been aware of her husband's crimes

⁹ Isobel's story is recounted in detail in her own words on page 183 of the previous chapter.

against their child and was therefore complicit in his offence. Isobel reacted with anger to this accusation and the incident completely derailed any possibility of therapeutic assistance. Following that episode the couple did not resume counselling and the relationship continued to deteriorate. By the time I met Isobel, although she was still legally married, her husband had become involved with another woman and they had not spoken in several months. Isobel was devastated by this outcome and was searching for answers. Her sorrow was evident when she spoke of the state of the relationship:

I don't think that John realises how much harm he's done... I think he... feels that he's been wronged by us in some way. And he won't talk to me so I don't know what it is. So it's not like he can give a side. Like I know that, that we will never ever get together as a... I don't know how to say this... well, as a man and wife normally are... but... there's two things I want, and that's his... uh... his health care, his extended health care, which I can't get if we get divorced... and... I want to be friends... because he's the father of my children... and we always said right from the beginning that we would always be best friends. No matter what. And I told him, I said, 'it will be unconditional... I will do that for you...' And it was all for him, for him, for him...for nothing. Well, he was gonna supposedly do the same for me and always look out for me... and I was gonna always look out for him. I've got it in letters that he wrote... [crying] But he doesn't go by it at all... [crying]

Girshick's (1996) study of prisoners' wives emphasised the importance of the marital relationship and the family to the women's identities. Isobel had been a stay-at-home mother and homemaker throughout the duration of her twenty year marriage until her husband was imprisoned and she was forced to find work. She was clearly torn between her revulsion toward her husband's offence and her desire to maintain the family unit and yet she cherished earlier, happier memories of her husband and their relationship. The defacto loss of her husband had a profoundly negative effect on Isobel's self-esteem and her emotional state, suggesting that the relationship had been a vital and defining part of her self image. When relationships breakdown, whether during the period

of incarceration or following, the consequences can be devastating and leave both the women and their partners in a situation requiring adequate support and understanding that is rarely forthcoming. Families are often left to deal with these circumstances alone. As Catharine had previously suggested¹⁰, outsiders who do not understand the struggles that families of prisoners face or the depth of feeling that many women have for their incarcerated partner will often minimise the loss that these women experience, suggesting that “there’s other fish in the sea”. The popular belief that women are better off alone than in a relationship with a convict (or ex-convict) results in little help or sympathy for those who encounter relationship problems and little help for those who wish to make their relationship work.

Not all post-incarceration family outcomes are negative. The other two women that I interviewed whose partners had been released were, by their own accounts, in very positive relationships and expressed satisfaction with their current situations. One of the husbands had been out of prison for eleven years and the other for four and a half years at the time of the interview. Although both women expressed that there had been difficulties to negotiate in the early days following release, they credited their positive situations to the strength of their relationships, open communication and determination to make the marriage work. Both relationships had been initiated while the man was incarcerated. One incorporated teenaged children from a previous marriage and the other resulted in the birth of a child just six months after the husband’s release.

When asked about the process of release and reintegration, Jane described an incident that exemplified to her the types of adjustments and understanding that are

¹⁰ See page 171, previous chapter.

necessary to support a man following release from prison and to help him be successful in his return to the community:

The morning after he came home I got up, went downstairs, started making breakfast and everything else and when I left I said well, I'll see you downstairs. And so I left. And I closed the door so that, you know, he could have his privacy getting dressed and everything else, and the kids were running around. He didn't come down, didn't come down. Came, went back up and I said, 'are you coming down?' 'Oh yeah, yeah', came down. I didn't know until about a year and half later or so, he told me when I shut the door he didn't think he was allowed to come out. So he stayed there waiting for me, sitting on the bed, for me to come in and let him out! That would never have dawned on me. But because he'd been in prison, he'd been where there was doors, the door was shut, you couldn't go out. You had wait for the fella to come and open the door! So he sat there, for about an hour, waiting for me to come back up and open the door. So... it just those institutionalised thinking. Where you have guys coming out who've spent, it doesn't take long to get that, that thinking pattern inside, right? So he comes out after two years or more, cuz I've been in Federal time, and he's lost because of all the advances that have been made during that time. So you need someone who can teach him to do that... who's strong enough to be able to hold him up.

Jane went on to emphasise that not all families are adequately prepared or able to accommodate the after-effects of institutionalisation. Her example supported and provided some insight with which to understand Lynn's experience (described on page 242) of her husband's financial irresponsibility following his release from prison.

It's like having a little kid, right? You're teaching the little kid all these little new things and everything else until he's strong enough to stand on his own two feet. And also stopping him from doing stuff that he thinks he's ready for that he's not... cuz they want life and everything, they have to have everything that... Money. Money just goes through hands, like the first year he was, it was like, he had to have a new car, he had to have a this, he had to have all this stuff. And he was lucky because he has a pension, so that had been sitting there, piling up during the time he was in prison, so he had money. But he was going through things, not thinking about what he was buying. So, and so, he was lucky he had the money. What happens to the family that's on welfare, and he has all these needs, he ends up going into the, like the rent centres for twenty dollars here or there, they end up being strapped for money. They have no money to pay anything, they're gonna lose it, what's he gonna do? Right? So she's gotta

be strong enough to say 'no, we can't afford to do this, this is how we're gonna go' and everything else and guide him along. And if that doesn't happen... [shakes her head] (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

The desire to reclaim financial independence and to control the family income is a common one amongst men who are released from prison. The deprivations of imprisonment, the social emphasis placed on the acquisition of material goods and the traditional equation of masculinity with earnings and control of finances (as the "head of the household") are all likely contributors to this phenomenon. The unfortunate reality is that ex-prisoners may attempt to reassert their financial and personal independence by spending extravagantly¹¹ and may cause their families financial hardship. Struggles over family budgets and spending are a common cause of conflict amongst families in the post-carceral stage. Although the wives and children of ex-prisoners are probably most directly affected by over-spending, the parents of ex-prisoners also noted a tendency for their sons to spend too much on luxury items and then approach them for money to cover rent and other necessities.

It's like he has no concept of budgeting...he just buys what he wants without thinking about, 'oh I need to have so much money for rent on the first of the month and money to buy groceries and pay the other bills'. He gets his social assistance cheque and it's spent before he gets it. Then he runs into trouble and he calls me or his father... but he always has money when he wants something! (Mary, a prisoner's mother).

Well, he had free room and board while he was in jail... We didn't have to pay for that! But... I think there was... when he got out of jail, then the family gets hit with, not only financially, but there is, now there can be substantial financial impact, burden when a person is released, because... especially if there is family who are still in contact and want to be supportive... because... basically you come out of jail with the clothes on

¹¹ The phenomenon of over-spending has also been identified as a common maladaptive coping strategy amongst persons who suffer from clinical depression, mood disorders and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. These types of mental health issues may be pre-existing or can be the direct result of the carceral experience (Kupers, 1999). Similar issues of over-spending have also been identified amongst soldiers returning from deployment, particularly if they have been exposed to traumatic events.

your back and that's about it. You've gotta find work, you have to find housing...In our case, he couldn't stay with us. And I would say there was, you know... and I think it continues to be... because he's not working and he's just... he's on a disability pension. And he still is an impulsive guy, you know, he still buys stuff, like he's into ham radio... he'll buy things for that and then say, 'oh yeah, I need a pair of shoes...' you know? Well... Mom and Dad buy the shoes. Well Mom. Dad says no so... but Mom says well alright...But we don't send him a hundred dollars, we send him the shoes (George, a prisoner's father).

In this sense, the financial difficulties that accompany the incarceration of a loved one may well continue long past the expiration of the sentence, particularly if the ex-prisoner is unable to find work or is suffering from an untreated mental illness that contributes to his behaviour.

In addition to coping with the after-effects of institutionalisation, the families of ex-prisoners are dealing with the difficulties inherent in (re)introducing a member into the household. As discussed previously, there may be role conflicts between spouses and children may have trouble adjusting to the presence of another authority figure. Again, these types of adjustment issues are not in fact unique to the families of ex-prisoners, but would be commonly experienced by blended families following a second marriage and military families following the prolonged absence of a parent on deployment. However, adjustment for prisoners' families (particularly of older children) may be complicated by apprehensions about the temperament and coping abilities of the ex-offender. Jane described her teenaged son and daughters' various reactions to their step-father's homecoming and the testing of relationships that occurred:

My son gave him a really hard time because my son was sixteen. He, um...tested John's limits. I mean, to the point where they'd get, not violent with each other, but my son would take this coffee table and he would shove it at him or whatever, and waiting for a response, or for him to get up, like for John to get up and slug him or something like that. John wouldn't do that, of course. And...uh, so he kept testing him to see if he

could provoke him to do something. Um... so after a while he said, 'okay, that's not gonna happen,' so he was fine. Um... my youngest daughter, was very accepting of course and as she got a little older we went through a period where he was not her real father. Which most step-family have... and so we used to call him plastic dad. If you're not real you must be plastic, so we'd say, 'oh plastic dad!' And that was a joke, and eventually that changed for her. She sort of, okay, everything is fine now, and he proved himself to her. I think of my children, the hardest one was our, my middle one. It's only after even within probably the last three or four years that she's been more, um, calling him dad and everything else. Um... but she was going through her own life stuff at the same time and everything else, so... and it's taken her a long time, longer than the other two to trust him and accept him. Cuz, I can't remember, oh, she used to call him my mom's lover, or the person who sleeps with my mother. Or she, even when we were married, this is what we'd get! So, yeah, it took her the longest time to do that. And he's always, you know, stepped back and sort of let them all meet him and to give him the authority to do, to be their father in a sense. That doesn't happen to a lot of families coming home, it's he comes home and expects all this respect and everything else and when he doesn't get it it blows up and things don't work out in the home.

Jane credits her family's successful integration and adjustment to her husband's patience and willingness to step back from demanding respect and authority, although she points out, from experience, that things do not always work so well. Not all men returning from prison understand the dynamics of the family and the changes that have occurred well enough to be able to step back from their own need for validation and respect within the family. This phenomenon can be seen, again, as a product of gender norms and the demand for respect and control that is commonly associated with western constructions of masculinity. Several years after her husband's release from prison, Jane obtained employment with a local non-profit agency to start a support group for the families of prisoners. She described seeing many families go through incredible difficulties post-release and was very concerned that women and families are not adequately prepared for the problems that may arise and are not offered support throughout the process of incarceration and release.

I think that the education, the support for the family needs to be there from the outset. Support during the process and definitely upon the reintegration part... because... they're going through... having someone... especially if he's come out and been gone for over two years, then she's functioned on her own for those two years, and she's lived...um... and when he comes out he expects everything to be back the way it was, and when it doesn't, family violence is one of the, increase, increases at that time, um... repeat offences, you know, offences in the sense of the children, you know? Either show me respect or I'm gonna beat it into ya? All those things increase at the time that he comes out, or she comes out... so...you know, those things, those supports need to be in place. And plus, something to account, keep him accountable and her accountable. See, if I can come out and do whatever I want, then that's what I'm gonna do. And if that's all he knows then that's what he's gonna do. So the supports need to be there to help him adjust to have a better life, so he doesn't go back in and start the whole process again. So...I think that's, that's important. And people, having people that have been through it... um...so that you can't manipulate and you can't, 'oh, yeah right...' um... cuz families are expecting the best and they don't see the signs, you know...or if you warn them they don't believe you. And then they go oh yeah, you were right! (Jane, an ex-prisoner's wife).

Placed in the context of several decades worth of research on the process of prisoner reintegration and desistence from crime, the lack of support for families of prisoners and the failure of Correctional Services to offer transitional support as the inmate leaves the institutional setting to return to his family is a curious phenomenon. It is well documented that post-incarceration family support and a stable home environment are key indicators of the likelihood of success for the returning offender (Irwin 1970; Holt and Miller 1972; Waller 1974; Cobean and Power 1978; Homer 1979; Eckland-Olson et al. 1983; Griffiths, Dandurand and Murdoch 2007; Maruna 2001; Naser and La Vigne 2006). The economic, material and social support that families provide to returning prisoners greatly increases their chances of success in the community. It stands to reason then that the Correctional Service of Canada and the Department of Public Safety should have an interest in ensuring that families are provided with adequate information and

support to help make the ex-offender's transition into community and family life a smooth one. Instead, Correctional Services choose to focus their attention on the ex-offender and his individualised needs without regard for the needs of the family and social context that he is returning to. The family is merely taken into consideration as a potential source of risk in the completion of the community assessment to ensure that they are a stable source of support and not involved in criminal behaviours that might pose a stumbling block for the reintegrating offender. According to the CSC Commissioner's Directive the post-sentence community assessment should "focus on obtaining information that will assist in the overall assessment of the offender; verify identities, living conditions, signs of abuse or neglect, or any other issues/concerns that may impact on the offender's reintegration potential"¹² (CSC 2008: 5). Ironically, the potential impact of the prisoner's return on the family environment is not addressed, with the exception of potential for family violence. The strains and stresses of family (re)unification and (re)integration are not targeted or addressed in terms of information or support. This is especially troubling given CSC's mandate to ensure the successful reintegration of ex-prisoners and the fact that troubled family dynamics, stress and conflict may in fact serve as a catalyst to propel the ex-prisoner back into maladaptive or criminal behaviours. As Glaser (1969) has argued:

"the absence or presence of conflict within the family, conflict between the parolee and his family, the compatibility of the parolee's and the family's commitments, the total character of the family's and parolee's past history together will have an important bearing on the solution of problems. In many instances, the family may be the major force driving the men back into systematic deviance" (245).

¹² See Appendix D for the criteria that are considered in the community assessment.

Given the seeming importance of the family to successful reintegration, we are left with the question of why virtually no resources have been dedicated to preparing and assisting families to be the primary support mechanism and to working with prisoner's families to reduce family conflict and aid in the negotiation of family roles post-incarceration. As Jane argued in her interview, there is a need for family members, and particularly the wives of prisoners, to be empowered and supported so that they can offer the strongest support possible to their men upon their return.

One of the things that I found was that a lot of these women were not very empowered. And so, it's very hard to be supportive of somebody else if you have no support for yourself. Um... it's like... some were, like empty. They were giving so much they had nothing left inside for themselves to be who they were. Um, and so that's one of the reasons that we went on the empowerment and, you know, teaching the skills they needed and then letting them do them, and being a support for them and that sort of thing. And I think that's, that's what's sort of lacking in what's happening today is that empowerment piece (Jane, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

In 2005 the Canadian Families and Corrections Network, with funding from the Correctional Service of Canada, initiated a pilot program designed to target the lack of support and information for families whose loved one will be returning from prison. The Family Group Decision-making for Reintegration uses a family-group conferencing process to aid families in preparing a reintegration plan and assigns a community mentoring team to follow the family for up to one year post-release. While this type of support program is certainly a good start, it is long overdue. The limited funding provided by the Correctional Service of Canada for this program has restricted its availability to inmates and their families at Frontenac Institution in Kingston, Ontario and at Montée St.-Francois Institution in Laval, Quebec. These are both minimum security institutions and it is unlikely that the most high-risk offenders and their families will be served from

these locations. A self-directed version of the family conferencing process is available online¹³ for families to download and use if they do not have access to the program, however the families who suffer the greatest difficulties and who are in most need of assistance are unlikely to be able to utilise this resource without direction and support.

The lack of concern that is demonstrated for the well-being of families in the post-incarceration phase is an extension of the apathy that the correctional system has toward the hardships that families experience due to the use of imprisonment. The consequences of correctional policy and release practices for the families of incarcerated men are not considered, resulting in what Link and Phelan (2001) would describe as structural discrimination and what Julian Roberts (2006) has referred to as “collateral punishment”. However we describe this phenomenon, the institutionalised failure to give consideration to a group of persons who are so clearly affected by incarceration and invaluable to the success of the correctional mandate is inexplicable. The issue is complicated by the fact that the Correctional Service of Canada evidently acknowledges the value of family support for inmates and relies on the family as a source of information about the offender’s level of risk and potential for success in the community. We are left to fall back then on the issues of stigma and marginality and the question of whether prisoners’ families are understood as less worthy of support, assistance and concern than other families. Simply put: do we as a society care about whether the families of prisoners and ex-prisoners struggle, or do we see their difficulties as just-dessert for maintaining a relationship with a criminal? The failure to offer services and help to these families despite the potential benefits to the correctional system and to society as a whole is symptomatic of the sticky stigma of criminality and dangerousness.

¹³ See “Time’s Up: A Reintegration Toolkit for Families” at <http://www3.sympatico.ca/cfcn/timesup.pdf>

Chapter Summary

The release of the incarcerated man to his family is often greatly anticipated, although a source of some concern. Families encounter many hurdles and must (re)negotiate family life and roles, while dealing with the effects of institutionalisation on the released husband/father. This is a situation that may be affected by gendered expectations, as seen when men released from prison wish to take on the role of “head” of the household in financial and disciplinary areas. In all phases of the release process (pre-release, the parole hearing and release, and post-release period) there are few or no supports available. Family members emphasised a lack of communication with CSC about parole and release and the absence of resources to assist them in helping their incarcerated loved one return to the community. Consequently, families are left to face difficulties in isolation and some relationships end in separation or divorce.

Family members complain that the Correctional Service of Canada is not concerned with the effect of the incarceration and parole policies on the families of incarcerated men and that they often feel “used” by parole officers as a source of supervision for the paroled convict. Although families are key to successful reintegration following imprisonment, they are not an integrated part of the release plan. It appears that the neglect of prisoners’ families in the release phase, as throughout the period of incarceration, is symptomatic of their stigmatised position, which perpetuates their marginalisation.

In the final chapter of this study, I will provide a brief summary of the key empirical findings and theoretical contributions of this study. I describe the social location of prisoners’ families and the lack of support offered within our current socio-

political and economic climate as a function of sticky stigma and compare this reality to that of other marginalised groups. I will then present family members' suggestions for much needed support and assistance and discuss the dilemma of justifying the need for services in a way that does not perpetuate existing stereotypical or stigmatic attitudes in society. Finally, I provide some directions for future research and praxis in the area of families and incarceration.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS PRISONERS' FAMILIES IN CONTEXT: STIGMA, MARGINALITY AND SOCIAL NEGLECT

The lack of support, services and understanding for the families of prisoners is a common theme throughout the narratives presented in this study. The various material and emotional effects of the use of imprisonment on the families of male prisoners are seemingly compounded by the sense of isolation and social indifference that they experience in the community. In this chapter, I first provide a brief summary of the key empirical findings and theoretical contributions of this research. I locate the social neglect of prisoners' families as a function of the sticky stigma of criminality and demonstrate the theoretical utility of understanding marginality as related to stigma in the case of prisoners' family members and other groups. I then present the suggestions for assistance and policy change that have been put forward by the family members in my sample and engage with the question of how to provide needed services in a way that is not further stigmatising or mobilising negative stereotypes as a justification for social concern. Finally, I will discuss areas of concern for future research and political action to address the marginality of prisoners' families in Canada.

Prisoners' Families in Canada: The Collateral Impact of Incarceration

The collateral effects of imprisonment on the families of male prisoners in Canada have been clearly demonstrated throughout this study. Incarceration may impact the family financially and emotionally, may result in the experience of social and structural forms of stigma and has a lasting impact on the long-term adjustment of the family, post-

incarceration. The effects of imprisonment on family members are often gendered in nature.

Interviews and focus groups with the family members of male prisoners in Canada reveal a myriad of difficulties related to the incarceration of a husband, partner, father, son or brother. This research mirrors the findings of European and American studies of prisoners' families in uncovering the financial, emotional, and social struggles that these families face. Unique to the Canadian context, we find that the cost of maintaining family contact with an incarcerated loved one in Canada is much greater than in other nations. Due to the geographical size of Canada and the relative dispersion of federal penitentiaries, Canadian families incur much higher costs for travel to visit their incarcerated loved ones, if they can afford to visit at all. The cost of telephone communication is also much higher, due to long-distance charges and the fact that out-bound calls from Canadian prisons are made collect and subject to expensive tariffs set by the telephone provider. Although the Correctional Service of Canada is now in the process of changing this situation, the long period of neglect is indicative of a general disregard for the welfare of the families of the incarcerated that permeates correctional policy in Canada. The financial effects of incarceration on families are also profoundly gendered when one considers that it is women who are most likely to be left with dependent children and who are most likely to be financially dependent on a spouse.

Involuntary separation from a loved one due to incarceration also results in many emotional struggles. The interviews that I conducted were rife with expressions of sadness, depression, anger and frustration. Incarceration, and the separation of husbands from wives and fathers from children, can also have a negative impact on family

relationships, leading to the separation and divorce of partners and the literal or figurative estrangement of fathers from their children. The Correctional Service of Canada has attempted to mitigate the effect of incarceration on family relationships by instituting the Private Family Visiting Program. This program is unique to Canadian prisons and, as such, has not been studied previously in an American or European context. While further study of families' use of the PFV program is warranted, this study did find that the private family visit can be both a positive and negative experience for the families of incarcerated men.

To its credit, the private family visit does allow valuable time for families to reconnect and to maintain and further their relationships in a setting that is more natural than the general prison visiting room. Incarcerated fathers are able to interact with their children, to engage in play and parenting, and to develop a father-child relationship that they might not otherwise have. However, the PFV also entails added costs for families and can provoke stress. The PFV also subjects the family to the regulation of Correctional Services for the duration of their visit to the penitentiary. When prisoners' families enter the institution and become subject to regulation by correctional officials and are treated as a potential threat to the security of the institution. The power differential that exists between family members and guards is emphasised and family members often feel that they become like prisoners themselves. In essence, free individuals are giving up their personal rights to an institution in order to maintain their family relationships and they often resent the intrusion of the institution on their family life.

The use of the ion scanner is another example of how the family members of prisoners in Canada are subject to the regulation of the institution and are treated as risky individuals. Only visitors to Canadian penitentiaries are routinely scanned for drugs, while guards, staff, and contractors are not subject to the same level of scrutiny. The narrow institutional focus on family members and visitors to penitentiaries as the source of illegal drugs entering prisons detracts from the possibility that those under the employ of CSC may also be guilty of introduction contraband. This focus is justified by the stigma of criminality that is attached to prisoners' families by virtue of their relationship with a convict, whereas correctional guards and staff are valorised as protectors of the community.

The incidence of "false positive" readings that prevent family members from visiting their loved ones is a distressing reality that induces visitors to take extreme measures to ensure that there are no traces of chemical substances that might set off the scanner. Prescription drugs have been known to set off the scanner and trigger a search. Family members are divided by the issue of drugs and the ion scanner. The individuals who participated in this study were adamant that although they, themselves, did not use drugs or introduce them to the prison, they were certain that others did attempt to bring drugs into the visiting room. Thus, they felt that the ion scanner was necessary in order to keep drugs out of the prison, but that it posed an inconvenience or threat to their visits. The phenomenon of prisoners' family members differentiating themselves from deviant others is an attempt to deflect the stigma that is associated with prisoners' families and to emphasise that they are not like "those other people". However, by emphasising that they

are different from the others, these individuals are in fact reinforcing the existing stereotype that impacts their lives.

Although the public commonly characterises the Canadian criminal justice system as less punitive and “softer” than our American neighbours’, there is no evidence to suggest that this in fact lessens the collateral damage of incarceration caused to Canadian families. Indeed, Canada has no more programs or supports for prisoners’ families than there are in the United States, and there are fewer resources in Canada than in the United Kingdom. Canada does allow private family visits, while other countries do not, but it is not clear that this is adequate compensation for the other difficulties that families face.

In addition to financial and emotional difficulties, the families of incarcerated men face the stigma of association with a man who has been convicted of a criminal offence. This stigma is manifested in various ways and contexts. In a symbolic sense, stigma is experienced in individual interactions when family members are rejected by friends, family, or complete strangers. At the structural level, family members are characterised as “risky” and targeted by institutions and organisations for interventions. At the societal level, the hardships and difficulties that families of prisoners face are deemed justified and ignored, preventing the creation of meaningful programs of assistance.

The significant symbolic and institutionalised stigma that surrounds criminality and, by extension, prisoners’ families perpetuates a social climate that permits the political neglect of these families and their needs. Consequently, steps must be taken to normalise and demarginalise prisoners’ families in order to emphasise the need for assistance and services to combat the collateral punishment that we exact through the use

of imprisonment. Care should be taken to ensure that services are offered in the spirit of compassion, rather than as a technique of risk management, in order to avoid the possibility that stigma will be exacerbated and perpetuated through interventions.

The lack of resources and lack of consideration for the effect of incarceration on Canadian families stems from the fact that families of prisoners are tainted with the stigma of criminality. Stigma leads to marginality by virtue of the fact that a stigmatised group is constructed as undeserving or unworthy of assistance. In the next section, I summarise the links between stigma, marginality and social neglect and discuss their effect on the families of Canadian prisoners.

Stigma, Marginality and Social Neglect

Emile Durkheim (1938) has argued that crime and other forms of deviance serve a vital function in society: that is, the creation of an out-group is necessary to define the in-group, thereby clarifying social expectations and rewarding conforming behaviour. In this sense, the stigma attached to those who commit criminal offences, and by extension their families, is used to reinforce the gravity of wrong-doing and to encourage others to stand fast in their rejection of criminal behaviour and any association with it. Functionally, then, the identification of deviance and the stigma associated with it rewards conforming behaviour and supports the existence of social order. This functional analysis of stigma has led some theorists to the somewhat pessimistic (or realistic?) conclusion that stigma, therefore, is an immutable social fact and though its forms may change, there will always exist in every society groups of individuals who are distinguished from the norm by

virtue of their deviant lifestyles (Durkheim 1938; Erikson 1966; Schur 1980; Falk 2001).

As Falk (2001) suggested:

To speak of “good” or “bad” stigma is as fruitful as speaking of “good” or “bad” gravity. The latter is a physical fact that has no moral attributes and the former is a social fact that is equally impervious to any evaluation in terms of ethics or morals. Stigmatization serves the function, i.e., anticipated consequence, of furnishing every human group with the social solidarity needed to insure the group’s survival [...] It is therefore certain that someone will always be stigmatized in any and all human groups (340).

Despite the inevitability of in-group / out-group divisions, Falk’s argument that stigma is amoral in character fails to stand up to the analysis of the origins and outcomes of stigmatic attitudes. As I, and others, have argued previously, the characterisation of stigmatic attributes is most often rooted in the moralistic judgement of religious or cultural standards of behaviour (Douglas 1966; Schur 1980; Falk 2001), while the negative effects of stigma on the everyday lives of persons who carry these attributes may be understood as a form of preventable harm and therefore understood as immoral. The claimed normality and pervasiveness of stigma then does not logically or necessarily render it immune to personal and political judgement. Rather, it is within our purview to comment on the seeming injustices caused by the stigmatisation of persons who pose no direct threat to the social order and to thereby challenge the labelling and the treatment of these individuals. Schur (1980) has referred to such challenges as “stigma contests” and emphasised the role of power in ultimately determining which social attributes will be defined as deviant and in need of intervention and which will be defined as within the range of normal variation (150).

What stigma-protest groups aim for is such a politicization or “normalization” of the perceived deviation that it will gain full acceptance as falling within a range of acceptable variation. Defining the situation as

involving a “variation” presumably carries no connotation of disvalue or discredit, even if it continues to imply something slightly out of the ordinary. At a theoretical extreme, the latter implication might also be removed, so that the behaviour or condition could be treated as but one of many, equally ordinary patterns. Opposing groups, seeking to invoke or perpetuate stigma, obviously aim to accentuate the unacceptable differentness of that which they deplore or fear; they want to make sure it is responded to as extraordinary (Schur 1980:150).

The families of prisoners are just one example of many groups whose conduct or inclusion in civil society poses no direct threat to the safety of other persons nor to the existing social order. That is to say, their marginalisation is in fact based on either an error of judgement or a political and institutional consciousness that finds it advantageous to subordinate the welfare and concerns of this group in favour of their own instrumental values. To challenge the marginal position of families of prisoners is to challenge the political and institutional values (truths) that have been privileged over the well-being of this population. According to Gutting (2005), in his explication of Foucault:

Marginality is the political counterpart of [...] error. Politically, of course, error must be understood not only as the falsity of a proposition but also, non-linguistically, as inappropriate behaviour or misguided values. Foucaultian politics, as I am understanding it, is the effort to allow the ‘errors’ that marginalize a group to interact creatively with the ‘truths’ of the mainstream society. To the extent that if the effort succeeds, the marginal group will no longer be a specific object of domination, and society as a whole will be transformed and enriched by what is had previously rejected as errors (89).

In this sense we might argue that the families of prisoners are marginalised and subject to social neglect, not because they actually embody a deviant lifestyle or a subversive set of values that would pose a significant challenge to mainstream culture, but rather because it is instrumental for our political and correctional institutions to maintain their own position of power and dominance in their relation to these individuals. This power is based, at least in part, on an erroneous “truth” about the division between the in-group

and the out-group. As an institution, the governmental and correctional enterprise is able to utilise the phenomenon of sticky stigma and the cultural aversion to dangerous or criminal behaviour to legitimate, or at least to render hidden, the neglect, marginalisation and mistreatment that they perpetrate on prisoners' families.

Originating in cultural interpretations of deviance and crime, symbolic (sticky) stigma directed at prisoners' families results in generalised social avoidance behaviour from "normals" and an indifference to the effects of stigma and avoidance behaviour on this population. In effect, prisoners' families are not perceived as worthy of public concern. At the institutional level, this abstract symbolic stigma is formalised into expressions of risk (constructed as truths about probability) that translate into the formulation and implementation of techniques of risk management directed at the "dangerous" or "risky" group. These stigmatic "truths" serve an instrumental and political purpose at the structural level in directing public concern away from weak or ineffective institutional policies and practices and toward an identifiable out-group or scapegoat who can be blamed for common problems. For example, issues of institutional security and the prison drug trade are often linked in correctional policy and practice to prisoners' family members and other visitors to the prison, rather than to correctional staff and/or misguided correctional ideology. This institutionalised or structural stigma serves not only to legitimise and reinforce existing power differentials, but also to strengthen social confidence in the justness of the symbolic stigma and the importance of maintaining social distance from this discredited (and potentially risky) population. This cyclical process then further marginalises the stigmatised group, perpetuating neglect and social apathy toward the difficulties that they encounter. From a political perspective,

within a socio-economic context in which many groups are competing for scarce resources, marginalised groups who are unable to successfully challenge the dominant “truths” that define them as problematic will be unable to mobilise the social and political support that would initiate a compassionate response to their difficulties.

In this sense, while not all of the hardships encountered by the families of prisoners are a direct function of stigma or outright discrimination, the social and institutional failure to address these issues can be viewed as the outcome of complex symbolic interactions that construct these families as unworthy of assistance. Symbolic forms of stigma allow discrimination, marginality and neglect to go unremarked upon while structural stigma at the level of the institution both creates difficulties and perpetuates the existing symbolic stigma through techniques of risk management. While the resulting marginality may not be the intended outcome of institutional policies, the malign neglect of stigmatised populations and failure to address their needs results in marginalisation and negative outcomes.

Prisoners’ families are not the only population to be caught in this vicious cycle of marginality, risk management and neglect. This model is theoretically useful for examining the situations of many groups who have been constructed as risky or dangerous to an institutional and/or social order. Amongst these, in the western context, one might consider gays, lesbians and trans-gendered persons, those who belong to marginalised ethnic or religious groups, those in marginal occupations (i.e. sex work), criminalised persons, the homeless, the mentally ill, drug users, and others. Each of these populations, in its own way, has been discredited and subject to institutionalised risk

management that perpetuates symbolic (and often erroneous) stereotypes and the social neglect of important issues affecting the group as a whole.

Here we encounter the great dilemma of the interaction of stigma and social neglect. If, as I have suggested, stigma creates social isolation and allows the needs of marginalised groups to go unaddressed then those who seek to combat stigma and marginality are seeking a means of breaking down the existing symbolic constructions that discredit the group in order that their situation can be recognised and responded to in a compassionate way. In other words, the stigmatised characteristic must be normalised in order to legitimate the call for social response – to make the group “worthy” of assistance. Institutionally and politically, however, the primary means of drawing social attention to a marginalised group and justifying the expenditure of public funds to alleviate social needs has been to mobilise the notion of the risk or danger posed by said group, either to themselves or (more commonly) to others. So for example, justifying services to the children of prisoners as a means of preventing inter-generational criminality, or requesting funds to offer services to prisoners’ families as a form of crime prevention is a double-edged sword. This reasoning serves the function of providing funding for needed support services, while failing to deconstruct the very label and stigma that has marginalised and isolated prisoners’ families, thereby creating the need for services in the first place! The dilemma becomes one of how to establish needed services and assistance in a way that does not perpetuate symbolic forms of stigma and serves to de-marginalise families by challenging existing stereotypes.

This view of stigma and marginality suggests that the mere provision of services to stigmatised groups does not, in itself, reduce marginality. Rather, as from a labelling

perspective, the course of intervention may actually serve to further separate the group from the mainstream by constructing the need for intervention as a function of the risk or threat posed by said population. The dissolution of marginality requires the deconstruction of dominant cultural stereotypes that label stigmatised populations as risky or dangerous and a reconception of the stigmatised group as “worthy” of services and assistance; not because intervention will serve some instrumental or protective function for the general population, but because it is the “right” and compassionate thing to do – to care for the needs of others.

The deconstruction of cultural stereotypes and aversions is a difficult thing to accomplish, and yet we have seen, over time, the evolution of social response to various groups of people who were once avoided and stigmatised. For example, individuals stricken with leprosy, once shunned and isolated due to the possibility of contagion, are increasingly integrated into mainstream health care and treated with dignity and compassion – not to manage their risk of contagion, but because they are recognised as individuals who suffer and are in need of aid (Frist 2000; Arole, Premkumar, Arole, Maury and Saunderson 2002). Advances in medical knowledge about the transmission and curability of leprosy have contributed greatly to changes in social attitude and, while avoidance behaviours attached to leprosy have not been entirely eradicated, the social response to the needs of those who suffer from this disease has been dramatically improved (Frist 2000; Arole et al. 2002). Similarly, the stigmas once associated with divorce and children born out-of-wedlock have dissipated in our increasingly socially liberal society, to be replaced with support groups and assistance based on “need” rather than on “risk”.

Groups such as these who have been partially or wholly destigmatised have been the subject of efforts to normalise or integrate them and break down the moral judgements that are often associated with deviant characteristics. Jones et al. (1984) have pointed to the fallacy of the “just world” hypothesis and suggested that by deconstructing the notion that individuals are deserving of their life outcomes we might at least limit the application of stigma to those individuals who are genuinely responsible for their own discredit (300). In the case of prisoners’ families, this would require challenging the belief that family members are responsible for or in collusion with the criminal behaviour of their kin as well as the notion that the criminal activity of the incarcerated loved one reflects the likelihood that the family members will be similarly involved. Activism which brings these types of stereotypes into question is a key aspect of normalising stigmatised persons and bringing undeserved marginality to the attention of the general public, while efforts to foster increased social tolerance to difference can also aid in this process (Jones et al. 1984: 305).

One aspect of this question of “undeserved” stigma and marginality is the phenomenon of sticky stigma (or courtesy stigma) in which stigma is passed from an individual to his or her associates. While Goffman first identified the reality of transferred stigma in 1963, the gendered nature of sticky stigma has rarely been discussed at length. It appears that stigma is more easily transferred to the female partners of incarcerated men whose identities are linked to those of their convicted spouses, in accordance with patriarchal ideas of the hetero-normative, “traditional” family in which the male is the head of the household. Sticky stigma is likely to be most acute for women who do not have a positive social or occupational identity that is separate from their incarcerated spouse.

When a man is linked to an incarcerated person by virtue of marital or kinship ties, it is more likely that an independent identity and financial status will insulate him to some degree from sticky stigma, although this is not necessarily the case for all men who have an incarcerated loved one. While I did not have a large comparison sample of male family members to test this theory, the men whom I spoke with did not express as much concern about stigma as the women. Clearly, this is an interesting area for further research in the area of prisoners' families and other sites of transferred stigma. In the next section I present the types of social responses and assistance that prisoners' family members would like to see made available for themselves and others who are dealing with the collateral punishment of imprisonment. While these suggestions for action are focused on tangible intervention and assistance strategies, it is important to keep in mind that in order for any of these to have the desired effect of demarginalising prisoners' families, they must be understood not as risk management strategies or as a means of preventing crime, but as a means of alleviating some of the distress and difficulties created by the use of imprisonment. To truly demarginalise and integrate prisoners' families into the mainstream is to acknowledge that as a society we choose to respond to crime with imprisonment and that this choice has significant implications for the families of the convicted. The creation of a social response to this collateral punishment requires that the damages caused to families be understood as the responsibility of our punitive society, rather than as the responsibility of the offender, who "chose" to commit a crime and thereby to place his family in jeopardy, or as the responsibility of the family, who "choose" to continue a relationship with the incarcerated man, despite the obvious negative consequences. Interventions and assistance for the families of prisoners then can

be viewed as a necessary, compassionate, social response to address the iatrogenic consequences of modern penal policy, rather than as a risk management strategy for the protection of the public.

Resisting Marginality – Family Members’ Suggestions for Action

Foucault maintained that his writings on resistance and the politics of marginality were meant to provide a “toolkit” and an “instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is” (Foucault 1977:208, 1980:145, 1981:13). Like the early symbolic interactionists and ethnographers, he was careful to consider the possibility that his own location as an educated and privileged academic might serve to further marginalise and silence the voices of the oppressed populations that he wrote of by perpetuating the claim to speak “for” them, rather than opening a space in which they might speak for themselves (Foucault 1977c; 1981a; Falzon 1998; Gutting 2005). For this reason, Foucault did not venture into prescriptive writing, to recommend forms of political action or resistance and he eschewed the notion that he, as an intellectual and a philosopher, could define ideal outcomes and mastermind social change. According to Falzon (1998),

he [Foucault] refuses to play the traditional role of the intellectual, to be the ‘conscience of humanity’, to speak for others, and to subordinate their resistance to some revolutionary master plan. Such a position runs the risk of contributing to the very forms of totalising closure and domination that he seeks to challenge, thereby limiting the possibilities for resistance. It does not help make it possible for others to speak, to resist and to transform existing social reality (63-64).

In the spirit of this Foucaultian politics of resistance and the ethnographer’s commitment to the realities of his/her subjects, the suggestions for change presented below are not my

own vision of the needs of families of prisoners (though I may be in agreement with them). I have attempted to present, as authentically as possible, the voices of family members who are engaged and interested in avenues for change and who are seeking to improve not only their own situations, but the lives of others who find themselves coping with the collateral damages of mass imprisonment. Here, the political is personal. In Canada we are just beginning to see the mobilisation of prisoners' family members toward the creation of social change, as evidenced by the participation of family members in recent colloquia to discuss issues of imprisonment and the number of family members that I spoke with who were actively involved in establishing support services or contemplating possibilities for contribution to change.

The family members that I spoke with provided a range of suggestions for services and action to combat the effects of incarceration on families. Many individuals proposed programs and services that would address not only the specific needs of families, but that also would address the needs of their incarcerated loved ones for appropriate assistance with substance abuse and mental health issues, rehabilitation and reintegration. They reasoned that any assistance provided to their incarcerated family member would also, by extension, relieve some of the concern and pressure placed on them to support and assist in the rehabilitation and re-entry process.

The need for information and to be kept informed was mentioned by virtually all of the participants. From the point of arrest until the completion of the sentence, family members felt that they were often floundering and were not provided with crucial information about their loved one's situation that would aid them in decision making and planning for the future. Information about everything from the availability of financial

aid to the procedures for visiting correctional institutions to the needs of the offender upon release was sorely lacking and family members were not made aware of available services and assistance. The sister of one ex-prisoner discussed the devastating impact that her brother's legal defence had on her parents' finances before they realised that he could qualify for legal aid:

Somewhere along the line, they'd... they or Bob learned about legal aid. It could well have been Bob as a matter of fact, 'you are entitled to a lawyer...' you know, whatever, whatever. I also knew about legal aid and I was really upset with myself that I hadn't thought of it years earlier...because their, their legal bills with him were pretty excessive. They, in the seventies, they were twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars... that was a lot of money... Anyway, yes. That ultimately was a solution... (Marilyn, the sister of an ex-prisoner).

Although her brother was eventually able to obtain legal aid, the financial damage to Marilyn's parents had already been done. Had information been provided to the accused and his family at the time of arrest they could likely have avoided the burden of such large legal bills.

It is abundantly clear that families need to begin receiving information from the point of first contact with the criminal justice system – the loved one's arrest – and that a continuity of service and assistance needs to follow the family throughout the sentence and re-entry process. A simple lack of information can often complicate an already difficult situation and result in increased costs for families. Jane recalled women who had attended their family support group who relocated their families repeatedly because they were not informed about the intake procedures and security classification upon entry to the federal penitentiary system and consequently did not realise that their husband/partner would not remain in the prison he was first sent to.

I think... for the families themselves, I think that that's... when there is a chance that a husband or a family member, whether it's a son or whatever, is gonna be incarcerated, I think services need to start at that time. [...] So especially if it's a first time that they've had anyone convicted in their family, they don't know nothing, they don't know what to expect, what to do, or anything else. And we had families that, like the women would, the guy was convicted, of course, and in Ontario he's sent to Millhaven. Well, she would uproot herself, move into this area and then he'd end up in Bracebridge or someplace else and she'd be stuck here, with no supports. Then she'd move to Bracebridge area, and there's nothing up there, although it's gotten better... um... to be near him, right? Because they didn't know that he was gonna go through assessment and then be sent somewhere else... they need to have that information at the time before sentencing. Because usually they know that he's gonna get a couple years or whatever, right? I mean, his lawyer knows. They need the services to start at that time, to start with the trauma of it all... um... to educate and to...um...help them to understand and go through the grieving process they're gonna go through (Jane, an ex-prisoner's wife).

Although organisations such as the Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN) and other local service agencies are established to offer this type of information to families, often family members are not made aware of the existence of this aid until their loved one has been tried, sentenced and entered the federal prison system, if they learn of it at all. Family members repeatedly emphasised the need for information about the court process and the correctional system to be provided much earlier in the process and uniformly offered to the families of all accused persons. Several of the women (both wives and mothers) mentioned that they only obtained information about the criminal justice process and the correctional system through their own resourcefulness and persistence in demanding answers to their questions. They emphasised that not everyone would have the tenacity or ability to chase down the information that they need in order to obtain assistance. Families who are the most marginalised by virtue of poverty or lack of education are least likely to obtain information about much needed services.

I bugged everybody until I got answers! But that's me. I was in the situation where I always thought of myself as being just as good as they are, which a lot of family members don't. A lot of people have this attitude where, 'oh...I'm on welfare, I don't deserve to have a life...' there's a lot of that... So...I don't think they even want to try. [...] Um...I'm a very strong-willed person and I would tell my husband, I need the help, I need to find out and I'm calling this person! [...] I'm also lucky, I guess, that I have the guts to do it. Like, if I get a negative decision I don't sit and look at it. I usually write and contact the correctional investigator and... like I try to change something (Anne, the wife of a prisoner).

Information is needed about both the provincial and federal correctional systems as many family members will have to negotiate the provincial jail procedures first if their loved one is held on pre-trial detention. The provincial system can be extremely difficult for families as contact visits are generally not permitted and the period of detention prior to trial is uncertain and can be extended due to court backlogs or delays in the trial process. Whereas limited support and information is available at the level of federal corrections, there is nothing at the provincial level to orient or assist families. Given that this is, for most families, their first exposure to the realities of incarceration, it is imperative that support systems be put in place at the provincial level.

The Canadian Families in Corrections Network was all set up to work within the federal system and but, it's like, if your family can survive to get through the court process into the federal system, then there are some supports. The very worst time is when your loved one is in detention and you don't know what is going to happen. So and that's when everything falls apart and all the stigma and that... so that's really where the need is, is in the provincial system there's absolutely nothing, it's like, all the bulletin boards in the prison are blank. There's only like ads for Alcoholic's Anonymous. So, that's for me, that's where I see a real need (Danielle, the wife of an incarcerated man).

Several women mentioned the need for very practical forms of information and suggestions, such as how to get creditors to stop calling your home for your incarcerated loved one, what to do with his personal effects, and seminars that would explain the

prison system and the rules and procedures for initiating visits and obtaining contact visits.

They should have some kind of “welcome to prison program” like, okay this is what you need to do, this is how you can stop credit card companies from phoning your family, this is what your family can do with all of your belongings. [...] I think someone should um, like a professional person should go to the home of the, like, where the person has been arrested and help that family deal with the immediate aftermath from, y’know, especially if the person is going to be held indefinitely as in our case. I guess some people, you know, you go pay bail somewhere and then they’re back, but in a situation like this, extreme circumstances, someone to help you, just tell you what’s going on, like “this is...” even things like, “this is where the prison is... he will be able to phone you...” or like a lot of those practical things like, “this is what to do with your mail, this is how to deal with the press” um... any of those sort of things, like, almost like, like when someone dies suddenly, you have a funeral director to say, “okay, this is the decision that you have to make, this one you don’t have to make” or y’know, because that’s what it was like for me. I’m sure many situations are different but I think that is absolutely vital, I think that it’s really vital to be in touch with people where your loved one is. Someone to be a liaison (Danielle, the wife of a prisoner).

Women who had dealt with more than one federal institution also mentioned the need to standardise such institutional policies as dress codes, search and visiting procedures, which often vary depending on the institution and the region, or even according to which staff are working. The standardisation of policies for visiting and correspondence would make life easier for families when their loved one is transferred to another institution and enable CSC to provide all inmates and their families with a single, standard orientation package that could provide relevant details, rather than generalisations, about existing policies and procedures:

I think there should be some kind of a seminar for families who first come into the system to explain how it works. Or a booklet given, at least, at the very least, explaining the dress code, the drug scanner, the hours of operation, who to contact if you have a problem... things like that (Anne, the wife of a prisoner).

Another, related, suggestion was to standardise and expand the availability of existing services, such as visitor resource centres within federal institutions and subsidised accommodations for visitors who are travelling to visit loved ones in federal penitentiaries. While there is an acknowledgement that these services do exist, they are not uniformly available and depend on the particular geographic and social location of the individual penitentiary. There are several key regions in which federal prison facilities are clustered and these areas do tend to offer some services, whereas the more isolated or rural the institution, the less likely it will have support services available. As a result it is ironically often the families who are travelling the furthest who have the least access to services.

I think it would be helpful if there was some kind of... like there is in... I think it's Warkworth, where they have the visitors' resource centre. I think that should be in every penitentiary. Especially the maximum security ones... the initial, like, the receiving centres in every province, but also in the ones that are further away. For the ones that are far from... civilisation... there should be also some kind of rooming service... so that people don't necessarily have to pay for hotels because a lot of people don't have the money to do that (Anne, the wife of a prisoner).

In addition to information and standardisation of services, family members also mentioned the need for personal emotional support and advocacy to be provided by someone who understands the criminal justice system and its effects on prisoners and their families. The element of understanding is mentioned as a very important criterion in identifying those who are best placed to provide support to family members. At the very least, those who work with the families of prisoners to offer assistance must be educated about the collateral punishment of imprisonment and sensitive to the needs of these families. That is, if services to prisoners' families were to be centralised and linked to the Correctional Service of Canada or provincial or federal justice departments, staff

would have to be handpicked for their compassion toward families and their ability to separate their view of the family from the stigma of the criminal offence. Some family members advocate the incorporation of others like themselves who have gone through the incarceration of a loved one and are willing to offer volunteer support and assistance grounded in their own experiences, rather than the use of professional support services. There seems to be a sense that someone who has “been there” is better able to identify with the family and to offer support in a non-judgemental and constructive fashion. Three of the wives/partners that I spoke with had taken it upon themselves to initiate family support groups and another was contemplating utilising her education in social work to get involved with peer support services.

I'm in a social work program and maybe at another point in my life, I'd like to work with people in the same situation – to be the person at the point of arrest – that's the most traumatizing – and then going through the nightmare of the shock of losing your loved one or going through this court system having no idea what's gonna happen, that's where people really need the support (Danielle, the wife of a prisoner).

Another woman mentioned her desire to provide families with the kinds of immediate and practical supports that she wished she had when her husband was arrested and charged with a criminal offence and her world came crashing down around her. For her, something as simple as a hot meal provided to a family in shock and the support of people who care and understand the situation could make a world of difference:

My vision is... to have a team... of... dedicated volunteers. I mean dedicated. Volunteers. Who either know somebody that this has happened to...or have heard about it happening and feel sick about it. I want... as I say, a group of people that have...very strong feelings...for whatever reason... When...this happens to a person... well we have to in some way have a method of being told that this has happened. A family has... is suffering in this way, or is going to be suffering in this way. My vision is that we could be waiting outside in a car. Not just one of us, more than one of us, at least two. And another one that we could phone to bring over

a casserole. Cuz we don't wanna walk in the door with one. And... that's my idea, you know... To give them supper... you know... I mean, I don't even remember if my kids ate that night [when her husband was arrested]. I would want them to come to a group, to our support group. And then it's their group too... that's what I would like, that's my vision...that in... I would like to have babysitters available for those who can't go because of their children, rides set up for those who can't go because they don't know how to drive... um... I... you know there's a whole bunch of things I would think of. If you don't want to go because you're afraid to go, I'll hold your hand... I'll go in front of you. I'll go behind you... what does it take to get you there, so that you can find out that you are a survivor? All these people are... and so can you. That's my vision (Isobel, the wife of an ex-prisoner).

The provision of financial and material support was another item on family members' wish list of services, particularly as it pertained to the costs of visiting and maintaining contact with their loved one. There were suggestions that the Correctional Service of Canada could provide staple groceries for the private family visiting facilities (rather than having family members provide all of their own groceries), subsidised travel to penitentiaries that are geographically remote or inaccessible via public transportation and subsidised or CSC-run accommodations for families who must travel long distances to visit. Even more ideally, CSC could prioritise and expedite the transfer of prisoners who are incarcerated far from their families to ensure that the sentence is served in the closest suitable facility to the family home. This would not only decrease the cost and logistical difficulties of visiting, but enable families to visit more frequently and maintain closer relationships. The cost of telephone calls from the prisons, always a point of frustration for family members, was also raised as an area in which CSC could make changes to alleviate costs for prisoners' families. Although CSC is currently in the process of changing the telephone system to allow the use of prepaid phone cards which will offer less expensive service than the previous collect-call system, family members

who lived near to prisons questioned the fact that they were charged at all for local calls. Technologically, and in terms of security, under the new telephone system there does not seem to be a reason why prisoners should not be able to make local calls at no cost, provided that the telephone number they wish to call has been approved and entered into the system. The fact that the telephone company and CSC persist in requiring family members to pay for local calls seems unnecessary and punitive. Many federal prisoners have also done time in the provincial system. Local (and long distance) telephone calls made from provincial institutions are also made collect and are consequently quite expensive, so this is an area of costs in which family members are anxious to see changes made across the board.

The centralised model of service provision used in the province of Manitoba to connect victims of crime with available resources is one model that could be very effective in linking the families of prisoners to local services and addressing many of the needs presented here and throughout this dissertation. When a serious crime is committed against an individual in the province of Manitoba, the victim is assigned to the caseload of a regional Crime Victim Service Worker (CVSW). The CVSW is responsible to contact the victim and to provide them with information about the court system, available counselling, mental health, and support services, and to advise them of their rights and responsibilities as the case proceeds through the criminal justice system (Manitoba Justice 2008). This model has been recognised as exemplary amongst Canadian victim services and appears to be an effective means of connecting victims to available resources and informing them of their options. The creation of a similar system for contacting and disseminating information to the families of accused and convicted

persons could help to provide the much needed support and continuity of service that family members are seeking, provided that existing services were expanded and made uniformly available across the country. If, as I have suggested previously, family members were understood as the victims of collateral punishment, rather than as guilty by association with their accused/convicted loved one, then an integrated model of service delivery and assistance such as this could be easily justified, regardless of the current political or penal milieu.

Directions for Future Research

This study focused on the families of male prisoners, recognising that because men make up the greater proportion of imprisoned persons in this country many women, in the form of partners, spouses and mothers, are the indirect victims of this use of incarceration. In this sense, the collateral effects of imprisonment are gendered in a way that has rarely been addressed, with many more women than men experiencing this non-specific, indirect form of punishment. However, this research does not address the other side of the equation: what happens to families when a woman is imprisoned? There is a need to address this question in the Canadian context as there are no existing studies of female prisoners and their families in Canada. The small number of female prisoners in Canadian federal corrections means that there are very few federal correctional facilities designed to accommodate women and therefore female prisoners are often incarcerated at great distances from their homes, families and children. Also, women are less likely to have a partner who will assume custody of her children, resulting in incarcerated women

disproportionately losing custody of their children to the state if there is no relative willing or able to care for them while she is in prison.

Another area that is in need of further study is the process of family (re)integration following incarceration. While I have addressed some of the issues briefly in the context of this research, clearly the dynamics of negotiating the institutionalisation of the ex-prisoner and attempting to (re)build a family life that incorporates the expectations and desires of both spouses is an area that is ripe to be explored. A better understanding of the family (re)integration process would enable the creation of appropriate support services and assistance that may decrease the strain on the family and help to ensure that more ex-prisoners will successfully re-enter the community and desist from criminal patterns.

This study attempted to operate at two levels. At the substantive level it was a qualitative study of the impact of the use of incarceration on the families of male prisoners. As such, it revealed many of the direct and indirect implications of the conviction of a family member and the material and emotional hardships that result from the involuntary separation of families by incarceration. The empirical data suggests that women are disproportionately affected by the collateral punishment of incarceration and, as such, the study of families on the outside is an important new direction for theorising the consequences of a patriarchal society.

At the theoretical level, I was also attempting to develop a framework that would allow me to extend the traditional, symbolic interactionist analysis of stigma as realised in individual interactions to understand how stigma becomes embedded in institutional practices and perpetuated through the language of risk. Theoretically I have argued that

symbolic stigma is most often at the root of marginality and that these are interconnected and mutually reinforcing processes. This discussion of stigma, as it pertains to the families of offenders, creates a useful framework for understanding the position of other marginalised groups and emphasises that it is the resistance of stereotypes and the changing of social attitudes that will most effectively break down stigma and marginality. The use of intervention and forms of assistance, framed in the language of risk management that accompanies structural stigma, will only serve to perpetuate and perhaps exacerbate existing stigma at the symbolic level, rather than integrating the marginalised population into mainstream society.

The family members of prisoners (and other stigmatised individuals), themselves, may inadvertently support the very stigma that isolates and marginalises them when they mobilise existing stereotypes as a means of demonstrating their own relative normalcy and identification with mainstream values. Unfortunately, in pointing out their own “difference” from the stereotypical prisoner’s family, they fail to effectively deconstruct or challenge the dominant view and may find that they continue to be understood in this light by those who are not “wise” (Goffman 1963:28) or sympathetic to the issues faced by the group. Perhaps one of the most useful outcomes of this study is the understanding that in order for resistance to marginality to be effective, it must necessarily be practiced in a collective form. While individual techniques of resistance may serve to boost the self-esteem and identity of the individual, they have a tendency to focus only on individualised, symbolically realised forms of stigma while ignoring the collective, structural stigma that defines the group to whom they belong as risky or dangerous. Consequently, individual forms of resistance do little (or nothing) to promote the

destigmatisation of the group and may often be counterproductive in the way that they serve to stratify the group and reinforce stereotypes. Theoretically, therefore, this research points to the need to further study collective resistance as a means of fighting marginality and stigma in the hopes that the dissolution of unearned stigma and the elimination of dubious characterisations of riskiness may improve the lives of countless marginalised persons.

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APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

1. Please state your name, organisation and position.
2. What services does your organisation offer? Which services are specifically for family of incarcerated persons?
3. Who provides these services? What training / experience does your staff have?
4. Do any of your staff members describe themselves openly as family members of a currently or formerly incarcerated person?
5. What is your role in the organisation? What services are you personally involved in?
6. Approximately how many family members of incarcerated persons does your organisation serve? What geographical area do you serve?
7. What do you see as the biggest needs/issues faced by your clients?
8. Are there any services that you receive requests for that you DO NOT currently offer? Why do you not offer these services?
9. Where does your organisation get its funding to offer services to the family members of incarcerated persons?
10. What is the rationale / goal of your organisation in offering these services?
11. Can you give specific examples of the types of problem situations that you encounter in your work with this population?
12. Please comment on the issue of stigma? Do you think it is a problem?
13. Do you think that you are reaching all of the people in your area who qualify/ could benefit from your services? What do you think some of the barriers to access are?
14. What other social/government agencies are your clients dealing with? Do you ever encounter conflicts of interest or difficulty in dealing with these agencies?
15. Do your clients describe difficulties in dealing with any social or government agencies?
16. Do you duplicate any of the services offered by any of these organisations?
17. Have you encountered any difficulties with getting potential clients to trust your organisation or staff members?
18. Can you comment specifically on any minor clients that you serve? What do you feel are the biggest issues with the children of incarcerated men?
19. What do you feel are the biggest issues for the spouses or intimate partners of incarcerated men?
20. What do you feel are the biggest issues for the parents of incarcerated men?
21. Do you notice any over-arching problems that seem to affect all family members?
22. Can you think of any other issues that I should be aware of and consider?
23. Would you be willing to refer your clients to me to be interviewed on a voluntary basis?

APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

Semi-structured interview format.

Questions including, but not limited to:

1. How are you related to your incarcerated family member?
2. Do you normally reside in the same household as this person?
3. Was your family member a primary or shared income earner in your household?
Was any of your family income derived from criminal involvement?
4. Please describe the status of your relationship with your family member, ie. Do you have contact with him? Is it a positive relationship?
5. When was your family member sent to prison?
6. Is he still in prison? If so, when do you expect him to be released? How long was his sentence?
7. Where or how far away from your residence is/was your family member incarcerated?
8. What is the size of your community? How publicised was your family member's conviction and incarceration?
9. How fairly do you think that your incarcerated family member has been treated by the criminal justice system, the courts and the correctional facilities?
10. Describe your relationship with your family member prior to his incarceration.
11. Describe your relationship with your family member during incarceration: amount of contact, type of relationship, etc.
12. Do / did you visit your family member in prison? If so, please describe that experience. How did it make you feel? How often did you visit? Would you have liked to see your family member more, less, or the same amount? Have you made use of the private family visit trailers?
13. How are you treated by guards and correctional officials when you visit?
14. If you did not visit your family member, why not? Did you want to visit your family member? How did it make you feel that you did not visit him?
15. Please describe any changes in your household since the incarceration of your family member.
16. What do you feel are the biggest, if any, issues that you have had to deal with since the incarceration of your family member?
17. What social or government agencies have you been in contact with? Have you encountered any difficulties as a result of your family member's incarceration?
18. How were you treated by the court, lawyers and other officials involved in your family member's trial and sentencing? Were you offered any assistance or support?
19. Can you describe any negative social experiences as a result of your family member's incarceration?
20. If you are a spouse/partner and have children, describe any difficulties that you see your children facing.

21. Have you been involved with any support groups or services offered to families of incarcerated persons? If so, have you found them helpful? What services have you used?
22. What services do you think would be helpful for you? What services would you use if they were available or accessible?
23. How has your family member's conviction and incarceration affected you financially? Socially? Emotionally?
24. How do you feel when you think about your family member being in prison?
25. Do you worry about your family member in prison? What are your biggest concerns?
26. Have there been any social repercussions to your family member's incarceration?
27. Have you heard others describe your family member in negative ways? Other family members? Friends? Acquaintances? How does this make you feel?
28. If your family member has been released, please describe your current, post-release relationship with him. How has his release impacted your household / family life?
29. Do you ever feel discriminated against as a result of your family member's incarceration? Please describe any such circumstances or instances.
30. Is there anything else that you would like to add or that you think I should know about or consider?

APPENDIX C: LETTERS OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORMS

Letter of Information A Family Members

This research study is being conducted by Stacey Hannem, a PhD candidate at Carleton University, department of Sociology, for the purposes of her Doctoral thesis. The study is being overseen by my PhD supervisor, Dr. Aaron Doyle, Professor of sociology at Carleton University.

The impact of incarceration on the families of inmates is something that has often been ignored in the creation of criminal justice policies and procedures. The goal of my research is to understand the experiences of the family members of men currently or previously incarcerated in a federal penitentiary in Canada. During the interview process, I hope to learn more about specific difficulties in dealing with the social, financial and emotional consequences of a loved one's imprisonment. This research will be helpful to improve public awareness of the types of issues you might encounter and to move towards effective social policy that will offer support and assistance to families affected by incarceration.

Should you agree to participate, the interview will last up to approximately two hours. In order to maintain confidentiality, I will use a pseudonym in place of your real name and will alter any identifying names, places, speech patterns or specific events to protect your identity and provide anonymity. You also have the right, if you so choose, to delete any information obtained in an interview or focus group that you do not wish to be used in analysis or that you feel endangers you, your family or friends. If you choose to participate in a focus group, you are asked to keep all information and discussion confidential to respect the privacy of fellow participants. You may also choose not to give your real name to fellow participants if you have concerns about your own privacy and the confidentiality of your information.

Questions will focus on your experiences in dealing with the incarceration of your loved one and any difficulties that have arisen as a result of his imprisonment. There is a chance that the nature of these questions may cause you to feel uncomfortable or sad. If at any time during the interview you do not wish to answer a question, feel free to decline. You may end the interview and withdraw from the study if you wish, at any time, for any reason, without any explanation. There is no consequence to withdrawing your participation in this study. All information provided to the researcher for the purposes of this study will be kept strictly confidential.

There are no direct benefits to your participation in this study. However, I believe that participating in this study should not cost you anything either. As a result, I am willing to reimburse you for any travelling or parking expenses as a result of participating in this interview up to a maximum of \$20, payable upon the completion of the interview.

Please indicate to me if you have any problems with or questions about the nature of this research project. The university requires that I obtain your written consent to participate in this study. If you agree with the terms of this research projects as I have explained them, both above and as follows, please provide your signature on the following consent form, indicating that you agree to participate according to the conditions outlined below:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project: Families of Prisoners – Family Members

1. I, _____, consent (agree) to participate in the research study being conducted by Stacey Hannem on the Families of Incarcerated Men. I understand that the research is being supervised by Aaron Doyle, Professor of sociology at Carleton University.

2. I understand that I am agreeing to participate in one interview lasting approximately two (2) hours. I understand that the interview will involve a series of questions about my experiences in dealing with the incarceration of my family member. I understand that the researcher will reimburse me for travelling or parking expenses related to my participation, to a maximum of \$20.

3. I understand that, in order to protect my anonymity and that of my family and friends, I have the right to edit or delete any information from the interview transcripts or processed notes which I believe might identify or endanger myself or any friends, family members or associates. I understand that I am entitled to a follow-up interview should I feel that clarification of my statements or additional information is needed. Further, I understand that all names, places, speech patterns, specific events or other information that might identify me or my family or friends will be changed during the transcription process to ensure the protection of my identity. I understand that all focus group participants will be asked to respect the privacy of their fellow participants by keeping confidential any information shared during the focus group, but the researcher cannot guarantee that confidentiality.

4. Because the topic being researched deals with my personal experiences, I understand that there is a possibility that answering some of the questions may cause me to be uncomfortable, or that it may be unpleasant for me to think about the subject. As a result, I understand that if, at any time, I do not wish to answer a question, I may choose not to respond. I also understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason, without consequence.

5. I understand that any information that I provide will be retained by the researcher for the purposes of future research, analysis and/or publications. Confidentiality will be maintained as only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the tapes, transcripts and signed consent forms. This material will be in the sole possession of the researcher and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secured facility.

6. I understand that I will be given opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification regarding the goals, methods and obligations of the researcher, the rights of the participant(s) and/or any other concerns I may have before the interview or focus group begins.

7. I understand that the undersigned researcher is currently working on a Doctoral degree in Sociology at Carleton University. The interview material will be used as the basis of the researcher's Doctoral thesis. I agree that this research may also be used by the principle researcher (Stacey Hannem) for academic presentations, journal articles, a book and/or book chapters.

8. Questions about the research process or requests to obtain copies of findings or publications should be addressed to:

Stacey Hannem and/or Aaron Doyle
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
7th Floor, Loeb Building, Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
Phone (819) 246-7096
Email: shannem@uottawa.ca

9. This project has been approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. If I require further information regarding the ethical considerations or requirements, have questions about the ethics process/expectations, or have any complaints about the ethical conduct of the researcher, I may contact:

Prof. Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
Carleton University Research Ethics Committee
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
Tel: 613-520-2517
E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

10. Two copies of the consent form must be completed: one for myself and the other to be retained by the principle researcher.

Statement:

I agree to participate in the interview with the understanding that the guidelines detailed in paragraph 3 regarding anonymity, confidentiality and the use of interview material will be strictly adhered to by the researcher.

The goal(s) of the research have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I retain the right to refuse any questions or withdraw from the project at any time as clarified above in paragraph 4.

I understand that should I choose to withdraw from the research project there will be no negative consequences for me or for my family, friends or associates as clarified above in paragraph 4.

I agree to have the interview tape recorded: YES_____ NO_____

I agree to allow direct quotation of this interview: YES_____ NO_____

I will allow follow-up contact by the researcher if necessary: YES_____ NO_____

Date: _____

Participant:_____ Signature:_____

Researcher: Stacey Hannem Signature:_____

Letter of Information B

Service Providers

This research study is being conducted by Stacey Hannem, a PhD candidate at Carleton University, department of sociology, for the purposes of her Doctoral thesis. This research is being supervised by Dr. Aaron Doyle, Professor of sociology at Carleton University.

This research will look at the experiences of the family members of men currently or previously incarcerated in a federal penitentiary in Canada. The project will focus on any difficulties faced by these individuals in dealing with the social, financial and emotional consequences of a loved one's imprisonment. The research is intended to be used to understand the experiences of individuals who have an incarcerated family member and to improve awareness of the issues encountered by this specific population, which has often been ignored in the creation of criminal justice policies and procedures.

Should you agree to participate, the interview will last approximately two hours. If you wish, the researcher will assign a pseudonym to protect your identity and the identity of your organisation. You also have the right, if you so choose, to delete from transcripts any information that you do not wish to be used in analysis or that you feel endangers you, your clients, your organisation or employees.

Questions will focus on your experiences in working with the families of incarcerated men. Particularly on your professional assessment of the major issues that you encounter and the difficulties that these families face. There are no foreseeable risks to your participation in this research. If at any time during the interview you do not wish to answer a question, you may decline. You may end the interview and withdraw from the study if you wish, at any time, for any reason, without explanation. There will be no cost or harm to you if you withdraw. All information provided to the researcher for the purposes of this study will be kept strictly confidential.

Please indicate to me if you have any problems with or questions about the nature of this research project. As a necessary condition for carrying out this research I am required to obtain your written consent. If you agree with the terms of this research projects as I have explained them, both above and as follows, please provide your signature on the following consent form, indicating your consent to participate according to the conditions outlined below:

INFORMED CONSENT FORM B

Project: Families of Prisoners – Service Providers

I, _____, consent to participate in the research study being conducted by Stacey Hannem on the Families of Incarcerated Men. I understand that the research is being supervised by Aaron Doyle, Professor of sociology at Carleton University.

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in one interview that will last approximately two hours. The interview will involve questions about my experiences in working with the families of incarcerated men. I understand that, if I wish, in order to protect my anonymity and that of my clients, employees, organisation, family and friends, I have the right to edit or delete any information from the interview transcripts or processed notes which I consider to, in any way, identify or endanger any of the above mentioned individuals. I understand that I am entitled to a follow-up interview should I feel that clarification of my statements or additional information is needed. Further, I understand that, if I desire anonymity, all potentially identifying names, places, speech patterns, specific events or other information will be altered during the transcription process to ensure the protection of my identity.

I understand that if, at any time, I do not wish to answer a question, I may choose not to respond. Further, I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that should I choose not to answer a question or to withdraw from the study, there will be no penalty to myself, my family, or any associates.

I understand that any information provided by me will be retained by the researcher for the purposes of future research, analysis and/or publications. Confidentiality will be respected as only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the tapes, transcripts and signed consent forms. This material will be in the sole possession of the researcher and will be kept securely in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home.

I understand that in order to ensure that I am able to give free and informed consent, these forms will be reviewed orally. I will be given opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification regarding research goals, methods, the researcher's obligations and the rights of the participants, as well as any other concerns I may have, before the interview begins.

I understand that the undersigned researcher is currently working on a Doctoral degree in sociology at Carleton University. The interview material will be used as the basis of the researcher's Doctoral thesis. I agree that this research may also be used by the principle researcher (Stacey Hannem) for academic presentations, journal articles, a book and/or book chapters.

Inquiries about the research process or requests to obtain copies of findings or publications should be addressed to:

Stacey Hannem and/or Aaron Doyle
 Department of Sociology and Anthropology
 7th Floor, Loeb Building, Carleton University
 1125 Colonel By Drive
 Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
 Phone (819) 246-7096
 Email: shannem@uottawa.ca

This project has been approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. If I require further information regarding the ethical considerations or requirements, have questions about the ethics process/expectations, or have any complaints about the ethical conduct of the researcher, I may contact:

Prof. Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
 Carleton University Research Ethics Committee
 Carleton University
 1125 Colonel By Drive
 Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
 Tel: 613-520-2517
 E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

Two copies of the consent form will be completed. One I may keep, while the other copy will be retained by the principle researcher.

Statement:

The goals of the research have been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I retain the right to refuse any questions or withdraw from the project at any time.

I understand that should I choose to withdraw from the research project there will be no negative consequences for me or for my family, friends or associates.

I agree to participate in the interview on the understanding that the above detailed criteria regarding anonymity, confidentiality and the use of interview material will be abided by.

I wish to remain anonymous and be provided a pseudonym for the purposes of quotation or attribution of statements: YES_____ NO_____

I agree to have the interview tape recorded: YES_____ NO_____

I agree to allow direct quotation of this interview: YES_____ NO_____

I will allow follow-up contact by the researcher if necessary: YES_____ NO_____

Should I exercise my right to withdraw, I will give the researcher permission to use data I have provided up to that point: YES_____ NO_____

Date: _____

Participant: _____ Signature: _____

Researcher: Stacey Hannem Signature: _____

APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

Correctional Service Canada
Service correctionnel Canada

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POST-SENTENCE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT CONTENT GUIDELINES

1. Notification to third party	Persons contacted shall be told that the information they provide will be shared with the offender. Should the identity of the contact require protection, the information should be provided in a Protected Information Report. The contact shall be informed that a summary or "gist" of any information disclosed will be provided to the offender if this information is to be used in the decision making process.
2. Source(s) of information	<p>For each contact, list:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name • Date of birth • Address • Telephone number • Occupation • Relationship to offender • Place where the interview took place and a general, brief, objective description of the physical environment (if relevant) • Date of the interview • CPIC check (as per regional practices)
3. Offender's relationship with the contact and significant others (if applicable)	<p>Based on information provided by the contact:</p> <p>Parole Officer's assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the nature of the relationship between the offender and contact; • the impact of the contact(s)' extended relationship with the offender during incarceration or at time of release; • the degree of support the contact(s) are prepared to offer to the offender regarding his or her reintegration in the community (in the present and in the future), as well as reliability of the information obtained; • the offender's social network; • the offender's relationship with peers or significant others.
4. Criminal history	<p>Contact's comments on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the offender's criminal behaviour (the age at which problems with the law started, type and frequency of offences, history of placement in juvenile or adult institutions); • the offender's performance on bail; • original charges versus final outcome, and fairness of the sentence. <p>Based on information provided by the contact:</p> <p>Parole Officer's assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the contact's attitude toward the offender's criminal behaviour and their ability to successfully reintegrate.
5. Contributing factors	<p>Based on information provided by the contacts:</p> <p>Parole Officer's assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the dynamic factors that contributed to the criminal behaviour and factors not directly

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	<p>related to the criminal behaviour but likely to contribute to the safe reintegration of the offender in the community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - offender's employment history (pattern of employment and job satisfaction), - offender's alcohol and/or drug history, - offender's attitude towards accepted social values and his or her views on living a law-abiding lifestyle, - the influences associates may have over the offender, - offender's personality (impulsive, empathetic, sensation seeking, manipulative), - pattern such as aggression, assertion, coping mechanisms or frustration tolerance, - offender's sexual dysfunction, - offender's mental health; • the offender's childhood including whether the family unit had a negative or positive influence on the offender; • the offender's community and historical information, particularly in the case of Aboriginal offenders; • the factors that represent the offender's strengths likely to contribute in his or her reintegration; • the contact(s)'s ability to assist the offender in the participation or completion of community programs; • the leisure activities and awareness or use of social or community services by the offender and the contact(s); • the relevance of offender's release plans, and suggestions for additions or alternatives to the plans with a corresponding rationale; • the dynamic contributing factors to be addressed prior to release (order of priority of the dynamic factors). <p>Contact's opinion on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the offender's ability to set goals, recognize and solve problems, communication skills (verbal and written), ability to handle finances. <p>Availability and short description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • programs and resources that are accessible in the community to address what seems to be the offender's contributing factors. • For s. 84 releases, comment on the community's capacity to support the offender.
6. Temporary absences and private family visits (as applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family eligibility and interest in participating in private family visits. • Contact(s)'s interest in receiving the offender on UTAs and the ability and willingness to provide suitable accommodation. • Concerns with respect to family violence (current or past relationships). • The offender's past and present marital status, parenting responsibilities. <p>Based on information provided by the contacts:</p> <p>Parole Officer's assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the value the contact places on family and the value the offender places on family; • the family dynamic; • the relevance of UTAs and PFV program, including reporting and supervision requirements, type and frequency of contacts.

7. Police or other official information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific information received from police, including reaction to the proposed release plan(s) and the reporting requirements established for the offender; impressions of the contact. • Specific information received from other criminal justice sources and official community organizations. • Specific information from police or other official information pertaining to family violence and the existence of any restraining orders. • Where relevant, indicate the offender's deportation status, or other relevant immigration information.
8. Assessment of impact on victim(s) If other regional practices to gather victim impact statements are used, this section should not be completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on available information examine the effect of the offence on the victim(s), elaborating on detention criteria subsections 129(2)(a)(i) and 129(2)(a)(ii) of the CCRSA as required. • Information may be obtained from a variety of sources, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the arresting/investigating police officer; - Crown attorney (should be the first point of contact for inquiry into the harm caused to a victim when the wishes and/or circumstances of that victim are unknown. From the information received at that point, it is a matter of judgement whether it is necessary or advisable to contact the victim directly); - the victim (although sensitivity to the victim may make direct contact inadvisable; such cases include where the victim has had no contact with the Service since the offender was sentenced, or where the victim has indicated he or she does not wish to be contacted). • The potential risk related to the offender's eventual release to the victim(s).
9. Community Strategy	For APR cases serving four years or less and all other cases serving three years or less where the Assessment for Decision is completed by the Intake Assessment Unit. See "Community Strategy Content Guidelines".
10. Overall assessment	The Parole Officer provides an opinion regarding the level and quality of the community support available to the offender and the proposed options and/or treatments/programs available in the community likely to maintain the risk at the lowest level possible, when the offender is eventually released in the community and the reintegration potential of the offender.