Reintegration Begins at Home:
Exploring Family’s Experience of Prisoner’s Re-entry.

by

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Doctor of Psychology (Forensic)

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OVERVIEW

In the last ten years, imprisonment rates have increased in all Australian states and territories. The average prison sentence is relatively short and, as a result of these factors there is a larger than ever number of ex-prisoners re-entering the community. Despite the adoption of models of rehabilitation such as Risk-Need-Responsivity and Good Lives, recidivism rates remain high and this indicates that current punishment/rehabilitation models may not be sufficient as responses to offending. In the face of such evidence, many authors now recommend that the reintegration of ex-prisoners into the community be the object of greater study and policy. There is evidence that the family relationship is a critical factor that influences reintegration and subsequent recidivism, however families are rarely considered in correctional research or policy. In response to this absence, this thesis explored the family adjustment processes and related systemic issues that affect the construction of an adaptive and productive re-entry of former prisoners into the community.

The first chapter begins with an account of the increase of imprisonment rates and the patterns of recidivism in Australia, and moves to the history of the development of offending programs, analysing the existing models of offender rehabilitation. After describing the Risk-Need-Responsivity and Good Lives models of offender rehabilitation, the limitations of current prisoner reintegration approaches are highlighted. Chapter two highlights the broad and complex processes that prisoners go through when re-entering society, and describes the effects of imprisonment on the family system. This chapter also reviews the literature and the issues of prisoners’ families and emphasizes the importance that the family relationship plays in the process of reintegration. Chapter three outlines the Family Stress Theory and Resilience frameworks and its theoretical parallel with the aspects of families’ experience of adjustment and adaptation to the return of an ex-prisoner. This chapter ends by proposing two studies that
look at the interactive process and systemic issues that affect prisoners and family members in achieving an adaptive and productive re-entry for the ex-prisoner.

The first study is described in Chapter Four. This exploratory study engaged an assortment of 15 professionals who were involved with the transition of ex-prisoners into the community and their families and employed in-depth semi-structured interviews and a thematic analysis approach to gain an initial knowledge of the family context of ex-prisoners. The aim was to explore the professional’s view of the family’s patterns of interaction, the challenges resulting from the process of the imprisonment and resettlement of a family member and their adaptive processes. The professionals indicated a distinction between the patterns of behaviours and attitudes of families of first timers in custodial system and families of recidivists. These participants also identified some degree of difficulty in family dynamic, such as cohesion, communication and adaptation, which seemed to have originated in family history and aggravated by the prison environment. While the difficulty of family cohesion was attributed to the high prevalence of childhood abuse and neglect within the prisoner population, the family patterns of communication seemed to require further development and were likely to adversely influence the family adaptive processes post prison resettlement. Furthermore, the findings suggest that the effects of correctional demands on the family system were contingent on the characteristics of parole conditions and the availability of support to the ex-prisoner. When the correctional demands were incompatible with the family resources, there was an increased likelihood of family crisis occurring, and therefore, disturbed reintegrative processes. As a result, a more systemic assessment of ex-prisoners circumstance that considers family patterns of interaction and resources would be desirable.

Chapter Five describes Study Two. This study was informed by the previous findings and attempted to explore the perception of all family members of a family unit about the process of imprisonment and prisoner re-entry into the community using a similar
methodology. Fifteen family units were interviewed and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed as the methodological approach. The overall findings suggested that there were parallels and discrepancies between the experience of prisoners' and ex-prisoners' nuclear family and the family of origin, and some contrasts in families of first timers and recidivists, which would have different implications to family adaptive process post prison release. Study Two also used the family self-report assessment tool Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES IV) in order to evaluate family cohesion, flexibility, communication and satisfaction of the participants, and design a profile of each family unit. This psychometric tool provided an indication of the quality of family relationship perceived by the family unit.

The discussion in Chapter Six argues that, in general, the process of imprisonment has an overall depletion on family resources in both the family of origin and the nuclear family. The nuclear families in Study 2 felt this impact on the family structure and marital relationship, while the family of origin experienced it at a more personal level. Despite the imbalance between the family resources and the psychosocial issues of ex-prisoners associated with their prison experience, the partners were likely to be invested in supporting their spouses to achieve reintegrative outcomes. For the participants in the family of origin this support appeared to be contingent upon the availability of family resources. The findings also suggest that families of recidivists may be at risk of a pile-up of demands, and therefore, have an increased prospect of family crises at prisoners’ resettlement. This crisis in family relationships has the potential to elicit conflict, which could contribute to offending behaviour or hinder reintegrative outcomes.

Chapter Six also included the discussion of FACES VI’s results. This psychometric tool demonstrated that a reasonable number of families seemed to be operating at healthy levels of family functioning despite adaptive difficulties associated with the involvement in custodial system present in the narrative of the participants. On balance, the strength of the families appeared to be focused on the family level of cohesion, and their difficulties were likely to
appear on the aspects of communication, and flexibility to adapt to the circumstances. FACES IV also established a discrepancy between the nuclear families and the families of origin. In general, the families of origin had a slightly negative view of their patterns of interaction in comparison to the nuclear families. It was argued that this outcome was possibly related to the fact that all participants in the family of origin had extensive contact with custodial system, and were likely to be experiencing a depletion of family resources. However, the reliability of the data provided by a single psychometric measure is questionable due to a range of methodological limitations.

The thesis ends outlining the overall findings, and the complexities and differences in patterns of interaction between the family of origin and the nuclear family during the process of incarceration and family reconnection post prison release. This final chapter also details the methodological challenges that potentially influence the generalizability of the findings, and explores some aspects of family relationships that may support or hinder reintegrative outcome.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the last decade in Australia imprisonment rates have increased in all states and territories, apart from Queensland (ABS, 2011). This phenomenon has also been occurring in other countries. Despite a slight decline in 2010, the Bureau of Justice Statistics in United States (US) shows that the overall imprisonment rate increased by fifteen per cent from 2000 to 2007 across the country (Guerino et al., 2011). In England and Wales, the entire prison population has been progressively increasing in the last century (Berman, 2012). New Zealand not only had the second highest rate of imprisonment in the Western world, but further growth has been predicted for the next ten years (Department of Corrections, 2011).

The ABS (2009) reported that the average Australian prison term imposed by courts is 4.9 years. This figure decreases to 3.5 years when considering good behaviour, time already served, and other circumstances. Among all sentenced prisoners, the minority (five per cent) were serving a life sentence or other indeterminate sentences. The ABS (2009) also indicated that more than half of all prisoners in Australia (55 per cent) had served a prison term in an adult facility prior to their current imprisonment. These findings were consistent with the national prisoner census carried out by the ABS in June 2005, which showed that more than 60 per cent of all adult prisoners in Australia had previously served a sentence (ABS, 2005; Australian Institute of Criminology, 2011). These figures not only demonstrate that a large number of prisoners return to offending behaviour, but also that the numbers of prisoners re-offending has been steady across recent years.

Two points are evident from the above figures. First, the majority of the prisoner population has a relatively short period of incarceration and eventually returns to the community. Second, punishment combined with rehabilitative programs does not deter the
majority from re-offending. Together, these points suggest the need for a focus on the task of reconnecting the former prisoner with society if corrective services are to prevent recidivism. A more systemic view of reintegration of ex-prisoners into society, including the psychosocial aspects, may be required. This may need to begin with an examination of recidivism.

**Patterns of Recidivism in Australia**

The term recidivism is broadly used by correctional services to describe "any and all repeated criminal events over the life course" (Payne, 2007, p. 13). While it does not have a single accepted definition, and it is affected by a vast range of complex elements that occur independently of correctional services, there is clear evidence of problems when measuring the occurrence of such a phenomenon (Maltz, 1984; Tarling, 1993). In the US, the Bureau of Justice Statistics breaks recidivism in four categories: rearrest, resentencing, reconviction, and returning to prison for additional crime during the three–year period subsequent to the prisoner’s release (Langan & Levin, 2002). This does not take account of those whose re-offending is not detected.

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), informed by the National Information Development Plan for Crime and Criminal Justice (ABS, 2005), assembled and summarised studies on recidivism published in Australian literature for the past ten years. The report indicated a series of difficulties when analysing recidivism data, such as the lack of uniformity when defining recidivism, the need for consistency in methodology when reporting recidivism, and the absence of national research on the prevalence of recidivism at early stages of contact with the criminal justice system (Payne, 2007). As Payne points out, in Australia the collection of criminal justice data is co-ordinated independently across all states and territories, and reflects the internal needs of each district rather than any uniform research
agenda. With these issues in mind, Payne argues that there is a clear need for further research into different aspects of recidivism, specifically identifying offenders’ life-style and difficulties faced on re-entry into the community.

In June 2007, the Department of Justice in Victoria published a study exploring the patterns of recidivism among a cohort of 3,352 adult sentenced prisoners released during 2002-03 (Corrections Victoria, 2009). Corrections Victoria defined recidivism as returning to imprisonment as a consequence of further offences less than two years after release, excluding breach of parole. The findings established some important factors in the patterns of recidivism. Analyses showed that close to 40 per cent of former prisoners returned to prison within six months of their release, and nearly 70 per cent did so within a year. These figures suggest that the early months after release are the riskiest period. While Corrections Victoria highlighted these issues, the study failed to investigate why prisoners return to prison and it did not examine the post-release environment and circumstances.

Both Payne (2007) and Corrections Victoria (2009) acknowledged that the environment and circumstances to which former prisoners return on their release are vital in contributing to the possibility of reoffending behaviour. Consequently, an additional analysis of key barriers to successful re-entry into the community is required (Bahn, 2011; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011; Payne, 2007). Travis, Solomon and Waul (2001) suggested that the wide range of dynamic dimensions that influence successful post-release adjustment and reintegration into society are related to employment, substance abuse and mental health, housing, and family relationships.

In summary, over the past 30 years, incarceration rates in Australia have escalated and recidivism rates have remained high, highlighting the need for identifying and accomplishing effective rehabilitation (Spjeldnes & Goodkind, 2009). Recent studies in recidivism have indicated that to fully understand ex-prisoner adjustment into society one needs to examine
the different and dynamic aspects of prisoner re-entry that impact on successful reintegration. Before looking into these factors, it is important to consider the way the society responds to crime.

The Development of Offending Programmes

Punishment, Deterrence and Rational Choice

In the eighteenth century, the principle of free will was examined by philosophers and social critics such as Voltaire and Rousseau, and was used to explain offending behaviour. This influenced future generations of theorists, such as the Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794) and subsequently the English jurist Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Beccaria and Bentham fundamentally affected the classical school of criminology and argued that people were rational beings who exercise free will in making choice, and the intent of legal punishment should be to provide sufficient reprimand to deter a person from criminal behaviour (Siegel, 2009). According to Siegel (2009), the notion that criminals make rational decisions to commit crime, and the idea that this action could be controlled by judicious punishment disseminated throughout Europe and the US. Although the popularity of classical theory declined during the nineteenth century and contemporary criminologists have introduced new paradigms, these principles still underlie the way police, courts and correctional officers function (Siegel, 2009).

The matter of whether punishment compels criminals to change has been debated continually (Hollin, 2002). The most recent inquiry has been whether any actions can be taken to effectively rehabilitate criminals, and if possible, which actions are most efficient in eliminating illegal conduct (McGuire & Priestley, 1995). In recent times the discussion has
centred on the _nothing works_ and _what works_ positions in relation to offenders’ rehabilitation.

The view that little or nothing works when attempting to modify or reduce re-offending behaviour had its genesis in an extensive array of evaluative studies produced in the mid-1970s in the US and the United Kingdom (UK) (McGuire & Priestley, 1995). The term _nothing works_ was taken from one of the most remarkable articles at that time, written by Martinson (1974). Lipton, Martinson and Wilks (1975b) were employed by a government committee in the state of New York to examine successful procedures to address offenders’ rehabilitation. They analysed the performance of 231 juvenile and adult correctional rehabilitative programs between 1945 and 1967, comparing 11 different methods of treatment in relation to seven dependent variables, such as personality change, adjustment in the community, and relapse of substance abuse. In the final report, Martinson, using recidivism rates to evaluate how well treatment programs achieved rehabilitation, and publishing without the approval of his colleagues (Sarre, 1999), affirmed that there was a _radical flaw in our presenting strategies [and] that education at its best, cannot overcome, or even appreciably reduce, the powerful tendency for offenders to continue in criminal behaviour_ (Martinson, 1974, p. 49).

Despite later challenging Martinson’s findings on methodological grounds, Lipton and associates (1975b) maintained the negative view about the possibility of offender rehabilitation, and this became the consensus in the US and Great Britain (McGuire, 1995). This belief was disseminated via many writings in criminal justice contexts, suiting right-wing political agendas in the US and the UK, and led to the withdrawal of funding from rehabilitation programs to enlarge policing and penitentiaries (Travis, 2005).

This belief persisted for three decades, affecting the structural and cultural landscape of the Criminal Justice system by discrediting rehabilitation ideals and thereby promoting the
collapse of rehabilitation policies in correctional services (Howells & Day, 1999). McGuire and Priestley (1995) indicated that, even in recent times, some British specialists in the field support the ‘nothing works’ theory in offender rehabilitation. For example, Farabee (2005) argued that ‘the majority of rehabilitative programs have little or no lasting impact on recidivism’ (p. 39).

Meta-Analysis: The Triumph of Dissenting Views

In the mid-1980s, a group of researchers and practitioners known as the ‘What Works’ movement, reviewed a significant number of rehabilitative programs with the intention of testing the integrity of Martinson’s work (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Gendreau and Ross (1980) edited a volume of publications reporting positive outcomes from a comprehensive array of procedures targeting offender rehabilitation, directly contradicting Martinson’s postulations. McGuire and Priestley (1985) also gathered a large number of studies in which positive rehabilitative outcomes were established. Further, Thornton (1987) re-analysed 34 studies reported by Lipton and associates (1975a) and found that a number of projects had had a positive effect on decreasing recidivism rates and that no conclusion could be drawn to the contrary. Although Thornton (1987) argued that the nature of the gains needed further investigations, it was incorrect to affirm that ‘nothing works’ in rehabilitation of offenders.

A number of meta-analytic reviews were conducted on recidivism and related variables in many different studies of offender rehabilitation (e.g., Andrews, Zinger et al., 1990; Garret, 1985; Gottschalk, Davidson, Meyer & Gensheimer, 1987; Izzo & Ross, 1990; Lab & Whitehead, 1988; Lipsey, 1992; Løsel & Köferl, 1989; Whitehead & Lab, 1989). The overall findings of these studies was that recidivism rates decreased by an average of ten per cent for offenders who received some form of treatment in comparison to control groups.
(Peake, 2007). However, interventions based on punishment, deterrence, incapacitation and humanistic psychotherapy did not work (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Hollin & Palmer, 2006; McGuire & Priestley, 1995). An array of principles and methods indicated that the most efficacious method to reduce recidivism was interventions based on psychological theories of criminal behaviour that focus on criminogenic and risky behaviours (Gendreau, 1996).

Moving from ‘Nothing Works’ to ‘What Works’: The Current Paradigm in Rehabilitation

The meta-analytic findings reported above prompted the ‘What Works’ movement to develop evidence-based approaches within the correctional setting, and established key principles for effective practice in working with offenders to reduce re-offending conduct. These are discussed below.

The Risk-Need-Responsivity Model.

The Risk-Need-Responsivity Model (RNR) in offending rehabilitation incorporates the central principles identified by the above meta-analytic research. It includes policies devoted to detecting risks and the management of behaviour, by evaluating the dangerousness of the individual and reducing the risk factors in the most cost-efficient manner (Ward & Maruna, 2007). The RNR model is supported by a large volume of empirical research (Andrews, Bonta & Hoge, 1990; Andrews & Dowden, 2005; Cullen & Gendreau, 2000; Lipsey, 1992; MacKenzie, 2006) and has become the dominant approach to offender rehabilitation in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Canada (Ward & Brown, 2004).

The RNR model has been elaborated and contextualised within the cognitive social learning theory of criminal conduct and the psychological theory of personality (Bonta & Andrews, 2010). It is supported by a number of principles that enhance and strengthen
offender rehabilitation, prioritising who should qualify for treatment, what intervention should be implemented, and how treatment should be administered (Howells, Day & Davey, 2005).

The objective of this model is to structure correctional services according to the three key principals of rehabilitation: risk, need and responsivity (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Ward & Stewart, 2003). The risk principle specifies and organises treatment according to the degree of risk the offender poses to the community. Higher risk offenders should receive interventions that are intensive, while low risk offenders should be given low intensity interventions. The need principle focuses on assessing dynamic risk factors or problem areas linked to offending behaviour, also known as criminogenic needs, which should be addressed in treatment. The responsibility principle states that correctional services should tailor rehabilitative interventions according to the offender's motivation, learning styles, strengths and abilities (Andrews & Bonta, 2003; Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

As stated by Eccleston and Ward (2006), despite the fact that the RNR model undoubtedly has theoretical and empirical virtues, there are a number of important points associated with the main principles that may influence the efficacy of treatment. Ward and Brown (2004) acknowledge that, although the management of criminogenic need is essential, it is not a sufficient condition for the offender's rehabilitation. Ward and Maruna (2007) argued that the perceived restrictiveness of the model and a lack of ability to embrace a more productive style of treatment is a major drawback. They contended that it was necessary to expand the range of correctional interventions, considering factors such as the promotion of pro-social behaviours that are strongly associated with wellbeing.

Other critics of this model added that the RNR model depreciates the relevance of the therapeutic alliance and its crucial role in the therapeutic process (Marshall et al., 2003). It is inclined to be concentrated on offenders’ risks or traits and downplays the importance of the
contextual or ecological factors, ignoring social and cultural systems that enable or restrict their behaviour (Lynch, 2006). As the model is heavily manualised and implemented on a large scale, Ward and Maruna (2007) argued that it fails to take account of particular values, needs and problems of individual offenders. In response to these critiques, the Good Lives Model (GLM) appeared as an addition to the risk model of reintegration theory.

The Good Lives Model of Treatment.

The GLM was conceived as an adjunct method to rehabilitative treatment. It utilises theoretical resources to consolidate particular aspects of treatment not incorporated within the RNR model, such as the therapeutic alliance (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Although the GLM model was designed to be implemented for all types of criminal conduct, it had been exclusively employed for the rehabilitation of sex offenders convicted of violent non-sexual conduct (Whitehead, Ward & Collie, 2007).

The GLM emerged out of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and is an example of a strength-based approach to the study of human behaviour. It moves away from prioritising criminogenic needs to concentrating on the promotion of human welfare and the establishment of individual strengths (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003). The two core therapeutic goals are: the promotion of human goods and risk reduction. The aim of the GLM is to establish an offender’s skills and competencies to allow him or her to acquire primary human goods (for example, creativity, physical health, relatedness, and mastery) in a reasonable fashion once released from prison, and to equip the individual with the capabilities needed to accomplish the goals related to his or her values (secondary goods). The promotion of psychological well-being and agency provides the offender with a chance to have an alternative life-style apart from criminality (Kekes, 1989; Rapp, 1998; Ward &
Stewart, 2003). According to Ward and associates, the emphasis on the encouragement of specific goods or objectives in the treatment of offenders will increase the reduction of risks.

The GLM in essence provides a broad framework for intervening therapeutically with offenders of all types (Ward & Maruna, 2007) and has gained empirical support (Simons, McCullar & Tyler, 2008). Although it has obtained some endorsement to integrate with RNR (Wilson & Yates, 2009), its application to interventions is under-developed in comparison to the RNR model (Ward & Gannon, 2005) and the evidence in crime deterrence is practically absent within mainstream offender populations (Andrews, Bonta & Wormith, 2011).

In summary, correctional services are equipped with empirical models such as RNR to target recidivism. More recently, the GLM, which attempts to look beyond the purely psychological factors of re-offending behaviour, has been embraced. However, recidivism remains high and rehabilitative programs alone seem to be insufficient to address the broader and complex issue of reintegration into society. Therefore, the development of programs, policies and practices to handle the challenges confronted by offenders upon their re-entry requires an understanding of the re-entry process and the multiplicity of elements that are associated with their success or failure post-release. This requires a multidimensional approach to prisoner’s re-entry into the community. This is explored in the following chapter.
CHAPTER TWO

Offenders’ Reintegration: Overcoming Multiple Obstacles

The analysis of recidivism is a crucial activity if governments are to make informed decisions about correctional policy. Spjeldnes and Goodkind (2009) argue that recidivism rates provide a measure of the success of ex-prisoner reintegration or re-entry into society. The term “offender reintegration” or “re-entry” refers to the transitory process that an individual experiences when released into the community from some type of imprisonment (Salomon, Waul, Ness & Travis, 2004). Travis and Visher (2005) describe prisoner re-entry as the inexorable outcome of imprisonment. In general, the re-entry of ex-prisoners is a long-term process that begins earlier than the actual release from confinement and lasts well afterwards (Maruna, Immargeon & LeBel, 2004).

According to Travis et al. (2001), to understand the individual pathways involved in the process of reintegration, it is necessary to concentrate on the dynamic factors that occur at the time of release, and the difficulties in regaining a life after imprisonment. Most certainly, offenders face several obstacles after release that affect this process (Garland, Wodahl & Mayfield, 2011; Kleis, 2010).

According to Listwan, Cullen and Latessa. (2006), there are several critical areas recognised as established hurdles to the community reintegration of former prisoners. These are: homelessness, unemployment and training needs, substance abuse and mental and physical health issues, as well as issues relating to family relationships and social networks. Each of these will be discussed in turn below.
Housing

The attainment of suitable and stable accommodation is often a mandatory condition for release of prisoners, since homelessness is one of the major aspects that obstruct former prisoner's reintegration (Little & Farrow, 2012). Unstable housing is often related to many negative outcomes for former prisoners released into the community, for example, it increases the difficulty for parolees to comply with their parole conditions and agreements (Bahr et al., 2005). As a consequence, parolees living in homeless shelters are more prone to abscond from parole agreements than those living with families post-release (Nelson, Deess & Allen, 1999). Unstable housing also presents an impediment for the obtainment and maintenance of employment and to the return to duties as a parent (Hirsch et al., 2002; Thompson, 2008). As such, it has a significant influence on the psychological state of the individual (Graffam et al., 2005). The literature shows that instability precipitated by homelessness affects former prisoners with a history of mental illness and substance abuse, intensifying the difficulty of adherence to treatment (Hamnett, Roberts & Kennedy, 2001; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Furthermore, drug rehabilitation is less likely to be productive if the problems caused by homelessness persist (Webster, Hedderman, Turnbull & May, 2001). In Australia, the lack of availability in public housing and affordability in the private rental market may place former prisoners in impoverished neighbourhoods, consequently reducing their prospects of finding employment and further contributing to their social disadvantage (Gunnison & Helfgott, 2011; Willis, 2004).

Employment and Training Needs

Employment is a factor that positively affects reintegrative processes, since it often produces a sense of self-worth, improves the likelihood of legal participation in society, and is a key factor that inhibits ex-prisoners from engaging in re-offending (Thompson, 2008;
Graffam et al., 2005). A high proportion of the prisoner population has a low level of schooling and lacks the skills required to be absorbed into the workforce. Therefore, former prisoners are more likely to be unemployed and to be recipients of welfare payments (Bloom, 2006; Corrections Victoria, 2009; Petersilia, 2003). Former prisoners are also subject to stigmatisation and discrimination from society, and this affects their prospects for engagement in the workforce (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2003; Solomon, Gouvis & Waul, 2001). This impacts on their attitude towards employment and their self-concept, confidence and motivation to avoid recidivism (Farrall, 2004; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2007; Jones, 2003; Maruna, 2001).

**Substance Abuse, Mental Illness and Physical Health**

A large proportion of incarcerated individuals have become involved in criminal behaviour to support their addiction to substances (Scanlon, 2001; Larney et al., 2012) and there is clear evidence of a high prevalence of substance dependence and mental health issues within the prisoner and ex-prisoner population (Butler & Allnutt, 2003; Butler et al., 2006). In Australia, 62 per cent of adult males incarcerated attribute their offences to the abuse of alcohol or illicit substances (Makkai & Payne, 2003). In addition, former prisoners present with a broad range of psychological states associated with imprisonment, including low motivation and low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, hyper-vigilance and suspiciousness, dependency on institutional structures, an internalisation of prison culture, social withdrawal and isolation, alienation, and psychological distancing (Haney, 2003; Mallik-Kane & Visher, 2008). This population is also inclined to have an array of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Hepatitis C, since a large number of them were exposed to intravenous drug use either before entering prison or during the term of their imprisonment (Adams et al., 2011; Dolan et al., 2010; Hellard & Hocking, 2002; Travis, 2005).
Family Relationships and Social Network: The Importance of Family Ties in the Process of Re-entry

Family is the first point of contact with society, and the majority of ex-prisoners rely heavily on family support to activate most aspects of re-entry, beginning with accommodation, employment, financial, and emotional support (Codd, 2007; Farkas & Miller, 2007; LaVigne et al., 2005; Rossman, 2003; Travis, 2005; Petersilia, 2003; Vischer et al., 2004; Vischer & Travis, 2003). The literature has regularly established the association between greater contact with family members whilst imprisoned with more positive outcomes after release (Bales & Mears, 2008; LaVigne et al., 2003; Naser & LaVigne, 2006). Some authors argue that family relationships are a critical element for the prevention of recidivism and for the promotion of desistance from crime (Maruna, 2001; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 2005).

The interaction between the multiple challenges involved in the process of reintegration offer important insight into the complexity of circumstances faced by former prisoners when re-entering the community. Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul (2003) devoted a chapter in their book *Prisoners Once Removed: The impact of Incarceration and Re-entry on Children, Families and Communities* to argue that these challenges faced by offenders on imprisonment and re-entry also affect their families. They suggest that only recently, researchers and policymakers in US have become concerned about the increase in the numbers of children and families impacted by incarceration. They argued that in the majority of cases the imprisonment of a family member exacerbates problems in the existing family system, which is characterized by poverty, trauma and stress. Moreover, families are excluded from the negotiations in the process of prisoner returning home, and are left with the task of providing support during resettlement (Goulding, 2004). The overlooking and exclusion of families of ex-prisoners in discussion during re-entry is also experienced in Corrective
services in Australia. According to King (2005) Corrective services fail to regularly collect or maintain data about children of prisoners. Nor is there support for the maintenance of relationships between prisoners and their families, despite indications that ex-prisoners would benefit from the inclusion of family support at re-entry.

The lack of concern related to the role of families of ex-prisoners, and their effect on reintegration is puzzling, given that the relationship between close familial ties and reduction of deviant behaviour has been theoretically recognised in Criminology. For example, Social control theorists argue that the familial relationship is intrinsically connected to the prevention of juvenile delinquency (Agnew, 1997; Church et al., 2009). Social bond theory suggests that the connection with family prevents deviant motivation and maintains conformity (Hirschi, 1969). Reintegrative Shaming Theory (RST) perceives the family to be the vehicle that drives the reintegrative shame and impedes engagement in further delinquent behaviour (Braithwaite, 1989; Hay, 2001), and most recently, life course theory supports the idea that strong familial and marital bonds have an effect of the trajectory of crime (Laub & Sampson, 1993).

This recent interest may be related to the fact that the majority of prisoners are parents, (ABS, 2010) and parental incarceration increases the prospect of children engaging in future offending (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Tomaino, Ryan, Markottić, & Gladwell, 2005). Furthermore, the family mobilizes social capital and reduces reoffending at re-entry, since it is a key motivator in desistance from crime, and is a significant factor that contributes to a successful resettlement (Arditti & Few, 2006; Wolff & Draine, 2004; Mills & Codd, 2008; Farrall, Bottoms & Shapland, 2010).

In summary, reintegration of former prisoners is a dynamic and complex process, which is affected by multiple psychosocial factors, commences long before the period of release, and has long-lasting effects. The literature has identified four main factors that
interact during re-entry of ex-prisoners into the community and these are: housing, employment, physical and mental health, and family relationship. Although families of ex-prisoners have a significant role and are affected by reintegrative process, only recently, has this population garnered attention from scholars and policymakers.

The Effects of Imprisonment on Families: A Literature Review

Academic research, public policy and prison statistics have neglected to investigate or acknowledge the effects of imprisonment on the children and families of prisoners (Codd, 2007; Day, Acock, Bahr & Arditti, 2005; Kingi, 2009; Murray, 2005; Travis & Waul, 2003; Woodward, 2003). Despite this general lack of systematic data, some scholars have begun to inquire about the extent of imprisonment’s consequences, beyond the prison’s walls. A critical review of the literature is presented here.

The Detrimental Effects of Imprisonment

In England, Pauline Morris (1965) conducted the most comprehensive study of prisoners’ wives to date. She obtained data from 825 prisoners using questionnaires to examine the extent of economic, social and psychological issues that affect families of prisoners, and interviewed 469 prisoners’ wives to identify how families adjust to the separation imposed by imprisonment. This intensive study emphasized the family relationship and changing pattern of adjustment during separation due to imprisonment. Morris found that the wives experienced imprisonment as a crisis of family disintegration. Almost two thirds (63 per cent) experienced financial difficulties, 81 per cent suffered from a decline in employment, 60 per cent experienced difficulties in their relationship with in-laws, and 57 per cent had problematic relationships with friends and neighbours. The qualitative material suggested that the type of relationship prior to incarceration tended to persist during
the period of imprisonment and upon release. However, the study could not substantiate this hypothesis because the data were collected during prisoners’ incarceration, and did not include the period of post-release.

In the US, Ferraro et al. (1983) developed an observational study to determine the impact of imprisonment on family relationships across different areas in the family life such as finances, relationships with relatives and friends, and management of stress. The study found that 75 per cent of spouses of prisoners experienced problems in their family relationships as a result of imprisonment, 92 per cent reported problems with finances, 75 per cent with unemployment, 75 per cent with friends, and 75 per cent coping with feelings. The most important finding was in relation to the durability of problems experienced by family members. This study found that all issues related to imprisonment persisted for at least eighteen months, demonstrating the prevailing and enduring effects of imprisonment on family members. Although this study yielded important data regarding the detrimental effects on family of prisoners, the scale used in this project demonstrated issues in conceptualizing the family cross-cultural issues. Given that the majority of the prisoner population in the US is African American or has Hispanic background, the validity and reliability of the scores obtained would be compromised.

In 2000, the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO) conducted a study in six prisons across the state of Victoria, aiming to identify specific areas of need for prisoners’ children (Tudball, 2000). A total of 221 prisoners and caregivers of prisoners’ children answered a questionnaire exploring family demographics and history of imprisonment, prison visits, prisoner and family reaction to imprisonment, future plans after release, and support services needed. Following the analysis of the questionnaires, further qualitative data was gathered from focus groups. The researchers found that 41 per cent of the respondents noticed an increase in difficult behaviour in
children, 19 per cent observed angry outbursts; 15 per cent reported problems at school, including social withdrawal; and seven per cent exhibited difficult behaviour when visiting the incarcerated parent.

The analysis of the questionnaires suggested that imprisonment impacts on the family unit as a whole, since children often express difficulties within the family system. However VACRO used qualitative data focusing on the delivery of practical support to prisoners and their families, and failed to examine the family functioning or the context within the household that could be precipitating such behaviour.

The effects of imprisonment on the physical health and other areas of family life have again been reported recently. Arditti et al. (2003) administered a semi-structured interview to 56 parents and partners of prisoners who had children in their care whilst visiting their relatives at a local jail. This study performed predominantly descriptive and comparative quantitative analyses to explore family members’ experiences with incarceration. They found that 43 per cent of partners believed that incarceration affected their relationship with their children, 27 per cent noticed deterioration in the children’s health, and 48 per cent observed a decline in their own health. Incarceration led to financial difficulties in 88.5 per cent of the cases. Overall, 81.6 per cent of parents and partners believed that incarceration created a problem for the family, but only 29.8 per cent felt they could solve it, which could imply that family members felt disempowered. This study also emphasised the lack of social support experienced by the families and the unplanned single parenting that partners of prisoners experience.

The deterioration of familial social support was also reported within the Australian context. A literature review on issues and difficulties of families of prisoners by Woodward (2003) suggested that families of prisoners are commonly stigmatized and ostracized by society, and sometimes by their relatives and close friendship. This is especially the case if
the nature of the crime was gruesome or sex-related (e.g., paedophilia).

This negative impact of imprisonment on families’ social networks was verified in a study conducted in Queensland. Dennison, Foley and Stewart (2005) examined the effects of incarceration on partners and children of male prisoners and the quality of their relationship with the wider community. They administered a questionnaire to 35 females caring for children, mostly to collect demographic information about family characteristics, finances, parenting, child characteristics, visitation and contact. Following the analysis of the questionnaires, additional qualitative data about parent-child and partner-prisoner relationships were collected from semi-structured interviews. The overall findings suggested that stigmatization, recurrent financial difficulties due to prior incarcerations, emergence of child behavioural problems, single parenting, and lack of social supports were prevalent challenges faced by these women. Although the nature of qualitative enquiring reduced the generalizability of findings, the results were consistent with the scant literature, and identified the need for implementation of programs targeting the complexity of needs presented by this population.

More recently, the detrimental effects of imprisonment on children have been analysed. Helen Codd (2008) in her book *In the Shadow of Prison: Families, imprisonment and criminal justice* analysed the current literature on the relationship between families, penal policies and prisons in UK. She argued that the effects of imprisonment on children of prisoners varies from manifestation of behaviour and emotions similar to response to bereavement, to experiencing emotions and behaviour comparable to those seen when parents divorce. These are intensified if the parent is the mother (Travis, 1994). Codd suggests that imprisonment of a parent has been also linked to childhood parentification, maintenance of secrecy regarding parental imprisonment, involvement with protective services, and negative impacts on the child’s development.
Overall, research shows that imprisonment of a family member increases the fragility of families, further depletes familial resources, contributes to family fracture, and deepens the disadvantage of children of prisoners (Wildeman & Western, 2010). Codd (2002) argues that the burden of imprisonment is more likely to be felt by women who are partners and mothers of prisoners, who often care for their children, and come from a disadvantaged social background. As highlighted by Codd (2007) _men in prison are visited by their wives and mothers, whereas women in prison are visited by their mothers and sisters_’ (Lori Girschick, 1996, p. 25 as cited by Codd, 2007).

Despite the significant persistent strain that families experience, the literature suggests that they go through a great deal to remain connected with their family member who is in prison (Bales & Mears, 2008; Comfort, 2003; Christian, Mellow & Thomas, 2006). As Christian (2005) points out in her ethnographic study examining family visitation, families frequently ponder about how their scarce financial and emotional resources will be spent, given the costly travel, lengthy waiting time, crowded rooms, unsuitable environment for children, and the expectation of fulfilling prisoners’ emotional needs. Christian found that the process of decision-making and frequency of visits were related to the quality of family relationship prior to imprisonment, the prisoner’s efforts to rehabilitate whilst in prison, the level of family strain generated by imprisonment, the availability of financial and emotional resources, and the family’s social support.

**The Focus on Family at Re-entry**

The majority of studies that focus on prisoners’ families emphasise the impact of imprisonment during the course of imprisonment. There are few studies focusing on families during prisoner re-entry. There are even fewer studies evaluating programs that include family interventions to address aspects of prisoner re-entry (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001).
However, *La Bodega de la Familia* is an example of a family-focused intervention program developed to provide crisis intervention, and case-management services to drug users and their families connected with the criminal justice system. In 1995, the Vera Institute of Justice opened *La Bodega* in a diverse, low-income community in New York City. The aim was to reduce substance abuse within families by strengthening all family members and to maintain substance abusers longer in treatment, thus reducing their substance abuse and criminal activities.

Nelson et al. (1999) evaluated the impact of *La Bodega* on 29 families participating in the programs, comparing them to 22 similar families in a control group. They administered a battery of standardized psychosocial tests and structured interviews in both samples upon entry and six months afterward. These instruments enabled the researchers to verify quantitatively and qualitatively the changes in both groups at the individual and familial levels. The study demonstrated a decrease of 80 per cent in illicit substance abuse among individuals who completed treatment, an improvement in mental and physical health among these participants, and lower recidivism rates (20 per cent) relative to the control group.

Although this study failed to examine the perception of children and adolescents in the family unit, it carries methodological strengths that confirmed the potential efficacy of family intervention in the process of prisoner re-entry. Travis (2005) stated that the *La Bodega* project carried two lessons. One is that family is significant in the provision of support for returning prisoners, and the second is that it is a difficult task for families to manage re-entry. Even though families received intensive case-management and other supports, the level of stress escalated significantly during the process.

In 2001, La Vigne et al. (2003) from the Urban Institute developed a four-state longitudinal study of prisoners’ re-entry entitled *Returning Home: Understanding the Challenges of Prisoner Re-entry*. The project was created in response to the increase in parole
violations and reimprisonment, and had the aim of understanding the re-entry experiences of returning prisoners, their families, and their communities. This extensive study produced numerous papers elucidating the complexities of re-entry for prisoners. For example, Naser and LaVigne (2006) explored the role that family members play in the success or failure of prisoners' re-entry. They interviewed 413 male ex-prisoners two months before release, and administered the Family Support Scale (FSS) and Family Relationship Scale (FRS) to measure the expectations for family support in relation to finances, accommodation and employment, and the quality of family relationship. The scales were administered once more two to three months post-release to ascertain whether the family expectations had been fulfilled. La Vigne et al. found that overall, 80 per cent of ex-prisoners' expectations were met and often exceeded in all domains of reintegration. However, former prisoners acknowledged that family members could also negatively influence the re-entry outcome. Although the research suggested the importance of understanding both the positive and negative influences of family members in the process of reintegration (Naser & LaVigne, 2006), the methodology used to determine quality of family relationships was a scale that evaluates family social support, and did not explore the family processes.

Sampson and Laub (1995) conducted a detailed 35-year follow-up of delinquent boys to examine their offending behaviour trajectory from the age of seven to 70. They collected and analysed data from 500 men from offending backgrounds who attended a reformatory school in Massachusetts in the 1940s, concentrating on whether they persisted or desisted from crime as they matured during the adult life course. Even though the aim of Sampson and Laub’s work was not connected with prisoner reintegration, they found a strong relationship between desistance from crime and a satisfactory marital relationship (Laub, Nagin & Sampson, 1998; Sampson & Laub, 1990).
Following in Sampson and Laub’s footsteps, Bahr et al. (2005) explored the re-entry process of parolees in the UK. Over three months, 51 parolees were interviewed three times: pre-release, immediately after release, and three months after. After an extensive review of literature, they selected an exploratory qualitative methodology because they considered it could lead to a better understanding of the process of re-entry. They included questions about how and to what extent family was supportive of the ex-prisoner. Quantitative questions were used to rate the family circumstances. The study found that the quality of parent-child relationships and close relationships with the family network were important contributors to parolee adjustment. The findings suggested that parolees who received support from their family network were inclined to perform better. In some cases, the family situation negatively influenced the re-entry process, contributing to reimprisonment or violation of parole. However, parolees who lacked close relationship or had conflictive relationships within the family system were more likely to be unsuccessful in their parole completion. Overall, the study showed that the quality and stability of family relationship is important to changing the life course direction. Bahr et al. (2005) stated that although the qualitative data were difficult to examine, they added some new insight into the process of re-entry. However, the study failed to investigate the perspective of family members.

In response to this need, Martinez (2008) used a social constructivist qualitative approach to investigate how ex-prisoners and their families perceive and exchange social support during re-entry. This cross sectional study interviewed seven dyads comprised of ex-prisoners and their respective family members. The findings demonstrated that family members were willing to provide assistance in order to promote positive outcomes in the ex-prisoner’s life, and the ex-prisoner’s perception of familial support motivated and fostered disengagement from antisocial behaviour. Martinez argued that although the sample examined in his study consisted of people from lower socio-economic background, and the
data could not determine how this additional demand would impact on re-entry, it was clear that these interactions increased the prospect of successful reintegration.

Following this line of enquiry, Martinez and Christian (2009) examined how family members and ex-prisoners exchange support post-release whilst sharing the same residence or living in different accommodation. In-depth interviews of six ex-prisoners and six corresponding family members were analysed using an ethnographic approach. Martinez and Christian coded five types of support (emotional, instrumental, informational, companionship and validation) that interplay during the period of resettlement. They concluded that overall, family members provide the type of support that is most available to them in order to minimise the burden on their resources. For example, the provision of informational resources was highly used in families living with former prisoners, since the family was supplying accommodation and was not able to afford the provision of further instrumental resource. For families who did not reside with the ex-prisoner, the provision of instrumental resources validated the notion that the family was contributing to a successful resettlement of their family member.

Although both studies mentioned above provided important preliminary insights into the interaction between former prisoners and their families, they focused on the dynamic of mechanism of support and did not identify the aspects of family functioning that occur and may interfere in reintegrative processes. For example, Lowenstein (1984) examined the factors that best predict families’ ability to cope with the stressful event of a husband’s imprisonment using Family Stress Theory (McCubbin at al., 1980). She interviewed and administered three psychometric tools to 143 Jewish prisoners’ wives whose husbands were first timers in prison. The overall findings suggested that two cluster of variables played a key role in successful adaptation to stressors. The first was personal and family resources, which in her sample consisted of, respectively, level of education, and couples who had a
more equalitarian approach to role division and demonstrated moderate cohesion. The second variable was the stage of family life in association with length of imprisonment. Lowestain’s study indicated that family functioning plays a significant role in the process of adaptation, and it may provide important insight into the family’s ability to provide support at the time of re-entry.

A different aspect of family functioning that may affect re-entry was observed in a more recent study. Yocum and Nath (2011) analysed the interviews of 17 children and their 8 mothers using grounded theory to investigate their anticipation of father’s re-entry and their degree of confidence that the expectations would be fulfilled. The overall findings indicated that children and their mothers expected the ex-prisoner to take an active parental and marital role, and to spend more time together. Children focused on doing activities with their fathers whereas mothers hoped for financial and emotional support, and the provision of a disciplinarian parental role. There was an expectation from children and mothers that the father/partner would cease antisocial behaviour and adopt a more prosocial lifestyle. Their level of confidence varied and was primarily influenced by the age of the participant, their values, experience with previous incarceration, and the father’s behaviour in prison during visitation. Yocum and Nath observed the uncertainty and unfeasibility of some expectations, given all the structural challenges faced by former prisoners at re-entry. They suggested that unrealistic expectations might be a factor that leads to further family relationship strain. Although this particular study was not designed to identify patterns or styles of communication between prisoners and their families, it was evident that lack or difficulties in communication was an element that would affect family relationships and consequently jeopardise a successful re-entry of ex-prisoners into the family system. According to Carlson and Cervera’s (1991) and Klein, Bartholomew and Hibbert’s (2002), the identification of
helpful characteristics of family functioning could also better inform and assist Correctional programmes in delivering appropriate interventions to inmates and the their families.

To summarize, it is evident that former prisoners have several structural barriers to overcome and familial support is a major contributor to successful re-entry. The scarse literature has shown that members of prisoners’ family systems also feel the detrimental effects of imprisonment. Research suggests that families experience imprisonment as a persistent crisis that leads to unplanned single parenting, emotional and financial strain, stigmatization, isolation or lack of social support, and parent-child relationship and health problems. In addition, some authors argue that families of prisoners are most likely to be comprised of females who are also the carers of the prisoner’s children, and equally have low socioeconomic status.

Research also observed that despite the complex and dynamic relationship between prisoners and their families, and the persistent adversities experienced by families, there is a significant investment in family cohesion and expectations that ex-prisoners will reconnect to their family roles upon release. Moreover, research has established that families struggle to manage their limited resources from the time of imprisonment until prisoner’s re-entry and the need for investment in family-focused intervention programmes.

The scant studies in which include prisoners’ families are concerned with the experience of partners and children, and neglect the family of origin of prisoners. Indeed, the majority of studies on re-entry are focused on ex-prisoner’s perspectives and fail to examine how this interactive process affects families as a whole. Moreover, there are also few studies exploring how the characteristics of family dynamics may influence prisoner re-entry or how families adapt to the re-entry of an ex-prisoner, and therefore, failing to establish how the experiences of family members shapes the complex process of prisoner resettlement. Given that families of ex-prisoners are subjected to disruption and distress that endures during the
period of incarceration, and that these circumstances may escalate at the time of ex-prisoner re-entry (Robinson, 2011), the Family Stress and Resilience framework is a theoretical model that may adequately describe the internal and external processes that occur within the family system upon an ex-prisoner's return to the community (Martinez, 2007). This theory will be outlined in the next chapter.
CHAPTER THREE
Family Stress Theory

As discussed in the previous chapter, the family has to endure and overcome major changes in its structure and lifestyle once a family member is imprisoned. In addition, engagement with the Criminal Justice System places a significant emotional and financial strain on the family (Braman & Wood, 2003; Hairston, 1991; Hairston, 2003; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2003). At the time of an ex-prisoner’s release, the family play an important role in the process of reintegration, and once more has to readjust to the circumstances (Codd, 2008; LaVigne, Kachnowski, Travis, Naser, & Visher, 2003; Travis, 2005; Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001; Visher & Travis, 2003). The scarce literature on prisoners’ families has not yet clarified how the process of adaptation occurs when ex-prisoners, experiencing major operational needs and frequently with Correctional demands to fulfil, are released from custody and reunited with their family members. It has also failed to identify the family processes, perceptions and resources that interplay during re-entry, which may affect the prospects of successful reintegration into society.

Family Stress Theory is a contemporary discipline concerned with the family’s reaction to diverse transitions and stressful life events (McKenry & Price, 2005). Every family experiences constant changes over the life cycle, which demand ongoing adjustments and adaptation by the family system and its members. These changes could be normative transitions, where family members and the family system are confronted with expected and predictable changes, such as transition throughout parenthood, retirement and widowhood (McCubbin & Figley, 1983). In addition, families could be challenged over the life span by non-normative or extraordinary events, which suddenly impact on families and their members, often affecting the family’s ability to cope. For example: war, captivity, substance
abuse, and chronic illness (Figley & McCubbin, 1983) are unexpected circumstances or events with which a family might have to cope.

The return of an ex-prisoner to the family is another event that requires reorganization within the family system, and the process of family adaptation could influence ex-prisoner's reintegrative outcome. The aim of this chapter is to clarify the ability of the Family Stress and Resilience framework to explain the ecological processes that families experience during re-entry that may affect ex-prisoners' reintegrative process.

**The Family as a Social System and Family Stress Theory**

According to Burr (1982) the academic interest in Family Stress Theory began in the 1930s when a number of studies investigated the effects of the economic depression on families. Several hypotheses were proposed to explain how families respond to, and are affected by stress. These propositions were retested subsequently in a number of other circumstances such as war separation and reunion, substance abuse, bereavement and unemployment, in attempts to understand the quality of stressful transitions, and how families successfully or unsuccessfully manage to adapt to stressful events.

Family theorists have conceptualized families under stress using social systems approach in which they are considered as living organisms with equally real and symbolic structures (McKenry & Price, 2005), and two or more persons (family structure) have patterns of connection between them (family functioning) (Bateson, 1972; Patterson, 1999). Families considered to be open systems, in relation to the movement of members' inputs and outputs, have a constant reciprocal flow of energy, information and matters with other systems (environment - community)(Bertalanffy, 1969). The family has the tendency to function as a whole system and the actions and behaviours of family members influence and are influenced by the behaviour of the other family members (Calil, 1987). Therefore, the
family is seen as being an open, ongoing, goal-seeking, self-regulating, complex social system that has a unique structure and is a component of other social systems (Broderick, 1993). Moreover, families are a result of both subsystems (individuals, dyads) and suprasystems (culture, society), and the family system is more than the sum of its part (Boss, 2006). This approach allowed researchers to move beyond the individual and the family to broad social systems, since families do not exist in isolation, but belong to a larger social context.

Reuben Hill’s (1949) study on war-induced separation and reunion was the first academic inquiry to propose a social system model of family stress. Briefly the ABCX family crisis model proposed by Hill (1949, 1958) states that:

\[ A \text{ (the event)} \text{ – interacting with} B \text{ (the family’s crisis, resources)} \text{ – interacting with} C \text{ (the definition the family makes of the event)} \text{ – produces} X \text{ (the crisis).}\]

The second and third determinants – the family resources and definition of the event – lie within the family itself and must be seen in terms of the family’s structure and values. The hardship of the event, which goes to make up the first determinant, lies outside the family and is an attribute of the event itself. (1958, pp. 141)

There is a fundamental belief that the \( X \) factor is affected by numerous other mediating phenomena. Crisis or stress is conceptualized as a function of the reaction of the distressed family to the stressor (Boss, 1993, 2006; Boss & Mulligan, 2003).

**Focus on Stressors**

According to Hobfoll and Spielberger(1992) the emphasis on stressor is practically central in all theories of family stress, and many scholars have attempted to describe a variety of stressful events (e.g. normative and non-normative). Hill (1949) understood stressors to be events that elicit some change in the family system. Consistent with Hill’s theoretical
proposal, McCubbin and Patterson (1982) also conceptualized stressors as circumstances that have the potential to, or place some pressure on the family system to reshape. Anything that can alter some aspect of the system such as roles, boundaries, structures, values, processes and goals could create stress (Boss, 2002).

McCubbin and Patterson (1982) utilized Hill's framework to longitudinally study 216 families consisting of wives of prisoner of war or missing in action during the United States' war with North Vietnam. The data obtained revealed that the coping mechanism utilized by families to deal with the stressor event and life change over time produced additional stress. These findings suggested that the occurrence of several stressor events, opposed to the characteristic of one single event, would determine a family's level of stress. McCubbin and Patterson used the term stress pileup to identify this phenomenon. More recently, Burr et al. (1994) have conceptualized stress pileup as the occurrence of new stressor events before families experiencing stress have coped with earlier ones.

Stressors vary in their form and intensity, and can be organized in three different levels: (a) the micro level (daily hassles that have a negative impact on family life); (b) the meso level (events that are not expected to be encountered during the life course); and (c) macro level (events or circumstances that are traumatic for the family and have persistent negative psychological outcomes) (Malia, 2006). Stressors are also likely to be associated with circumstances of tangible loss or situations that elicit loss (e.g. divorce, death of family member or loss of freedom due to imprisonment) (Hobfoll & Spielberger, 1992).

Stressor events are not always identifiable and this creates ambiguity within the family system. Boss (1977) introduced the concept of ambiguous loss or a state of ambiguity resulting from incongruence between physical and psychological/emotional presence/absence (Price, Price, & McKerry, 2010, p. 9) to address this issue. According to her, there are two important types of ambiguous loss: (a) that of a family member who has
been emotionally/psychologically present but is physically absent (e.g., a family member in prison) and (b) when a family member is emotionally/psychologically absent but is physically present (a person with severe mental health issues or chronic substance abuse). In both cases, the ambiguity not only disrupts the family functioning but also blurs boundaries and appropriate roles within the family system. Boss (1999) emphasized that this type of ambiguity generates the most stressful circumstances that a family or person can experience, since people are incapable of solving the problem because they cannot identify its duration, the social network tends to withdraw rather than provide support, families are refused social rituals as a pathway to a clear loss, and the circumstances endure for a long period of time, preventing families members from reorganizing their relationship with the loved ones.

**The Event and the Family Perception**

The effect of the stressor event on the level of family stress is mediated by the meaning that family members give to the event. According to Patterson and Garwick (1994) the conceptualization of family meaning has been a critical construct within family stress theory, given that a family’s perception of a stressful event shapes its responses to stress. For Boss (1992) the family meaning may be the most significant variable in establishing a family’s reaction to stressful events. Families’ views and appraisals are social constructs and therefore will be influenced by their *values and belief systems, stage of family life cycle, culture, and spirituality* (Boss, 1992; Kirmayer et al., 2000; McAdoo, 1995; Patterson & Garwick, 1994; Wright, 1997). Family perception of the event also shapes individuals’ and the family’s coping strategies (Boss, 2002).
**Family Resources**

Families are less likely to perceive strain as problematic if they have adequate and appropriate resources. According to McCubbin and Patterson (1982) resource is defined as the individual and family strengths that are accessed within the family ecological context. It functions as a shield and controls the effect of stressor events on the family's level of stress (Olson & McCubbin, 1983), and it adjusts according to the stages of family life cycle (McCubbin, 1988). For example, a family with young children whose father had served a long sentence and was returning home, would access and require different resources compared to a family with adolescents.

Resources might be activated through (a) **personal resources** (e.g. financial resources, individual psychological characteristics, level of education); (b) **family system resources** (e.g. the quality of family relationship, their values and belief system) and (c) **social support** (e.g. the people and institutions outside the family system that could provide support) (Lavee, McCubbin & Patterson, 1985; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

**Personal Resources** refers to the characteristics or competencies that individuals have that may assist the family’s process of adaptation to stressor events (McCubbin & Patterson, 1985). McCubbin & McCubbin (1996) classified eight categories of personal resources: (1) **Innate intelligence**, which increases understanding of the demands and assists the family’s capability in solving problems; (2) **Skills acquired from education**, which may promote greater efficiency in performing tasks; (3) **Personality traits or temperament** that aid coping strategies; (4) **Physical, emotional and spiritual health of members**, which promotes the availability of energy to fulfil family demands; (5) **Sense of mastery**, which consists of the belief that individuals have control over their life; (6) **Self esteem**, one’s appraisal of self-worth; (7) **Sense of coherence**, or the perception that life can be trusted; (8) **cultural**
background and ethnic identity, which shape the family members’ world view and model family functioning.

*Family system resources* are the family aspects that protect the family system from the effects of stressful events and promote greater adjustment during strain or crisis situations (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996). Overall, these qualities are related to how family members interact and organise themselves to solve problems, define their roles and norms, maintain boundaries, and share responsibilities, in order to develop and accomplish the family’s developmental tasks (Nichols & Everett, 1986). Two main aspects of family resources have been identified in the literature, these are: (a) family cohesion (or connectedness), which consists of the emotional bonding that couples and family members have towards one another and focus on how systems balance separateness and togetherness (Olson & Gorall, 2003, p. 516) and (b) family flexibility (or adaptability), which is the quality of expression of leadership and organization, role relationships, and relationships rules and negotiation (Olson & Gorall, 2006, p. 6). These two characteristics of family functioning have received the most consideration in research and are the pillar of the Circumplex Model of Family Functioning proposed by Olson et al. in 1979.

The basic premise of the Circumplex Model is that families who are able to achieve balance between cohesion and flexibility will more effectively manage stressors, given their ability to change their system in order to cope with the stressor events (Olson & Gorall, 2003). According to this model, *family communication* also plays a significant part in facilitating the levels of family cohesion and flexibility, and is considered to be a third dimension of family functioning. Olson (2000) argued that families who have clear and effective skills to convey information and demonstrate respect and regard for its members, are more likely to be balanced and therefore cope better with stressor situations.
The family stress and resilience framework views *social resources* as the people outside the family system or the organizations that provide assistance to the family members in order to cope with crisis situations (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996). These may range from members of the extended family, friends, schools, and churches, to broader social levels (e.g. state and federal government). Hobfoll and Spilberger (1992) suggest that there is an intrinsic relationship between *social support* and family *communication*, therefore they consider *social support* to be component of Olson’s (1989) *family communication* dimension, which takes place predominantly outside the family system.

According to McCubbin and McCubbin (1996), Cobb’s (1976) definition of social support is the most useful to understand the family’s environment when it is facing stress. Cobb (1979) delineated social support as the exchange of information that occurs in relationships that provides (a) *emotional support* or information leading individuals or the system to believe that they are cared for or loved; (b) *esteemed support* or information leading individuals or the system to believe that they are esteemed and valued; and (c) *network support* or information leading individuals or the system to believe that they belong to a network of communication and mutual obligation (p. 300). The family’s appraisal that they are valued in association with having access to a wide range of adequate social support will assist it to cope with strains, and will positively impact on the family’s process of adaptation.

Although the provision of *social support* has been connected to the mechanism of buffering against family stress (Cohen & McKay, 1984), Eckenrode and Gore (1981) argued that *social support* needs to be contextualized, and therefore, the family’s meaning of an event needs to be taken into account. If *social support* fails to correspond to individuals or the family systems’ demands, it may contribute to an increase in the family’s level of stress (Thoits, 1995). For instance, an individual who requests financial support from an
organisation to visit a family member in prison and receives informational support may experience further stress.

**Stress and Crisis**

According to Price, Price and McKenry (2010), the literature has been irregularly using the terms *stress* and *crisis*, and has failed to draw a distinction between these two concepts. For example, McCubbin and Patterson (1983) described stress as the continuous imbalance between demands and family capability, whilst crisis was theorized as the family’s impossibility to restore homeostasis, and the continuous strain in shaping its structure or patterns of interaction. On the other hand, Boss (1988) portrays family crisis as the disturbance in family homeostasis that is so vicarious, or the strain is so severe, that it incapacitates families to maintain favourable physical or psychological levels of functioning, such that individuals are not able to perform customary roles and tasks, and family boundaries are no longer maintained. The degree of family stress is essentially related to the family’s perception of the stressor and its ability to activate resources to satisfy the demands for adjustment corresponding to the stressor event. For McCubbin and Patterson (1983), crisis point may never occur if the family is able to utilize its resources and re-evaluate (or reframe) its understanding of the situation.

**Coping and Adaptation**

*Family coping* is the actions that individuals or family systems carry out to manage stressful events or situations. It interfaces with both family resources and family perceptions (McCubbin, 1979). Patterson (2002) describes *coping strategies* as responses to the family’s perception of the *demands* that are cumulatively organised in a pattern or trajectory, in order to adjust to stressful situations and restore the balance, also known as Adaptation.
The figure 3.1 represents the Family Adjustment and Adaptation (FAAR) Model proposed by Patterson (1988).

Figure 3.1

*The Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response (FAAR) Model*

According to Patterson (1988, 2002), the FAAR model highlights the dynamic processes that occur in families in order to balance the *family demands* (stressors and strain) with their *capabilities* (resources and coping). For Patterson, both *demands* and *capabilities* could be manifested within an ecological context (e.g. individual, family system or community). The model emphasizes three levels of *family meanings* that mediate this process and these are significant factors for the family’s attainment of a balanced functioning: (a) *situational meaning* (how the family members perceive their stressors and their resources); (b) *their identity as a family* (how the family members see themselves as a unit) and (c) *their world view* (how the family system perceives itself in relation to other systems) (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). Patterson (1988, 2002) proposed that *family adjustment or adaptation* is the result of the family’s effort to successfully achieve homeostasis.

This model suggests that, in general, the family system employs a reasonably stable pattern of behaviour in order to achieve a balance between the *demands* and *capabilities*. Yet, there are times during which the demands become greater than capabilities, and if this imbalance persists it becomes a *crisis*. For Patterson (1988, 2002), *crisis* means a point at which the family system modifies its structures, interactions and meanings to restore balance and to promote individual and family development. In family stress theory this successful outcome is known as *family bonoadaptation*. On the other hand, when families engage in processes that hinder family organization and unity, and discourage individual growth and development, *family maladaptation* occurs (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

The dynamic process of family adjustment and adaptation described above could be applied to the return of a family member after a period of incarceration. The ex-prisoner’s return would place varied levels of *demand* on the family system (e.g. role negotiation, financial and emotional strain, etc.), and consequently, the family would be required to access
their capabilities (e.g. individual and family resources and coping) in order to adjust and adapt to the new context. This interactive process would be significantly influenced by the family members’ appraisal of the event, and how it is contextualized. Moreover, the occurrence of crisis would depend upon the continuous imbalance between family’s demands and its capabilities. It would require individuals and the family system to modify their functioning and structure, and to reframe the meaning of the event in order to overcome the crises and achieve a balance that assists individual and family development or family bonoadaptation. On the contrary, if the system is unable to do this, or performs and maintains changes that are detrimental to progress, it would reach maladaptation.

Resilience

The most recent paradigm in Family Stress literature is the concept of resiliency in family adaptation (Price, Price, & McKenry 2010). The resilience framework had its genesis in studies of children who had positive adaptive outcomes despite having endured several adversities (Black & Lobo, 2008). The idea that families have adaptive qualities when facing stress is observed in McCubbin and McCubbin’s (1988) definition of family resilience. According to these authors, family resilience is the characteristic, dimensions, and properties of the family which help family to be resistant to disruption in face of the change and adaptive in face of crisis situations’ (p. 247). Hawley and DeHaan (1996) add that family resilience accounts for the dynamic trajectory that a family’s experience, which enables it to achieve a positive outcome despite stressful circumstances. According to them, this process is unique to each family and is permeated by their context and their worldview.

Walsh (2002) argued that the resilience framework precipitates a shift in paradigm in the field of family therapy, where the focus is placed on family strengths and moves away from a consequential notion that emphasizes the family’s pathology. Walsh also maintained
that this model is advantageous in informing prevention strategies and interventions to disadvantaged families in crisis.

The Family Resilience framework takes into account the family ecological circumstances and a developmental family perspective, where family is viewed as an open system that functions in relation to its broader sociocultural context and evolves over the multigenerational life cycle (Walsh, 2002, p. 131). Therefore, the family’s meanings of events are collectively constructed by their interaction within the family system and their ecological context (Patterson, 2002). Moreover, the family adaptive process accounts for the passage of family life cycle (Carter & McGoldrick, 1988) and is affected by multigenerational influences (Walsh, 1996).

In summary, the family system is required to adjust once one of its members is incarcerated. The literature reviewed established that the context of incarceration places strains on the system, which elicits adjustments in its structure and functioning in order to access resources to cope with the period incarceration. This process is mediated by the meaning family attributes the stressors, which are influenced by their ecological context. There is some indication that families feel the period of incarceration to be a period of crisis. The level of family stress during this period may be related to the accessibility and availability of resources, the family’s capacity to change its structure and functioning, and to reframe the situation. Similarly, the return of the family member after a period of imprisonment will equally place demands on the family system, which may or may not be depleted due to the adverse effects of incarceration. Nevertheless, the family will need to readjust to a new context. Theoretically, the successful adaptive process is related to the primacy of the family’s perception (Boss, 1992), its capability to achieve balance between demands and resources, and its unique trajectory that is permeated by ecological and multigenerational aspects. However, the aspects of the family’s experience of adjustment and
adaptation to the return of an ex-prisoner are yet to be explored, opening the way for the current research project.

**Literature Overview and Rationale for Study**

As demonstrated in previous chapters, despite the widespread development and implementation of correctional programs that focus on rehabilitation, recidivism rates remain high. This implies that the current approach of punishment and rehabilitation is possibly not addressing the complexity that ex-prisoners face upon re-entering the community. It is also apparent that former prisoners have interconnected structural issues to overcome, such as finding stable accommodation and employment, and addressing substance abuse and mental health issues. In addition, the presence or absence of family support significantly influences the process of re-entry into the community.

Although the detrimental effects of imprisonment on families and their disenfranchisement in the process of prisoner re-entry have been documented, correctional services frequently request family members to provide some level of assistance at the time of prisoner resettlement (e.g. accommodation, information, etc.), and the repercussion of such demands on the family system remains unknown. Furthermore, the literature establishing the importance of family relationships for ex-prisoners’ reintegration is often focused on the prisoners’ perspective, and does not examine how prisoner re-entry affects family members. Therefore, it does not explore how the family system adapts to the re-entry of an ex-prisoner. Yet, the few studies investigating the characteristics of family functioning that may influence prisoner re-entry fail to explore the family’s ecological context and the adaptive processes that occur during the time of a prisoner’s resettlement.

Given that families of ex-prisoners are subjected to disruption and strain during the time of imprisonment and once more at the prisoner’s re-entry into the community, the family
stress and resilience framework may describe the process and factors that affect family adaptation at these times. The model of family adjustment to stress emphasises the family’s perception of the stressors and the families various capabilities, and its capacity to modify its structure and functioning. This model includes the family's ability to access internal and external resources in order achieve balance and to promote individual and family development. Hence, the Family Stress Theory and Resilience frameworks inform the current research project.

The Study

The general aim of this thesis is to explore the perspective of members of a family unit related to the family adaptive process that occur during pre- and post-release of a prisoner. In particular, it aims to explore the family members’ appraisal of their context that may assist an ex-prisoner’s reintegrative processes; to identify the challenges that ex-prisoners and family members face upon a prisoner's release; and to identify families’ internal and external resources that are predictive of adaptive and productive reintegration. Two data sets and two qualitative approaches were selected in order to extend the understanding of the complex circumstances encountered by these families, and these are described below.

Study One was designed to obtain a preliminary understanding of the family context and members’ interactions, and the challenges that ex-prisoners and their family members endure during the process of incarceration and prisoners’ re-entry into the community. Therefore, this exploratory study opted to interview a diverse group of professionals working with this population, and use thematic analysis to ascertain prevalent issues within the ecological context of these families. Specifically, this study will examine the professionals'
understanding of family circumstances, the family dynamic and the resources employed by family members to deal with the demands arising during the time of a family member's incarceration, and their adjustment to prisoner re-entry. The findings of Study One will inform the themes explored in Study Two.

*Study Two* examined the family members' experience of the process of imprisonment and resettlement of an ex-prisoner into the community. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected as the methodological approach, given that this qualitative method allows focusing on the phenomena in question. This study also opted to use the family self-report assessment tool Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES IV) as a method of evaluating family’s perceived internal resources. This tool provides insight into the family’s perception of their family connectedness, adaptation, communication, and family satisfaction.
CHAPTER FOUR

Study One: A Preliminary Qualitative Investigation in the Context of Family of Prisoners

Method

Participants

The 15 participants in this study were professionals who were involved with the transition of ex-prisoners back into the community and/or worked with the family members of these ex-prisoners. Eight professionals were staff of three non-profit organisations working with the forensic population (two located in Melbourne and one in the Victorian South East region), and seven were stakeholders working in roles assisting in the reintegration of ex-prisoners. Overall, this group was comprised of 13 females and 2 males ranging in age between 20 and 60 years ($M=40$, $SD=11.33$). The participants were engaged in several professional roles, including counselling (5), psychology (4), administration (1) and multiple social work roles with the organisational structure (5). They averaged 11 years of practice working within the forensic population, with a range of between three and over 20 years of experience in the field. For further information about the professionals participating in this study, refer to Appendix A.

Material

Semi-structured interview.

The study used in-depth semi-structured interviews, aiming to allow participants to provide a deep social and personal reflection of their experiences and knowledge, to provide flexibility in their responses, and to avoid potential issues with time constraints.
Data Collection Procedure

The recruitment process.

The research project was granted approval from the Deakin Human Research Ethics Committee, by Corrections Victoria, and by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Justice (JHREC). (Appendix B).

The recruitment of staff members.

Three non-profit organisations assisted in identifying potential participants among their staff members. The organisations emailed staff members who are involved with the transition of ex-prisoners back into the community and/or who work with the family members of these ex-prisoners on behalf of the research team, explaining the aims of the project in plain language. Once a staff member expressed a desire to participate, the researcher arranged a convenient time to meet at the relevant site. A plain language statement was first read to the potential participant and an opportunity was given for any issues to be clarified. The participants signed an informed consent form, and were given a copy of the plain language statement and a revocation of consent form, in case they wished to withdraw before the data were analysed. An in-depth semi-structured interview was then conducted. Refer to Appendix C for the Recruitment Advertisement, and Appendix D for the Plain Language Statement and Consent for Professionals.

The recruitment of stakeholders.

This was a convenient sample of professionals who work in different areas of reintegration. These professionals had been informed about the study by the research team, and had expressed an interest in being interviewed. Verbal information about the project was given via email to the potential participants explaining the aims of the project in plain
language. Once the person expressed a desire to participate, the researcher arranged a convenient time and place to conduct the interview with the professional and the procedures detailed above were followed.

**The interview process.**

The participants were asked to engage in an informal conversation about their professional experience with ex-prisoners and their family members. An interview guide containing 26 open-ended questions was developed to investigate systemic factors that occur in the process of reintegration of ex-prisoners into the community, and how this process affects the family system. The questions were designed to more specifically explore: a) the professionals’ perceptions of family functioning and adaptive processes during the course of prison exit and re-entry into society, using the themes of the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, 1989); b) to identify historical factors (e.g. family events) that professionals perceive to contribute to reintegrative outcomes; c) to identify correctional aspects (e.g. agency assistance with transition, offending chronicity) that professionals perceive as contributing to ex-prisoners’ reintegrative outcomes; and d) to identify professionals’ opinions about the most useful support systems experienced during the process of prison exit and reintegration. Overall, the length of the interviews ranged between 45 and 90 minutes. For a sample of the interview protocol designed for professionals, refer to Appendix E.

The participants’ verbal responses were digitally recorded and transcribed to a Microsoft Word document, and the transcriptions were stored in an encrypted file for further analysis.
Data Analysis Procedures

The qualitative data for analysis comprised participants’ transcribed responses to 26 open-ended questions. Several steps were taken to organise and analyse the data set.

Stage 1.

The first stage of the analysis was to transcribe the participants' audio-recorded responses to a Microsoft Word document on a computer-encrypted file. After each participant's interview was transcribed, the responses were grouped into four broad categories, according to the specific aims of the study:

a) The professionals' perceptions of aspects of family dynamics and adaptive processes that professionals observe during the time of incarceration and prisoners resettlement, using the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, 1989);

b) The historical factors (e.g. family events) that professionals perceive to contribute to ex-prisoners’ reintegration;

c) The correctional aspects that professionals perceive as contributing to ex-prisoners’ reintegration;

d) The professionals’ opinions about the most useful support systems experienced by families during the process of prison exit and re-entry into the community.

Stage 2.

The second stage involved the use of thematic analysis of the transcripts to ascertain a secondary descriptive category within the four grouping themes. Firstly, the researcher uploaded a PDF version of the Microsoft Word document on to the GoodReader application. This approach enabled the researcher to read and re-read the transcripts in order to familiarise herself with the data, to make annotation and code interesting features of the data across the
entire data set. The researcher then collated the codes into a list of descriptive categories of each broad theme to discuss and compare the findings with an independent coder.

An independent coder, who is familiar with literature in Reintegration of former prisoners and has extensive clinical experience with this population, followed the same procedure. Then, the researcher and the independent coder compared the codes and the extract of the data, and rearranged the findings in four separately broad themes. These broad themes and codes are outlined in the Table 4.1.

Stage 3.

The researcher and the independent coder then reviewed the broader themes, and after a lengthy discussion, it was established with a high degree of agreement amongst the pair, that the broad themes needed to be reorganised into three different domains in order to produce a report: The first domain is the legal and psychosocial context of these families, the second domain is the family dynamics that operate within these families during the process of imprisonment and prisoner resettlement, and lastly, the influences of corrective aspects on family adaptive processes through prisoner re-entry. These are presented below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family functioning</th>
<th>Historical factors</th>
<th>Correctional aspects</th>
<th>Support systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family feature</td>
<td>Family values informing the behaviour of the person</td>
<td>Prisoners’ institutional dependency</td>
<td>Lack of familial support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single mothers with children</td>
<td>History of childhood neglect</td>
<td>Detrimental effects of incarceration on behavioural traits and physical health on ex-prisoners</td>
<td>Lack of family connection increasing connections with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement towards seeking family connection</td>
<td>Exposure to physical, sexual and emotional abuse</td>
<td>Lack of or inconsistent family involvement with Corrections</td>
<td>The existent social support associated with drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women driving the process of connection</td>
<td>Trauma</td>
<td>Corrections demands affecting family life</td>
<td>Limited social support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's commitment to the relationship</td>
<td>Exposure to domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
<td>The misuse of social support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provision of financial and emotional support to the prisoner</td>
<td>Lack of emotional bonding</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication difficulties</td>
<td>Intergenerational involvement with Criminal Justice System</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulties in managing family boundaries</td>
<td>Family values informing the behaviour of the person</td>
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<td>Lack of trust</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
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<td>Extremes of family Cohesion and Disconnection</td>
<td>Poor education</td>
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<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Lack of living skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family level of stress increases at time of resettlement</td>
<td>Recurrent homelessness</td>
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<td>Lack of communication and planning during resettlement</td>
<td>Grief</td>
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<td>Struggle in negotiating roles at re-entry</td>
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</table>
Results

The findings of the thematic analysis are presented as following: the professionals’ perception of prevalent themes encountered in the legal and psychosocial context of families of prisoners, the aspects of family dynamics that are prominent during the process of incarceration and resettlement, and corrective factors that effect the family adaptive process. In each of these topics, extracts of the data will be reported.

Family Features

Despite a wide range in the socio-economic status of families that had contact with professionals working in reintegrative services, the professionals reported that there was a predominance of families with a lower socio-economic background. Many of these were female-headed single parent families. The following quotes of professionals illustrate some aspects of the context of families in contact with the custodial system.

There’s a big range there. I can think of a family where the son was in for drink driving and he killed his brother in a car accident and his girlfriend. So that family came from one of Melbourne’s good suburbs, not brilliant suburbs, but a good suburb. I met the family and they were a very middle-class, ordinary, very frightened - ordinary in the nicest sense of the word - very frightened about what had happened. Then I’ll go to the other extreme and most of them would lean towards that other extreme [poverty].

(Female psychologist 2 with 17 years experience)

Well, by nature of the justice system because there’s many more men in prison. The families I tend to see who are outside tend to be single mum families with kids. Yes, I haven't seen so many single dad families. Often, if mum is inside, it's the grandparents that are taking that role too. So in terms of that gender thing, it's hard to make a good comment 'cause the families I see tend to be female-carer families, whether it's grandmother or mum. I've probably only seen a handful of dad-carer families over the time.

(Female social worker/family counsellor with 7 years experience)
They [families] are probably - apart from the prisoners or ex-prisoners themselves they're probably the most marginalised - some of the most marginalised people in the community. They're just judged and I suppose from a point of view - financially they struggle - basically it's difficult for them to get housing and it's difficult for them to work. People don't want to employ them - especially in a small community - they know that they're connected to the prison system somehow - they don't want to employ them. So financially, they're marginalised. First and foremost, it's the housing - it's difficult for them to find anywhere reasonable to live.

(Female counsellor with 15 years experience)

Household structure may provide a preliminary insight in how a family system is organised, in particular, how the family system is affected in terms of family hierarchy, the formation of coalitions and alignment amongst family members, the family dynamic and the members' ability to manage resources in order to adjust to the period of incarceration and post-release.

**Family of First Timers and Recidivist**

Despite professionals' acknowledgment that families are idiosyncratic systems, the data indicated a consensus regarding a well-defined difference in patterns of behaviour between families of individuals incarcerated for the first time and families in contact with prison system on numerous occasions. According to professionals, families of first timers often exhibited feelings of embarrassment and disbelief in the family's involvement with the criminal justice system, and require information to navigate the prison systems. They also have a greater confidence in the rehabilitative prospects of the individual and expect to become part of the process within the criminal justice system. These families also appeared to demonstrate greater readiness to assist the ex-prisoner at re-entry.

In the families of recidivists, the professionals identified a greater cynicism regarding the prison system, and a general lack of confidence in the criminal justice system. The professionals indicated that although resilience appears to be present in families of recidivists, the recursive interaction with the prison system seems to exhaust the family's
resources and reduce the degree of confidence in the rehabilitative prospects of the member who is incarcerated. Therefore, they are less inclined to provide assistance and more likely to relinquish support to the ex-prisoner at the critical period of resettlement. These accounts are observed in the quotes below.

Yeah, look I think that where there is a lot of recidivism that the families become informed themselves over the time, so their survival mechanisms are better. They know visiting times, they know what’s going to happen. Their expectations of rehabilitation are usually quite low. I’m just thinking of first timers that I’ve worked with, there’s a real fragility and naivety and almost a fresh or there’s more hope. So they’re looking for solutions and they’re much more eager to be part of the process in wanting information and wanting that, so there’s that freshness often, of course these are real general kinds of comments that I’m making. Everyone’s different, but that rotating kind of door that some people go through in incarceration, they tend to go through this kind of weariness and it’s almost like battening down the hatches to survive. The families rather than a more open and they also tend to be a little more cynical about the system so they’ve been, they talk about being let down by the system, numerous times. First time families are really thinking of hope and looking at their supports that are going to be there and it’s going to actually help them and their loved one.

(Female social/CEO worker with 15 years experience)

Yeah, first time out much more support, much more likely to - but then if, particularly, there’s drug related, because they’re the ones that re-offend and get back in the drugs. They often do really well for a while and then something happens, lose a job or lose a girlfriend or something. Some kind of stress and they can’t cope. So no, I think with first timers, people are much more - families are much more supportive. Once it’s happened two or three times, they’re kind of well - understandably they’re feeling a bit of what’s the point?

(Female psychologist 1 with 15 years experience)

Well often with the recidivist ones, the family members drop off. You know ‘my dad used to come, but he doesn’t come anymore’. Or ‘he said he’d help me when I get out, but he’s not going to visit anymore’. Yeah, they just drop off. That would be the main thing. I guess more cynicism.

(Female psychologist 2 with 17 years experience)

The identified themes may suggest that families of first timers and recidivists have
different needs and may require distinctive approaches throughout the process of incarceration and re-entry.

**Family Cohesion**

Given the wide spectrum of families that are in contact with the custodial system, the professionals demonstrated a degree of caution in defining an overall quality of connection amongst family members, and to characterise usual patterns of family dynamics or embedded rules that prevail in the family system. The following quote demonstrates this.

I think I see such diverse families that it's not a simple answer. Some of the families I see I think are extremely cohesive, that they function really, really well and it was a situation where someone made a terrible decision and it's kind of an isolated incident in some ways or it's just spiralled out of control, but the family themselves have heaps of resources. On the other end of the scale, I see people where the cohesion is not strong at all and our goals are to have baby steps, that even if, you know, they can tolerate being with each other for a few hours, and not erupt in conflict, that's fantastic.

(Female social worker/family counsellor with 7 years experience)

However, the majority of professionals identified a particular level of difficulty in family cohesion, which was attributed to a family history of childhood neglect, exposure to family violence, physical and sexual victimisation, and traumatic events experienced by the prisoner population. The quotes below suggested traumatic events in the history of prisoners that might have an affect on their ability to relate to their family members and consequently disturb family connections.

I think there's a lot of disconnection. A lot of disconnection...Young men in prison. They've all got horrible histories of family. Lack of cohesion, mum left when they were six and dad was a drug addict. Like it's just, there's no cohesion. They all sort of love each other, but it doesn't translate into anything stable or useful.

(Female psychologist 1 with 15 years experience)
I think in a lot of cases there isn't that family cohesion. I think a lot of clients don't talk that much about having a family. They've lost contact with family or there's conflict in the family. They've got children they don't see, so cohesion is generally not there.

(Female forensic AOD counsellor with 4 years experience)

Their ability to relate to others is deeply flawed because they've just got so much trauma that's led them to where they are. Of course their partners experience the same level of childhood trauma that they carry into their adulthood.

(Female housing and support services 2 with 10 years experience)

Like the childhood and adult attachment styles, mental illness, drug abuse, historical trauma, whether it be physical abuse or sexual abuse, chaotic living arrangements, on again off again, parental relationships, lack of boundaries, violence in the household. And I think that stuff about poor history of nurturing, poor history of feeling safe within the family unit, and something that comes up a lot, is for guys who have actually been in [prison].

(Male forensic psychologist with 10 years experience)

The professionals also noted that aspects of imprisonment, such as length and number of incarcerations, would broaden the difficulties in family connection, especially in families that lack financial resources. It was identified that the length of the sentence could restrict the time together, limiting family interaction and the family's ability to maintain connection across the time. This lack of family connection may also have a detrimental effect on the member who is incarcerated and indicate an increased likelihood of family conflict.

I think the length of prison sentences and where people are, is having a big impact. Because obviously as a partner or a mum, if you don't own a car or you don't have a lot of money, it's very difficult to travel four hours to visit your child, compared to if they were at a prison that was half an hour or an hour away. So you already start to lose some of your connectedness to your child or your partner because of the distance and how long you have to sustain that. If they're there for three years, it's less likely you can sustain that amount of visits over that time. I think that already starts to create some disconnection. Prisoners also have a lot of time to worry and wonder about what their partner's doing while they're locked up, so I think they can get a bit paranoid, jealous and worried too about what's happening out here while they're in there. I think that can sort of again affect - so if already your partner's suspicious and jealous of you, it's much harder to help them.

(Female reintegration worker / forensic drug assessor with 13 years experience)
On the other hand, the professionals believed that recurring terms of imprisonment have a negative impact on the level of confidence that family members have in ex-prisoners' prospects for rehabilitation, as well as decreases family connection. As a result, these factors may interfere with the family’s predisposition to support an ex-prisoner at the time of re-entry. The following extracts from the data illustrate these themes.

If the person has done a really long sentence, then reintegration is always going to be hard. It's pretty hard for the family _cause the family kind of, it comes with all of this history. _Well, this is his 27th imprisonment_. You know, they get so used to. _He’s going to fall over_, _There’s no use for us to help him_.

(Male forensic psychologist with 10 years experience)

I think it depends if it’s a first time offence or if it’s a long time issue. Because if it’s a first time offence, it might have been a brain snap where they got into a bar fight and they’ve been jailed for it. Then they’ve come up and they’ve had that family say. 'We know this is not like you' and then we are able to support them through that and it doesn’t happen again. I then think that it is still cohesive then. But if it’s a long time effect on their mental health, their drug and alcohol, or their just bad behaviour. And they’ve been in and out of prisons a lot or they’ve said they’ll do good and behave and get help, and then that’s fallen down, and again. Then I think it causes that disconnection.

(Female family counsellor with 7 years experience)

Although the professionals noticed family disengagement as a persistent issue in this population, the data also pointed to an effort towards some form of connection, which was commonly driven by women. This observation is expressed in the following citations.

I can only say that they're as connected as they can possibly be given their histories of physical, sexual and emotional abuse. There's absolutely a desire there and that's I guess what I'm saying - that all of these people are asking for nothing different to perhaps anyone else, okay?

(Female counsellor with 15 years experience)
My experience was they either had a partner for a very short amount of time, which wasn’t going to last very long, or the children had been and gone in their life, they had no access to them. But those that did have a partner and with children, I think they had a good connection and I think the woman drove that process of connection, but very short-lived due to recidivism, due to, as I was talking about before, the pressures and the ability to actually keep moving on as such.

(Female housing and support 1 worker with 10 years experience)

One thing that jumps out of my mind, the woman's very strong. I think the woman holds the family together. She's done all the research, done all the support, made sure everything's where it is. I think that would be a fair statement, to say that.

(Female housing and support 2 worker with 10 years experience)

**Family Communication**

Overall, the professionals recognised a degree of difficulty in terms of interpersonal communication amongst prisoners and their family members. The data suggest that there was a pattern of family communication style that required further refinement in order to promote a clear and effective communication amongst family members. The professionals reported that families that have been in contact with them have a restricted emotional vocabulary, and their listening skills are poor. Moreover, the communication within the family is superficial and often omits important information. These aspects of family communication are articulated in the following extracts of the data.

[Family communication is] Fairly difficult. Like they're pretty fractured. They don't have communication skills. Like talking about feelings, being able to articulate what was needed they don't have assertiveness skills, they just get mad. No, communication is pretty bad.

(Female psychologist 1 with 15 years experience)

I think sometimes a lot of the families are more likely to express negative emotions like anger and things like that than they are love, or love's expressed by saying negative things to people. So the idea behind it might be positive but the way it's worded is negative. There's a lot of I suppose verbal abuse and things like that to each other. So they're not particularly styles that help people to move forward.

(Female reintegration worker / forensic drug assessor with 13 years experience)
They often find it really hard to listen about how the other person sees something. It’s not an easy skill to have when you’re under pressure. Often it would be through loud outbursts and people banging doors. Often there’s that cyclical stuff where somebody’s very sorry and begging forgiveness, and I love you and writing cards and poems about how wonderful you are.

(Female psychologist 2 with 17 years experience)

Probably at some level fairly shallow communication that they really only communicate around certain topics and areas. Again, because they don’t have the skills to go beyond that and if it goes beyond that without skills, it ends up in an argument.

(Female community development worker with 10 years experience)

The professionals also noted that the prison environment might aggravate these underlying issues with interpersonal communication, given that prisoners have limited time to interact with family members, and the prison setting may have physical barriers that are not conducive to effective communication. Moreover, it was identified that both prisoners and their families may suppress information in order to manage the level of stress of other family members. The data indicated that the presence of barriers in the environment and/or the filtering of information between the sender and receiver might result in the failure of the communication process, which perhaps reinforces assumptions that are not necessarily accurate. Hence, this process has the potential to foster unrealistic expectations between prisoners and their families. This negative outcome appears to reduce family connectedness over time, and to increase the likelihood of family conflict at the time of prisoner resettlement. This intricate process is partially described in the following extracts of the data.

Generally they come [to counselling] because there’s some kind of issue with their communication, either that’s it difficult to communicate to one another what it was like without the other one there, to sort of really explain that. Sometimes the barriers are that they don’t want to worry the other one, especially while they’re inside. I hear a lot of that, that it’s so hard on the outside but I don’t want to worry him or it’s so hard inside and I don’t want to worry them on the outside, that sort of stuff. Communication, while the person is inside is really limited. I hear often that, you know, in 12 minute phone calls how can I get parenting - like
what do I do with the kids today, kind of talk about that, and the visits, the kids are climbing all over dad so I can't get that connection. So there's sort of a break down often in intimacy and connection over that time.

(Female social worker / family counsellor with 5 years experience)

I don't think there's lots of conversation, in my experience, in terms of families themselves. And that's where it can often be quite difficult that, there's so much build up and excitement about them coming home, that sort of colours everything and it's not until they're home, and things aren't just falling into a natural pattern of life again, that things start to feel difficult. When they've come back and maybe do that talking here [in the office]. By that stage often it's quite conflictive as well 'cause their expectations are that it'll just naturally flow again how it used to. Yes, 'cause that's all they've known about how it was then and they assume that they can just transfer that years later into it how it will be now.

(Female family counsellor with 7 years experience)

The professionals reported that the potential for family conflict upon prison release was also related to the family system's failure to accomplish reciprocated expectations. This was attributed to the assumptions of prisoners and their family members that both parties would resume the roles that existed prior to incarceration, without reflecting about the dimensions of the situation and the impact of imprisonment on both parties. Therefore, the absence of a clear dialogue regarding the expectations that family members place on each other, the lack of an effective exchange of information between members regarding the changes that have occurred within the family system during custody, and a lack of clear understating of each individual's appraisal of the situation, would increase the likelihood of family conflict post prisoner release, and will consequently effect the family's adaptive processes. This occurrence is demonstrated in the following quotes.

I think a lot of people assume it'll be how it was prior to prison. Like almost like that period of time is just on pause and they're right back into their role. That's sort of their expectation that, if they were the father figure then, even if eight years have passed and their child is much, much older. I think initially their expectation is that it'll just be the same and that can be a really big challenge when they're out [of prison].

(Female family counsellor with 7 years experience)
Maybe not expectations, but the naïve belief and hope because there is often all those conversations during incarceration. ‘Yeah, I'm getting better, I'm doing this program inside, things are going to be different’, all that stuff that you've probably heard about. So the family is hearing that, and most of us want to attach to the belief that things will be better. So their expectation is that things will be better for a certain group of families. So then it's a shock, and they're not ready for it when it isn't better, when it is still hard.

(Female community development worker with 10 years experience)

**Family Adaptation**

The professionals observed another aspect of family miscommunication that would impact on the families’ adaptive processes. It was noted that difficulties in interpersonal communication had the potential to compromise the family's ability to negotiate roles within the household upon prisoner re-entry, in particular, for couples with children. These patterns of interactions are evident across the data set as exemplified by the quote below.

Quite a challenge for any woman and children to adjust to that transition. A lot of them haven’t got the skills to be husbands and fathers and workers, it's quite a challenge for them to adapt to that. A challenge if the mother's been doing the parental stuff for so long, and here comes dad and he's got a different way of parenting. His patience might not be as strong as the mother's, so then he's got to relearn if he has actually made a connection with his children anyway, depending on how long he's been in.

(Female housing and support 1 worker with 10 years experience)

Moreover, it was implied that the family system to which an ex-prisoner was returning was usually comprised of a single female with children, with lower socioeconomic status, who often had similar experiences as their partners (e.g. exposure to family violence) and a similar background of structural issues. These women had to adapt to the absence of a male in the household, and as a consequence their family patterns of interactions altered in order to adapt to the context and achieve a state of equilibrium. For instance, women would typically have to be in charge of the household, and exercise all decision-making in relation
to parenting and finances, given the partner's absence and limited communication with him. Therefore, one of the outcomes of imprisonment for couples is the shifting of power within the intimate relationship.

Once the ex-prisoner returns to the household or re-establishes his relationship with his partner, the couple need to renegotiate roles in order to re-adjust. Communication is a key facilitator in this process. Taking into consideration the difficulties in interpersonal communication previously identified, the professionals noticed a clear struggle between couples in renegotiating roles upon prisoner resettlement. Moreover, it was inevitable that for some women, their partners would re-establish their power, which may imply an increased likelihood of episodes of intimate partner violence. The occurrence of these processes is referred to in these extracts of the data.

Negotiation is a skill they [the couple] don't have in general, so if someone wanted to change something, there'd be an explosive argument and a lot of hurt and probably nothing would end up changing.

(Female community development worker with 10 years experience)

That's very difficult [communication] and often they think they [ex-prisoner] come in and take over. You know, a very overpowering way. And yet the woman's managed at least for months, if not years by herself and that can be very, very difficult. I can think of a lot of examples.

(Female psychologist 2 with 17 years experience)

I think women, we're fairly resilient about looking after the needs of our kids first and you see that with all the families - and there are a lot of single headed households where there's three, four kids - that's a big work load. She gets them up and off to school, it might not look pretty in the process but it gets done and that's - that idea of the fellow comes back. How will that change? I think it is a really - it would be a difficult time for women. I see it in how they want their fellow back, they might not feel they have a choice, they might not feel that they can say 'no you're not coming back' and how do they actually say that out loud? If the relationship was violent before - whether it is physical, emotional or financial - there will always be that trepidation around whether it's going to come back with him, and human nature is that we'll just test the waters I guess. - Trust and
negotiation or the ability to negotiate without fear is probably something that might come with time and work.

(Female housing and support 2 worker with 10 years experience)

The process of adjustment described above suggests that the return of an ex-prisoner to the household would place demands on the family system, especially on the dyad, and consequently is likely to increase the level of family stress. In addition, the data implied that the time of an ex-prisoner’s re-entry and the re-establishment of relationships is a period of increased risk for intimate partner violence, which is often associated with the engagement in substance abuse. This is demonstrated in the following statement.

My experience as a general would be that there would be a power struggle, in terms of the man’s determination to either do his own agenda when he's released. For example, she says, ‘well you're out, there's no more of this behaviour to go on’; he doesn’t agree with that, he may slip back, he may go back to his old way of living, which then places pressure. Then family violence becomes prevalent, if he doesn’t go back drinking and taking drugs.

(Female housing and support 1 worker with 10 years experience)

The Correctional Demands and the Family Adaptation

According to the professionals, the effects of correctional demands on the family system depend upon family circumstances, and need to be contextualised. The data suggested that when parole conditions provide adequate boundaries, and corrective services offered support to the individual, the pressures on family members in activating reintegrative outcomes (e.g. housing, employment) potentially decrease. For example,

I think the parole conditions - I think I said this before - and I guess it depends to on the delivery of the correctional services. I do query though - in those that have been on orders, getting out of jail going on to orders so they have to still maybe do drug screens or they have to still meet with their correction worker. They're able to - they have to link in with employment services or do certain training and stuff like that - I actually see that as a real strength”.

(Female housing and support 2 worker with 10 years experience)
Depends on what the parole is - the conditions are. Sometimes it can hamper because it hampers the way the family interacts. There’s so many things that he needs or she needs to do, that the family can’t actually assist them. Or it gets in the way of them catching up with their children because they’ve got so many other things they’ve got to meet before they can do that. So, sometimes the conditions can be a little bit unreasonable to then promote that family support in there.

(Female family counsellor with 7 years experience)

On the other hand, the frequency, nature and length of the parole conditions have the potential to generate an imbalance between the demands on the family system and its resources, and therefore increase the likelihood of crises occurring. It was also observed that a detrimental effect of parole conditions, in terms of family cohesion, was the increase in financial strain, and the escalation of the level of stress amongst family members, which is illustrated in the following quotes.

Well I think the parole conditions can be often really ridiculous and make it just about impossible for the family to support the person, because it becomes a full-time job, especially if you're on intensive parole. A full time - you're really - a full-time job to comply. I mean, it's very difficult often for reporting ... These people haven't necessarily got transport. In the country there's no public transport.

(Female psychologist 1 with 15 years experience)

Yeah, I think so, especially too if you don't have a licence and maybe your partner or your mum's having to drive you to all of these appointments. Maybe they start to get a bit annoyed or that sort of thing as well. Yeah, especially too if you've got children, you need to get to school and home. Then you've got appointments that you need to take your partner to and things like that. I think it can be annoying. You may have lived for two years without having to worry about doing things for this person, so you get yourself into a nice routine with your kids and that sort of thing. And suddenly this person comes back and they've got emotional issues, and you need to drive them everywhere and you're worried about them using drugs. It can create a lot of stress.

(Female reintegration worker / forensic drug assessor with 13 years experience)
I think it probably adds stress to the relationship because the parolee is often stressed by the whole process. And concerned about breaching and concerned about - If I miss an appointment here and there - So their stress is elevated which would in turn affect their relationship with their family.

(Female psychologist / forensic AOD counsellor with 7 years experience)

The data provided by professionals suggest that, in general, corrective services consult family members in response to the need of the ex-prisoner at time of pre-release, and families are expected to provide some form of assistance (e.g. ensuring that the ex-prisoner has accommodation). However, this assessment often lacked depth in terms of the overall family context and fails to take into account aspects of the family relationships and resources, which have the potential to increase or decrease the ex-prisoner's prospects of successfully completing parole. This is demonstrated in the following quote.

Yeah, what sort of assessment of holistic needs for the whole family are being looked at or is it just dad [ex-prisoner] that they're looking at. And everyone else [the family] is meant to fall into line with - is forgotten basically. I think Corrections needs to take that view of everyone that is living with this fellow. To do a bit of an assessment around how emotionally connected is he, how cohesive is that family unit and if that is actually working for him or against him, rather than just plonking him in there.

(Female housing and support 2 worker with 10 years experience)

The overall data provided by professionals implied that although correctional services acknowledged that family members contribute to the process of reintegration of ex-prisoners, family members are often excluded from the process of prisoners' re-entry. This was attributed to the scope and capacity of corrective services, and the complexity of needs presented by these families, which is demonstrated in the following quotes.
It's limited [family involvement]. Like I think the guys are content to go in, have a chat to their parole officer, sign the book and leave. That's my understanding. Occasionally I'll liaise with them and they'll want to know what their people are doing in counselling and again with consent, I tell them what - yes. It doesn't seem like a really holistic process. I think they've got pretty high caseloads, that sort of thing.

(Female social worker / family counsellor with 5 years experience)

I've certainly talked to them about that [family involvement] and, again, it's about case loads, that there's no time, they only really have time to just get through what they need to with the offender, to add the family into that is beyond their capacity at the moment.

(Female community development worker with 10 years experience)

As a result, family members are frequently unaware of the conditions ex-prisoners are required to meet, or the implications of failing to comply with the conditions:

Parole conditions affect it [the family] because it's another one of those areas that they're not really included in, not invited to participate in how it's managed. It's not like you can go along with your partner, like you go along to the doctor if they've got a serious illness, you can go along and learn about their medication and what needs to happen at home.

(Female community development worker with 10 years experience)

Look I guess it's how the demands at corrections that is placed on peoples' release. I think that often those families don't know what those demands are. So, again information. So they get a sort of skewed version of that through some form. So I think because they are not included with the process of um defining what they are, they don't go to those meetings they're not acknowledging and they don't actually get the information that they need to have to do that. So they're kind of working in the dark often, they need that experience in my experience. So a lot of the time those processes that are attached to a person post release are very clunky and to navigate that system is really complex. So if you don't even know what it is, how do you support someone how to get through it?

(Female social worker / CEO with 15 years experience)

The data imply that the lack of family-inclusive practices in the process of re-entry has several ramifications for correctional aspects, ex-prisoners and their families, which has
the potential to increase or decrease the prospects of ex-prisoners’ successful reintegration. In terms of correctional practices, the lack of family engagement and a comprehensive evaluation of family context would have an impact on the detection of risks and protective factors (e.g. intimate partner violence) that would subsequently affect the management of offenders. Furthermore, the practice of excluding family members would also increase the likelihood of forming a triangulation in the communication between ex-prisoners, family members and correctional officers. This triangulation in communication has a potentially detrimental effect on ex-prisoners’ ability to accomplish the orders. The following extract from the data provides an example of how family coalitions have the potential to impede ex-prisoners’ progress.

Even if the family is supporting because sometimes the family can overcome it, but if they come home and say ‘that bitch at the office, she was rude to me again’, the rest of the family is probably going to say, ‘yeah well she is a bloody …’ - like they're probably going to join in that negative stuff, rather than saying, ‘well hang on a minute, she's just - you know, hang on a minute, she's just trying to do her job and you're a silly fool. She's trying to do her job. What use to you is it if you get mad about it and if you don't do what she says to do? Let's just see how we can work a way of …'- because that voice of - it's the voice of reason that's missing from some families. Sometimes they get it through their worker, but not always.

(Female psychologist 1 with 15 years experience)

On the other hand, the triangulation in communication has the potential to reinforce pre-existing family difficulties in terms of family cohesion and communication, leading to a perpetuation of various maladaptive processes. The strategy of shifting the focus to a third party is likely to be used when family relationships are under strain, as proposed in Bowen’s family systems theory (Nichols & Schwartz, 1995).

Moreover, the absence of family involvement has the potential to inhibit the family’s ability to assist ex-prisoners, as verified in the extract below.
I wonder if families see that as just a little bit of an extra support mechanism to help the whole family transition so that the person who's coming out of jail is just not left with - 'Well what am I going to do now?' - That, that's just an extra support that's put in place. How the Corrections actually incorporate the family in all of that too - I don't think there's a lot of that. I think if someone comes out of prison on an order then he goes and does his responsibilities with Corrections, but mum and the kids aren't a part of that. I don't understand why they wouldn't be. Because even though he's an adult, he's actually impacting on all these lives over here too - she's impacting on his ability to actually keep to his order.

(Female housing and support 2 worker with 10 years experience)

Summary

To summarize, the interviews with professionals revealed that although families are unique systems that need to be contextualised, particular family structures and patterns of family interaction that may affect the process of ex-prisoners' reintegration are common. According to the professionals, due to the high prevalence of males in the custodial system, a great many families are comprised of single parent female-headed households with children, and are of a lower socio-economic status. The professionals also identified a difference in patterns of behaviour, and consequently attitudes, between families of prisoners involved with the criminal justice system for the first time and families of prisoners with recurrent contact with the custodial system. It was suggested that while families of first timers have more difficulties in navigating the criminal justice system, they have a greater confidence in the prisoner's rehabilitative prospects, and are more likely to display a willingness to assist prisoners at the time of resettlement in comparison to families of recidivists. As a result, the data implied that each of these families requires a different support approach.

The occurrence of difficulties in aspects of family functioning, such as family cohesion, communication and adaptation were evident across the data set. The professionals recognised a particular level of difficulty in family cohesion that can be credited to the high prevalence of exposure to family violence, physical and sexual victimization and childhood
neglect within the prison population, which affects the prisoner’s ability to relate to others. Despite the difficulty in family cohesion, it was also noted that there was a continuous movement towards family connection usually propelled by women. Moreover, the professionals noted that aspects of imprisonment (e.g. length and number of incarceration) deepens the difficulties in family cohesion, decreases the family’s confidence in ex-prisoners’ rehabilitative prospects, reduces family connection, and inhibits families’ predisposition to assist ex-prisoners at the time of re-entry.

The professionals also observed a degree of difficulty in interpersonal communications between ex-prisoners and their families, which detracts from the family’s ability to promote an individual’s development. In particular, a prevalent communication style often results in the failure of communication processes, and leads to conflict. It was also inferred that the prison environment exacerbates difficulties in communication and family connection, given the physical barriers present in the prison setting. Moreover, the patterns of communication between prisoners and their families may reinforce individuals’ assumptions and promote unrealistic expectations amongst prisoners and their families that may lead to family conflict.

Professionals also understood the difficulties in communication affecting families' adaptive processes at the time of an ex-prisoner's resettlement. It was implied that these difficulties would have a detrimental effect on the couple’s ability to negotiate roles and relationships post prisoners’ release, placing stress on family relationships, which increases the likelihood of intimate partner violence.

Finally, the professionals observed the effects of correctional demands on the family system. The data suggested that when correctional conditions are accompanied by adequate support to individuals, this could potentially reduce demands placed on the family system and result in decreases in a family’s level of stress, which in turn, may prevent crises from
occurring. On the contrary, if the nature, frequency and length of parole conditions are not appropriate, there is the potential to produce an imbalance between family demands and resources, and therefore, increase the likelihood of crises occurring. The professionals suggested that there is a need for a more systemic assessment of an ex-prisoner's context that takes into account family patterns of interactions and family resources. This would assist in identifying various risks and the protective measures needing to be put in place as part of an offender's management program when he is released from prison.
CHAPTER FIVE

Study Two: A Phenomenological Investigation of Family’s Adaptation to the Prisoner’s Incarceration and Re-entry

Method

Participants

The participants in Study Two were 19 individuals drawn from the family system of ex-prisoners. The family group contained 14 females and five males and their ages ranged between 13 and 65 years (M=44; SD=13.41). Eighteen family members identified their background as Australian and one as Aboriginal, and all lived in a city in the southern region of Victoria. In terms of family relationships: six were partners of ex-prisoners (amongst those two also had children who were ex-prisoners), five were ex-prisoners’ parents, three were ex-partners of ex-prisoners, two were ex-prisoners’ children, and one was a sibling of two ex-prisoners. Two ex-prisoners also attended the interview with their respective partners. Three family members had a history of past imprisonment. This group had a wide-range of living arrangements: six were living together with an ex-prisoner; three had recently separated from an ex-prisoner; two partners were in a relationship with an ex-prisoner but living in separate accommodation; three were waiting for a person to be released within less than 60 days, and one was a family member of a recently deceased ex-prisoner.

Excluding the families attending the interview with the ex-prisoner, all family members provided information about the status of the ex-prisoner. The time absent from household due to imprisonment varied between three months and over five years. Four ex-prisoners were incarcerated for the first time (first timers) and thirteen had more than two periods of incarceration (recidivists). The average sentence length of first timers was 33.4 months and the recidivists had a diverse array of sentence terms and length of imprisonment.
All family members waiting for the release of their relatives were in contact with the prisoner via phone calls or prison visits. Although the nature of the charges was not deliberately collected, it was evident in the sample that at least nine ex-prisoners were imprisoned due to drug-related charges and two for sex-related offences. For further information regarding the sampling of families, refer to the Table 5.1.
Table 5.1

The Sampling of Families Participating in Study Two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator for families:</th>
<th>Family members present in the interview</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Existing living arrangements</th>
<th>Prior in incarceration terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family 1</td>
<td>a) Male ex-prisoner</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Ex-prisoner was living in a transitional house and his partner was living alone with children in a rental property.</td>
<td>The ex-prisoner had applied for parole several times in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Female Partner of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Son of ex-prisoner/partner</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Daughter of ex-prisoner/partner</td>
<td>2 m.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 2</td>
<td>Mother and partner of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>The interviewee and her partner (an ex-prisoner) were homeless at the time of the interview. The couple was provisionally living with friends. The interviewee's son was in a juvenile detention centre.</td>
<td>The ex-prisoner had applied for parole on several occasions in the past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 3</td>
<td>Female partner of prisoner</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>The interviewee's partner was living alone with children whilst waiting for her partner's release in 45 days</td>
<td>The interviewee's partner of incarceration has also served terms four years ago. The interviewee had also been in prison for two years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 4</td>
<td>Mother of prisoner</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>The interviewee was living with her husband. The interviewee’s son was waiting to be released on parole within 60 days.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 5</td>
<td>a) Ex-prisoner</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>The ex-prisoner was a former inmate. Length of the sentence was a factor in the family dynamics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Wife of ex-</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prisoner</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Son of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Daughter of ex-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prisoner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 6</td>
<td>Father of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>The interviewee’s son was a child of a previous relationship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>His son was living with the interviewee’s brother. The interviewee refused to provide accommodation to his son due to concerns regarding negative influences on two younger half-brothers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 7</td>
<td>Mother of ex-</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>The interviewee was living alone with children. This interviewee was the mother in law of family 3. She was interviewed a couple of weeks after the release of her son who was living with his partner and children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prisoner</td>
<td></td>
<td>The interviewee’s son has incarceration and has never been released.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family 8</th>
<th>Brother of ex-prisoners</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>The interviewee was living alone.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The interviewee had two imprisonments with a very long imprisonment terms of over 10 years. Since this participant was the ex-prisoner’s only living sibling and had recently died, she was living with the brother who was the interviewee. This interviewee had also lived alone for years with the brother who was the interviewee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 9</td>
<td>Wife of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>The interviewee was living alone whilst her husband was serving parole in another state. There was a cut-off in the family due to the nature of his charges. The couple’s children ceased contact with the interviewee since she was providing support to their father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 10</td>
<td>Mother of prisoner</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>The interviewee was waiting for her son to be released within 60 days. The interviewee was not able to provide accommodation to her son since her husband disagreed with this arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 11</td>
<td>Ex-wife of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>The interviewee was recently separated from the ex-prisoner and was living alone with children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The interviewee’s ex-partner had a very long imprisonment terms and was released after 10 years. The interviewee’s ex-partner has four months prior to the interviewee’s own release.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 12</td>
<td>Wife and mother of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>The interviewee was living with ex-prisoner and children. Her daughter was also an ex-prisoner. The living arrangement of the interviewee’s daughter is unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 13</td>
<td>Mother of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>The interviewee was living with partner and children. The interviewee was not able to provide accommodation to her son since her husband disagreed with this arrangement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 14</td>
<td>Ex-partner of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>The interviewee has recently separated from ex-prisoner, had no children and was living alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family 15</td>
<td>Ex-wife of ex-prisoner</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>The interviewee was separated from the ex-prisoner and was living alone with their children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.* The family members who were presented in the interview, their living arrangements and level of experience navigating change.
Material

**Semi-structured interview.**

Study Two used a similar methodological approach to Study One, using in-depth semi-structured interviews, to allow participants to provide an insightful social and personal reflection of their experiences, to support flexibility in their responses, and to evade potential issues with time constraints. Furthermore, the study selected this methodology because it is _suitable for collecting information from vulnerable and marginalised people_ (Liampittong, 2009, p. 44). A protocol of interview of 22 open-ended questions was prepared in order to explore the prevalent themes presented in the first study (e.g. family cohesion, adaptation and communication, and correctional demands on the family system). Refer to *Appendix F* for further details.

**FACES IV.**

In addition to the interview process, the members of families attending the interview were asked to respond to the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scales (FACES IV) (Olson, 2009). FACES IV is a reliable and respected psychometric instrument that measures the interactions among family members concerning *cohesion* (connectedness), *flexibility* (adaptability), *communication*, and *family satisfaction* defined by the Circumplex Model (Olson, 2011). This family self-report assessment can be completed by one or more family members and it was used as a means of evaluating the internal resources that may be affecting the family’s ability to adjust to the return of a member after a period of incarceration. Although this psychometric tool is a quantitative instrument, it was mainly used to evaluate the quality of relationships among family members, to assess the family perception of their patterns of interaction, and their degree of satisfaction with family life.

FACES IV contains 62 items, 42 of which assess family cohesion and flexibility, and
10 of which assess each of family communication and family satisfaction in relation to family cohesion, flexibility and communication. FACES IV measures the dimensions of family cohesion and family flexibility using six scales: two balanced scales (cohesion and flexibility) and four unbalanced scales (disengaged, enmeshed, chaotic and rigid). The balanced family cohesion and balanced family flexibility assess the equilibrium between the other scales, which indicates a more conducive healthy family functioning. On the contrary, an unbalanced degree of family cohesion and flexibility, either very low or very high, would suggest a family functioning that is problematic for individuals and the progress of their relationships across time.

According to Olson and Gorall (2006), in order to calculate how balanced or unbalanced the family system is in relation to cohesion and flexibility, a ratio score can be calculated for both Cohesion and Flexibility Ratios, and the sum of these used to form a third ratio, labelled as Circumplex Total Ratio. The two balanced scales estimate a satisfactory healthy family functioning and the four unbalanced scales estimate a more problematic family functioning. Consequently, a greater score in balanced ratio (score above 1) in comparison to unbalanced ratio characterises a healthier family functioning. On the other hand, a greater score in unbalanced scales (score below 1) would represent a family with a greater degree of difficulties in cohesion and adaptability amongst family members.

The Cohesion Ratio is estimated by dividing the Balanced Cohesion score by the average of the unbalanced scales, Enmeshed and Disengaged. Similarly, the Flexibility Ratio is calculated by dividing the Balanced Flexibility score by the average of the unbalanced scales, Chaotic and Rigid. The Circumplex Ratio, which represents the summary of family balanced and unbalanced features, is calculated by dividing the average of the two balanced scales (Flexibility and Cohesion) by the four unbalanced scales (Rigid, Chaotic, Enmeshed and Disengaged). The participants were invited to indicate the extent to which they agreed or
disagreed with a sequence of statements. A sample question to estimate family cohesion is

"Family members are involved in each others lives". An example of question to gauge family
flexibility is "Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems". For each item, a 5-point
scale is used from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Refer to Appendix G for item
numbers of Balanced Cohesion and Flexibility scales and Unbalanced Disengaged,
Enmeshed Rigid and Chaotic item numbers, and Appendix H for percentile scores of
Balanced and Unbalanced scales and their respective levels.

The Family Communication scale is a 10 item scale that was based on a longer
version on the Parent-Adolescent Communication scale developed by Howard Barnes and
David Olson in the 1980’s and can be used with a wide range of families in different stages
of their family life cycle (Olson & Barnes, 2004). This scale measures how effectively family
members exchange information, ideas, thoughts and feelings, to which degree family
members feel satisfied and free to communicate with other members, as well as evaluating
the negative aspects of communication that are present in the family. The Family
Communication score is calculated by adding responses to all items of the Family
Communication scale, which range from very poor (10 to 29 points) to very effective (44
to 50 points). A sample of question measuring family communication is "Family members
are very good listeners". Refer to Appendix I for the Family Communication items, and
Appendix J for the Family Communication interpretation score.

The 10 item Family Satisfaction scale measures overall family satisfaction in relation
to family cohesion, flexibility and communication. The basic hypothesis behind the
Circumplex Model is that families with higher levels of family satisfaction will also have
higher scores in balanced cohesion and flexibility scales, and have a higher degree of family
communication (Olson, 2004). Similar to the Family Communication scale, the Family
Satisfaction score is calculated by adding responses to all the items of the Family Satisfaction
Scale, and ranges from “very dissatisfied” (10 to 29 points) to “very satisfied” (45 to 50 points) with most aspects of their family. The participants were asked to specify the degree to which they were satisfied or dissatisfied with family life. An example of a statement to gauge family satisfaction is “The amount of time you spend together as a family”. For each item, a 5-point scale is used from very dissatisfied (1) to extremely satisfied (5). Refer to Appendix K for the Family Satisfaction items and Appendix L for Family Satisfaction interpretation score respectively.

Olson’s most recent study explored the validity of the scales through an exploratory factor analysis using oblique rotation and a confirmatory factor analysis, and determined that the reliability of the six FACES IV scales were: Enmeshed Scale $\alpha=0.77$, Disengaged Scale $\alpha=0.87$, Balanced Cohesion scale $\alpha=0.89$, Chaotic Scale $\alpha=0.86$, Balanced Flexibility scale $\alpha=0.84$, and Rigid Scale $\alpha=0.82$. Family Communication and Family Satisfaction scales have exhibited alpha reliability .90 and .93 respectively (Olson, 2004; Olson, 2011; Olson & Barnes, 2004). Hence, FACES IV has been shown to be reliable for research purposes.

Although FACES IV has been used in several different English speaking countries and the questions were read aloud to the participants, some individuals were unable to understand some words in the instrument. The words seldom on items 27 (Our family seldom does things together) and 33 (Family seldom depend on each other) were modified to hardly ever. On item 34 (We resent family members doing things outside the family) the word resent was amended to dislike. Finally, on item 38 (When problems arise, we compromise) the word compromise was substituted for cooperate. For a sample of the FACES IV modified to adjust to the participants’ needs, refer to Appendix M.
Data Collection Procedure

The recruitment process.

Firstly, the research project was granted approval from Deakin Human Research Ethics Committee, by Corrections Victoria, and by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Justice (JHREC).

Family members were recruited with the assistance of the organisations involved in this study, which assessed family suitability for the project primarily in relation to the upholding of the safety among family members due to the high prevalence of family violence among the ex-prisoner population (Oliver & Hairston, 2008). The organisations then posted invitation letters (or provided verbal information) on behalf of the researcher to family members of ex-prisoners who had incarcerated for more than three months, and released in the last twelve months. The invitation letters were addressed to family members over the age of 13 years (The delimitation in age had the purpose of the potential to induce stress in young children and to reduce distraction during interview. This strategy allowed the participants to focus on the task and to have a higher degree of comfort in speaking about their challenges). The invitation letter informed potential participants that the aim of the project was to explore the experience of family members when one of its members returns from prison. The family was invited to decide who would attend the interview. The letter also indicated that a questionnaire would be used to examine the familial relationship, and each family unit would be compensated with a $30 grocery voucher. Refer to Appendix N for the Invitation Letter addressed to Family Members.

In addition to the invitation letters, some advertisement posters were left at the reception area of the organisations with the purpose of prompting potential participants to seek further information about the research project from their respective organisations. The advertisement contained a brief introduction to the project, the incentive offered to
participants, and the contact details in case the potential participants wished to gain further information about the project.

These recruitment strategies proved to be inefficient due to the type of population targeted (families of ex-prisoners), since over 50 letters were sent out without a single reply following two months, and no one demonstrating interest through the advertisement posters. After consultation with the organisations, the researcher concluded that this population seemed to be suspicious of letters or the provision of information via agencies. As a result, a more personal approach was required.

Fortunately, an organisational staff member in the Victoria South East region communicated with some potential participants and initiated snowball sampling. Moreover, the recruitment process had a slight modification with the purpose of increasing participation and incorporated family members who were expecting prisoners who were within two months of release. As a result, a few families agreed to meet the researcher for an informal conversation about the return of a family member after a period of imprisonment. The researcher arranged a convenient time and conducted the interview with the family unit or individuals at the organisation. These interviews included all interested parties at one time and the composition of the interview groups depended upon the organisation’s and family members’ approval. In the case that the organisation identified any risk of harm for participants in presenting as a family unit, the research team prioritised the experience of family members. The research team also offered to conduct separate interviews with the ex-prisoner with the organisation’s approval and consensus among the family members in order to avoid family conflict. However, this strategy was not used. Young people under the age of 18 were required to be accompanied by an adult family member in order to be interviewed.
The interview with families of prisoners and ex-prisoners.

A prepared set of 22 open-ended questions was used to guide the interview process with the purpose of exploring: a) the family’s perceptions, their context and patterns of family interaction during incarceration and post-release; b) the family members’ perspective on the challenges that ex-prisoners and family members face upon incarceration and prisoners’ release, and the adaptive processes that had to occur; and c) the family’s perspectives of the internal and external resources required during the process of prison exit and ex-prisoners’ resettlement.

A plain language statement was read and questions were answered before the interview commenced. The investigator reiterated that the participants should refrain from discussing offending behaviour that had not been adjudicated by the court. The investigator advised that if the participants did so, the researcher would need to disclose this information to authorities. The researcher also reminded the participants that a counsellor would be available at each site, in case the participants felt distressed during the interview process.

When the family unit attended the interview with a person under the age of 18, a plain language statement suitable for young people was provided to the minor. Informed consent was sought from both this individual and his or her caregiver. The Plain Language Statements and Consent forms addressed to family members are included in Appendix O.

During the interview, the participants first received a copy of the 22 open-ended questions that would be used in the interview. This approach was taken to minimise feelings of anxiety regarding the themes that would be explored in the interview process. Furthermore, active listening techniques were used during the interview process to provide an opportunity to clarify and expand the participants’ ideas, and diminish potential stress.

In general, at the commencement of the interview process the families demonstrated some level of apprehension regarding the disclosure of the criminal activity of the family
members, particularly the families attending with the ex-prisoners. Once the participants learned that the study was concerned with family life and their perception of the process of incarceration and re-entry into society, the majority was appreciatively surprised that someone was interested in their stories. In fact, some participants stated at the end of the process that although it was a difficult topic to be explored and highly emotionally-charged, it was very important at a personal level, since, from their perspective, some change in the Justice System needed to follow. The interviews with the family system were digitally recorded and the material was transcribed to a Microsoft Word document and was stored in an encrypted file in order to be qualitatively analysed. The average length of interview within this group was 54.2 minutes.

**The administration of self-report questionnaire (FACES IV).**

Apart from one participant who was indigenous, the FACES IV was introduced following the interview process. Prior to commencement, the researcher reminded the participants not to compare or discuss answers while completing the form. The interviewer indicated that results were confidential and the score would not be available at the time of the interview. The researchers asked the participants to complete the questionnaire reflecting their marital or family relationships according to the participants’ individual circumstances. The items were read aloud to the participants and the investigator asked them to rate their level of agreement with each item. The use of this strategy was intended to avoid inhibition in case of difficulties with literacy, to accelerate the procedure, and to prevent discussion about the items.
Data Analysis Procedures

The qualitative analysis.

The qualitative data comprised 15 transcripts of interviews including participant’s responses to 22 open-ended questions. These data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is a qualitative research approach dedicated to the investigation of ‘how people make sense of their major life experiences’ (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 2). This methodology is informed by hermeneutics, which is the study of human cultural activity though the interpretation of texts intending to discover expressed or intended meanings (Kvale, 1996). IPA acknowledges that the researcher’s understanding and interpretation of participants’ experiences are continuously dependent on what participants say about their experiences. As a result, the researcher engages in a double hermeneutics, providing that ‘the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them’ (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 8). Smith (1996) also acknowledges that research is a dynamic process, and the researcher’s effort to understand the meanings of participants’ personal experience is contingent on and implicated by the researcher’s own knowledge, which may introduce bias (Candice et al., 2002). However, the inductive nature of this approach has the advantage of allowing the analysis in the view of a diverse range of existing psychological theories (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). It is also suitable for the investigation of the complexity or processes involving personal matters, and provides instructive clinical suggestions (Warwick et al., 2004). This methodological approach was chosen because it focuses on the phenomena in question (the family members experience of the process of incarceration and re-entry of their loved ones), is consonant with the Family Stress Theory and Resilience framework (Boss, 1992), and considers disempowered or disenfranchised groups (Fossey et al., 2002).
The organisation of the data set and the steps taken in order to analyse and interpret the transcripts are explained in the following section.

**Phase 1.**

The first stage of the analysis was to transcribe the participants’ audio-recorded responses to Microsoft Word documents on a computer-encrypted file. After each participant’s response was transcribed, their responses were allocated to a table containing three columns: one column for emergent themes, one column for the original text, and one column for exploratory comments.

**Phase 2.**

The researcher then read each transcript alongside the audio recording, with the purpose of immersing in the data and commencing to take notes. Initially, the notes focused on the language used and semantic content. However, with the process of engaging with the transcripts, the notes became more focused on the meaning of participants’ experiences and therefore the researcher began to enhance the understanding of the families’ context and how and why the families have concerns. This process allowed the researcher to develop more abstract concepts about the meaning of the participants’ accounts whilst considering the aforementioned theoretical frameworks. These meanings were simultaneously coded in themes and expressed in the column of emergent themes. The analysis of a single transcript was concluded before moving on to another and this procedure was followed for all transcripts. Once all the transcripts were analysed, the researcher began to identify similarities and differences in emergent themes within each transcript, and searched for a connection across those themes.


Phase 3.

The independent coder who assisted the researcher in the first study was invited to aid in the second study and engaged with the transcripts in the same manner. The researcher and the collaborator then discussed and compared the codes and the emergent themes. It was also agreed that the emergent themes would only be labelled if it occurred in at least 60 per cent of the total number of transcripts.

After a preliminary lengthy discussion, the pair rearranged and clustered the emergent themes in three categories according to the timeline of events. This strategy permitted the coders to better understand the experiences of family members at each given time. These categories are the following: family members experiences upon imprisonment, family members experiences throughout the imprisonment period, and family members experiences upon prisoners resettlement. These categories and emergent themes are illustrated in Table 5.2.

Phase 4.

The coders then identified the patterns between emergent themes in each category in order to recognise the main themes and their resultant sub-themes. This identified some similarities and differences in perspective from partners and children (nuclear family) of ex-prisoners and their prisoners’ parents and siblings (family of origin), which are detailed in the Table 5.3. As a result, the participants in this sample were divided and considered as two distinct groups: the nuclear family and the family of origin.
Table 5.2

*The Emergent Themes Identified during the Course of Imprisonment to the Period of Prisoner’s Resettlement.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family members experiences upon imprisonment</th>
<th>Family members experiences throughout period of imprisonment</th>
<th>Family members experiences upon prison release</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abrupt change in family structure</td>
<td>Apprehension about prisoner’s feelings</td>
<td>Great excitement, lack of planning and unrealistic expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial strain</td>
<td>Apprehension about the feelings of children of prisoners</td>
<td>Apprehension about prisoner’s rehabilitative prospects for families of recidivists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal of immediate social network</td>
<td>Purposeful omission of information with the purpose of protecting prisoner’s feelings</td>
<td>Apprehension about the ex-prisoner’s ability to adapt to the family system and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of control of children’s behaviour</td>
<td>Financial and emotional strain in order to maintain connection with the prisoner</td>
<td>Partner’s difficulties to trust and relinquish the control of the household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprehension about children’s wellbeing</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed about how to navigate the prison system and its inconsistencies</td>
<td>Strong sense of responsibility for the ex-prisoner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings of loneliness, anger, betrayal, sadness, embarrassment and disbelief.</td>
<td>Confusion and anger about the block in intimacy imposed by the prison system</td>
<td>Commitment to prisoner’s successful resettlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostracised by immediate social network and wider community</td>
<td><em>Secondary Prisonisation</em> (Feeling of being judged, punished and mistreated by the custodial system)</td>
<td>Desire for a corrective service that includes family perspective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.3

The Similarities and Differences in the Experience of the Nuclear Family and the Family of Origin during the Process of Prisoner Resettlement.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Upon imprisonment:</th>
<th>Period of imprisonment:</th>
<th>Upon release:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>The sudden surprising or upsetting experience</td>
<td>Endeavour to maintain family stability and connection</td>
<td>Anticipation and ambivalence</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nuclear family</th>
<th>Family of origin</th>
<th>Nuclear family</th>
<th>Family of origin</th>
<th>Nuclear family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unexpected change in family structure, sole parenting and immediate financial strain</td>
<td>Concern for prisoner’s and grandchildren’s well-being</td>
<td>Financial and emotional strain in order to maintain connection with partner and a conduit between partner and their children</td>
<td>Provision of financial assistance in order to maintain connection with the prisoner.</td>
<td>Mixture of great excitement for the partner’s release and bittersweet sadness due to theagne of imprisonment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdraw of social network</td>
<td>Disbelief and sadness about the prisoners circumstances</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed about how to navigate the prison system and its inconsistencies</td>
<td>Functioning as a conduit between grandchildren and the prisoner.</td>
<td>Apprehension about the ability to reintegrate with the family system and community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concern for the children’s and prisoner’s well-being</td>
<td>Feelings of embarrassment and responsibility.</td>
<td>Confusion and anger about the block in intimacy imposed by the prison system</td>
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<td>Partner’s difficulty in re-establishing and relinquishing control of household</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling of betrayal, anger and loneliness</td>
<td>Becoming guardian of grandchildren and immediate financial strain</td>
<td>Purposeful omission of information with the purpose of protecting the prisoner’s feelings</td>
<td>Purposeful omission of information in order to protect the prisoner’s feelings</td>
<td>Overall deterioration in couple’s relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling of embarrassment for partners and children of prisoners who had the capacity to understand the meaning of imprisonment.</td>
<td>Secondary prisonisation’</td>
<td>Secondary prisonisation’</td>
<td>Strong sense of responsibility for the prisoner’s successful reintegration</td>
<td>Other’s perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration for the impossibility of exercising typical familial roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Desire for a correctional service that includes a perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis of self-report questionnaire (FACES IV).

To examine the family members’ view of their level of family cohesion, flexibility, communication and satisfaction, the FACES IV data were recorded in the Excel 2010 Spreadsheet Microsoft formula provided by the author, which is included in the FACES IV Package. The use of this software allowed scoring the items automatically, creating a Cohesion Ratio, Flexibility Ratio and Total Circumplex Ratio scores, and calculating all Balanced and Unbalanced scales. The Excel program also provided scores for the Family Communication and Satisfaction scales.

The qualitative and quantitative results will be described and discussed in the subsequent section.
Results

The Qualitative Findings

The findings of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis are organised and presented in three sections: (a) the family members’ experience when undergoing imprisonment of a partner or a child; (b) the family members’ experience during the period of prisoners’ incarceration; and lastly (c) the family members’ experience upon prisoners’ resettlement. Providing that there is reciprocity in the family patterns of interaction within itself and with other systems, the arrangement of themes presented in the findings is for academic purposes only, and does not intend to demonstrate linearity across the themes. Each section will discriminate between the experiences of partners and children (nuclear family) of ex-prisoners, and those of ex-prisoners’ parents and sibling (family of origin).

To protect the identity of the participants each family was given a number as an identification. The quotes presented in this document were directly extracted from the transcriptions. Changes to the quotes have only occurred when it would jeopardise confidentiality or disclose the identity of the participants. All participants under the age of 18 will be reported as children of an ex-prisoner.

Every family unit that participated in this research had a unique account and circumstances, however the themes reported were dominant in the majority of the transcripts. A brief description of the family circumstances related to the family relationship with the ex-prisoners, the family living arrangements, the family structure and the degree of involvement with the criminal justice system is provided in order to present some contextual information. This approach was selected with the intention of placing the families and the revealed themes in context, since the phenomenological family inquiry presumes that _individual family
member's stories are accurately understood only within the family context and are illuminated by other stories in that context’ (Boss, Dhal & Kaplan, 1996, p.97).

**The family members’ experience upon imprisonment.**

According to the partners and parents, the imprisonment of a loved one is essentially experienced as a sudden surprising or upsetting event, which produces an abrupt change in family structure, and consequently, family dynamics. The families interviewed described the incarceration of a partner or a child as an event that generates an immediate financial strain, which increases the risk of homelessness for partners with a disadvantaged social-economic status. Therefore, the need for a rapid adjustment to the circumstances elicits intense emotions.

Two main themes surface in the data. Firstly, the abrupt change in family structure requires a rapid adjustment in the family members' usual roles and induces an immediate financial stress that persists throughout the time of prisoners' sentence. This is often accompanied by the withdrawal of family social support system. The second theme was the emotional turmoil that partners and parents experience in order to maintain family stability and hierarchy, and to support the prisoner. These two themes that appeared in the families' account are intrinsically connected and will be reported in conjunction. The extracts of the data will be firstly described from the perspective of nuclear family, and lastly from that of the prisoner's family of origin.

**The sudden family adjustment and its emotional turmoil: The experience of the nuclear family.**

The first participants were a couple with two children under the age of 3. He had had three imprisonment terms in the past, and he had been released a couple of months before the
interview. She was living alone with the children, whilst he was in transitional housing.

According to him, the immediate financial strain that instigated his partner’s homelessness was a main concern at the time of his imprisonment, followed by his frustration at the impossibility of exercising his usual role in the family.

Yeah money was a big issue. You [referring to his partner by his side] had to move house because I lost my house when I got locked up, couldn’t make the house payments. So she had the stress of moving all my furniture into storage because I can’t [unclear] in society now.

(Family 1, male ex-prisoner, 35 years)

It’s stressful when you’re in there. If something happens when she’s on the phone so to speak, I can’t do anything to help her out and it gets me angry. Generally when I can talk to her on the outside and she’s got a problem, I can just go and deal with it. When I am in jail my hands [are] tied and I can’t just get up and walk out the gate and go do what she needs done and then come back.

(Family 1, male ex-prisoner, 35 years)

His partner confirmed that financial strain was an issue and added that for her the main challenge was to manage the sole parenting role whilst trying to maintain some financial stability.

Yeah money was a big issue. [Unclear] the challenges. I had this one [referring to her three years old son running in the room] in my care for a bit while being pregnant. [unclear] was organising the little one. Yeah working at the same time. I had my mum looking after him. I only worked three days a week.

(Family 1, female partner of ex-prisoner, 28 years)

The second participant was the partner of an ex-prisoner and also the mother of an ex-prisoner. Her partner had two imprisonment terms. The participant and her partner had no children in their care and were homeless at the time of the interview. Her account focused on her relationship with her partner. For her, his imprisonment meant losing her main social
support, which produced immediate financial stress and a strong feeling of loneliness. It is also clear that in her context, her partner’s imprisonment also represented furthering her socio-economic disadvantage.

I totally lost the person who cares 24/7 for me a day. I was on my own in our transitional housing that was set up with workers and everything that appointments had to be met and everything to be able to keep it and keep it going on and all that thing - that sort of stuff. Apart from the fact that for - all of a sudden I was alone. I hadn’t for the last prior eight years ever been alone or separated from him, do you know what I mean? In the way that he’d always been there to care for me and any of our children.

On the same hand instantly the minute they go to prison, your partner, your – Centrelink [welfare payment agency] chop your money off straightaway in half. I went straightaway to being only recognised as being a single person yet I still had to support my partner the whole time he was in prison, because they’re allowed $140 a month in their accounts and so they can use phones and things like that.

(Family 2, partner and mother of ex-prisoner, 44 years).

The third person to participate was the wife of an ex-prisoner who had recurrent short-term incarcerations. She had also been in prison in the past. She was living alone with her two children under the age of 12 whilst waiting for her partner’s release in the next couple of weeks. She not only corroborated with the evidence that managing the sole parenting role, financial strain and feelings of loneliness were significant issues, but also confirmed the intense apprehension that the impact of her husband’s recurrent incarceration had on her children’s emotional wellbeing, since her children have demonstrated some capacity to understand the meaning of being in prison.

For her, the main challenge was to maintain some form of family stability and hierarchy. It appears that this task would place her in a taxing situation of attempting to preserve her husband’s status in the family system whilst acknowledging to the children that their father’s behaviour is discordant with social norms. She also accepted that this message may be very confusing for children to understand, and she worries about their feelings. It is
also implicit in her account that she expected that her husband would take the father’s role once he returns from prison, and cease antisocial behaviour that would eventually lead to re-imprisonment.

The children is a major challenge that I faced from going in and out of prison and then going in this time again. Particularly we have a 12 year old son, a five year old daughter. They’re now understanding exactly what it is, so I mean that would be one of the big challenges. I mean not having him there is another big challenge, handling a lot of things by myself particularly when it comes to housing, when it comes to bills, when it comes to doing things with the children. Our 12 year old is in sixth grade, sixth grade graduation this year and my husband’s in prison. I am on my own yeah completely, completely, with both children and which is a big thing to juggle. I mean with a five year old in kinder and about to start school at the start of the year next year and this one's going into high school at the start of the year and he will be out just before they both start school. But just the things before then and I mean I do have a lot of problems with the children, with emotional problems with them as well with him being inside. Very, very hard for me to explain because I cannot put him down at all because he's their father, but I also have to put it in a perspective that they understand that the wrong thing was also done for their father to be where he is. So they're all challenges, the whole lot of them, and I mean you can only work through them can’t you? That's all you can do. I've done it quite a few times now and I think I'm starting to get there but I'm hoping he's getting there now too where it won't happen anymore.

(Family 3, wife of prisoner, 31 years)

The fifth family attending the interview was the wife of an ex-prisoner and her husband and their two children, the son aged 17 and the daughter aged 13. The couple was living together and had another son aged 15 who did not attend the interview. It was his first time in prison and he had a four year prison sentence.

Similar to the other participants who had children in their care, the wife expressed that she experienced difficulties with adjusting to the responsibilities of becoming the head in a single parent family, striving to maintain family stability, and the emotional effects of his imprisonment on her children. She also acknowledged that the whole family felt embarrassment and tried to maintain discretion regarding the father’s circumstances.
I suppose coping without him [her husband] being there, I suppose. The kids didn’t have dad there. I don’t know. Sort of, I had to take his role as well as my own, step in for him. Just him not being around and not being contactable and stuff. That was one thing. We didn’t really want people to know. I suppose in a way we were embarrassed. But then in a way we’ve always been a close-knit family and we just thought it’s no one else’s business. I know particularly [my 17 years old son] at the start didn’t want anyone to know. Like, I asked him if he wanted me to talk to teachers and stuff and he said no. Both emotionally, physically, the whole lot, yeah. The income. I had to be strong, I suppose, for the kids. We kept the kids in school, kept them going, they knew exactly what was happening with [my husband] and his situation, they knew what he’d done. We’d always said to the kids, you make choices in life and if you choose the wrong ones you’ve got to deal with the consequences. So that’s what was happening. I think that’s helped having a routine for myself and the kids. Just kept everything plodding along. I mean, it wasn’t easy. It definitely wasn’t easy.

(Family 5, wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years).

The participant admitted that her husband’s involvement with the criminal justice system produced embarrassment and undesirable demands on the family, which elicited her feelings of anger.

But in the beginning when he first did it, I was very angry with him. I was very, very angry. But yeah. We sort of try and put it all behind us now and look towards the future.

(Family 5, wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years).

The daughter of the ex-prisoner had also expressed identical feelings of shame and anger.

Yeah, like [my friend], when I told her, she like stuck by me the whole time. But with my other friends they just flicked it away. I was in primary school. One day I had this teacher who was being really mean to me and I started getting really angry at her and I had to tell her [about father’s imprisonment] because she was being really annoying and like putting me down a lot.

(Family 5, daughter of ex-prisoner, 13 year).

The son of the ex-prisoner confirmed that he also struggled with the absence of paternal guidance. He added that for him the feeling of embarrassment was intense and he
was not prepared to share his feelings and thoughts with his family or friends.

Yeah, just mainly adapting to him not being there just for every day kind of stuff. You’d ask him questions and stuff like that. He wasn’t there. That was all a change. Yeah, mainly just so I didn’t get asked about it. I just didn’t want to talk about it that much back then when it happened. It did come up a couple of times but I just, I don’t know, shot a bit off there. I’d just turned 15.

(Family 5, son of ex-prisoner, 17 years).

The ex-prisoner acknowledged that his imprisonment was felt as a shock to everyone in the family, which immediately affected the family financially and emotionally. He also accepted that his incarceration had a negative effect on his children, especially the son who was absent during the interview.

See I was initially, after I was charged I was actually on bail for 16 months. I wasn’t allowed to live at home. That was one of the conditions. Then there was that 16 months and everybody was hoping for a good outcome. Then when I was sentenced, well it was bang, the reality of it. It hit home. Well, the only good thing about being on bail and not being able to live at home was it immediately put a financial strain on the family so [my wife] went out and re-mortgaged the home to make the repayments a bit less.

(Family 5, ex-prisoner, 48 years)

He was on a downward spiral [referring to his youngest son who was not present in the interview].

(Family 5, ex-prisoner, 48 years)

As for the ex-prisoner interviewed in the first interview, this ex-prisoner revealed that he also experienced the frustration at being prevented from exercising his typical role in the family.

I found that hard and I saw it in a lot of other inmates too. To lose this control of, not control over the family, but any type of decision-making or what might be best. That was a major point, I thought. I saw it in a lot of other inmates. The anger coming out in them over the phones to their partners and kids and what have you, you know what I mean? A lot of smashed phones.

(Family 5, ex-prisoner, 48 years)
The ninth family unit participating in the interview was the wife of a first-time offender, in her mid sixties and living alone. She also struggled to become the head of the household. For her, this task was felt intensely because her family of origin, her offspring and her husband’s family of origin withdrew emotional and practical support due to the nature of her husband’s charges. She also expressed feelings of being judged by her immediate family because she has been supportive of her husband during his imprisonment term and release.

Doing all the housework and everything because my husband used to do the housework and that. Trying to find somebody who can do the gardening and mow the lawns and everything, because I've got a tear in my shoulder. I can mow the lawns, but I can't start the lawn mower. I was in a car accident about 42 years ago and I've got a bad back due to a car accident so I can't bend over to do the weeding in the garden very much. So I find it very hard to cope, trying to do the gardening and organise things and all that sort of stuff.

(Family 9, wife of ex-prisoner, 63 years)

My family won't talk to him. They won't have nothing to do with him, neither will his family, apart from his two sisters. The rest of the family won't have anything to do with him, won't even talk to him. She's [referring to her daughter] cut me off. Grandkids have cut me off too. Not my fault any of this happened.

(Family 9, wife of ex-prisoner, 63 years).

The eleventh interview was with an ex-wife of an ex-prisoner who had separated recently. She was living with the couple’s daughter and her grandchild at the time of the interview. Her ex-husband had had two incarceration terms and had been released one month prior to the interview. Her account suggests that even though her ex-husband had an enduring connection with the criminal justice system, she experienced his last incarceration with disbelief and confusion.

There was constant court cases we had to go to for different matters and I stood by him the whole time, every time we had to go. Just recently married before this happened [referring to the imprisonment]. So then I found out that he'd been
sentenced to six years with a minimum of four. At this point I was just absolutely devastated. My doctor had advised me that, with having bipolar, that it would be too emotional for me to go [to his trial].

(Family 11, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

I didn't believe that he'd done any of it. He was so gentle, like he'd be verbally abusive to me but I wouldn't think that he could ever [commit the offence].

(Family 11, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

The twelfth family unit participating was the wife of a prisoner and also the mother of a female ex-prisoner. The couple were living together and had children in their care. Her husband was indigenous and was involved with the custodial system for the first time. Her account focused on the impact that her husband's imprisonment had in her family. For this participant, the lack of the couple's connection, the financial strains, and the community exclusion, affecting her younger son in particular, were challenges that the family had to endure. It is also apparent in her narrative that the family unit had to maintain some secrecy regarding his circumstances in order to protect the family and prevent community retaliation for her husband's behaviour.

Poverty. Living - the breadwinner leaving, even though I was working it was half the income. Not being able to talk with it with anyone outside the family. So the family had to keep pretty quiet about it so they didn't get any community backlash with him going to prison. He'd actually left the house before he left, so two years before basically he was incarcerated and during all the trial and everything else he didn't live with us. He lived nearby. Well, the nature of his crime meant that he didn't - shouldn't live with a family and I was pretty devastated about what had happened, so we felt it was better that way.

That's very common with Aboriginal people, especially Aboriginal men, because they can be very - in denial right up to the last minute - to the tenth degree. Yeah, so - which he was and of course once all the charges and everything came through, well he had to admit what had happened. So, there had to be consequences for that from the family. When he actually went in - because he was still supporting the family even though he wasn't living with us - yeah, that was one of the hardest things and, like I said, not being able to open up to anyone. The family had - we really had to be our own counsel and that was very difficult.
We also - it was a struggle because - it's a hard thing to say, but in our family there's only my husband and my younger son who are Aboriginal, so when my husband was locked up it was a struggle for my son to be part of the community.

(Family 12, wife and mother of ex-prisoner 50 years).

The fifteenth family unit was the ex-wife of an ex-prisoner who had had recurrent imprisonment terms during their 25 years of marriage. The couple and their three children were indigenous. She was living alone with their children at the time of the interview. According to her, maintaining family stability was paramount as she learned to rely only on herself over the years. She felt that her children were the most affected by his recurrent incarcerations and there was a feeling of being punished for his behaviour. She disclosed that in her context, his imprisonment also provided some form of stability to the family system, because she was able to focus on the children rather than monitoring the negative consequences of his drug addiction.

I reckon the biggest challenge we had was - because our children were little it was like we were being victimised or punished because of him going to prison, you know, the kids not being able to - no dad to go to the footy with them, dad to do his things, because he was a good dad to the kids. It was the kids, I believed, were being punished for his behaviour, yeah. Well, I was the major financial worker in the household so it never really changed. I suppose the only difference you could really say is that the family violence decreased when he wasn't home, because there was when he was home. We didn't have every Tom, Dick and Harry calling him so it was a more quiet lifestyle for me and the kids when he was in prison. Yeah, and knowing he couldn't go anywhere so I didn't have to worry about him. I know that's sad, isn't it, but, you know.

(Family 15, ex-wife of an ex-prisoner, 50 years)

In summary, it appears that from the partners' perspective the main challenge experienced during the time of imprisonment is to preserve family stability, whilst striving to manage the effects of becoming a female-headed household (e.g. financial strain, reorganisation of parental roles). The increase in the family demands appeared to be often
accompanied by the withdrawal of immediate social support or the family’s decision to relinquish social support (often associated with the nature of the charge), which may ultimately intensify the family’s level of stress. The partners who had children in their care demonstrated a great deal of concern for their children’s feelings and behaviours, which seemed to escalate their level of distress. The unexpected demands caused by imprisonment of a partner seemed to lead to emotional turmoil, which was shared by all family members. The transcripts suggest that for the ex-prisoners interviewed, the distress of being imprisoned was related to the impossibility of exercising their usual role in the family. In particular, losing the role of making decisions was considered emasculating and produced feelings of frustration.

*The surprising event and its emotional turmoil: The experience of the family of origin.*

According to the family of origin of ex-prisoners, the imprisonment of a family member is experienced as a surprising event that is met with disbelief and sadness, and an intense worry for the prisoner’s safety. Furthermore, for the parents of ex-prisoners who had grandchildren, their concern was extended to their grandchildren’s wellbeing.

The fourth family unit to participate was the mother of an adult prisoner who had had intermittent incarcerations since his adolescence. The interviewee was living with her husband whilst waiting for her son to be released on parole within 60 days. Although her son had lost contact with his children due to his imprisonment and consequent collapse of his marriage, the participant had maintained communication with her grandchildren. For her, the disbelief, feeling of accountability for her son’s actions, and the concern for his safety were dominant emotions, despite his regular periods of incarcerations. She also disclosed that her feeling of sadness was associated with his recurrent imprisonments and its implications for
her grandchildren.

The shock of it all and wondering whether he’s safe. I don’t even know how to put this in the right context. Devastated and wondering why. He might have been stupid and did silly things but wondering whether he’s all right, which he was. But I can’t help but be his mum.

(Family 4, mother of prisoner 52 years).

It just feels like he’s died every time he’s gone [to prison]. There is a grief factor there because I cry for my son a lot because he’s the only child I have, which makes it a little bit harder. There’s a lot of anxiety involved there because I worry about his two little children. It affects them as well.

(Family 4, mother of prisoner 52 years).

The sixth family unit participating in the research was the father of an adult ex-prisoner with frequent imprisonment terms since adolescence. His son was single, had no children and was living with his paternal uncle, whilst the participant was living with his second wife and their children. He had also been in prison himself in the distant past. For him, sadness and concern for his son were intense emotions, along with guilt for being an absent father during his son’s childhood and adolescence.

He wasn't with me at the time. He was with his mum. I went and seen him a couple of times in there. It was pretty challenging, yes. Well, I've seen him behind a glass window. I've also seen him - we talk to him in the general population, things like that. So I've seen both sides of the thing [referring to juvenile and adult prison system]. It's not easy seeing your children in jail. I do feel responsible for him, yes, I do, I do, because he's my son. He didn't ask to come into the world. We [his child's mother and himself] made an agreement that we're going to have a child, but there's really a lot more to just playing happy families. There's a lot to families.

(Family 6, father of ex-prisoner 44 years)

The seventh family interviewee was the mother of a prisoner who also had had regular imprisonment terms since adolescence. This participant was also the mother-in-law of
the third family interviewed and her son had been released a couple of weeks prior to the interview. Her account focused on her struggle to deal with the demands generated by his incarcerations. For this participant, her son’s imprisonment meant having to become the sole guardian of her grandchildren whilst having young children herself, which instigated an immediate financial strain. Alongside this were the worry for her son’s safety and her concern for her grandchildren’s wellbeing. As did her daughter-in-law (interviewee from family 3), this participant demonstrated concern in maintaining some form of stability and hierarchy within the family system.

Just the stress and the worry. The first time he went to prison it was the worry about what would happen to him in prison because he was so young, and you hear these terrible stories and things. Just trying to explain to the younger children, make them understand that you know, their brother’s not a bad person. Yeah, then of course I’ve got [my son’s] children, the grandchildren, because the first time he went to jail, so did his partner so I had the children. Yes. I mean, it’s just the circumstances. It’s all the little things, like the struggle financially.

(Family 7, mother of an ex-prisoner, 50 years)

The eighth family’s interviewee was the brother of two ex-prisoners who had intermittent imprisonment terms. One of his brothers had recently passed away. The interviewee has also been in prison several times in the past. According to him, the angst for his brothers’ safety, and the anger towards his parents were feelings that he experienced when his brothers were imprisoned.

I guess half of you are really worried about their wellbeing because they were young at the time to go to jail. So you worry about their safety and whether they’re getting hurt. You’re also angry with your parents because they didn’t give them the necessary tools that they should have.

(Family 8, brother of ex-prisoners, 44 years)
The thirteenth family member participating was the mother of an ex-prisoner who had had two short imprisonment terms. Her son was single, had no children and was living in a transitional house, whilst she was living with her husband and his siblings. Similar to the other participants, disbelief and confusion were emotions that she experienced when she learned about her son’s imprisonment. She also felt victimised and judged by the criminal justice system.

Well in my son's case we didn't even know he was in trouble, that he didn't contact us. But as it turned out he didn't want to let us know because he was embarrassed, and it wasn't actually until he was sent to the assessment prison [that the family found out]. One of the policemen knows us, and he actually rang and said that he was leaving [to the Melbourne Assessment Prison] in about an hour. So that was pretty tough on us. It was a big shock. When we did find out and I - we went to see him [in the police prison's cell], he was very stressed about his wallet and that. My husband and I went round to where he was living to get his wallet, and we found out that everything had been stolen: all his bank cards and things like that. So then I had to report that to the police, which was really hard because they were very nasty to me. I actually went - they were sort of laughing at me, saying oh the thief's been stolen from and things like that. Then - like it was at the counter so people from the public were present and they were really bad, and I actually just said them the only thing I'm guilty of is loving my son. But I was sort of treated like a criminal myself. That was the difficult part for me, the way the kids [the ex-prisoner's siblings] and I were sort of treated, like we were criminals as well. That's about it I guess.

(Family 13, mother of an ex-prisoner, 50 years)

The theme of feeling victimised and judged by the community, in particular enforcement and custodial staff, was a persistent experience observed in the data set, and it will be further explored in the following section. This persistent subject was labelled in Table 5.2 as 'secondary prisonisation' in reference to Comfort (2003) cited in Codd (2008), which asserts that once family members become involved with the prison system, they also become 'a peculiar category of prisoner or quasi-inmates' despite being individuals who may not be necessarily involved with criminal activities.
On balance, for the family of origin, imprisonment is experienced as an abrupt event that creates overall confusion and anxiety for the prisoner’s safety. Concerns also extended to the grandchildren’s wellbeing for parents of prisoners who had children. In the parent’s account, a strong sense of responsibility for the person who was incarcerated was evident, characterised by a feeling of having done something wrong or failing in their obligations as parents.

**The family members’ experiences during the prison sentence.**

Although every family member interviewed had unique circumstances, overall partners and parents indicated that the period of incarceration placed the family in continuous financial and emotional stress in order to maintain the prisoners’ connection to the family. The families revealed that expenses with travelling long distances to visit the person in prison, the provision of financial assistance to prisoners, the frustration with the blocking of the demonstration of affection imposed by the prison system, experiencing mistreatment from custodial staff, and the persistent concern for the prisoner’s feelings and wellbeing were challenges that most of the families interviewed faced during the time of prison sentence.

**The endeavour to maintain connection: The experience of the nuclear family.**

For the partner of the first family which had two children under the age of 3, the long travel to the prison with a toddler was a difficult challenge that she had to meet during the time of her partner’s imprisonment.

Travelling from [the country] to Melbourne, long travel especially with someone who's a lot active [referring to her toddler present in the interview].

(Family 1, partner of ex-prisoner, 28 years).
According to family 2’s informant, the period of her partner’s imprisonment deepened her economical disadvantage, since she provided financial assistance for him in prison whilst coping with the financial burden of travelling long distances to maintain connection.

At the MAP [Melbourne Assessment Prison] that was good because I was in [the city] and I caught the train in everyday and I’d see him. But then I went in one day and they’d transferred him down here to [a prison in the country]. That was two weeks into his six months sentence. From that time on, not only having to provide money for him, but I spent every weekend coming down Friday lunchtime and spending all weekend in [the country] so I could visit him on the Saturday and the Sunday and then go back home to Melbourne, catch the late train back on my own, on Sunday night. I mean, as you could well imagine just from what I’ve said, that’s more than a pension. The only way I was able to manage was the people that were supporting me with the transitional housing and people that I was linked in with up here as well and down in Melbourne helped out with paying for at least one night of accommodation for me every fortnight or once a month or something like that. But apart from that the rest of it was on my back. So not only did I have to - and when you go in for visits you’re allowed to take in $40. That’s their only money for enjoyment while you’re in visits and things like that to get an ice cream or whatever. So I’d try and make sure I had that put aside. So virtually, yes, I spent the whole time just paying for accommodation, him being in prison. I lived on the generosity of - charitable agencies would give me a Coles’ [supermarket chain] card and things like that for food, but in a lot of respects I’d miss out, you know what I mean?

(Family 2, partner of ex-prisoner 44 years)

She also revealed that throughout his prison term there was an intentional omission of information on her part, mainly for legal reasons and to protect her partner’s feelings.

So, yes, we did stay in contact, but it’s not like you can - the things that I had occurring around me with my oldest son and things - it’s not like you can talk over a prison telephone about the things that I had - I was having to deal with anyway. There are a lot that I couldn’t discuss with him over the phone and things like that. Plus, the other thing is that I was going to say a lot of things I purposely don’t say to him because I don’t want him stressing on the inside because he can’t do anything about it and it’s the one thing that’s the most frustrating for them [prisoners]. I mean, three-quarters of the way through his incarceration I had to go, when I walked into the prison he had to see me - my whole head was swollen and I couldn’t see and I had broken eye sockets and jaw and I’d been belted up all down the side of me and everything. You can imagine when he saw me walk into the prison looking like that. Do you know what I
mean? He got very distressed and very upset at being the fact that what could he - he was locked up. Do you know what I mean? There was nothing he could do about it, the situation that was going on.

(Family 2, partner of ex-prisoner 44 years)

The experience of the interviewee from family 3, the partner of a prisoner with recurrent imprisonment terms, was that her partner's imprisonment had the effect of igniting the couple's relationship. She also acknowledged that the limited ability to communicate with him maintained a degree of tranquillity within the dyad, and she acknowledged the there was also suppression of information on her part. In her circumstance, it seems that the recurrent imprisonment terms leading to a constant period of absence from home had the effect of maintaining the couple’s connection, given that the limited communication imposed by the prison environment would decrease the possibility of couple’s disagreement.

We get along like a house on fire when he's inside. On the outside we get along very well, but I suppose because you don't see each other as much when he's on the inside, it's very exciting to go to jail on visits and it's very exciting to see him and stuff. So I suppose it's like you're younger again. But when you're at home, I mean I've been with the man 15 years, so it's not like we were teenagers again. Fifteen years of being partners and we both don't work due to both having criminal records. We couldn't get a job if we wanted to. So we're together 24/7. We are together 24/7 and we've never been separated in 15 years, never ever split up, except for jail time. But, no apart from that, we get along fine but when he's on the inside I suppose we get along a lot better. You don't want to argue when he's on the inside. He doesn't want to argue with me over the phone, because they have 12 minute phone calls and they don't want to argue for that 12 minutes and visits are too precious to argue and I suppose because he doesn't know a lot - not that he doesn't know a lot what's going on around the household - but whenever it comes to the children or that - we can't argue because he's not there to experience what's actually going on with the children. So no, we get along much better when he's inside than out because you can have those arguments outside as any couple do, more than what you do when he's inside.

(Family 3, partner of prisoner, 31 years)

For the partner in family 5, the wife of a first timer ex-prisoner, the major experiences throughout her partner’s sentence was persistent financial strain whilst balancing family
demands associated with the overwhelming feeling of unfamiliarity with the criminal justice system. According to her, one of her major concerns was to maintain her husband’s connection to the family.

It was hard too because not having any [experience], I’ve never dealt with the criminal system before. I had absolutely no idea what was happening, where he was, how I could contact him, what the systems were or anything like that. I found that pretty hard just not being able to get on the phone and ring him you know, to help me answer something or contact him in any way. I found that pretty hard to deal with. The fact that they don’t tell you when they’re moving them either. So the chaplain up there was sending me a fuel card specifically for me to travel over there [prison], which was a good help. [The organisation] helped me a couple of times with that, with school camps and stuff, big amounts. My local Lions Club at Christmas time would give us a food hamper. So we tried to get over like every school holidays so it wasn’t too much disruption for the school, the kids. I took the kids with me every time. The main reason I did was because that day that [my husband] went to court, that was the first thing I asked the women that was helping me. I said, should I take the kids to visit and she goes, yes definitely. So I took the kids down that day to see him so that the kids knew that he was okay, because that’s what she sort of said for me to do. So that’s sort of what I did. I looked forward to the visits too just to sort of touch base with him and let him know what’s going on. I tried to tell him a lot of what we’d been doing and that sort of thing to make him feel like he was involved in a way, sort of thing.

(Family 5, partner of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

Equally, her husband agreed that family visits were important for him to feel connected to his children and belonging to his family. Moreover, in his view, the prisoners with frequent incarcerations had a reduced degree of connection to their children in comparison to the first timers.

I looked forward to seeing them immensely, because you have to have something to look forward to. Unless you’re an experienced crim being in and out, in and out, in and out. So my being the first time, especially, it just really means it’s something to look forward to and it was good to have the visits and see them all. See how much they had grown and everything like that.

(Family 5, ex-prisoner 48 years)
The interviewee from family 9, the wife of an ex-prisoner, corroborated that she experienced financial strain during his imprisonment due to the absence of his income in the household, and being required to travel long distances to visit her husband in order to preserve the couple’s connection. She experienced anger at the impossibility of demonstrating affection to her partner in prison, and the high financial cost of prison visits.

You get to the correctional centre, you're allowed to give him a kiss and a cuddle when you see him and a kiss and a cuddle goodbye, otherwise you're not allowed to touch him. I reckon it's bloody stupid, you don't see them for so long. It was very expensive to go to see him, so I used to only go every three or four months because I just couldn't afford it. I'm paying the mortgage off on our house, paying our car off. I just couldn't afford it.

(Family 9, wife of ex-prisoner, 63 years)

The account of family 11, an ex-wife of an ex-prisoner living with her daughter and grandchild, also focused on the frustration at being unable to show affection to the prisoner after the costly financial and emotional investment in prison visits. In her experience, the feeling of being mistreated by custodial staff, the lack of information about prison code of conduct, and the divergent procedure in different prisons added to the burden of her attempt to maintain family connection during prison visits. She also disclosed in her lengthy narrative of prison visits that she purposely omitted information with the intention of protecting the prisoner's feelings, given his inability to make decisions.

To get to [a maximum security prison] and back took me 16 hours of my day, to spend an hour with him. Because I'd have to travel all the way out there, then get on the bus, then there'd be a queue of people waiting. You'd have to grab a number, when your number came up then you'd be allowed in for the hour. But we were allowed to be close, but I still couldn't physically touch him.

I felt trapped. I felt like the prisoner and I felt like a criminal when I went in to visit. The way they searched you, scanned your eyes for drugs. You can't have, you can't get close. You can't kiss, you can't show your affection. If you cuddle for more than 30 seconds they think you're up to something, even though they get strip checked after the visit and we've get checked as well to make sure.
When you're in, when they're in prison, if something dramatic happens to your family, their family, getting a message through to them is nearly impossible. My daughter fell pregnant, our daughter. I had to tell him this while he was locked up, I didn't know how he would take it. So she had a boyfriend, but she went to a fireworks night and she was raped. She fell pregnant. I couldn't tell him that because I knew that it would upset him more. So I just told him that my daughter was, our daughter was going to have a baby and I had to lie and say it was the boyfriend's, who was living with us at the time. He was devastated because she was so young. Then I said, look, it's okay. I'm setting up a nursery at home, we will cope. Financially it was such a struggle. I was trying to support him, paying $120 a month for his canteen, and then paying the mortgage as well and all the other bills.

I think that they need to let visitors know what to expect, not be told what not to do, but to tell us what to expect when visiting at jail. Because each jail is different, so there is no consistency. So what you do at one place is different from another and that makes it hard. Everywhere the rules are different and I think there needs to be more support [to family members].

(Family 11, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

The interviewee from family 11 also expressed her feelings of being punished by his misconduct, which may suggest that in her view prison may not be characterised as a rehabilitative environment.

We [the family members] are the ones, I believe, that do the sentence, not the prisoner. Because they [the prisoners] can move around, they've got no bills, they've got no rent. They get their meals, they've got no washing up to do, nothing. You know, they've only got little jobs - basically keep your room clean and things like that.

(Family 11, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

In family 12, the wife and mother of ex-prisoners, endorsed family 11's experience of feeling mistreated by custodial staff during prison visits and the divergence amongst prison procedures. She also indicated that families experience a great deal of discomfort in order to preserve the relationship with the person in prison, and eventually become desensitised to the procedures involved in prison visits. In her experience, the discrepancy amongst prisons and lack of information about the code of behaviour in custodial settings increased the degree of worry experienced by family members.
Like at Port Phillip [maximum security prison] you've got to be a distance away. You're only allowed to give a small kiss and then you're not allowed to touch them again. At one time we got in trouble because I actually hugged him. All these guards came up - I didn't realise see, they never said you weren't allowed to hug. Well, at one stage there - you get used to that sort of thing. I've had every part of my body - I've had my hand print, I've had my finger prints, I've had my retina's or irises scanned - you name it, it's been done. I don't care - my - the only thing my husband - the first ever visit was in MAP [Melbourne Assessment Prison] and my son and I stood there and they got - paraded the prisoners behind a glass screen and then they strip-searched them in front of us all. It was horrible. I actually turned my son around and took him away. It was just horrible.

Then you've got the Custody Centre [main facility in Melbourne for people who have been arrested by the police] and they're all different - because they have such different levels in them. Whereas Fulham's just medium to low prison. I have to say, look the prison staff at Fulham made it really easy. They tried their hardest to make it really easy for us and that made a big difference. It meant - like when I go - if I go to Port Phillip or - not so much Dame Phyllis Frost [maximum security women's prison], but some of other ones, the Custody Centre and that - the staff perhaps aren't so nice and make if really officious - like we're the prisoners.

(Family 12, wife and mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

The participant from family 14 was the ex-partner of an ex-prisoner who had a lengthy prison sentence. They have rekindled their relationship whilst he was serving one third of his sentence. She was living alone and had no children. She also confirmed feeling and witnessing victimisation by correctional staff whilst visiting her ex-partner.

Oh, horrible to start with. He was in [maximum security prison] when I was first seeing him, so that's very restricted. I was living [interstate] at the time so luckily I could go and visit two days in a row. They'd let me do that because I was travelling all that way. So I think the visits back then were like two hours, he had the monkey suit thing on, we weren't allowed to touch, or - you could hold hands across the table, all that sort of stuff, really lack of - really not treated well by warders there. Family members weren't treated well I didn't think either. Most of the time there was that real - I don't know, they kind of treat you like the scum of the earth as well because that's obviously their view of the prisoners they've got in there.

(Family 14, ex-partner of ex-prisoner, 37 years)

According to the interviewee from family 15, the ex-wife of an ex-prisoner with recurrent imprisonment terms, the main concern was to sustain her children's connection to
their father, despite the potential harmful consequences of seeing their father in a custodial setting. She also reported that the purpose of continuing family connection placed her under financial pressure, and that she had witnessed the same dynamic as other families throughout the years of contact with the prison system.

It's hard. You're looking at an institution where they're locked up. I found it scary for the kids, to go in with all those big gates, the waiting, the big wide fences and all that. But then once they saw dad it seemed to just melt away, they didn't care. But I reckon it must be so hard on the kids to see their dad like that. There was that constant contact. He wanted to speak to the kids. There'd be days where - one day it would be just him and I would talk and then he would ring the next day and it'd be the kids, then I, the kids - to make him feel like he was being part of the children's lives and the kids to be able to tell him what they were doing at school, how their friends were going. We found that was the only way we could really do it.

I suppose for families, it's taking that financial strain. Even though he would work while he was incarcerated, he would still ask for money. I put a stop to it because I wasn't letting me and my children miss out for him. But a lot of families would do that and they would lose out. So then they would hit the welfare system and that puts a strain on that as well. Then they become dependent on it.

(Family 15, ex-wife of an ex-prisoner, 50 years)

While each participant had a unique situation, it appears that the overall experience of partners during the time of imprisonment was characterised by the effort of preserving the couple's/family connection whilst coping with the demands of being a female single headed household. Moreover, the transcripts suggested that for families with children in their care, there was a continuous concern in involving the children in the prisoners' lives. In general, the women interviewed had to travel long distances to visit and provide financial and emotional assistance to the prisoner, which placed them under a continuous financial and emotional burden. The discomfort with prison procedures and the conduct of correctional staff during prison visits were also felt as humiliating and depreciatory experiences. In addition, there was some indication that the discrepancies amongst different prisons procedures, and the absence of information about these procedures aggravated the feelings of
discomfort experienced by partners during prison visits. However, the data show that partners were willing to tolerate this distress in order to maintain the prisoner’s connection to the family. The data also suggest that families of prisoners with recurrent imprisonment terms were less affected by the embarrassment of prison visits and more apprehensive about the detrimental impact of several imprisonments on their children. It was also noted in some partners’ accounts that there was a concern for the prisoners’ feelings, which commonly lead to suppression of information about their own circumstances.

_The endeavour to maintain connection: The experience of the family of origin._

The parents of ex-prisoners reported having similar experiences to partners regrading the provision of financial assistance to the prisoner, travelling long distances to maintain contact, and feelings of discrimination by prison staff during prison visits.

According to the interviewee from family 4, the mother of a prisoner with several periods of incarceration since adolescence, the exercise of diplomacy whilst visiting her son in prison was paramount. Even though she felt judged by custodial staff during visits, and angry for being placed in an uncomfortable situation of going through prison procedures, she felt compelled to demonstrate courtesy in order to shelter her son in prison. Her account also disclosed a sense of feeling responsible for his misconduct and imprisonment, and a sense of injustice due to her circumstances of raising him as a single mother.

Most of them [referring to prison staff], because they don’t – [my son]’s like me, he won’t tolerate, even though he’s a bugger, rudeness. I will treat people how I like to be treated. Because I’m [his] mother and I have medical letters last time to prove that I cannot go through these doors [turnstile door] because of the restrictions and TAC [Transport Accident Commission]. They [the prison staff] said — no, no, you’ve got to go through there”. I got spoken to like a piece of… Am I allowed to swear? Piece of crap.

I’m nobody, you see. I was just, I don’t care. Okay. You’ve got to grin and bear it. You have to. Because if you complain around, they’re going to go and attack
your kids. That’s the problem. Not that I’m a dabber-dabber, as they say. But you know, it’s not us [referring to parents], our fault. I know things start at home sometimes but I had a terrible life too, so it was [my son] and I on our own.

(Family 4, mother of prisoner, 52 years)

Although she has become used to the prison procedures across time, this interviewee disclosed that she decreased prison visits due to family circumstances and the daunting prison visits experience. It was apparent that in her case the provision of financial assistance to her son was a way of maintaining connectedness.

It's just too far. I used to cry when I used to leave him but now I think I’ve desensitised myself and shut down the emotions. I miss him terribly, because he is a good man, he’s just made a whole lot of mistakes in his life. I send him money when I can so he can ring me. I send him $100 a month. He’s got a nice girlfriend. She helps me with the little odd bit that he might need.

(Family 4, mother of prisoner, 52 years)

For the interviewee in Family 6, a self-employed father of an ex-prisoner with recurrent imprisonment terms since adolescence, the effort was to organise time to travel long distances to visit his son. As for family 4, the provision of financial assistance to his son in prison seemed to be an approach of sustaining family relationships in the absence of prison visits.

Well I like to get there at least once a week, once a fortnight to see him. I think I average - I got there, I think - he was there for three months. I think I visited him about four or five times, because trying to get out there and see him it's so hard because there are so many hours that you can do. Running my business too and trying to juggle everything, it's difficult. I think it was once every three weeks I went out to see him. He wanted money and different things like that. I gave him money. He said that he would come and see me [when was released], but never did.

(Family 6, father of ex-prisoner, 44 years)
The account of Family 7, a mother of an ex-prisoner with repetitive incarcerations and the mother in law of Family 3, included similar experiences to family 4, with the decrease of prison visits due to the demoralising experience of prison procedure. For her, the focus was on the attempt to lessen the detrimental effects of her son’s frequent imprisonment terms on his siblings and his children, rather than maintaining a connection with him. It was evident in her narrative that her decision to withdraw prison visits was related to the fact that she felt that his partner had taken the role of providing emotional and financial assistance to her son in prison during his last imprisonment term. In addition, the experience of prison visits had a negative effect on her emotional state, increasing feelings of sadness and hopelessness.

This time I never went in and saw him as often as I did. The first couple of times I saw him every week. But this time I didn’t so much because it’s just not a pleasant thing to have to do. I’ve just got to try and step back a little bit out of the picture [withdrawing contact with her son and his partner], and for myself as much as him, because it does knock me around a bit. I mean, I worry like every mother does, I suppose. But I put more into my younger children and my grandchildren. You know, I’m very close to the grandkids so I tend to try to put more time into spending time with them [her son and his partner] to give them a break. She’d taken on the role of being there for him [referring to his partner] so I just went as a mum this time, sort of once every three or four weeks. You know, like I walked down the street and they know me by name. It can be quite embarrassing, for want of a better word. Well, you go in there fearful all the time because you’re pulled up and they put dogs through your car and that’s happened to me a couple of times. They’re always polite. It’s just unpleasant I suppose, because you just don’t want to be there. You don’t want that to be the place you’re going to visit. I mean, I’m 50 years old and never been in trouble with the police. I understand they have to do their job but yeah, I don’t know. I think there is no consideration for the fact that you don’t want to be there either, that’s probably the best way to put.

(Family 7, mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

In Family 8, the brother of ex-prisoners who also had prison experience corroborated with the notion that the exercise of diplomacy during prison visits was a skill that had to be developed by family members in order to protect the person inside. He added that this ability
had to be extended to the other inmates as well as prison staff. His account also suggests an increased sense of apprehension during the time of prison visits.

You can't be sort of personal - like you can't be - you've got to be careful because they're always self-conscious to the other inmates. You've got to cool, like you can't do anything uncool or anything like that. Yeah. You've got to be careful not to look at other prisoners because some might think that you're staring at them and you could end up getting your brother - his head kicked in when he goes back inside after the visit. So you've got to be a bit diplomatic I guess. Most inmates, they'll train their family when they come. I'll be self-conscious of all - when you sit down all your family members, you're watching them even when they go and get a drink, there's a drink machine. You're watching that no other inmates give them a hard time or say anything out of line. But you're also making sure that your family isn't saying or doing anything that could get them in trouble and hence in return cause trouble for you back in the yard, back inside.

(Family 8, brother of ex-prisoner, 39 years)

In Family 10, the mother of a prisoner with persistent imprisonment terms who was waiting to be released in few weeks, also agreed that she has reduced prison visits over time due to feeling victimised by prison staff during visits. For this participant, the provision of financial assistance was a method of sustaining connection with her son whilst evading the unpleasant condition of prison visits.

Yes, and I do send him money so he can make phone calls. And I won't drive to Melbourne. I'll drive to Melbourne, but not to the prison, no. They give me a hard time [prison staff]. They do.

(Family 10, mother of prisoner, 65 years)

She also revealed that although she has maintained contact with her grandchildren and her son's ex-partner during his prison sentence, she has deliberately suppressed information about them with the aim of preventing him from becoming engaged in misconduct and jeopardising his prospects of successful reintegration.

But I think the main thing he wants, and I can't arrange it for him, no matter how hard I tried, is for him to see his three youngest children. He's been in now for
nearly five years. So they were real little. But [now] they don't want nothing to do with him because they've seen too much of the violence, too much of dad being drunk and because they live [interstate]. She [her son's ex-partner] disappeared for a while, but that's because I told her to. But she's always kept contact, like phone wise, she'd ring me, because she knows I don't [disclose her location to my son]. I've been at my house now for 35 years. She knows where home is. She thinks it's important that the kids have contact with the rest of their [family]. We're [the grandchildren and her] in constant contact on the computer. They send me messages on the phone and I usually fly down at least once a year. Well, he knows that I have contact with them. I said to him I can't give you - I won't give him the address, and I don't think he's appreciative of that. But I don't want him getting - I can see it just happening. If I say to him where she lives and he comes out, he'd break all the rules to get up there. That's [my son], and that's not going to work, is it. So I won't.

(Family 10, mother of prisoner, 65 years)

In Family 13, the mother of an ex-prisoner (who had two short imprisonment terms) equally felt that prison visits were a financially and emotionally costly exercise and a demeaning experience, which was aggravated by her inexperience with prison procedures.

Can't remember now, but the first couple of visits were actually non-contact visits which was behind glass. That was really hard because he hadn't told us, they'd sort of taken him and we could see him, but it was seeing him from here to the wall away. All we wanted to do was hug him. Then when we got to the - when he got to [maximum security prison] and the MAP [Melbourne Assessment Prison] he was actually - it was non-contact visits, so he was behind glass. That was really, really difficult.
I remember once we travelled down to [maximum security prison] and my son's younger brother, who would have been about six at the time, actually walked ahead of me, and the prison lady that was doing the searching terminated the visit because apparently I - and I didn't know children had to walk behind the family, not go through the radar thing first. That was really upsetting because I'd just travelled three hours to see him, and then we were told we weren't allowed to go in.

(Family 13, mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

It was such a long way to visit and yeah. One of his sisters is intellectually disabled, and they brought the sniffer dogs around for drugs and things as we went in. She actually didn't understand and went to pat the dog and we got into big trouble about that as well. When I tried to explain it really - I believe I really felt like I was a criminal myself the way we were treated.

(Family 13, mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)
Her story also suggests a degree of commitment to providing emotional and financial support to her son in prison. Her husband's disapproval of the provision such assistance placed her under emotional strain and a sense of isolation.

Of course when he comes out they haven’t got anything so they can't pay you back. So, yeah, it's hard that way. So there'd be financial. In my case probably emotional because I'm the one that'll be dealing and I'll be the one that when I visit him with him being depressed - having to watch him go through that.

Because I take his [her son] side so now I just secretly visit him and talk to him. Not that he's barred from the house or anything, he comes but it's difficult because I know my husband blames him. So he [her husband] doesn't really talk to him.

(Family 13, mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

This loyalty dilemma amongst the couple, where the parent of an ex-prisoner feels divided between the usual inclinations to assist an offspring whilst going against their partner’s wishes appeared in two other participants.

For the father of an ex-prisoner with recurrent incarcerations since adolescence in family 6, the provision of any support to his son that goes beyond financial assistance meant to him jeopardising the stability of his second marriage and his other children.

I found that my 16 year old, 15 year old at the time and my 13/14 year old. Two boys. They spiralled down for months to get them back, just because of the interaction with their brother [referring to the ex-prisoner]. I'm not perfect myself. I've made a lot of mistakes, I still do, but I still try and be a good dad. I still try and be a good dad to all of them. When you're married and the children that you have are not the blood children of your wife's, and they're a bit different, a bit out there, and there's trouble - obviously, she doesn't want that. Nobody wants that.

(Family 6, father of ex-prisoner, 44 years)

Similar, in family 10, the mother of a prisoner with recurrent imprisonment terms, disclosed that the provision of housing assistance to her son at the time of prison resettlement would go against her partner's wishes.
This time when he comes home he can't stay at my place because my present husband and [my son] just do not get on. They did when he was a child, but once [my son] started kicking the braces. [My husband] is ex navy, finished up being Governor at the prison, so he's very straight laced, by the book, you can't do this. There's no grey, there's only and white as far as he's concerned. He can come and visit, but he can't live there.

(Family 10, mother of prisoner, 65 years)

To summarize, the parents of ex-prisoners had a generally similar experience as partners in regards to the conditions of prison visits. According to the majority of the participants, prison visits were a deprecating experience that had high financial and emotional costs. Some parents felt judged by custodial staff because their children were in prison. Moreover, the accounts suggest that they felt obligated to accept mistreatment and exercise diplomacy within the prison environment in order to protect the loved one in confinement. Although some participants reported becoming desensitised to prison procedure overtime, it was apparent that these unpleasant conditions ignited feelings of frustration and sadness, which may eventually lead to the reduction of prison visits. The narratives also implied that the provision of financial assistance for the person in prison was a way to maintain some form of relationship with the person in prison, whilst avoiding the negative feeling of undertaking prison procedures. For some parents, the provision of assistance to a child who was engaged with prison system represented a loyalty dilemma that appeared to be a source of further distress.

The transcripts of parents also revealed constant apprehension about the prisoners' circumstances. In addition, particularly for parents of prisoners with repeated custodial sentences who had children, the focus appeared to be on maintaining connection with the grandchildren as a bridge between the prisoners and their children.
The family members’ experience upon prison release and resettlement into the community.

The feelings of anticipation and the unexpected challenges: The experience of the nuclear family.

The time of prison exit and prisoners’ resettlement into the community was felt with a mixture of great excitement for family reconnection and apprehension for ex-prisoners’ adaptive and rehabilitative prospects. The partners evidenced in their reports a range of unforeseen difficulties during this phase that directly negatively affected the couple’s relationship and consequently altered the family dynamic.

The ex-prisoner interviewed in the first family was very vocal about the time of prison exit and resettlement. According to him, he felt an intense enthusiasm to reconnect with his partner and children, and regain decision-making in all aspects of his life. It was apparent in his account that the excitement for his release overcame any preparation for his return.

Just sitting back with my girl, being out for the baby to be born. Basically just to get our shit sorted out [referring to the couple’s relationship]. That’s the most exciting part, getting us back as a family again instead of being told when you can and can’t go to bed. Not having to explain where you have to go, being strip-searched every time you’re in an area you’re not supposed to be in, that sort of thing. You just can’t wait to get out! That’s all we ever really said to each other anyway. She’d say: “I can’t wait for you to get home” and I’d say “I can’t wait to get out. Be home with the kids and that”.

(Family 1, ex-prisoner, 31 years)

The participant also acknowledged that his partner actively participates in his obligations with corrective services, which consequently affected her time devoted to their children. In his perception, partners should learn about the ex-prisoners’ requirements and the implications for the ex-prisoner in case of non-compliance in order to have a better understanding of ex-prisoners’ circumstances, and to support this process more effectively.
Yeah, it's still cutting in on her time. Like before she had to sit in the car for an hour when I went to my supervision appointment, because she's up this way [referring where she lives].

(Family 1, ex-prisoner, 31 years)

I reckon that she'd be sent a package saying I get assigned community work. My partner knows about it but she should still get a thing saying look, these hours are. They should be explained the rules just the same as us and they should be made aware on how serious the rules are and then they'll probably find that people won't breach as much because the girls are the ones that say oh no, you'll breach if you don't do this. Whereas if they're not aware of the rules and that, they go: _oh, don't worry about community work!_ And before you know it you're breaching. Maybe they should be made aware of maybe the rules and stuff. More say, explain the seriousness of it. Of how bad it is if you don't turn up and if you miss appointments. I don't think they are aware of how serious the appointments are. It's not just a case of you can ring up and reschedule, you haven't got that - or you have got that right but you haven't.

(Family 1, ex-prisoner, 31 years)

This ex-prisoner’s partner reported that she also shared the same response of excitement and expectations regrading his release from prison. However, from her perspective, the importance of assisting him to meet his parole condition seemed to be related to the purpose of re-establishing family connection.

Same thing really! Make things better just so you can be a family.

(Family 1, partner of ex-prisoner, 28 years)

The narrative of the first couple interviewed may indicate that the lack of information from corrective services may further the adaptive problems faced by the dyad during the process of prisoner resettlement. His narrative evidenced his desire for her support in order to accomplish his legal obligations, and reciprocally, she would assist him in his efforts with the ultimate purpose of sustaining family connections. However, her lack of understanding of his legal circumstances could have the potential to increase the likelihood of the couple’s conflict
during the process of reintegration, given that his efforts are on accomplishing his legal conditions, and her focus is on family maintain family connection.

In family 2, the partner and mother of an ex-prisoner, reported that the time of her partner’s resettlement was charged with disappointment, mainly due to the unrealistic expectations that she placed on her partner’s resettlement.

I don’t know if you spend your time with all of what you’d hope is going to happen and everything like that with happy ideas and that, because we both had lots of plans for doing some travel and getting away and going away and things like that and stuff, but none of it’s actually happened, you know what I mean? Since his release it’s just been one quagmire and problem after the next, sort of thing, do you know what I mean? No matter what we’d - no matter what - because I’ve got a book of both our letters that I keep from the time of all the letters we sent to each other. I mean, if only all those happy nice things. In a perfect world all those things would happen, wouldn’t they? Like I said, we were both planning on travelling and going away, but none of it happened and none of it and because of financial things and everything like that now where constraints - none of that will happen not for probably a long time.

(Family 2, partner and mother of ex-prisoner, 44 years)

This participant recognised that despite her efforts to keep connected to her partner during his prison sentences through prison visits, letters and phone calls, the prison experience produced negative effects on the couple’s relationship. It was apparent for her that aspects of couple’s communication and trust have been impaired during the process of imprisonment. Her account indicated that the couple exhibited signs of disconnection after he returned to the household and she struggled to repair their connection. It is evident to her that he recognises that his imprisonment has had a detrimental affect on her physical and mental health. As a result, he does not communicate his experience in an attempt to protect her feelings. This strategy, which was essentially used by her during his incarceration, appears to have the undesired effect of exacerbating the couple’s disconnection, and consequently dissatisfaction with the relationship at the time of re-entry.
I think it’s taken away my trust of people and things like that to the point that I have - I’m having problems even as much as - prior I’d always –[my partner] always - I’d always known that I could trust in him and things like that, but no matter what I have a fear. I tend to get panicky and have fear. I’ll get withdrawn and put up a brick wall even to him when really he is. He loves me to death and he’d do anything for me and that, but just in my own head things aren’t right any more.

He feels some guilt from that [referring to being in prison] because it has seriously affected me mentally and physically, which in turn reflects on our relationship together and enjoyment of our relationship together and things. Our communication - I think a lot of the time he’s too scared to speak to me now for - He doesn’t want me upset for instance and things like that. Do you know what I mean? That’s what I keep saying to him. I just live in a world of silence and he just disappears into his computer world. So yes, I do feel really sad and alone and everything. (...) Yes, communication's a big thing. Since I don't know whether he's changed inside or me, what's happened to me outside since.

(Family 2, partner and mother of ex-prisoner, 44 years)

In Family 3, the partner of a prisoner with recurrent incarceration confirmed that she had experienced a great sense of excitement upon her partner’s previous releases and confidence in his anticipated resettlement. It was implicit in her lengthy narrative that the couple did not communicate mutual expectations in the past and that she had difficulty in relinquishing control over the household. She observed his difficulties in adapting to the routine that she has successfully engendered during his absence, which appeared to have sparked feelings of guilt in her approach in earlier resettlements. Her feelings of guilt may also indicate that she feels responsible for his adjustment.

When he got released, I thought it was going to be easy but, because it was nine months, it was the longest time he had been away. I did find it hard. I was so excited for him to come home and it was exciting for the children. I think they found it a lot easier. I found it hard due to - I had things in a lot of routine. It felt like he had been away for a long time, it really did. Nine months didn't fly for me. It felt like he had been away for a long time. In that time I was able to get the house in routine, buy myself a car, start everything with the children and when he got home he tried too hard because he saw what routine I had in the house. When he was there [at home] it was a bit of a lazy routine. The dishes could sit there and pile up and then they’d get done that night. Where now the kids eat, they rinse
their dish and they put it on the sink, you know what I mean? So when he got released last time it was very hard because I got angry. Because I had such a routine in the house that he was trying to do this routine I had but I wasn't finding it good. I think that made me very frustrated because I was trying to fit him in to this lifestyle that I thought I'd created while he was away. And I found it very difficult for him to let him into it. Not let him into it, but to get him used to it. So it was - I found it really difficult when he came home. I'm hoping this time's going to be a bit different. I'm planning it now.

(Family 3, partner of prisoner, 31 years)

It's like he doesn't adapt to it. It's like he does but he tries so hard and I feel like - it's so hard to explain, it really is. I'm planning it now so that that way I don't want him to come home and feel like he's got to try. I know he's got to pick his game up and I know. Things have got to change and everything like that and he does seem like he has changed being in there. But I don't want him to think that I've [pause]. He thinks that every single time he goes in prison I change the lifestyle. I get it running good, that's the thing and he's not used to that. So when he's out he finds it difficult so then.

(Family 3, partner of prisoner, 31 years)

Family 3’s account also suggests that the couple struggled to clearly communicate roles and expectations during the aforementioned process of adaptation into the household.

Yeah it was, he got very frustrated because he didn't know how to adapt in our life anymore. He felt it was so different where it wasn’t, it wasn't different. There was just more routine in it. So I suppose he did find it very hard to adapt. But once we talked about it, it was fine, it was. The routine was fine and then it got lazy and so then that's when he ended back up in prison.

(Family 3, partner of prisoner, 31 years)

The ex-prisoner of the fifth family interviewed agreed that his main expectation was to reconnect with his household and consequently to his family.

I was mainly looking forward to the opportunity to do things that I felt really comfortable with, that I enjoyed. One would have been tinkering in the shed when I get home, fixing little things. The other one, probably the biggest one though was going out in the bush and getting wood because I enjoy the bush. I missed driving a car. One other thing was just being with [my wife] also. We'd
spent 20 plus years sleeping with each other every night sort of thing and for that to be gone I was really looking forward to just like it.

(Family 5, ex-prisoner, 48 years)

For his wife, the prospects of his return to the household initially ignited feelings of apprehension regarding his adaptive ability and the abdication of her control over the household. She established that his behaviour in prison was not suitable for a couple’s satisfactory relationship, which encouraged the couple to open communication regarding their experiences inside and outside prison walls, the expression of feelings and mutual expectations. She acknowledged that she had a limited perception of his experiences in prison and there was some unspoken resentment for the strains that she had encountered during his absence from home. In her experience, once the couple was able to fully understand each other’s feelings and perceptions they were better equipped to negotiate roles upon his return.

Yeah, because in prison, in the male prison you’ve got testosterone flying around. I didn’t want him coming home with that, if you know what I mean, throwing testosterone around, because there’s no need for it at home. But my fears were, that hasn’t happened. [Him] being bossy I suppose, was more coming in and telling me what I was going to do and what I wasn’t going to do and that sort of stuff. I’m not in control all of a sudden, so I’ve got to give him some leeway as well. So yeah, it’s been a bit of a juggle but we’ve got through it. Because we’ve talked to. We’ve just had that open communication and I said that from the minute I picked him up. I said, let’s just be open and honest with each other and we were. So it’s happened.
The other bit too was, with the kids too. I think it’s that control thing again. I didn’t want him coming back in and saying, the kids have got to do this, this, this and this, when me and the kids had already set up a routine of what we normally do. But we’ve worked through it and it hasn’t been an issue.
But I think we did have one long talk on one visit there and I think after that visit I think we understood a bit more about where each other was coming from. I don’t think I really understood what he had to deal with on a day to day basis being in prison. I think after that conversation I’d open my eyes up a little bit more and I realised. Same for him. I think I let him know a few things too, from my side and I think he took a different perspective too. So I think that really helped both of us. We had a big blue at the end. I think at that stage I think I put it down to both of us being defensive. Like, he’d said a couple of things to me and my defences just automatically went up because I had to have, and I explained that to him. I said, for the last three and a half years, I’ve had to be like that to do
what I’m doing. He sort of said the same thing because he had to protect himself as well. I think after that we sort of. Yeah, we sort of understood each other a little bit more.

(Family 5, wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

The couple of Family 5 also agreed that the wife was the prisoner’s main source of support in accomplishing his parole conditions, which increased the demands placed on her during the time of resettlement. Furthermore, her account suggested that the increase in demands on her, and the couple’s expectation that corrective service would have a more comprehensive perspective of the family circumstances, produced feelings of frustration. This is explicit in the couple’s dialogue below.

Well, you go into the office [Corrections] down here and they’ve got all the warning signs up. And you know, “You bring this in”. “You do this, you face going back to jail”. Blah, blah, blah.

(Family 5, ex-prisoner, 48 years)

The frustrating thing for [me], when he didn’t have his licence back, I’d come into work for five hours so he’d come in with me. Whatever time in the morning I started and he’d have his appointment. He’d go to his appointment and the person wasn’t even there. You know, like he’d sign in with somebody else. But to me, like he had to hang around for five hours while I worked. Where’s their communication?

(Family 5, wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

Yeah, and my appointment took 30 seconds because she [the correctional officer] wasn’t there.

(Family 5, ex-prisoner, 48 years)

Yeah, he just wants to do the right thing. But as he said, a little bit of common sense and hey, let’s work together to make this work. You know.

(Family 5, wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

Like, I said. Look, I don’t have a car. I don’t have a licence. I live in a town where there’s no public transport and you know. You’re not taking into account any of my circumstances.

(Family 5, ex-prisoner, 48 years)
In Family 11, the ex-wife of an ex-prisoner with two imprisonment terms, disclosed that she also experienced great excitement with her partner's release, which overpowered any communication of mutual expectations or planning for his release. Her account implied that she expected a change in his behaviour, appreciation for her support during his prison sentence, and family reconcilement post-release.

Basically we hadn't spoken about anything [referring to his prison release]. He was just excited in his letters that he was coming home. They said that he came home earlier because he had good behaviour. He'd done all the courses in there. The first time he went to the Parole Board he got it and he was really excited. He knew that when he came out it was going to be hard and that he was going to have to make a change in lifestyle and who he associated with. Basically it was he wanted to make up those years to me and my daughter of what he had done.

(Family 11, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

However, in her experience, her husband's process of adaption to the household revealed a new set of unexpected behaviours that were perhaps related to his prison experience. Her description of his conduct may indicate that his imprisonment had a detrimental effect on his mental health, which in turn negatively impacted the couple's relationship.

Because when he came home he'd changed. He was like a different person. Well everything had to be spotless. He'd sleep with weapons next to the bed, like he was in fear. Then - sorry - that in turn scared me, thinking that he was going to use them on me. Because they were great big knives or he made this baton with these sharp pointed edges and he'd sleep with those things next to his bed. I thought, if he's capable of stabbing people in...I was afraid of my own life. But he swore that they were only for our protection because he was not able to protect me anymore. But I didn't feel safe. He said: "Oh I'll show a few people who have put me down what I can do". Little did I know that I was going to be one of them. But he closed off. It was like he was shut inside his body and couldn't show love. He'd get angry, I bought him a punching bag and I hung it up in the garage for when he got frustrated. Nobody suggested these sort of things but I thought if he needs to get something out, take it out on the punching bag and that way, you know? Because I don't know what it's like in jail.

(Family 11, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)
This interviewee from Family 11 also felt that despite being her partner's main source of support during parole completion, she experienced a lack of information and involvement with corrective services. Similarly to the spouses in family 3 and 5, she experienced a strong sense of responsibility for the meetings of his legal requirements.

When he returned home? There was the stress of him reoffending, there was the stress of getting him to the parole dates on time and everything he had to do, there was those pressures. I had to fit in my time to do those things for him. I did everything so that he would meet his conditions and complete his parole. It was hard, it was very, very hard but it was something that had to be done. Luckily, because he was home there was no longer the financial burden of finding the money for him while he was in jail. There was now that extra income that helped. But still there was no real help for me to know how to help him in completing the parole.

I spoke to them [Correctional officers] a couple of times, but it was just they'd tell me that they'd spoken to him about this matter and you must make sure that he gets to the doctors and gets this looked at and you must do this. It was like somebody telling me what I have to do, like I was the one that was in trouble and I had to babysit my husband sort of thing. So, yes, that's the way it felt. I felt under pressure that if he failed it would be my fault. My fault because I was the one that had the licence, he didn't.

(Family 11, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 41 years)

In Family 12, the spouse and mother of ex-prisoners, agreed that her husband's prison experience has negatively affected his mental health and consequently lead to the deterioration of the couple's relationship. It was evident in her narrative that this circumstance may have stimulated the couple's conflict, which had the potential to ignite intimate partner violence.

We got along heaps better before he went into prison and during prison than what we do now. Because when he got out of prison he was a totally different man. Oh, guaranteed and for the worse. For a while he wouldn't, and he still probably doesn't, he has to sit with his back to a wall. He can't sit with his back to a door or where. Like, if you're in a restaurant he has to be, have something behind him rather than have anyone coming up behind him. Suspicious of everything, including his family. Like obviously if we're doing something, it's against him. Just really difficult. But now, you know, if - even now - how can I say it -
because his attitude to life has changed incredibly. It’s a very negative one. It’s never got positive since he’s left jail. That’s been very hard on me and I’ve seen how much I’ve had to shoulder.

(Family 12, wife and mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

We’ve had to fight so hard and there’s so much acceptance, but I’ve also learnt that some of the behaviour I didn’t have to accept. When you have someone attacking you all the time - like verbally because they think you’re against them, when you’re not - that gets very hard - especially when it’s your husband. But he’s finally coming around now. You can tell him until you’re blue in the face, but you just never got it.

(Family 12, wife and mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

Similar to previous interviewees, this participant was also her partner’s major support during his parole completion. She reported that she had a satisfactory experience with a particular corrective officer mostly due to her professional role, which allowed an open communication between corrections and the family. She acknowledged that she had to be educated about her husband’s legal conditions, and the couple’s open communication with Corrections facilitated his process of resettlement. She also recognised that despite her efforts to maintain connection and communication during his prison term, she was unaware of his experiences in prison. This suggests that he possibility withheld details of events that occurred in prison in order to preserve the couple’s relationship.

We had a really good relationship with his parole officer. That was great. (...) Oh no [indicating that the parole officer did not initiated family involvement]. I was engaged with the parole officer, but that’s also my experience with - in the welfare side of things [referring to her professional role]. Plus we really wanted this to work. We really wanted him to move on and there was a lot of things that I couldn’t understand. Like, as I said, he was a changed man when he came out and the parole officer was really good in helping identify some of the things to him and his behaviour. We would talk about that sort of stuff together. The parole officer set reasonable goals which and he discussed it with both of us - always with both of us. That was [my husband] wanting that as well because I was part of his life and that was important to both of us. Because the parole officer couldn’t see him moving on if we weren’t doing it together. So I really appreciated that. There were no sort of secrets that way and everything was laid
out on the table. He was a really great parole officer. He had one, at one stage, that was just horrid. A female - couldn't give a damn about his cultural stuff. Couldn't give a damn about what he did. Just was just really, really horrible and treated me like I was a piece of shit under her feet too. It was horrible. See. The parole restrictions, they're really strict and to be honest, my husband was dead scared of going back in jail. It's only just recently I've heard some things that happened to him and he said to me: 'I cannot tell you what happened to me. I never want to tell you what happened to me because I don't deserve to know'. He did things like a prisoner. It's just the way he thought, but when we got into difficulty, because we'd be so scared about him being, he was so petrified about being put back. Like he would be ringing his parole officer so much to the point that his parole officer said: 'Look you don't really have to ring that much'. It was fear that he would be doing something wrong and he didn't want to be seen to be doing something wrong because he never wanted to be sent back as much - as long as he lived. It certainly produced a lot of tense stuff between my husband and myself and that in turn produced intense stuff for my kids.

(Family 12, wife and mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

It was also evident in family 12’s account that the period of resettlement was emotionally demanding for the ex-prisoner, and this emotional state affected the couple's relationship, and consequently their children.

In Family 14, for the ex-partner of an ex-prisoner, his prison release represented the collapse of their relationship. She accepted that she had placed unrealistic expectations on the prospects on their relationship outside prison walls. She also recognised that she was naïve regarding the dimensions of his prison experience and her awareness was only possible when she observed his struggle to adjust to the community after a long period of imprisonment.

We did [referring to communicating before his release], but not what needed to be talked about. I think he had a fairy-tale idea in his mind he would come out, because I bought my house down here when he was in [prison] and I think we had the fairy-tale idea that I'd move down here. We'd live here in [the country] for a little while, do my house up a bit, sell it, move up north where all my family are. We had all these sort of plans but we didn't have the reality. I think I thought I had it all together about the things that he would notice when he got out, but I had no, no idea whatsoever.

I suppose not really knowing how he was seeing things. You can only imagine. I would have no idea what it would be like to be in prison for any length of time and come out back into society. So he was a bit like a deer stunned by headlights for quite some time. He was just kind of … everything was a bit of a shock I
guess. Just that going to the supermarket, going to get a coffee, all the stuff we take for granted all the time. I think it was a nervous thing for him.

(Family 14, ex-partner of ex-prisoner, 37 years)

Family 14's interviewee's narrative also demonstrated her feelings of guilt because despite maintaining years of a relationship inside the prison walls, she only realised the magnitude of her partner's structural issues once he returned to the community, and she felt that she used an inappropriate approach to his circumstances.

Well, I think I always thought initially, before, in the years leading up to his coming out, that I would be able to support him. I could do all this stuff, the rescuing stuff. I've could. He'd have me, he'd have a house to come to, he'd have all this stuff, he'd be okay. When he did get out, I saw my role as the opposite. Now I need to push him into doing this stuff for himself. I need to. He needs to learn it. I probably should have really been somewhere in the middle of those two extremes, because I just didn't support him. I just sort of...Grow up now! Hurry up!
I remember one day doing a budget with him - like my dad used to do to me when I was a teenager and I used to hate it - but I sat down and he was always - he had direct debits coming out the bank left, right and centre. He didn't even know what day they were coming out and he was constantly overdrawn and all that sort of stuff. I'm like okay, let's head up. I was saying; how much is your rent? How much is this? How much do you spend on cigarettes? We added it all up and we didn't even count electricity bills or anything. We just did the everyday stuff he had to pay every wage and he was [unclear] out - what was going out, there was a lot less coming in. He was just like, ah [expression of amazement].

(Family 14, ex-partner of ex-prisoner, 37 years)

In Family 15, the ex-wife of an ex-prisoner with recurrent imprisonment terms had experienced numerous resettlements. These had fostered her disbelief in his rehabilitative prospects, which impacted on their communication, increased the couple's disconnection and ultimately decreased her support during his resettlement. This interviewee also identified that her partner's prison experience had an adverse consequence for his behaviour, which appeared to have increased his difficulties in adjusting to family life. Furthermore, it was apparent in her detached evaluation of the couple's situation that the years of recurrent
incarcerations had depleted the family resources, and the emotional disconnection was necessary to maintain family homeostasis.

Actually, no [referring to communicating expectations]. I sort of left that up to him. I'm thinking: well, you're a grown man. You should know what you want and to go, and [do] what he needed [to do]. Actually, no. Not really, other than just _I won't ever go back_. When you hear that the third or fourth time you go: Yeah, whatever, because we know it's going to happen.

(Family 15, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

I believe over the period of time it did start to [disconnect], by the end I refused to go and see him, take the children. I just started to [settle down]. You've made your bed, you sleep in it. I'm not putting myself and the kids through it anymore. So I think I started to sort of, I suppose, build a wall, where before I was very supportive of him.

(Family 15, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

I don't think it was difficult for us, I think it was more difficult for him [to adapt to the household]. Because we hadn't changed, and that's what I really tried to reinforce, that I kept my children's lifestyle as normal as everything, it's not going to change for him or myself. I think the kids were glad dad was home. Dad was very more eager to be involved in the children's activities. Having just him in the household. I know that sounds really bad. Even though he's part of the family, we didn't have to involve him in our thinking and ways of life. So when he came home it was like now I've got to cook, make sure that there's an extra table set for him. I could actually sleep in and he could take the kids to the footy, I didn't have to do that. So sometimes I forgot he was there. I found that, just having him there. I know that sounds really odd, but yeah.

(Family 15, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

As for other interviewees, it was evident that for this interviewee that her partner's prison experience shaped his behaviour and aggravated his difficulties in adjusting to the family environment. It is also noted in her description the same pattern of the ex-prisoner's behaviour of concealing prison experiences from family members in order to preserve the family, which possibly had an adverse effect on the couple's communication.
When they are released and they come home, they are a different person, they’ve still got that institution way of them. Well, it took weeks for him to leave the home, as an example. He would have tea so early, it was unbelievable, because that was his time clock. He was used to having tea at 4:30 [pm]. He would go to bed before the kids, again because it was that learned behaviour. We didn’t adjust to that, he had to adjust to our lifestyle. But I found that a very - it was difficult, and just he was...He was very quiet, that reserved, never really talked about his time in prison until later he would share stories. I suppose that too is that maybe he wanted to protect the children and me. So we didn’t really hear much of his experiences, but we did notice that he was very different. But it didn’t take very long for him to change right back to where he was and every time he became more aggressive and angry. Like he did all that stuff in prison [referring to rehabilitative programs]. I look back now and I think: well, why didn't they follow it through when he got released?

(Family 15, ex-wife of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

In summary, it was apparent that the period of pre-release elicited an overall excitement in anticipation of family reconnection that generally overcame any preparation to face the structural and legal issues associated with prison release. The data implied that there was an implicit agreement within the dyads that the partners would continue to support the ex-prisoners during the process of resettlement with the intention of reclaiming family connection and hierarchy. However, the majority of women interviewed were unaware that the complexity of the issues associated with prison experience would produce a negative impact on the couple’s and family dynamic. Moreover, it was evident that during the period of the couple’s reconnection there was an insufficient level of communication about the couple’s individual experiences outside and inside prison walls. This may suggest that there was probably a dynamic of reciprocal omission of information amongst the dyad throughout the period of incarceration, which increased the likelihood of unrealistic expectations, and the prospect of family disagreement.

Some partners were able to identify and disclose that there was some degree of difficulty in relinquishing control of the household following the continuous effort to maintain family stability while the prisoner was incarcerated, which may indicate a lack of
trust in the ex-prisoner's rehabilitative prospects or their ability to sustain family stability. Furthermore, this lack of confidence seemed to be greater for partners of prisoners with multiple incarcerations.

Despite the overall lack of understanding of the ex-prisoner's legal conditions, partners felt somewhat responsible for the successful accomplishment of the ex-prisoners' legal requirements. As a result, the partners were essentially involved with the provision of practical and emotional assistance during the critical period of re-entry, which increased the overall demands placed on the family. Consequently, there was a general desire for corrective services to become more inclusive and to take into consideration the family's circumstances.

_Ambivalence and feeling of responsibility: The experience of the family of origin._

The time of ex-prisoners' resettlements seemed to have ignited a combination of emotional responses for the parents of ex-prisoners, which ranged between compassion and willingness to provide assistance in the process, and anguish related to their children's rehabilitative prospects.

According to family 4's interviewee, the mother of a prisoner with recurrent incarcerations who was anticipating his release, it was evident that his lengthy involvement with the prison system had changed his conduct. An outcome that might suggest that he had adaptive difficulties in the past. Her awareness of her son's prisonization (an expression for the negative psychological effects of imprisonment) appeared to provoke anxiety in relation to his rehabilitative prospects, and therefore she was eager to provide favourable conditions for his resettlement.

_Well, he's institutionalised. That's the sad part about it. He is._

(Family 4, mother of prisoner, 52 years)
For when he comes home? Well, he’s got no choice if I’m still there [referring to the house she lives], but like I said, in the meantime there’s supposed to be a housing worker getting a one bedroom thing for the moment, just for now. Obviously I plan to buy a little block of land somewhere. I just want to get [him] out of here because I’m scared when he comes back [to this city], they’re going to start again. They’ll shoot him.

(Family 4, mother of prisoner, 52 years)

In Family 6, the father of an ex-prisoner with persistent imprisonments since adolescence also experienced ongoing concern for his son’s rehabilitative prospects. He disclosed feelings of ambivalence regrading fostering a relationship with his son, since this relationship may represent a risk for the stability of his other children and his marriage.

When there's no relationship and you've had a lot of hurt and there's been a lot of shipwrecks between one another, like me and [my son]. I find it very hard to trust him and what he says because he's come up many a time to see me up here and he's been off his face. So therefore he hasn't really respected me or my boundaries for my home, because I don't want that at home [referring to drugs], around the children [his siblings]. They've seen me and [my wife] wrestle about [him]. Do you know what I mean? I don't mean physically. I mean emotionally wrestling over [my son] and stuff. I'd say just worried and just concerned whether he's going to go back again. Well, I was always worried that he's going to be okay, that he didn't wind up somewhere killed or something like that.

(Family 6, father of ex-prisoner, 48 years)

The interviewee from Family 7’s candid description of her son’s release revealed concerns not only for her son’s rehabilitative prospects but also for the ripple effect that his misconduct would have on his wife and children. Her account suggested that she might feel divided between aligning with her daughter-in-law who provides stability to her grandchildren or with her son who has been struggling with drug addiction and recurrent incarceration. She also acknowledged her disappointment and sadness related to her son’s difficulties in adapting to a prosocial lifestyle, and she attributes his adaptive problems to his early and lengthy exposure to the prison environment.
Before he got out, easier. I was looking forward to it. Now that he’s out, I would say it’s harder but I think it’s because I had greater expectations. My expectations were too high. He seemed very different this time and I thought he’d beaten the demons and he hasn’t. So, it’s making it even harder to cope with. I mean, I’d do anything for him but I also understand why his wife needs to [have her space]. Like, I don’t know that she’s going to leave him but if it comes to that, I know I have to back her because it’s the right thing to do and that is very hard when it is someone you love. It is very hard. That’s it. It’s a very difficult thing but I understand. She’s got through it [referring to her prison experience]. She’s risen above it and she’s doing well for herself and if she stays it [referring to the marriage] will only bring them down. So you know, but it’s hard because you just want to do what’s right for yours but you have to be really understanding of what’s going on. That’s it. There’s so many [concerns]. Like I feared that [his partner] might fall back in the hole. I mean. There’s always a chance of that. I’ve spoken to and met a lot of people that have had problems with drugs and some of them have been clean of it for 20 years and they still wake up sometimes and yearn for it. So you know, there’s always that fear. My grandson especially, is growing up amongst all this. Everyday life shows what you grow up with has a great deal to do with what you become. That worries me. Throwing them into the prison system, he changed his whole way of thinking changed when he was in that prison. He became, they think differently, they speak differently. It’s quite horrible as a mother to see. I call it the criminal way of thinking. I don’t know what else to call it. Because when they’re in there, they’re in there with experts. They don’t just stick them in with other young people. They stick them in with people that have been long termers in and out for a long, long time and they become friends with them and the schemes and the scams...Yeah, well they have no choice. You adapt or you’re not comfortable. I don’t know. It can’t be all the system’s fault but I would like to see younger boys and younger people get a chance rather than being thrown into prison. Put them somewhere to get the drugs out of their system and show them that there’s something worth working towards. Because nine times out of 10 they started because they feel like there’s nothing left.

(Family 7, mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

It was also apparent in family 7’s narrative that despite the depletion of emotional and financial resources the son’s recurrent incarceration has had in the family system, there is a strong commitment in promoting his wellbeing.

I’ve been doing this for 10 years and there’s no way you can say it’s got better or it’s got worse because it’s still happening regardless, you know. The way things were yesterday, yesterday if you’d asked me I would have said he’ll probably be back within a month. But then today might be different. I don’t know.
It's just been very, I don't know, it's just a letdown. But I'll live with it. We'll live with it. We get through it every other time. Always. I will never, never lose hope. He is my son. I won’t give up on him.

(Family 7, mother of ex-prisoner, 50 years)

In family 10, the mother of a prisoner with recurrent incarcerations who was waiting for his release, also shared the same apprehension regarding her son’s abilities to adapt to the community after a prolonged contact with prison system. Similar to family 4, she is prepared to provide practical and emotional support at his re-entry in order to increase the likelihood of a successful resettlement.

[My son] is going to be 45 and he's got nothing left, that's what worries me. I know he's doing all these courses at the prison, but he's done anger management before. His problem is being able to stay off the alcohol. As soon as some pressure is applied to him, I can see him going back. Yes, and he's also got a job to go to. He's going to stay there for about six weeks and then he's going with other friends I've got right up in [the country], so he's out of the way, with people that he knows who have got their own business and are quite willing to employ him so that he's got a job. Neither of them drink, which is. I've sort of researched all this. Make him feel that he's, how do I put it, that he's still welcome, that he's still [my son]. He hasn't done anything that terrible that I can't, you know, and that no matter what I will always help him anyway. As I said, he'll know that. I'll make sure he knows that.

(Family 10, mother of prisoner, 65 years)

On the balance, the data implied that parents of ex-prisoners seemed to have a more realistic perception than the ex-prisoners' partners about the structural and emotional issues that ex-prisoners have when facing re-entry. This outcome was possibly connected to the fact that the sample was comprised in its entirety of parents of ex-prisoners with several incarcerations. Some parents were able to accept that there was a mixture of sadness about the detrimental consequences of incarceration and scepticism due to previous disappointment with persistent misconduct, which led to re-incarceration. Not surprisingly, there was an overall concern for their children’s rehabilitative prospects and wellbeing, which largely
stimulated the organisation and provision of practical assistance to the ex-prisoner. In contrast to partners, there was no evidence of concern with legal requirements.

**The Result of Self-Report Questionnaire (FACES IV)**

**An outline of the Circumplex Model and FACES IV.**

The self-report questionnaire FACES IV is a family self-report assessment used in clinical work and research that evaluates the three central dimensions of the Circumplex Models of Marital and Family Systems (Olson, 2000): family cohesion, family flexibility, and the degree of communication amongst family members. This psychometric tool also measures the family’s level of satisfaction with family relationship.

The central tenet of the Circumplex Model is that families with balanced scores of family cohesion and flexibility (or adaption) endorse a healthy family functioning and consequently support the development of their individual members. According to this model, balanced types of couples and families would have superior resources and abilities to change the family system in a more effective manner at time of crisis. On the other hand, a higher unbalanced score on family cohesion and flexibility is associated with difficulties in family functioning and would hinder the development of the family’s individual members. Unbalanced types of couples and families lack resources and skills to promote a shift in the family system, and thus would have greater difficulties to adjust to crisis.

**The marital and family cohesion and flexibility.**

The cohesion dimension in the Circumplex Model is a factor that measures the aspect of emotional bonding, the alliances amongst family members, shared interests, and time spent together. The emphasis of this scale is how the family members balance their time collectively and independently. The flexibility dimension in this model estimates the manner
in which the couples or family members negotiate discipline and control in the family, the rules in the family relationship and roles performed in the family system. The pivotal aspect of this scale is how the family conveys and balances changes in family leadership, roles and rules in order to adapt to circumstances.

*The family types.*

According to this model, the family system operates in different levels and these are categorized in three groups: *balanced, midrange,* and *unbalanced* (or *extreme*). These groups would differ according to the degree of healthy patterns of interaction, in which *balanced* types would be characterised as the healthiest patterns of family interaction and *unbalanced* types as the families with the least healthy patterns of family interactions. There are four categories of *balanced* families: *flexibly connected,* *flexibly separated,* *structurally connected,* and *structurally separated.* The balanced types of couple and family are categorized by high scores in balanced subscales on cohesion and flexibility, and low scores on unbalanced scales. These types of families are considered to operate at an ideal level and this tends to be beneficial throughout the family-life cycle.

The characteristic of families in the *midrange* is that they are balanced in one dimension (e.g. cohesion or flexibility) and extreme on the other. There are six groups of midrange families, which are *chaotically connected,* *chaotically separated,* *flexibly enmeshed,* *flexibly disengaged,* *structurally enmeshed,* *structurally disengaged,* *rigidly connected* and *rigidly disengaged.* This midrange cluster is theorized to function at satisfactory levels, and would neither exhibit high levels of family strength or high levels of family difficulties.

Lastly, low scores on the balanced cohesion and flexibility subscales and high scores on unbalanced subscales would characterize the *unbalanced* family group. There are four
groups of *unbalanced* families, which are *chaotically disengaged, chaotically enmeshed, rigidly enmeshed*, and *rigidly disengaged*. The unbalanced family typically operates with *extreme* levels of cohesion or flexibility, which are considered challenging for family relationships. For example: When family cohesion is very low, the family members would present with restricted emotional connection towards one another, little shared family interest, and be inept at seeking family support and problem-solving. On the other hand, when family cohesion is extremely high, family members may present with intense emotional closeness towards one another, and therefore individuals may become reactive to each other. There is often dependency amongst family members, and a lack of individual separation and private space. The individuals in families with extreme degrees of cohesion would devote most of the time to the family, and have few interests and friends independent of the family system.

Similarly, families with extreme levels of flexibility would tend to be problematic for the adjustment of the family system. For instance, families with patterns of interaction with very low flexibility would be characterised by well-defined family roles and static family rules. Families with limited flexibility would be inclined to have a leader who imposes the majority of family directions, which would restrict the family’s ability to negotiate rules and roles in the family relationships. In the other extreme, families operating with a very high degree of flexibility would be inclined to have a lack of leadership, make impulsive family decisions and frequently change the family rules. These extreme types of family interaction would most likely hinder the family adjustment, given that the family group would experience difficulties to change roles and rules to adjust to the circumstances or would present a degree of disorganisation to make decisions and achieve common outcomes. A graphic representation of the family map of the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family System is presented in the Figure 5.1.
Figure 5.1

The Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems

Figure 5.1 From Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems by Olson, D. H. (2000), *Journal of Family Therapy*, 22, 148. Copyright © 2013 by John Wiley and Sons Inc.

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FACES IV also uses the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios to determine the level of function versus the level of dysfunction in the family system. The Circumplex total ratio score encapsulates the balanced and unbalanced scores and provides an indication of the family’s overall qualities in a single score. Scores above 1 characterise families with healthier functioning, and scores below 1 portray families with problematic functioning. Olson and Gorall (2006) established that, in general, balanced family types would reach a ratio of 2.5, midrange family type would arrive at ratio of 0.82, and lastly, unbalanced family types would attain ratio of 0.24. For further information about the family types and the respective Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios, refer to Appendix P.

*Family communication.*

The third dimension in the Circumplex Model is *family communication.* This aspect of family relationship is considered to aid the family cohesion and flexibility dimensions, and for this reason, it is not visible in the family map. The family communication focuses on the style in which family members exchange information and feel comfortable to clearly express feelings and thoughts with other members. An important principle in the Circumplex Model is that balanced types of families have a more positive communication in contrast to unbalanced family systems. According to Olson (2002), good ability in communication contributes to support a balance between family cohesion and flexibility. Conversely, a lack of communication skills would hinder family advances in the unbalanced systems and strengthen the likelihood that families continue to function at extreme levels.

*Family satisfaction.*

The Circumplex Model also takes into consideration the cultural diversity and ethnicity in families. One of its principles is that family values will dictate the quality of
patterns of interaction; in other words, when the family group values more intense patterns of interaction, and all family members are content with this style of interaction, the model considers the family as functional. For example, the patterns of interactions of South American families might operate in more extreme levels of cohesion; however, this type of family interaction is normative and expected within their culture, and consequently is considered adaptive in nature. The family satisfaction scale was established with the aim of informing the degree of agreement of each family member about the family’s relationship in regards the degree of cohesion and flexibility. Therefore, if the family operates with an extreme level of cohesion and flexibility, and there is an overall satisfaction about the family relationship, the system is regarded as functional. Conversely, if the family operates with extreme levels of cohesion and flexibility, and family members present an overall degree of dissatisfaction with the family patterns of relationship, the family system is considered dysfunctional.

**The Clinical Assessment of Individual Families using FACES IV**

FACES IV was used to explore the participants’ perceptions of the quality of family relationship. This may provide some understanding of potential family strengths and areas of growth that these families may employ during the process of incarceration and re-entry. Two aspects of FACES IV’s results were considered: firstly, a clinical assessment of individual families was explored, then, the overall results were examined and a comparison between nuclear families and families of origin was observed.

The figures below provide a picture of the position in which the families interviewed were allocated onto the family map of the Circumplex Model. These maps display the families’ cohesion and flexibility dimension scores, and present a more complete picture of the balanced and unbalanced scales. The tables under the family map detail the participants’
responses about the family’s level of communication, and their degree of satisfaction with aspects of family life. These tables also include the Cohesion, Flexibility, and Circumplex Ratios scores, and therefore indicate the family level of functioning.
Figure 5.2

FACES IV’s Profile of Family 1

Table 5.4

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 1.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</th>
<th>Ex-prisoner</th>
<th>Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *Mean scores calculated and Standard Deviation in brackets.*

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 1**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 1 was comprised of a 35-year-old male who had approximately three incarceration terms of 24 months; his partner, a 28-year-old female; and two children under the age of three years. The couple was living in separate accommodation. He was allocated in transitional housing arranged by Correctional services, whilst she was living alone with the children in an adjacent town.

**FACES IV scales.**

The cohesion and flexibility dimension scores from the ex-prisoner and his partner can be seen on the family map above. The ex-prisoner’s cohesion dimension score suggest
that he perceived the couple’s relationship to have a moderate to high degree of emotional bonding and separateness, whilst her cohesion dimension scores indicated that she saw their relationship with a high level of connectedness. His scores on flexibility dimension indicated he perceived his marital relationship to have a low to moderate degree of flexibility, whereas her scores in this dimension suggest that she views the couple’s relationship with a high degree of flexibility. Both the ex-prisoner and his partner scored low in all unbalanced scales, with the exception of the rigid subscale. His overall scores implies that he assigned his marital relationship as *flexibly connected*, in essence, a relationship that has a good degree of emotional closeness and loyalty to the relationship, as well as a balanced degree of individuation. His scores imply that in his view, the family roles would be well defined and stable and the leadership would be occasionally shared. Her results suggest she perceives the marital relationship as *flexibly enmeshed*. This style of family functioning is characterised by a high degree of attachment to the family and a lesser degree of personal separateness, or a more interdependent relationship.

He perceived the couple to have a decreased ability to communicate with each other and requiring some improvement, whereas for her, the couple had generally good communication skills. The ex-prisoner’s perceived lack of family communication is reflected on his degree of satisfaction with marital life. His low score on the family satisfaction scale indicated a slightly level of dissatisfaction with marital relationship. For her, the high score in family satisfaction suggested a great degree of contentment with the marital life. Although the couple’s overall results of Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios were above 1, which placed the couple in a healthy level of functioning, the pronounced discrepancies in scores of family communication and satisfaction implies that the system may not be operating at an optimum level.
The couple's average results in the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios (ratio of 1.67) revealed that this family was considered as rigidly balanced (refer to Appendix O for family types and Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex total ratios). According to the Circumplex Model, these family types usually have a great degree of emotional closeness, which supports a beneficial family pattern of interaction. However, the degree of rigidity may suggest some problems in changing family roles and rules in order to adjust to the circumstances in time of crisis. Although this couple is in the balanced range, they could benefit from some support in the area of flexibility and communication in order to assist with reintegrative processes.
Figure 5.3

*FACES IV’s Profile of Family 2*

*Figure 5.3. The family map of the Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility
Dimension scores of Family 2.*
Table 5.5

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 2.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td>10% Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>10% Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratios</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores (&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 2**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 2 was comprised of a 44-year-old female who was the partner of an ex-prisoner and a mother of a youth male prisoner. Her partner had two incarcerations with a prison length of six months, and he had been released a couple of months prior to the interview. Her son had several short-term incarcerations in the past, and he was in juvenile detention at the time of the interview. The interviewee and her partner were homeless and were living with friends.

**FACES IV scales.**

According to her responses in cohesion and flexibility dimensions, the partner’s relationship with her ex-prisoner’s partner had a low to moderate degree of connectedness and flexibility. She also scored high in disengaged and enmeshed, and moderate on the rigid unbalanced scales. As a result, her overall scores inferred that she perceives her marital
relationship as *rigidly separated*. These types of relationships usually present with a slight degree of emotional separateness. Family members might be inclined to do individual activities and have some degree of difficulty in seeking support within the family group. Moreover, families with low to moderate flexibility scores suggest some degree of intransigence in adjusting roles and leadership in the family. Rigid families tend to have an individual in the family group who exerts control with restricted opportunities for other family members to negotiate situations. This interviewee scored very low in both family communication and family satisfaction scales, therefore exhibiting a great degree of concern for the couple’s ability in exchanging information and a great degree of discontentment with marital life.

Given that her scores were below 1 on Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios, her family was considered to have a problematic level of family functioning. Her perceived lack of communication in the family is also a factor that may contribute to the decreased abilities of this couple to move towards healthier patterns of interaction. Her high degree of dissatisfaction with most aspects of her marital relationship is possibly related to the deficit in the couple’s communication. This couple appears to be operating in the midrange and has significant difficulties in all three dimensions of the Circumplex Model (cohesion, flexibility and communication), and consequently seem to have a shortage of resources needed to handle family burdens. They would most likely benefit from family interventions targeting the aforementioned areas.
Figure 5.4

*Faces IV’s Profile of Family 3*

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**Cohesion**

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Figure 5.4. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 3.
Table 5.6

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 3.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner of prisoner</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ratios</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores (&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 3**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 3 consisted of a 31-year-old female who was the partner of a male prisoner (he had several short periods of incarceration and has never been on parole). She also had served two incarceration terms four years prior to the interview with an undetermined prison length. She was living alone with her two children whilst waiting for her partner’s prison release in 45 days. According to her, the couple was planning to live together following his release.

**FACES IV scales.**

This participant perceived her marital relationship to have a moderate to high level of connection and a moderate degree of flexibility. The scores in these two dimensions imply that, in her view, her family was considered as *flexibility connected*. Her high scores in family cohesion dimension suggest that she perceives her relationship to have a good degree of emotional bonding and loyalty, with a great weight on closeness. Her moderate scores on
the flexibility dimension indicate a democratic leadership in the family and that the family roles are inclined to be static. Overall, this family type is characterised by a great emotional closeness that aids family function; however, her moderate scores on enmeshed and chaotic unbalanced scales may reveal a degree of dependency and lack of leadership within the dyad that had the risk of becoming accentuated at times of crises. Given that her answers disclosed a high degree of uneasiness about the couple’s ability to communicate and a high degree of dissatisfaction with the marital relationship, this participant may be flagging difficulties in the area of communication that will perhaps emerge during the time of prison resettlement.

Although her score above 1 in the Circumplex ratio signifies that her family is operating at a healthy level, her concern for the couple’s communicative abilities and her degree of dissatisfaction with the marital relationship may indicate that the family system may be at risk of facing difficulties with adjustment at times of crisis, such as prison resettlement. Provided that this couple has experienced prior prison resettlements in the past, and issues of communication and flexibility dimensions were established during the interview process, this couple would be a good candidate to conjugal interventions targeting flexibility and communication dimensions.
Figure 5.5

FACES IV’s Profile of Family 4

Figure 5.5. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 4.
Table 5.7

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 4.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother of prisoner</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>45%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ratios</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>1.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores (&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 4**

The family living arrangements.

Family 4 consisted of a 52-year-old female who was the mother of a male prisoner with several periods of incarceration since his adolescence and was due to be released on parole within 60 days. This interviewee was living with her husband. Corrections Victoria was allocating transitional accommodation for her son upon his prison release.

**FACES IV scales.**

According to this interviewee, her family had a moderate to high level of connection and flexibility. This participant scored low to very low on all unbalanced scales, with the exception of a very high score on the rigidity scale. Her high scores in balanced cohesion and flexibility dimensions indicate she perceives her family as *flexibility connected.* Her scores suggest she perceives her family to have a good balance between emotional closeness and separateness, and a predisposition to share interests and spend time together, which may
facilitate healthy patterns of family interaction. However, the very high level of family rigidity may indicate some degree of difficulty to have a more democratic and open negotiation styles in family roles, rules and decision-making, which could hinder family adaptive processes. Her scores on the family communication scale revealed that she was contented with her family level of communication, and had few concerns about her family's communicative abilities. Regarding her satisfaction with family relationship, her scores show that she was moderately satisfied with the family patterns of interaction.

Given her Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios scores above 1, which indicates a healthy pattern of family interaction, her perceived high degree of communication, that may facilitate family adaptive processes, in addition to her overall degree of satisfaction with family life, her overall results indicate that her family operates in the balanced range, and therefore has good levels of healthy family functioning. The pronounced family strengths suggest that her family is likely to have good abilities to handle family stressors and has the capacity to contribute to the provision of assistance to the ex-prisoner.
Figure 5.6

*FACES IV’s Profile of Family 5*

*Figure 5.6. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 5.*
Table 5.8

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 5.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-prisoner</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentile score and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percentile score and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.42*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.59*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores (&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *Mean scores calculated and Standard Deviation in brackets*

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 5**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 5 was comprised of a 48-year-old male who had no prior imprisonments and served a four-year imprisonment term; his wife, 41-year-old; and their two children, a 17-year-old male and 13-year-old female. The couple had one more child, a 15-year-old male who was not present during the interview process. The couple was living together with the children.

**FACES IV scales.**

The ex-prisoner, his wife and their son perceived their family to have a high degree of connection, while their daughter felt the family had a moderate to high degree of connection.
In the view of the ex-prisoner and his son, the family had a moderate to high degree of flexibility. The wife perceived the family to have a high level of flexibility and the daughter sensed the family to have a low to moderate flexibility. Essentially, the ex-prisoner, his wife and their son characterised the family as *flexibly connected*, whereas the daughter saw the family as *structurally connected*. The family’s overall scores revealed high scores in balanced cohesion and flexibility dimensions and low scores in all unbalanced scales, which implies a good balance between of emotional connexion and separateness, and a family that values time together and has shared interests, but also have separate activities. Their overall scores indicate that family roles might have a degree of stability, nonetheless role negotiations tend to be open and democratic, and children might be invited to take part in family directions. In addition, family rules might be adjusted when the circumstance requires.

Overall, participants in Family 5 perceived their family to have a high level of communication skills. Their family communication scores indicated that the family felt good about their level of family communication and were able to express feelings and thoughts to other family members. Excepting for the daughter, all family members were satisfied with most aspects of family life. The participants’ mean score on Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios (ratio of 2.0) classified this family as *balanced* (refer to Appendix P for family types and Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios). This type of family usually operates at high levels of healthy family functioning. The family perceived a high degree of communication skills, which is a contributory factor for the high level of family functioning. Although the daughter’s divergence in opinion could indicate that the family might not be operating at optimal levels, the overall results for this family group signpost a family system that is likely to have an array of strengths to manage the strains of prisoner re-entry.
Figure 5.7

_FACES IV’s Profile of Family 6_

*COHESION*

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**Figure 5.7.** The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 6.
Table 5.9

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 6.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father of ex-prisoner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(> 1 Healthy; < 1 Unhealthy)

*The Clinical Assessment of Family 6*

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 6 consisted of a 44-year-old male who was the father of an adult male ex-prisoner who had been involved with the juvenile justice system since the age of 13 and had numerous incarcerations since adolescence. His son had served a sentence in an adult prison for the first time and was within under twelve months since release. The interviewee had also been in prison for a short term in his youth. This participant was living with his second wife and had two children in his care. The ex-prisoner, who was a child of a previous relationship, was living with the participant’s brother outside the state of Victoria. This interviewee declined to provide accommodation to him due to concerns about negative influences on the younger half-brothers.
FACES IV scales.

Family 6’s response indicated that he felt that his family had a very low degree of connectedness and low degree of flexibility. In conjunction with his high scores in the disengaged and rigid unbalanced scales, his family relationship was considered to be operating in a *rigidly disengaged* manner. Disengaged types of relationships may present with an absence of emotional affection, a lack of shared interests and time spent together, and limited loyalty to the relationship. Family members might present with a high level of independency and focus on individual activities, and consequently individuals are inept at seeking support in the family. Rigid relationships may denote that family members may have a considerable amount of difficulty in negotiating roles and rules in the family in order to adapt to the context. These relationships are inclined to have a less democratic and equalitarian leadership style and family rules are typically immovable. His scores on the family communication scale implied that he had numerous concerns about his family communication skills and may feel that the family members are unable to express their feelings and thoughts. He also demonstrated a great deal of dissatisfaction with most aspects of family life.

According to his scores that were below 1 in Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios, his family is considered to have a problematic family functioning. His perceived lack of family communication skills may hinder the family’s abilities to move towards more balanced interactions. His high level of family discontentment with family relationship is possibly related to the lack of family communication and cohesion in the family. In addition, the lack of emotional closeness and reduced ability to change rules and roles in the family suggest that his family has actually limited resources to deal with stressors. Given the low level in all three dimensions and high level of family dissatisfaction, which placed his family
in the unbalanced range, this family would be a good candidate for intervention targeting primarily cohesion, communication and flexibility.

Figure 5.8

*FACEs IV’s Profile of Family 7*

*Figure 5.8. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 7.*
Table 5.10

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 7.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother of ex-prisoner</th>
<th>65%</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratios</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 7**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 7 consisted of a 50-year-old female who was the mother of a male ex-prisoner with several short-term imprisonments who has never been previously on parole. She was also the mother-in-law of the interviewee in Family 3. This participant was interviewed a couple of weeks after her son’s release. Her son returned to live with his partner and children as planned, and she was living alone with his younger brothers.

**FACES IV scales.**

This participant’s scores on family connection and flexibility dimension indicate that she perceived her family to have a high degree of connection and moderate degree of flexibility. Moreover, she scored low in all unbalanced scales with the exception of a moderate score on the rigidity scale. Compatibly to Family 3, her cohesion and flexibility
dimension scores and her moderate scores on the rigid unbalanced scales positioned her family as *flexibility connected*. The high level on the balanced cohesion scale denotes that her family may operate with a high degree of emotional closeness and a high commitment amongst the family members. The moderate response in flexibility suggests a degree of shared leadership and democratic discipline. Family roles and rules are typically stable and well defined with an inclination to maintain family *status quo*; nonetheless, roles and rules may change when the circumstances demand. Overall, the high scores in cohesion and moderate flexibility, and low score in unbalanced scales with the exception of rigidity, indicate that her family may have a good degree of emotional closeness and alliances amongst family members to support a healthier family function. Yet, the moderate level on the rigidity scale may signify some difficulties in shifting roles and rules in order to adjust to the circumstances.

The participant’s responses on the family communication scale imply that she usually feels good about her family’s abilities to communicate thoughts and feelings, yet there are significant concerns. Her score in family satisfaction demonstrated some degree of displeasure with family relationships, and concerns for her family. Although her Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratio scores were above 1, which specifies a family in the balanced range, the moderate level of family communication and the dissatisfaction with family relationships signals a family functioning that might be operating at a decreased level, and therefore possibly experiencing a shortage of resources to cope with stressors of prisoner re-entry. The overall results indicate that this family could benefit from interventions addressing issues in communication and flexibility.
Figure 5.9

*FACES IV’s Profile of Family 8*

![Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 8](chart.png)

*Figure 5.9. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 8.*
Table 5.11

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 8.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brother of ex-prisoners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td>10%  Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>10%  Very Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ratios

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(> 1 Healthy; < 1 Unhealthy)

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 8**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 8 was comprised of a 39-year-old male who was the brother of two male ex-prisoners with numerous incarceration terms and a variety of prison lengths. One of his siblings had recently died and he had not had contact with the other brother. This participant had also been in prison in the past but his prison term length was unknown. He was living alone at the time of the interview.

**FACES IV scales.**

The cohesion and flexibility dimension scores of this participant indicated that he perceived his family of origin to have a very low degree of cohesion and low to moderate degree of flexibility, which assigns his family as *rigidly disengaged*. His high scores in the unbalanced disengaged scale point to a family that has an intense emotional separateness
where there is little trustworthiness amongst family members and a high degree of individuality. Moreover, his high scores on the unbalanced chaotic scale indicate a degree of unsettled family connection that may be characterized by restricted and unpredictable family directions, where family rules and roles are highly unclear and changeable. This type of family is considered to be extremely problematic due to the absence of emotional connection and expression, and the high degree of change in family rules and roles. His very low scores in family communication and satisfaction suggest that he would have several concerns for his family’s abilities to express thoughts and feelings, and a great degree of dissatisfaction with family relationship.

His scores below 1 in Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios imply a family system that is operating at unhealthy levels. His perceived limited family communication skills are likely to delay the family’s abilities to change to healthier patterns of interaction, and his high degree of family dissatisfaction is conceivably related to the family’s lack of communication. The overall results denote that his family of origin is operating in an unbalanced range and is most likely to have an insufficiency of family resources to manage stressors. Given the family’s lack of connectedness and prominent difficulties in communication, this family is possibly unable or even unwilling to provide support to the ex-prisoner. In the case of family involvement during prison resettlement, the areas of cohesion and communications could be prioritized.
Figure 5.10

*FACES IV’s Profile of Family 9*

*Figure 5.10. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 9.*
Table 5.12

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 9.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</th>
<th>96%</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ratios</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Clinical Assessment of Family 9*

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 9 was comprised of a 63-year-old female who was the wife of an ex-prisoner. She was living alone while her husband was serving parole outside the state of Victoria. The ex-prisoner was waiting to be transferred to Victoria where the pair has residency. This couple had adult children who had ceased contact with the interviewee because their mother was providing support to their father.

**FACES IV scales.**

This interviewee perceived her marital relationship with a high degree of connectedness and high degree of flexibility. Despite her high scores on the cohesion and flexibility dimensions, she scored high in all unbalanced scales, which consequently characterised her family as having a *chaotic enmeshed* type of family patterns. Her scores
suggest that her family might present with a high degree of emotional closeness and a high
degree of dependency within the couple, and loyalty is stipulated. Couples operating with this
level of cohesion may have little interest in activities and relationships outside the family, and
could become reactive to each other. Her high scores on the flexibility dimension suggest that
the family roles and rules are democratically shared and possibly vary from time-to-time,
however these family roles and rules have a tendency to be ambiguous and highly
changeable, which may cause a degree of chaos and increase family difficulties in organising
and achieving common goals.

The participant’s response in the family communication scale indicates that she felt
positive about the couple’s communication skills. She is also likely to be very satisfied and
really enjoy most aspects of the marital relationship. Although her scores above 1 on
Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios indicate a family functioning that is operating at
healthy levels, her high scores on all unbalanced scales place her between midrange and
extreme range. This result may forecast some degree of difficulty in family adjustment once
her husband returns home. Her perceived high level of the couple’s communication skills
might function as a protective factor. However, areas of cohesion and flexibility may become
areas of concern during a taxing time such as prison resettlement.
Figure 5.11

FACES IV’s Profile of Family 10

Figure 5.11. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 10.
Table 5.13

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 10.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios</th>
<th>Mother of ex-prisoner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td>58% Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>45% Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratios</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 10**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 10 consisted of a 65-year-old female who was the mother of a male prisoner who had several short and long periods of incarceration. This participant was waiting for her son’s prison release to occur within 60 days. This participant was not able to provide accommodation to her son post prison release, given her husband’s disagreement with this arrangement.

**FACES IV scales.**

According to her scores on the family cohesion and flexibility dimension scales, this participant felt that her family had a high degree of connection and moderate degree of flexibility. She also scored low on all unbalanced scales. Given that her score on the rigid unbalanced scale was greater than that for the chaotic unbalanced scales, she considers her
family to be operating in a *structurally connected* style. Families of this kind typically present with a high degree of emotional closeness and loyalty to the relationship. Family members may value time spent together rather than alone. The moderate level of flexibility means that the family leadership is occasionally shared, with a degree of steadiness in family roles and rules, and therefore an inclination to maintain an existing state of affairs within the family system.

Her score on the family communication scale implied that she would characteristically feel favourably about her family communication skills and openness to exchange feelings and thoughts; however, she would have some particular concerns about the family communication style. The score on the family satisfaction scale suggested that she was slightly satisfied with most aspects of family relationships.

The scores above 1 for the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios indicate a family functioning that is operating in healthy levels. However, her perceived marginal degree of family communication and satisfaction indicate a family system that might not be operating at the most favourable level, and consequently may be prone to experience an unavailability of resources at a time of crisis. In the case of family involvement with prison resettlement, this family could benefit from family interventions affecting areas of communication and flexibility.
Figure 5.12

*FACES IV’s Profile of Family 11*

![Cohesion Chart](image)

Figure 5.12. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 11.
Table 5.14

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 11.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex-wife of ex-prisoner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(> 1 Healthy; < 1 Unhealthy)

The Clinical Assessment of Family 11

The family living arrangements.

Family 11 consisted of a 41-year-old female who was the ex-wife of an ex-prisoner and had recently separated from him. Her ex-husband had two imprisonment terms, and his last sentence was six years. He was released four months prior to the interview. The interviewee was living alone with her daughter and her grandchild.

FACES IV scales.

The participant’s score on the balanced cohesion and flexibility dimensions indicate that she perceived her family to have a high degree of connection, and a low to moderate degree of flexibility. Excluding the rigid scale, this participant had low scores on all unbalanced scales, which consequently placed her family as *structurally connected*. Her results on the cohesion dimension imply that she sees her family to have a high degree of
emotional closeness and loyalty. Families operating with such a high level of connectedness may also demonstrate an inclination for members to be more dependent than independent. Her low to moderate score on flexibility suggest a family system in which roles and rules are characteristically stable, and role negotiation is somewhat democratic. Although structured relationships may share roles and responsibilities when required, there is a propensity to maintain some stability in the family patterns of interaction.

The high scores on communication and satisfaction denote that this participant feels a high degree of contentment with her family’s communicative skills and most aspects of family relationships. According to her Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratio scores, her family is operating at healthy levels, even though this participant is undergoing a likely time of stress such as the process of divorce. Taking into consideration her favourable results that assign her family onto the balanced range and the content of her transcripts, perhaps, her divorce from the ex-prisoner may have decreased the level of family stress elicited by prisoner’s re-entry.
Figure 5.13

*FACES IV’s Profile of Family 12*

*Figure 5.13.* The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 12.
Table 5.15

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 12.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wife and mother of ex-prisoners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ratios**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(> 1 Healthy; < 1 Unhealthy)

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 12**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 12 was comprised of a 50-year-old wife of an ex-prisoner and the mother of a female ex-prisoner. Her husband was in prison for two years for the first time and he was under twelve months of prison release. Her daughter has been released a couple of months before the interview and the length and number of her imprisonment terms is unknown. The interviewee was living with her husband and their other children. The living arrangement of the interviewee’s daughter is unknown.

**FACES IV scales.**

The participant’s scores on the cohesion and flexibility dimensions imply that she senses the couple’s relationship to have a moderate to high degree of connection, and a moderate level of flexibility. Her overall scores in cohesion and flexibility dimensions, and
low scores on all unbalanced scales categorised this family as *flexibility connected*. Families in this group are likely to have a good balance between emotional closeness and separateness, and a predisposition to share interests and spend time together, as well as having separate activities. Her score on the flexibility dimension indicates a relationship that is typically characterized by a more egalitarian and democratic negotiation of roles and rules in the family, and negotiation is usually open and inclusive of children.

According to her family communication score, the participant appears to feel satisfied with the couple’s abilities to communicate; however, there are some concerns about the couple’s capabilities to clearly communicate thoughts and feelings. Her very low score on family satisfaction implies that she feels extremely dissatisfied and is concerned with most aspects of the family relationships. Although her Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex ratios were above 1, and her scores assigned her family to the balanced range, the concern for family communication skills and the high degree of dissatisfaction with family life may indicate that this family functioning may not be operating with ideal patterns of interaction. As a result, this couple could be experiencing the unavailability of the family resources needed to manage the stressors of prisoner re-entry. This couple may benefit from marital interventions concerning the communication dimension.
Figure 5.14

*FACES IV*’s Profile of Family 13

*Figure 5.14. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 13.*
Table 5.16

*The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 13.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother of ex-prisoner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Very Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratios</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Clinical Assessment of Family 13**

**The family living arrangements.**

Family 13 consisted of a 50-year-old female who was the mother of a male ex-prisoner. Her son had had two short imprisonment terms and was within six-month release at the time of the interview. The interviewee was living with the ex-prisoner’s father and siblings, and was not able to provide accommodation to her son post prison release because her husband disagreed with this arrangement.

**FACES IV scales.**

According to her scores on cohesion and flexibility dimension scales, this participant sees her family to have a moderate degree of connection and a low degree of flexibility. She also scored high on the chaotic unbalanced scale and moderate on the rigid unbalanced scale, which characterised her family as being in the *rigid connected* range. Typically, families
operating at this level have a reasonable balance between emotional bonds in the family and separateness. The low flexibility score may indicate a family system that presents some degree of difficulties sharing leadership in the family, with limited opportunity to change roles and rules within the family. Families with a high degree of rigidity may have a person who exerts the control over the family affairs, and the negotiation of family rules and roles is restricted.

The participant’s very low scores on the family communication scale revealed that she has a great deal of concern for the family’s ability to communicate thoughts and feelings openly and freely. Her very low score on the family satisfaction scale indicates that she is very dissatisfied and concerned for the family’s relationships. Her perceived lack of communication in the family is possibly a factor that may contribute to the family’s inability to move toward healthier patterns of interaction, and her low level of satisfaction may be related to the low level of family communication. Furthermore, her scores below 1 for the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex total ratios suggest that her family is operating with unhealthy patterns of interaction. Hence, her overall results indicate a family system that is operating in the midrange level and appears to be lacking resources. This family may benefit from some family intervention targeting flexibility and communication dimensions if actively involved in the process of prisoner re-entry.
Figure 5.15. The Circumplex Model and the Cohesion and Flexibility Dimension scores of Family 14.
Table 5.17

The Family Communication and Satisfaction Scales, and the Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex Ratios Scores of Family 14.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-partner of ex-prisoner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication percentile score and Communication level</td>
<td>61% Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction percentile score and Satisfaction level</td>
<td>21% Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ratios

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(> 1 Healthy; < 1 Unhealthy)

The Clinical Assessment of Family 14

The family living arrangements.

Family 14 consisted of a 37-year-old female who was the ex-partner of a male ex-prisoner from whom she had recently separated. Her ex-partner was in prison for the first time and served a long period of incarceration. He was under twelve months of prison release when the couple separated. The interviewee was living alone and had no children. The couple still maintain some contact.

FACES IV scales.

The participant’s scores on the cohesion and flexibility dimensions imply that she perceived her relationship to have her ex-partner with a high degree of connection, and moderate degree of flexibility. She also scored low on all unbalanced scales, with the exception of the rigid scale, which characterised their relationship as structurally connected.
Her high score on the family cohesion dimension suggests that she perceives her relationship to have a good degree of emotional bonding, with loyalty within the couple and a great weight on intimacy. The moderate degree in the flexibility dimension scale and high level of rigid unbalanced scale may imply that roles in the relationship are stable and well defined, and rules have the tendency to remain static; however, these may change when required.

The participants’ scores on the family communication scale suggest that, in general, she feels good about the level of couple’s communication but has some particular concerns about it. Her low scores on the family satisfaction scale imply that she is dissatisfied with the couple’s relationship. Her Cohesion, Flexibility and Circumplex total ratios indicate that the relationship is operating at healthy levels, or in the balanced range. Based on the information given in her interview about the status of her relationship with the ex-prisoner, the favourable results in the psychometrics may be related to the fact the couple is no longer living together. In the case of active participation in the process of prisoner resettlement, this couple could benefit from support in the communication and flexibility dimensions.

The Overall Results of FACES IV

Table 5.18 indicates the overall balanced and unbalanced scores for family cohesion and flexibility, their ratios and the Circumplex ratios, provided by the partners, ex-prisoners and children who attended the interview. This table also includes the scores for the Family Communication scales, and the Family Satisfaction. The results of these family dimensions scores provided by the parents and siblings of ex-prisoners will be equivalently reported in Table 5.19.
Table 5.18

The Overall Scores of Family Cohesion and Flexibility, Family Satisfaction and Communication Scales of Nuclear Families.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Cohesion and Flexibility</th>
<th>Family 1 (n=2)</th>
<th>Family 2</th>
<th>Family 3</th>
<th>Family 5 (n=4)</th>
<th>Family 9</th>
<th>Family 11</th>
<th>Family 12</th>
<th>Family 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Cohesion</td>
<td>30.0* (4.24)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30.25* (2.5)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Flexibility</td>
<td>29.0* (2.82)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24.5* (7.72)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged</td>
<td>18.5* (0.70)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13.75* (2.21)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enmeshed</td>
<td>16.0* (0.0)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.75* (2.75)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaotic</td>
<td>13.5* (7.77)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14.00* (3.16)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid</td>
<td>23.0* (1.41)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.50* (2.38)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Communication</td>
<td>36* (2.82)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41.75* (3.30)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Satisfaction</td>
<td>37* (4.24)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39.75* (6.70)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ratios</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion ratio scores</td>
<td>1.74* (0.28)</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.42* (0.43)</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility ratio scores</td>
<td>1.60* (0.12)</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.59* (0.43)</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumplex ratio scores (&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td>1.67* (0.07)</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.00* (0.43)</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean scores calculated and Standard Deviation in brackets. Family 15 was not assessed due to participant’s aboriginal background and the lack of norms for this population.
Overall, all participants in the nuclear family reported that their family unit had a high degree of family cohesion, which ranged from connected (37.5%) to very connected (62.5%). They also perceived their family unit as having a good degree of flexibility or adaptability, which ranged from flexible (62.5%) to very flexible (37.5%). The majority of the participants revealed a general score of very low to moderate levels of disengaged, enmeshed, rigid and chaotic unbalanced scales. Moreover, the majority of families (87.5%) scored above 1 for the Circumplex ratio, which suggests that the family functioning of these participants was largely operating at a healthy level.

In regard to the degree of family satisfaction, participants in this group indicated great variance in their responses: 37.5% responded that they were very dissatisfied and concerned about their family, 37.5% that the family members are somewhat dissatisfied and enjoy some aspects of their family, and 25% that they were very satisfied and really enjoyed most aspects of their family. The level of family communication disclosed by these participants equally demonstrated a remarkable degree of variance. Of these families, 12.5% indicated that they have many concerns about the quality of their family communication, 25% responded that although they have some concerns, they feel generally good about their family communication, 37.5% reported that they feel good about the family communication and have few concerns, and 25% reported that they feel positive about the quality and quantity of their family communication.
Table 5.19

*The Overall Scores of Family Cohesion and Flexibility, Family Satisfaction and Communication Scales of Families of Origin.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Cohesion and Flexibility</th>
<th>Family Communication</th>
<th>Family Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Cohesion</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Flexibility</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enmeshed</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaotic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigid</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ratios**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cohesion ratio scores</th>
<th>Flexibility ratio scores</th>
<th>Circumplex ratio scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(&gt; 1 Healthy; &lt; 1 Unhealthy)</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parents and siblings of ex-prisoners indicated a diverse degree of family cohesion and flexibility (or adaptability): 33.33% of participants felt that there was a degree of disconnection amongst the family members, 16.66% experienced their family as being connected, and 50% of participants considered their family had a high level of connection.
Overall, this group revealed that 50% experienced their families as having some degree of rigidity, 33.33% felt that their family relationships were flexible, and 16.66% considered their family to have very high level of flexibility. Altogether, the family of origin disclosed a very low level of disengagement and enmeshment on the unbalanced scales. However, there were some differences on the chaotic and rigid unbalanced scales, in which the participants reported as very low (83.33%) to low (16.66%) respectively. The Circumplex ratio score of parents and siblings of ex-prisoners revealed that 66.66% scored above 1 and 33.33% below 1, which may indicate that there were a moderate number of families in this sample functioning at a healthy level.

Regarding the family of origin’s level of family satisfaction, the participants disclosed that 50% were very dissatisfied and were concerned about their families, 16.66% indicated that they were somewhat dissatisfied and demonstrated some concern for their families, and 33.33% moderate satisfaction and enjoyment for their family. When the parents and siblings considered their level of family communication, 50% had numerous concerns about the quality of their family communication, 16.66% felt although there was some concern, in general, they experienced good family communication, and 33.33% had a positive experience about the family quality and quantity of family communication.

**The Discrepancies Amongst the Nuclear Family and the Family of Origin**

The sample of nuclear families generally felt their family unit had a higher degree of connection and flexibility in comparison to the participants comprised by the family of origin. The overall data showed that the family of origin reported a slightly higher degree of problematic family functioning, a generally higher level of family dissatisfaction, and greater concerns about their family communication than the nuclear families.
Summary of Overall Results

The transcripts demonstrated that partners experienced the time of a partner’s imprisonment as a challenge to manage the sudden change in their family structure. The unplanned sudden change in family structure that lead to them becoming a female single-headed household, with immediate and persistent financial strain and re-examination of parental roles, was often accompanied by the departure of their close social support systems or the family’s own decision of relinquish access to social support. This decision appeared to be often related to the family’s appraisal of their circumstances, to have the purpose of minimising collateral damage for the family system and protecting family stability. All family members in the nuclear family were affected by imprisonment. For families with children, their children’s emotional distress was a topic of concern and appeared to intensify their level of distress. For the ex-prisoners, this period appeared to be felt as emasculating as a result of the impossibility of exercising their typical roles within their family, whilst the children seemed to mirror the parents’ feelings.

For the family of origin, the imprisonment of a child or sibling was felt as a shock, which generated an immediate concern for the prisoner’s safety and the effects of imprisonment on the grandchildren. The parents also experienced a strong sense of responsibility for their children’s involvement with the criminal justice system, and felt that they had done something wrong or failed in their duty as parents.

Partners and parents of ex-prisoners experienced the prison sentence to be a period of investment in maintaining some form of connection with the person inside the prison walls, and they often performed the role of linking prisoners to their children. For partners of prisoners, this stage was considered to be a period of intense financial and emotional strain, due to the increased demands of being a female-headed single household whilst providing
emotional and financial support to the prisoner. In particular, partners who had children in their care, had to balance their desire to provide family stability and connection with the prisoner, with the visible negative consequences of imprisonment on children’s wellbeing. This appeared to have increased their level of distress. Some partners also acknowledged the couple's communication was affected during this period, primarily due to the partner’s concerns in protecting the prisoner’s feelings and their attempts to preserve stability within the dyad.

Both partners and family of origin felt that prison visits were a deprecating experience that had high financial and emotional costs. The partners expressed frustration about the obstruction of intimacy imposed by the prison system, the irregularities amongst different prisons’ practices, and the lack of information about the prison code of conduct. The parents corroborated with the partners’ view and added that for them, a prison visit was an event that provoked strong feelings of sadness and ongoing worry about their offspring’s wellbeing. These concerns were often extended to their grandchildren.

The family of origin described the need to constantly exercise diplomacy in the prison visits, whilst at the same time accepting stigmatization from staff in order to protect their children and siblings inside. Although some parents recognised that they became desensitised to prison procedures over time, these strong feelings appeared to have lead to the reduction of prison visits. The transcripts of some parents also indicated that there was an inclination to provide financial assistance as a means of maintaining connected to their children in prison as a replacement for prison visits. The use of this strategy appeared to be associated with unpleasant feelings triggered by prison procedures and perceived stigmatization, or the need to avoid a loyalty dilemma in their marital subsystem. Both parents and partners of prisoners with recurrent incarcerations reported that the unpleasant and costly prison visits become
secondary in comparison to the observed harmful effects of the father’s incarcerations on his children’s wellbeing.

The partners’ experience of the period of prisoner re-entry revealed that there was a combination of great excitement for family reconnection as well as worry about the ex-prisoners’ adaptive prospects. Partners disclosed that generally the great excitement disregarded the structural and legal issues that were associated with prison release. The transcripts indicated that the couple had an implicit arrangement that the partner would continue to support the ex-prisoner during resettlement in order re-establish family connection and hierarchy. However, it was evident that the majority of the participants were unprepared for the complexities of the issues associated with their partners prison experience, which affected negatively the couple’s relationship and family dynamics. Furthermore, the transcripts suggested there was a strong possibly that there was a dynamic of reciprocal omission of information between the couple during the time of prison sentence, which could have fostered unrealistic expectations and increased the probability of couple’s disagreement at the crucial time of resettlement.

The transcripts indicated that once the ex-prisoner reconnected with the nuclear family, the adverse effects of imprisonment (e.g. hyper vigilance, alienation, social withdrawal, incorporation of prison culture, etc.) became evident. These incapacitating psychological impacts of incarceration may explain the partners’ lack of trust in the ex-prisoners’ rehabilitative prospects or their ability to provide family stability. Consequently, partners demonstrated difficulties in relinquishing the control of the household, and this appeared to be more common amongst partners of recidivists.

Partners felt that they were somewhat responsible for the successful completion of the ex-prisoners’ legal requirements, and were essentially involved with the provision of practical and emotional support in this regard. The ex-prisoners were amenable to their
support. However, this task increased the overall demand on the family system, and consequently, families pointed to the need for a more inclusive approach from corrective services.

The family of origin experienced the period of ex-prisoner resettlement as a phase that elicited a mixture of anxiety for the ex-prisoner’s rehabilitative prospects, and hope for their success in overcoming the visibly negative impact of incarceration. The parents of ex-prisoners appeared to have a more realistic view of their children’s structural and emotional problems, and the issues associated with imprisonment. They reported intense feelings of grief and scepticism, largely attributed to their children’s recurrent misconduct and reimprisonments. These results are probably related to the fact that all participants in the family of origin group were comprised of parents and siblings of ex-prisoners with several incarcerations. In addition, some had been in prison themselves. Nevertheless these feelings were dominant; every interviewee in this group demonstrated readiness to assist the ex-prisoners in order to succeed in the re-entry process.

The clinical assessment specified by the self-report questionnaire FACES IV demonstrated a peculiarity in the family functioning of all participants. Each family participating in the study presented with a diverse range of strengths and areas of potential growth according to the individual family circumstances. In general, the majority of families (N=9) seemed to be operating at balanced levels, followed by three families that appeared to be operating at unbalanced levels, and two families that were functioning at midrange levels. While the cohesion dimension appeared to be the forte of the majority of the families, the areas that required further development seemed to be concentrated in communication and flexibility dimensions, in that order. Considering the difference between the responses of nuclear family and the family of origin, a discrepancy was observed in responses amongst these groups. The nuclear family perceived their family unit as having a high degree of
family bonding and a relatively good ability to express leadership and negotiate rules and roles amongst their members. On the other hand, the family of origin saw their family as having low to very high level of connection and some degree of difficulties in communicating leadership and negotiating rules and roles. The family of origin also disclosed higher levels on the unbalanced scales. As a result, the nuclear family generally revealed a higher degree of healthy family functioning in comparison to the family of origin. The nuclear family also generally disclosed higher levels of family satisfaction, and fewer concerns about their family level of communication.
CHAPTER SIX
Discussion

This thesis explored the perspective of professionals and family members relating to
the process of family adjustment that occurs during pre- and post-release of a prisoner.
Firstly, it explored professionals’ view of the context of ex-prisoners and their families, their
patterns of interaction, and the challenges they face during the process of imprisonment and
prison resettlement. Secondly, it explored family members’ appraisal of their circumstances,
their demands, resources, and adaptive process experienced throughout the period of a prison
sentence, and resettlement. In order to expand the knowledge of the complex circumstances
experienced by families of ex-prisoners, this thesis considered two different data sets and
employed two qualitative approaches as well as a family self-assessment questionnaire. An
outline of these studies is described below.

The first study provided a preliminary understanding of the context and dynamic of
families involved with the custodial system. The characteristics and experiences of family
members and ex-prisoners were explored using in-depth semi-structured interviews and
thematic analysis of interviews with a diverse range of professionals working in the field of
prisoner’s reintegration. These professionals presented their reflections of the complexity of
the economic and ecological context of these families, certain trends in family history, the
family dynamic and resources generally employed by the family members during the process
of imprisonment and prisoner’s resettlement.

The second study attempted to include the perspective of family members of a family
unit who were involved with prison system. This study used the Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the family members’ perception and adaptive
process related to imprisonment, prison sentence and the resettlement into the community of
a family member. Study Two also employed a family self-assessment tool, FACES IV, with the purpose of examining the families’ perceptions of their degree of cohesion, their flexibility in roles and rules negotiation, their level of communication and family satisfaction. This exploratory study also identified similarities and differences between the experiences of the nuclear family and the experiences of the family of origin of ex-prisoners, and these are further described in this chapter.

**The Family Structure and the Demands Experienced by the Nuclear Family Through the Process of Imprisonment**

The professionals in Study One recognised that there is a wide range of families in contact with the criminal justice system, and these families are idiosyncratic systems that needs to be understood in their social context. However, in their experience, there was a trend of a particular family structure frequently comprised of female-headed household with children with lower socioeconomic status.

The professionals’ observation is likely to be connected to the demographic characteristic of the correctional system, which is comprised of 94 per cent males with lower socioeconomic status and levels of education, and poorer health in comparison to the average population (Baldry, 2008; Ritchie, 2013). Likewise, the partners of prisoners come from equally disadvantage backgrounds (Hairson, 2003; Wolff & Drain, 2004).

This typical family structure observed by professionals is an outcome of imprisonment (Wildeman & Western, 2010). As a result, the partners’ description of experiencing imprisonment as an unexpected change in the family structure that lead to sudden readjustment of parental roles, and persistent financial strain was anticipated.

This type of family structure in association with low socioeconomic status may provide some insight into the consequences for the balance between the demands placed on
the prisoners’ partners and their adaptive capabilities throughout the process of imprisonment. For example, there is sufficient evidence in public health studies to show that families composed of female-headed households with children are linked with increased risk of poverty, increased maternal parenting distress, and negative effects on children’s wellbeing (Cooper et al. 2009; Snyder, McLaughlin & Findeis, 2006; Waldfogel, Craigie & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). A similar picture of increased financial and emotional strain endured by prisoners’ partners is also well documented (e.g. Codd, 2008; Ferraro et al., 1983; Light & Campbell, 2006; Naser & Visher, 2006). Thus, the experience of partners of the abrupt decrease in family income, the increased expenses with prison visits and financial assistance to the prisoner, and the need to emotionally support the prisoners, reinforce the notion that these partners (especially women with children in their care) endure high levels of financial and emotional demands that are likely to lead to high levels of stress.

The nuclear family adaptive process.

Another aspect of the abrupt change in the family structure due to imprisonment is the inevitable adjustment in family roles, alliances, internal and external boundaries, and family hierarchy (Boss, 1977; 1980). As a rule, families are considered as a system whose various members and subsystems interact much alike the organism of the human body and the stress experienced by a member or subsystem of the family requires adjustment and accommodation of the reminder of the system (Nichols & Everett, 1986, p. 69). In essence, the strains enforced by the change in the family structure would have implications for the family subsystems (e.g. marital, parental, siblings), and consequently alter the family patterns of interaction.

In this study, professionals observed that partners would have to adapt to the absence of a male in the household and take over the decision-making in all aspects of family life,
which consequently shifted the power within the dyad. The result of this process is visible in the ex-prisoners’ account of feeling emasculated and frustrated, having lost the role of decision-making in the family. Similarly, partners revealed disappointment in managing the sole parenting role and the household.

One of the consequences of this change in power in the relationship is the potential to generate new or pre-existing tensions in the marital subsystem. These tensions in the spousal subsystem would also have ramifications for the family patterns of interaction within the parental and sibling subsystems.

According to Nichols and Everett (1986), when tension is present in the marital subsystem, a third family member (typically a child) might be triangulated into the subsystem in order to alleviate stress and balance the family system. The authors claim that when parents are not able to perform executive functions, and internal family boundaries are unclear due to stress, there is an increased risk that children may take the role of parentified child to relieve stress, and rebalance the family system. Children could also undertake the role of a scapegoat through misconduct aiming to dissipate or remove stress from the spousal subsystem.

Generally, the greater the family vulnerability to stress increases the likelihood that these roles become deepened and rigid within the family (Nichols & Everett, 1986). The perpetuation of this family dynamic would primarily obstruct the marital subsystem from resolving divergences (Minuchin et al., 1975; Peris et al., 2008), and have later consequences on the children’s development, since the persistence of these roles in children is often associated with negative outcomes in adolescence and adulthood (Earley & Cushway, 2002; Fischer & Wampler 1994). Although this coping mechanism was not well defined in the account of partners, this aforementioned family dynamic is possibly connected to the parents’ concerns for their children’s behaviour, particularly, for partners with children who have
cognitive capability to understand the meaning of imprisonment for the family.

Families could also employ this process of triangulation in larger systems when tensions in relationships are high and the family's external boundaries are weak. A third party in the larger system could be brought to the family system in order to dissipate tensions amongst family members. For instance, an ex-prisoner might complain about a worker to a family member in an attempt to shift the focus of family conflict to the larger system, and increase family alliance, as observed in Study One. Compared to the triangulation within the family system, the attempt to triangulate within a larger system is likely to obstruct the resolution of the conflict and perpetuate the family patterns of interaction.

On balance, the change in family structure imposed by imprisonment is likely to increase the demands on partners of prisoners and elicit tensions within the dyad. When families experience vulnerabilities and family boundaries are unclear, a third party within the family ecological system could be brought into the family systems with the aim of balancing these demands and decreasing tensions in the marital subsystem. Therefore, the presence of these family dynamics is an indication of strain on the family relationships generated by an increased level of family stress.

The nuclear family coping strategies.

While the current and previous research has identified the high financial and emotional costs to families of prisoners, the coping strategies used to manage the increased level of family stress has not yet been explored in the context of reintegration. According to McCubbin & McCubbin (1996), coping strategies are both cognitive and behavioural strategies that individuals or family systems use to preserve or strengthen the family as a whole, and provide emotional stability and wellbeing to its members. Internal and external resources may be drawn on to manage stressful events. For Boss (2002) these strategies are
shaped by the family’s perception, which is a construct of their values and belief systems, the stage of life cycle, culture and spirituality (Boss, 1992; Kirmayer et al., 2000; McAdoo, 1995; Paterson & Garwick, 1994, Wright, 1997). In Study Two were suggestive of some coping strategies utilised by the family members during imprisonment and prison sentence.

Study Two identified that imprisonment of a spouse was often accompanied by withdrawal or relinquishment of familial social support. The transcripts implied that the family’s decision to conceal information about their judicial, financial and emotional circumstances from their social support system appeared to be used as a tactic for protecting the stability of the family system. The use of this strategy seemed to be often related to the family’s evaluation of their context, in which the nature of the charges and the family level of experience with criminal justice systems would be taken into consideration. For instance, it was evident for the partner of an ex-prisoner with Indigenous background (Family 12) that the disclosure of her husband’s legal situation to her community would arouse adverse reaction to her family, given the nature of his charges. For this reason, she decided to suppress information from their social support system in order to protect her children, and avoid additional strain on the family system.

A similar coping strategy of concealing information between partners and prisoners was also identified by professionals, and acknowledged by other partners of prisoners. According to professionals, besides the detrimental effects on family communication imposed by prison settings, both prisoners and their families appeared to suppress information with the purpose of managing the stress levels of other family members. For example, some partners in Study Two reported that they purposefully concealed information from the prisoner about the family circumstances as a strategy of protecting the prisoner’s feeling. Likewise, they only became fully aware of the prisoner’s experiences once the prisoners reconnected with the family, which may indicate that prisoners and their partners
reciprocally used this strategy. In essence, this is an attempt to manage marital stress and preserve stability within the dyad. Another factor that may explain this phenomenon is the level of stigmatization experienced by prisoners and their families in correctional settings. According to Goffman’s Stigma Theory (1963), the intentional concealment of information (also called passing as normal) is a behaviour adopted by a stigmatized individual to manage his or her identity.

This dynamic has the potential to be aggravated by the unwelcome setting of the correctional system. Families of prisoners repeatedly reported that prison visits were a financially and emotionally costly exercise and a demeaning experience, which is consistent with previous research on prisoner visitation (e.g. Christian, 2005; Light & Campbell, 2006). This antagonistic experience of prison visits in conjunction with the prisoners’ high level of stress is likely to be detrimental to the promotion of family communication, and may reinforce these coping strategies.

The perpetuation of these coping strategies would have implications for adaptive family processes at time of prisoners’ re-entry. For example, the relinquishment of social support in order to manage external pressures may initially contribute to the relief of family stress. However, the persistence of this dynamic would eventually deplete family internal resources, exacerbating the level of family stress, and ultimately increasing the likelihood of crises occurring at resettlement. In terms of family communication, the systematic strategy of suppressing information between the couple could ultimately decrease their level of communication. Consequently, couples could nurture unrealistic reciprocal expectations, and increase the likelihood of conflict post prison release. These difficulties in family communication could be a risk factor for families with a history of intimate partner violence, and validate the professionals’ observation about increased likelihood of intimate partner violence at time of resettlement.
The accounts of partners suggest that the use of this strategy appeared to have contributed to the their lack of awareness of prisoners’ traumatic experiences, and the absence of preparation for prison release. Thus, the partners interviewed seemed to be unprepared to deal with the issues associated with prisoner resettlement. Some partners were also surprised by the deterioration in the couple’s communication, and the intensification of couples’ disagreements.

Remarkably, the majority of partners of recidivists seemed to demonstrate a similar obliviousness of prisoners’ structural limitations and prison experiences, despite their familiarity with prisoner’s re-entry. These outcomes may suggest that the accumulative stress sustained by partners of recidivists could have lead to the reliance and reinforcement of withholding information to manage couples stress. Moreover, the use of this strategy resulted in many negative impacts on the ability of couples to communicate.

In summary, the partners’ account revealed the use of two coping strategies in order to decrease the high level of strain generated by imprisonment: the renunciation of social support and the concealment of information from the person in prison. The first coping strategy appeared to be a consequence of the nature of the crime perpetrated by their partners and had the function of averting external pressures on the family system. The second coping strategy seemed to be implemented by the couple in order to minimize pressure in the relationship and preserve the couple’s relationship. The use of this strategy was conceivably reinforced by the hostile nature of correctional settings, and perhaps contributed to the deterioration of couple’s ability to communicate during the critical time of prisoner re-entry. This adverse effect was verified by the lack of knowledge about their partners’ prison experience, and the escalation of marital disagreement post prison release. A similar process was also verified in partners of recidivists, even though their partners have experienced prison re-entry in the past. The implications of this coping strategy for the adaptive process of
the families during prisoners’ resettlement are discussed below.

**The partner’s endeavour to maintain family connection.**

Research has shown that family support is one of the pillars of prisoners’ successful reintegration (Berg & Huebner, 2010; Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2012; Visher, et al., 2004). The overall experience of partners endorses the view that family members are actively involved with the provision of practical and emotional support to ex-prisoners. The ex-prisoners interviewed were receptive of this support. The partners’ participation in the reintegrative processes appeared to have the purpose of restoring family connection, balance and wellbeing.

The findings in Study Two indicated there was an implicit assumption amongst the couples that the partner would continue to support the prisoner after prison release. The women’s drive was likely to be related to the purpose of reinstating family connection and re-establishing traditional family roles, which consequently would reduce hassles and re-establish balance in the family system. These expectations of retuning to conventional family roles post prisoners’ release are also consistent with Yocom and Nath’s (2011) findings (e.g. revitalise romantic relationship, perform parental roles, provision of emotional and financial support). For that reason, partners might feel in some way responsible for the successful accomplishment of prisoners’ legal requirements during parole, and invested in providing favourable conditions for the task ahead. For McCubbin and McCubbin (1996) this has a positive relationship to family adjustment, given the family’s attempt to manage stressors and strain, and to balance the system. However, the findings in Study Two indicated that in order to perform this task, the women encountered some unforeseen obstacles. These difficulties seemed to deepen the overall demands on the family system, and placed further strain on the marital subsystem. As a result, there was a feasible risk that the accumulation of burdens on
these women would exceed their capabilities, and consequently generate family crisis. It may be the case that family crisis would ultimately affect prisoner’s reintegration.

Factors that Influence the Nuclear Family Adaptive Process during Prisoners’ Resettlement

Family adaptation to stress tends to be viewed as a process that takes into account previous experiences (Mechanic, 1974; Hansen & Johnson, 1979). Boss (1977, 1980) argues that prior unresolved family strain, compulsory role changes in the family and interfamily boundary ambiguity are likely to enhance difficulties and contribute to strain when a family faces a major stressful event such as a prisoner’s resettlement. Thus, the family’s interpersonal relationships, its structure and established patterns of functioning, the family life cycle, its experience with prison system, the accumulation of family demands, coping strategies and access of resources ought to be considered when observing adaptive family processes of ex-prisoners. A limited number of these aforementioned factors emerged from the narrative of the families interviewed, and these will be examined below.

The previous section described how one of the outcomes of imprisonment is the compulsory restructuring of family roles, boundaries, coalitions and hierarchical positions. For instance: contingent to the family life cycle, a child may be required to perform the role of the father whilst he is in prison in order to balance the demands placed on the mother. This adaptive outcome would increase the child-mother relationship, and place this child in a differential hierarchical position in the family during the father’s prison sentence.

Once the ex-prisoner reconnects with the family, these family roles need to be renegotiated and reorganised. The fundamental adaptive tasks for the family would be to strengthen the coalition in the marital subsystem whilst maintaining generational boundaries, and ultimately re-establishing hierarchical positions. These are important aspects for the
couple’s satisfaction and their children’s development (Erel & Burman, 1995; Olson, 2000). In terms of reintegrative aspects, a greater marital satisfaction would be likely to increase the ex-prisoner’s sense of belonging to the family system, and perhaps encourage desistance from crime (Laub et al., 1998).

An aspect of family dynamic that would facilitate family re-adjustment is family communication (Olson et al. 1979). A clear and effective expression and exchange of information amongst family members would affect positively the family’s ability to negotiate roles, rules and leadership in the family (Olson, Russell and Sprenkle, 1980). However, previous findings have indicated that the accumulative family strain imposed by imprisonment, and consequent persistent coping strategy of concealing information result in the deterioration of the couple’s ability to communicate, a necessary skill to have in order to negotiate the competing family demands and the complex challenges of re-entering after a period of incarceration. Moreover, it is possible that these communication problems will hinder the re-negotiation of rules and roles in the family, increase the tensions in the marital relationship, and ultimately obstruct the development of alliances among the dyad.

Another factor that appeared in the account of partners and was likely to be a contributing factor to the escalation of marital strains was the unforeseen negative psychological effects of incarceration. Partners reported they were surprised by the psychological impact of incarceration on their spouses. They often reported that the prison experience changed their partner’s perception and behaviours, and this sequel had an adverse effect on the marital relationship¹. These debilitating psychological outcomes (e.g. hyper

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¹ This term is used indiscriminately in the literature for husbands and wives and people cohabitating. Here it is used to refer to wife or cohabitating partner or formerly cohabitating partner.
vigilance, interpersonal distrust, social withdrawal, diminished sense of self-worth, 
posttraumatic stress reaction, incorporation of exploitative norms of prison culture) are well 
known for hindering interpersonal relationships (Haney, 2003). They are likely to contribute 
to distrust in the relationship, build up conflict, and obstruct the marital alliance (Arditti, 
2012).

According to Haney (2003), these psychological outcomes could also constrain ex-
prisoners in their execution of their parental roles. Thus would probably contradict partners’ 
expectations, and reinforce scepticism about the ex-prisoners’ abilities to re-establish family 
stability. It is possible that these processes somewhat explain why partners displayed 
ambivalence in relinquishing the control of the household. It may also be the case that 
women’s unavoidable independence during their partners’ prison sentence gave them a sense 
of empowerment and discovery of their own capabilities (Martin & Jurik, 1996).

An additional factor that could delay the reestablishment of marital alliance is the ex-
prisoners’ vulnerability during prison resettlement. Usually, ex-prisoners re-enter the 
community in a vulnerable position, and consequently rely on the support of family members 
to activate reintegrative outcomes and accomplish legal requirements (Codd, 2007; Farkas & 
Miller, 2007; La Vigne et al., 2005; Rossman, 2003; Travis, 2005; Petersilia, 2003). This 
process was also evidenced in Study Two. Partners were actively involved with the 
accomplishment of parole conditions, and the ex-prisoners were willing to receive their 
support. While this support could be beneficial to the attainment of reintegrative outcomes, a 
substantial reliance on partners had the risk of positioning the ex-prisoner equivalently to the 
status of children in terms of family hierarchy, for partners perceived the ex-prisoner as 
another family member who is incapacitated and requires care. It is possible that this 
dependence reinforces the ex-prisoner’s feelings of emasculation, and accentuates the 
partner’s scepticism of his ability to fulfil her expectations. This would contribute to marital
tension and hinder marital alliance.

**The Accumulation of Family Demands: The Risk of Pile-up Demands in Families of Recidivists**

The family’s degree of exposure to the prison system is another aspect of imprisonment that might impede the task of providing support to the ex-prisoner to accomplish legal requirements post prison release. The overall findings suggested that correctional demands had the potential to prevent or engender family crises during prisoners’ resettlement. The occurrence of family crisis would be contingent on the family’s appraisal of their situation and the balance between their resources and capabilities (Boss, 1992, McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996).

The interviews indicate that families of recidivists incur an excessive accumulation of financial and emotional burdens, and possible exhaustion of family resources. The accumulation of these burdens appears to decrease the family’s capabilities to assist ex-prisoners, as well as drain their ability to negotiate the family strains. The greater degree of exposure to prison environment, and incorporation of prison culture in recidivists seems to aggravate the couple’s difficulties to address problems in their relationship. When considering these factors, the data suggested that these families were likely to experience greater vulnerabilities and a pile-up of demands in their efforts to support prisoners’ re-entry.

According to family stress theorists, pile-up of demands is the cumulative effect of stressful events across time, or the occurrence of a new stressor event before families experiencing stress are able to cope with earlier ones (Burr et al., 1994; Lavee, McCubbin & Patterson, 1985). Research has shown that the pile-up of demands is associated with negative impacts on the family’s level of adaption, decreases in individuals’ personal wellbeing, and increases in health risks and emotional and interpersonal problems in family relationship (Coddington, 1972; Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974; Lavee, McCubbin & Patterson,
1985; Patterson & McCubbin, 1983). For this reason, families of recidivists are likely to present with a higher degree of vulnerabilities and complexity in achieving adaptive outcomes. As a result, they probably have decreased capability to support the ex-prisoner during re-entry in comparison to families of first timers. It may be the case that these families need a different approach in order to facilitate ex-prisoners to achieve or sustain reintegrative outcomes.

**Summary**

To summarise, the partners account supports the suggestion that family is an active part of ex-prisoners' reintegrative process. The data suggested that the partners' motivation in supporting their spouses in all aspects of re-integrative outcomes appeared to be related to retrieving traditional family roles, and re-establishing family balance. However, the participants had to manage unforeseen challenges associated with the prison experience. The partners revealed that the family adaptive processes were disturbed by the negative consequences of incarceration on their husbands, and was aggravated by the difficulties in the couple's communication. The data also suggested that these issues appeared to be severe in families that had recurrent contact with the prison system. Therefore, it is possible that these families have a higher level of difficulties in supporting ex-prisoners to achieve reiterative outcomes.
The Different Levels of Demands Experienced by the Family of Origin and Their Coping Strategies Through the Process of Imprisonment

While the scant literature on families of prisoners has focused on the nuclear family, it has failed to provide a great deal of information about the experience of the family of origin of prisoners and their adaptive processes (Codd, 2007; Mills & Codd, 2008; Klein, Bartholomew & Hibbert, 2002; Schaffer, 1994). The findings on Study Two might fill some of these gaps.

The second study identified that both partners and family of origin have experienced similar demands such as travelling long distances to maintain contact with the prisoner, provision of financial assistance to the prisoner, mistreatment by custodial staff, and persistent concern for the prisoner’s feelings and wellbeing. However, the family of origin appeared to have felt these burdens at a deeper emotional level, and appeared to exhibit a slightly different pattern of responses to stress. These patterns of response might be related to how the families appraise their experiences and perceive their capabilities, and their interaction with other systems.

Family Stress and Resilience frameworks argue that the degree of family stress is determined by the family’s perception, values, and the meaning that the family gives to the demands (Boss, 2001; Lavee, McCubbin & Patterson, 1985; McCubbin &McCubbin, 1996; Reiss & Oliveri; 1991). Families can give multiple level of meaning to stressors. These meanings would affect how the families perceive the stressful situation, and their capabilities to manage it, how they see themselves, and how they perceive the world (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). These meanings are also developed through the interaction with family members and other systems (Reiss, 1981), within three distinctive levels of family ecosystem: individual family members, the family unit, and other social systems (e.g. community) (Patterson, 2002).
Study Two revealed that the parents of prisoners/ex-prisoners felt accountable for the misconduct of a child, and were confronted with profound feelings of guilt, shame and sadness. The only sibling interviewed in Study Two attributed the incarceration of his brothers to his parents. The parents’ guilt was also reinforced by their perception of stigmatization during prison procedures. These experiences appeared to have produced strong feelings of humiliation, sadness and anger, especially during prison visits. They seemed to generate a substantial level of strain on parents, which contributed to the subsequent reduction of prison visits, and the use of financial assistance as an alternative method of connection. This decline or lack of contact with the prisoner is likely to have later consequences for the prospects of prisoners’ successful resettlement, since prison visits have a positive correlation with delay or reduction of recidivism and post-release success (Bales & Mears, 2008; Schafer, 1994).

In order to understand the parents’ strong emotional responses and their coping strategies, there is a need to consider that all parents of prisoners/ex-prisoners in this research have possibly experienced criticism to some extent at all three levels of the family ecosystem. For example, the demands on the individual level could be observed in Family 6, when the interviewee talked about his feelings of guilt for being an absent father and unable to reconnect with his son post-release. The demand at the family level is observed in the account of the brother of two ex-prisoners who blames his parents for his brothers’ imprisonment. Finally, the demands from other systems are seen in the parents’ experiences of stigmatisation on the part of their extended family members (e.g. Family 10), community (e.g. Family 7), law enforcement (e.g. Family 13) and prison staff (e.g. Family 4).
The demands from larger systems and the coping strategies.

The stigmatisation of prisoners’ families by society and correctional settings is well established in the literature (Codd, 2007; Davies, 1980; Foster & Hagan, 2009; Hairston, 2003; Light, 1993). This attitude is reinforced by the large numbers of intergenerational patterns of criminal behaviour in families (Gadsden & Rethmeyer, 2003). It is usually the case that the statistics support the perception that parents are likely to be the source of the individual’s misconduct (e.g. McCord, 1991; Schroeder, Osgood & Oghia, 2010; Williams & Steinberg, 2011). A parallel process was observed in professionals account in Study One when they accredited the prisoners’ family history of childhood neglect, exposure to family violence and intergenerational criminal behaviour to involvement with criminal justice system.

While the family of origin tends to play an important role in determining values and shaping behaviours of prisoner, and is an important factor for risk assessment in procedural aspects of Criminal Law, the simple attribution to families of the misconduct of the individual is likely to be a reductionist view of the complex socio-structural issues that prisoners and their families experience.

Arditti’s (2005) work is grounded in an ecological approach to prisoners and their families, and considers contextual factors in the environment and their influences on the family’s pattern of behaviour. For her, the stigmatization experienced in prison settings has a powerful affect on the emotions of family members, and underpins the marginalisation of these families. This process of marginalisation is also reiterated by community stigma (Hairston, 2002), which produces the effect of reducing the family’s self-esteem and self-efficacy, and disturbs the family patterns of interaction with their social support systems (Larson & Corrigan, 2008). As an illustration, families suffering stigma are likely to
experience strong negative emotions, devalue their personal resources, and avoid social interactions.

Considering that the majority of prisoners and their families generally belong to lower socioeconomic background, and perhaps have a long history of marginalisation, it is possible that the unwelcome prison procedures provoke shame and intense emotional discomfort among family members. These negative emotions are likely to be deepened by the impossibility of expressing displeasure, since they feel the need to exercise diplomacy in order to protect the person inside from retribution from staff or other prisoners, a belief that is also emphasized by the person inside. As a result, parents might feel that the high financial and emotional cost imposed by prison visits might not be valuable, or it is perhaps, beyond their financial and emotional capabilities. It maybe the case that the reduction of prison visits and provision of financial assistance as a replacement is a product of this process. The Family Stress Theory labels these strategies as coping avoidance and elimination.

McCubbin and Patterson (1983) explain that when family members perceive the situation as intimidating or adverse (experience of distress), the family unit is likely to attempt to protect itself from change by preserving its traditional patterns of interaction through the use of three coping strategies: avoidance, elimination and assimilation. They describe avoidance as the family engagement in denial or disregard of a stressor in the hope that it would disappear or resolve itself; elimination as the family’s vigorous expenditure of energy to free themselves from stressors by replacing or eliminating the demands; and assimilation as the family endeavours to accept the strains generated by the circumstances but employs only minor changes in the family structure and patterns of interactions. They add that coping avoidance would be likely to be used when families have insufficient resources, and identify the demands with a state of distress (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).
Hence, it is possible that the different level of demand experienced by parents of prisoners might produce a state of distress, and as a result, parents would tend to use coping strategies such as avoidance (reduction of prison visits) and elimination (provision of assistance as an alternative method of family connection). This use of coping avoidance could also account for the remarkable naivety of partners of recidivist, and explain the lack of attempts to address issues of prisoners’ adjustment to the family prior to their release. The use of this strategy also corroborates with the notion that families of recidivists are likely to experience lack of resources and to be prone to pile-up of demands during prisoners’ re-entry.

**The demands from the family unit and the coping strategies.**

The findings in Study Two revealed that demands on parents were also developed within the family system. For example: some parents disclosed that the connection and support to their children in prison and post-release would trigger a loyalty dilemma in their marital relationship, and instigate family disagreements. For these parents, the division of loyalty between their children and their partners appeared to further increase their level of anxiety, since they had to negotiate with their partner the level of connection with their children. Their account also revealed that the marital alliance appeared to be more important or stronger than the parent-child relationship. This may be due to the fact that these parents had younger children in their care and therefore would favour their marital relationship in order to promote family stability. However, the limitation of the data provided presents a degree of difficulty to ascertain if the connection between parent-children has always been weak, or if their level of connectedness was reduced by their children’s imprisonment.

Nonetheless, while these parents experienced restriction in their support of their children during and post resettlement, they were willing and able to activate some reintegrative outcomes through the mobilization of their extended family members. This
outcome may suggest that irrespective of the degree of connection between parent and child, parents have generally a strong sense of responsibility to their children, and are likely assist them during difficult times. This strong sense of responsibility was also evidenced in their relationship with their grandchildren.

This strong sense of responsibility might as well explain the emotional burdens experienced by parents of prisoners when acknowledging the negative impact of incarceration on their grandchildren. For instance, the grandparents interviewed in Study Two reported that the adverse effects of imprisonment on the grandchildren’s wellbeing were a continuous source of distress. An approach used to manage their concerns was to strengthen their alliances with the children, and sometimes with the children’s mother. Some grandparents have also become a conduit between the prisoners and the prisoners’ children through the exchange of information.

Their actions appeared to have been guided by their sense of responsibility to their children, and seemed to perform a role in balancing the demands on the nuclear family system. For example, the establishment of a good quality relationship with grandchildren had the potential of promoting their wellbeing, and decreasing the demands on the children’s mothers during the time of prison sentence and resettlement. These grandparents may also support the relationship between prisoners and their children, or sometimes perform a protective role when the relationship between the prisoners and children’s mother is conflictual (e.g. families 4 and 10). Grandparents might reciprocally feel some degree of satisfaction for being able to relief the stress on their grandchildren, and counterbalance their negative feelings of guilt for their children’s misconduct (Gibson, 2002). The use of these strategies would indicate a more adaptive coping strategy, in other words, strategies with the purpose of maintaining the family working as a unit, promoting the esteem of members, and supporting family confidence (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).
Whilst grandparents might perform roles that have the potential to assist the nuclear family in adaptive processes, this support could also increase significantly the grandparents' level of stress when resources are limited. In Family 7, the mother of an ex-prisoner who was bound to assume the care of her grandchildren due to the imprisonment of her son and his partner is an example. Research shows that the grandparents who become caregivers of children of imprisoned parents are frequently confronted with great financial difficulties, high parenting stress, and poor physical and mental health outcomes (Hanlon, Carswell & Rose, 2007; Mackintosh, Myers & Kennon, 2006; Minkler & Roe, 1993; Minkler et al., 1997).

On the other hand, a substantial reliance on grandparents support when resources are limited could be equally detrimental to children's wellbeing. While the grandparents interviewed in Study Two seemed to execute a protective role, research into female incarceration has also indicated that many children who are placed in the care of grandparents are exposed to family violence and substance abuse (Sharp & Marcus-Mendoza, 2001). These contradictory outcomes may suggest that a more comprehensive assessment of family patterns of interaction and family needs is required.

The role of the family of origin during the process of prisoners' reintegration.

The same emotional demands described above seemed to re-emerge at the time of prisoners' resettlement. The parents interviewed agreed that they were willing to assist their children during prison resettlement, and were committed to deliver favourable conditions to successful reintegrative outcomes. However, they were sceptical about their children's rehabilitative prospects, since their children's recurrent engagement in criminal activity had lead to previous disillusionment and grief. These parents also identified the detrimental psychological impact of incarceration on their children, and appeared to have a more realistic view of the structural and emotional issues faced by prisoners in comparison to the partners
in the nuclear family group. As a result, they demonstrated ambivalence about having a close emotional connection with their children post-release, and were inclined to promote reintegrative outcomes through the provision financial assistance, perhaps, because the provision of financial assistance would decrease their level of concern for the their children whilst avoiding to become emotionally involved with them (*coping elimination*).

The occurrence of this family process appears to be related to the fact that all participants in the family of origin had a persistent contact with Criminal Justice System, and were probably experiencing a pile-up of demands. In other words, there was possibly of a depletion of family resources and decreased ability to assist the ex-prisoner post-release, or better knowledge of the system.

This pile-up of demands may explain the use of coping strategies of avoidance, elimination and assimilation evident in the parents' account. For example: The father in family 6 was inclined to support his son financially, however he was unlikely to promote the son’s connection with his younger brothers; the mother in family 7 was predisposed to support her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren, but decided to withdrawal contact with her son due to his drug relapse post-release; the mother in family 13 was inclined to assist her son financially but was unable to promote the reconciliation between her son and his father, and had to maintain secrecy about her relationship with, and support to her son.

The use of these coping strategies may also suggest that without support, these families would be less likely to achieve satisfactory family adaptive patterns of interaction, and would be likely to continue to use these coping mechanisms throughout the period of prison resettlement. Above all, it is possible that these parents would attempt to promote reintegrative outcomes to their children, on condition that this support does not trigger further burdens.
Summary

To summarize, the second study indicated that all the participants in the family of origin encountered similar obstacles to maintain connection with the person inside the prison. However, this group appeared to have felt these difficulties at an emotional level. It was argued that these emotional responses were likely to be connected with the parents’ experience of being accountable for their children’s wrongdoing, which was reinforced by the family members as well as other systems. As a result, parents appeared to experience prison visits with a state of distress, and were likely to resort to coping strategies that would attempt to avoid and eliminate the source of distress. On the other hand, these parents also performed more adaptive coping strategies, which had the potential to balance the demands on the nuclear family throughout prison sentence.

The account of the parents revealed that their worries resurface at the time of prisoner resettlement. They disclosed an inclination to promote their children’s reintegrative outcomes with scepticism, given their history of persistent engagement in criminal activities that lead to reimprisonment, and family grief, possibly, because all parents interviewed in this group had extensive contact with the prison system. These parents also acknowledged the detrimental effects of incarceration on their children, and appeared to be ambivalent about having a close relationship with their children. They also revealed a continuous use of the coping strategies employed during incarceration, which suggested that this group was likely to be experiencing a pile-up of demands. It may be the case that this depletion was associated with the family’s extensive contact with prison system.
The Family Capabilities and FACES IV Results

The overall findings have established that both nuclear family and family of origin are confronted with a wide range of burdens to overcome during the process of imprisonment and prison resettlement. However, the participants’ capabilities to resist crises have not been yet examined. According to McCubbin, Lavee and Patterson (1985), family adaptive resources may comprise personal resources or individual family member’s characteristics; family system resources or how families perceive the qualities of the family system (e.g. cohesion, flexibility and communication); and social support or larger systems that goes beyond the family unit. These social systems tend to support family values, and promote family esteem and feelings of belonging. The results of the self-report questionnaire (FACES IV) were used as a method to evaluate family internal resources, and may provide some indication of how the nuclear family and the family of origin perceive the patterns of interaction of their families.

Family Connection and Adaptability.

The perception of good connection and adaptive capabilities are important aspects for family functioning and the promotion of family development (Olson & McCubbin, 1982). The view of family as connected may contribute to the sense of identity as a family, and how the family view their capabilities to negotiate the demands imposed by re-entry (Patterson & Garwick, 1994). As observed in Lowenstein’s (1984) study on prisoners’ wives coping with stress, families revealed that cohesive and democratic families had superior successes in coping with husband’s incarceration. In addition, the perception of mutual support, commitment and collaboration in difficult times may serve as a motivation to ex-prisoners to pursue positive aspects of their lives (Marinez, 2009).

The results of the family self-report questionnaire FACES IV indicated that, in
general, the majority of the participants perceived their family as very connected but with a variable degree of flexibility in the family system, which ranged from moderate to extreme levels. Within the nuclear family and family of origin, cohesion and flexibility dimension scores also exhibited some discrepancies.

The nuclear families appraised their family unit as having a high degree of connection amongst their members. They also revealed a moderate to high degree of flexibility in how the family changes leadership, roles and rules in order to adjust to the context. At large, this group showed a low degree on all unbalanced scales, which typically indicates a less problematic family functioning for individuals and relationship development, and a significant number of scores above 1 in Circumplex Total ratio (N=7). As a result, the data suggest that the majority of these families were operating at healthy levels.

These results suggest that most participants in the nuclear family demonstrated a strong emotional closeness and loyalty to their relationships, valuing their time together and sharing interest. This strong emotional connection perceived by the nuclear family is likely to be a factor that contributes to the partner’s high investment in assisting the ex-prisoner in meeting their legal requirements. Usually a moderate to high degree of flexibility indicates a more democratic style of decision-making in the family, which is open to the inclusion of children; and roles and rules in the family are versatile. However, high flexibility could also mean a more chaotic system that has a lack of leadership in the family and difficulties in organising the group to achieve common goals.

The overall responses of the nuclear family suggest that this group would have greater responsiveness to negotiate rules and roles and therefore adapt to the demands of re-entry, which was contradicted by the narratives of spouses of prisoners. As noticed in the individual clinical assessments of these families, in order to have an accurate picture of the quality of the adaptive capabilities of these couples, the inclusion of the spouses absent in the interview
process would be required, and other scales would need to be considered. These factors would also need to be pondered to determine the accuracy of the positive results in the Circumplex total ratio. In other words, the overall favourable results yielded by the nuclear family may have been an effect of the absence of their respective partners in the interview process.

In contrast to the nuclear family, the participants in the family of origin had a remarkable variability in their responses on the cohesion and flexibility dimensions. Half of participants in this group indicated that their family had a very high degree of emotional bonding towards one another, and the other half a moderate to low degree of attachment. Therefore, it appears that the family of origin is divided into two groups, where some perceived the family as very connected and others with a lower level of connection.

There is certainly a high degree of difficulty to ascertain the aetiology of the low degree of emotional attachment in some families in this group. However, this result may provide an indication that families operating with this level of cohesion probably have a lower degree of loyalty to the relationship and emotional closeness, and therefore may not be prepared or equipped to support the ex-prisoner, in particular, the provision of emotional support. It could also suggest or explain the inclination to provide financial assistance to the ex-prisoner rather than emotional support.

A similar trend in the data was found in the family of origin’s perception about their ability to negotiate leadership, rules and roles in the family. While half of members in the family of origin perceived their families as having a degree of difficulty in performing more democratic decision-making and role changes in the family, the reminder saw their family as having a moderate to high degree of malleability to execute change in the family. On balance, the data showed the family of origin revealed a sensible inclination to maintain the family status quo, as well as a reduced ability to compromise rules, roles and leadership in the
family in comparison to the nuclear family. It is possible that the difficulties in flexibility perceived by this group may explain their coping styles, since avoidance, elimination and assimilation are used by the family as an effort to protect itself from change by maintaining its established patterns” (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983, p. 25).

Despite some differences in the chaotic and rigid unbalanced scales, in general, the participants on the family of origin obtained a low score in scales that would be more problematic for the functioning of these families. As a result, a reasonable number of participants in the family of origin (N=4) were considered to be operating in a healthy manner, and a smaller number of participants (N=2) appeared to be operating at unhealthy levels of family functioning. Yet again, the accuracy of this result would be subject to the participation of other family members and other scales on FACES IV.

**Family Communication.**

As mentioned above, family communication is an aspect of the family functioning that facilitates family adaptive processes (Olson et al. 1979). The qualitative findings implied that partners of ex-prisoners experienced a decline in family communication throughout the process of imprisonment, and this outcome was likely to have implications for the family adaptive process post-prison release.

The responses provided by the nuclear families on FACES IV demonstrated a remarkable variance in how they perceived the families’ ability to communicate. Overall, more than one-third of participants expressed concerns about the quality of family communication, and 25 per cent of participants felt relatively good about the family and had few concerns. The residue experienced a positive degree of family ability to communicate.

The family of origin demonstrated similar divergences in responses, and once again was divided into two groups. Half of the participants in the family of origin (N=3) revealed
that they had frequent concerns about the family’s ability to communicate, and half (N=3) perceived their families as having a moderate to very high quality of communication. Therefore, the professionals’ observation in Study One regarding communication problems in prisoners’ family of origin appears to be pertinent, given the perceived high prevalence of difficulties in this family dimension.

Although the family of origin demonstrated a greater concern in their ability to communicate in comparison to the nuclear family, the overall responses suggested that the majority of families interviewed tended to have a good to high levels of communication. This outcome would ultimately contradict the professionals’ observation, and the account of partners of prisoners. It was possible that the partners did not notice decline in family communication. However, the responses in Family Satisfaction scales provided a different picture of family communication.

The Family Satisfaction scales showed that, in general, approximately one-third of participants in the nuclear family were very dissatisfied and concerned with their marital and family relationships. One-third answered that they were somewhat dissatisfied and enjoyed some aspects of their family, and finally one-fourth suggested that they were very satisfied and really enjoyed most aspects of family life. Therefore, the nuclear families overall indicated a dissatisfaction with marital and family life. A similar trend was established in the family of origin, where two-thirds of participants indicated dissatisfaction and concern about their family, and one third reported having a moderate level of satisfaction and enjoyment with family life.

The Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems states that *Family Satisfaction will have a positive relationship to Family Communication*; that is, *families high in satisfaction will have significantly better communication than families low in satisfaction* (Olson, 2006, p. 1). Therefore, the discrepancies in the responses, between the perception of
good communication and lack of family satisfaction, imply that these families are possibly embellishing their levels of family communication, particularly, because previous literature has also established communication problems between prisoners and their families during imprisonment (e.g. Hairston, 1991; 2003; Lynch & Sabol, 2001).

The contradictions presented in the communication and satisfaction scales could also suggest that the overall results of this psychometric tool needs be interpreted with caution, since a single method of assessment could misrepresent the experience of these families. This assertion is also pertinent to the application of other psychometrics or scales in isolation to the family contexts in future research. As observed in the different outcomes and recommendations in the individual clinical assessments of the participants, there was an explicit need for a more contextualized family pattern of interactions in order to obtain a clear representation of the strengths and areas of growth of these families. For example, some partners could be disclosing healthy patterns of relationship with the ex-prisoners because they were not living together, or because there is an expectation that the relationship may improve post prison release. Likewise, parents of ex-prisoners may observe less positive patterns of interaction in the family because of feelings of guilt and mistrust.

Olson (2002) also recognizes the limitations of a single psychometric instrument, and advocates for a multisystem assessment in order to avoid conflicting data. Therefore, a comprehensive assessment of the family context appears to be paramount for the detection of familial strengths and difficulties presented in all levels of their ecological system.
The Overall Family Strength and Area of Development and the Discrepancies between the Nuclear Family and the Family of Origin

The individual clinical family assessment indicated that despite all the challenges experienced by the participants, a reasonable number of families were operating at the balanced level. Family cohesion emerged as a predominant strength observed across the entire sample, and communication and flexibility dimensions came up as areas of family dynamics that required further improvement. While these results may be arguable and only represent the reality of a very small portion of families involved with the prison system, this outcome adds to the notion that these families have strengths that could be useful during the process of reintegration, and areas of growth that may require support in order to assist with adaptive processes. Most importantly, these family features are dynamic and therefore susceptible to psychosocial interventions if required.

Considering the differences between the nuclear family and the family of origin, the family of origin reported a slightly higher level of difficulties in flexibility, and a more problematic family functioning in comparison to the nuclear family. The family of origin also disclosed a generally higher level of family dissatisfaction, and several concerns about their family communication. It may be the case that this outcome denotes a more negative view of their family patterns of interaction. Although it is difficult to ascertain the explanations for this observation, given the scope of the study and its sample size, there is a probability that this negative perception might be related to the fact that all of the participants in the family of origin had experienced numerous incarcerations. Thus, their negative responses were likely to be a representation of a family system experiencing a depletion of resources and increased levels of stress.

Finally, a comparison between the results of FACES IV with previous studies exploring the family functioning of prisoners and their families would be incompatible (e.g.
Carlson & Cervera, 1991; Klein, Bartholomew & Hibbert, 2002; Lowenstein, 1984), given the limited sample size of participants and the characteristics of this study.

**Family Social Support**

In regard to the families’ social support, the transcripts implied that the majority of participants interviewed relied primarily on support from their extended family and friends, and the organisation that recruited the participants. The two partners who indicated being ostracised by their immediate support system (due to the nature of the offences committed), and the three parents lacking marital support to maintain a relationship with their children appeared to have a substantial reliance on emotional support provided by the organisation. Excluding the mother of an ex-prisoner who had to care of his children, the participants in families of origin did not appear to require as much financial support as the partners interviewed. While the majority of participants in the family of origin received emotional assistance from the organisation, the partners appeared to be receiving more financial assistance.

Although these results may infer that partners incurred greater financial demands in comparison to the family of origin, the restricted sample size in this study means that it lacks a satisfactory representation of this occurrence. As abovementioned, the great financial burdens on prisoners’ wives are well established in the literature (Codd, 2007; Murray, 2005; Petersilia, 2003). However, scholarship comparing the demands and needs of the nuclear family and family of origin is virtually non-existent (Schafer, 1994). Therefore, additional research in this topic would be desirable.

The findings in Study Two also revealed that whereas partners of first-timers had difficulties in finding information and support to navigate the prison system, the partners of recidivists have exhausted the support supplied by the limited number of organisations and
governmental departments. It is possible that the respective lack of information and support for families of first-timers and recidivists is related to the fact that all participants in this research lived in regional Victoria. This is a region notoriously under-resourced in comparison to the metropolitan area. Another factor to be considered is that the social support system of these families is possibly comprised of individuals of equal social disadvantage. This context might denote that these families could rapidly fatigue these relationships, and consequently increase the reliance on organisations and governmental departments.

**Summary**

To summarize, the results of the family self-questionnaire revealed that most of the families participating in this study were operating at balanced levels, and consequently healthy levels of family functioning. In general, the family strengths appeared to be focused on the family degree of emotional bonding, whereas the areas of growth seemed to be concentrated on the communication and flexibility dimensions. However, these results need to be considered with caution given the latitude of the study, and a more customised assessment of family strengths and areas of growth might be required.

When considering the comparison between the nuclear family and the family of origin, the nuclear family perceived their family as having a good degree of connection and flexibility to negotiate changes in role and leadership. While the family of origin demonstrated a similar degree of family connection in comparison to the nuclear family, they recognised in their family a degree of difficulty to change and negotiate roles, rules and leadership. Both the nuclear family and the family of origin perceived their family as having a generally satisfactory degree of family communication. However, the discrepancies in the Family Satisfaction scale portrayed a different picture of family communication, which
indicated that these families were possibly overestimating their family's ability to communicate. The results also showed that the family of origin had a slightly negative view of their patterns of interaction in comparison to the nuclear family. It is argued that these results are probably related to the fact that the entire sample of participants in the family of origin had extensive contact with the prison system, and was possibly experiencing an accumulation of burdens, and therefore were less equipped to support the ex-prisoner post release.

The family members interviewed also revealed that their social support system was mostly comprised of their extended family and friends as well as the small community agency that recruited the participants. They indicated an overall lack of support from their community. The partners of first-timers appeared to need information to navigate the complex prison system, whereas the partners of recidivists seemed to have fatigued the limited resources offered by the region. Both partners of first-timers and recidivists relied on financial assistance provided by the small community agency, whereas the family of origin received emotional support from this organisation. On balance, these families seem to experience a shortage of adequate social support systems for demands imposed by imprisonment.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusions

Summary of Results

The overall aim of this thesis was to examine the family members’ perspective of their adaptive process throughout imprisonment and the period of incarceration and prison resettlement of a loved one. Two data sets and two qualitative methods were used in order to explore the family members’ view of their challenges and capabilities to adjust to the process of imprisonment and prisoners’ re-entry. The overall findings revealed that there were similarities and differences between the adaptive processes experienced by the partners and children of ex-prisoners, and the prisoners’ family of origin.

The nuclear family.

For the nuclear family, the imprisonment of a spouse seemed to have had an immediate affect on the family structure, which consequently impinged on the family’s roles, alliances, boundaries and hierarchy, as well as a persistent financial and emotional demand on partners. In the majority of the cases, this increase of overall demands was followed by a decline in social support systems due to social stigma associated with imprisonment and the nature of charges. The social stigma was also likely to trigger partners to purposely relinquish social support in order to avoid external pressures in the family system.

It was argued that one of the products of incarceration for the nuclear family was the enforced shift in power relationship in the marital subsystem. This outcome in association with prison experience had the potential to elicit new or pre-existing tension within the couple. It was identified that partners and prisoners seemed to conceal information about their experiences with the purpose of managing their level of stress and sustaining family
connection. The findings demonstrated that it was also possible that the unwelcoming nature of the prison settings strengthens these patterns of interaction, which would contribute to the decline of a couple’s ability to communicate. Therefore, the couple was likely to fail to exchange clear mutual expectations, and less likely to set realistic goals before prison release.

The experience of the partners interviewed in this study corroborated with earlier literature that indicates that families tend to be a source of support to ex-prisoners to achieve reintegrative outcomes. The findings suggested that the partners interviewed were likely to be driven to support their spouses in all aspects of re-entry with the purpose of re-claiming traditional family roles and restoring family balance. However, the participants encountered unexpected challenges related to the prison experience during their attempt to accomplish this task.

For the majority of partners interviewed, the negative effect on family communication and the negative psychological impact of incarceration on their husband’s behaviour seemed to be only established once the ex-prisoner reconnected with the family and family adaptive processes became challenging. In terms of family process, the findings suggested that the process of incarceration had negative effects on the couple’s communication, and an adverse consequence on ex-prisoners’ interpersonal skills. Therefore, they appeared to be less equipped to negotiate rules, roles and leadership within the family, while trying to manage the difficulties of prisoners’ re-entry. Factors such as these would contribute to an increase in the couple’s level of disagreement and tension in the relationship, which may increase the risk of initiating intimate partner violence in families with pre-existing issues of family violence, or contribute to offending behaviour (e.g. drug relapse), or hinder reintegrative outcomes (e.g. accommodation). Likewise, this outcome has the potential to have a negative impact on marital satisfaction and disrupt the desirable improvement of alliances in the marital subsystem.
Despite the familiarity with the process of prisoners’ re-entry, the partners of recidivists demonstrated a lack of knowledge about prisoners’ structural limitations and prison experience. It is possible that the accumulation of burdens imposed by the recurrent contact with the prison system would deplete the resources of the family unit such as family communication. It is also feasible that given their lack of resources, these families would be inclined to use less adaptive coping strategies, such as avoidance, during prisoner resettlement, therefore failing to address these prisoners’ adaptive difficulties to the family prior to release. It appears probable that these families would continue to use similar coping strategies post prison release, given the great challenges generated by prisoners’ resettlement and lack of support. As a result, they would be less likely to identify and satisfactorily address tensions in the marital subsystem, and incline to engage in triangulation in the family and larger systems. The presence of these family processes would suggest a family system that is at risk of pile-up demands, and consequently would most likely have greater difficulties in supporting ex-prisoners to achieve successful reintegrative outcomes without support.

The family of origin.

The overall findings demonstrated that while the nuclear family disclosed that imprisonment generated a great deal of financial and emotional burden to the partners, the family of origin appeared to have felt this stressful event at a deeper emotional level. It is possible that the changes in the nuclear family structure would generate greater financial demands on these families in comparison to the family of origin. Therefore, partners’ major concern would be perhaps related to the obtainment of financial assistance in order to maintain family balance and connection with the spouse in prison.
Although the majority of parents interviewed may not have disclosed change in family structure leading to financial difficulties, their demands appeared to be experienced at a personal level. These parents felt intense disapproval for their children engagement in criminal activity from the different levels of society. For them, these experiences seemed to have resulted in deep feelings of guilt, shame and sadness. Social stigma had an impact on their self-esteem, their sense of identity and capabilities to manage the situation, and consequently their behaviours. For this reason, the perceived stigmatisation in prison settings appears to overpower the parents’ purpose to maintain connection with their children inside prison.

For these parents, the experience of prison procedure and prison visits was felt as an anxiety-provoking situation. The adverse conditions of prison visits, in addition to the impossibility to express displeasure, appeared to have strengthened these negative emotions and possibly elicited a state of distress. Thus, these parents were inclined to use less adaptive coping strategies to avoid and eliminate the source of anguish, such as the reduction of prison visit and provision of financial assistance as a substitute for family contact, sign that theses families could be experiencing insufficient resources to deal with the demands they were subjected to.

By the same token, these parents also demonstrated more adaptive coping strategies. For instance, the participants in this group who were grandparents appeared to invest their resources in promoting their grandchildren’s wellbeing and supporting the relationship between the prisoner and their children though the exchange of information. The establishment of a good relationship with grandchildren and their mothers would have the potential to promote the balance of demands on the prisoners’ nuclear family. It was argued that this support to the nuclear family could have advantages and disadvantages for the family of origin. These actions had the potential to counterbalance the parents’ feeling of
guilt for the prisoners’ misconduct, but it could also increase significantly their level of stress when their resources were limited.

The parents interviewed disclosed that despite prison release being a period that triggered worries and scepticism about their children’s rehabilitative prospects, they were inclined to promote the ex-prisoners’ reintegrative outcomes. This inclination was also observed in parents who had marital pressure to deflect contact and support to the ex-prisoner.

This group also demonstrated an awareness of how the structural and emotional issues and negative psychological effects of incarceration are likely to hinder ex-prisoners’ adaptive processes. They disclosed a degree of scepticism about their children’s rehabilitative prospects, and ambivalence about having a close emotional connection with their children post prison release. This outcome might be related to the fact that all participants in this group had extensive contact with the prison system, and similar to the partners of recidivists, were likely to be experiencing a pile-up of demands.

Equivalent to the experience of partners of recidivists, the use of these patterns of interaction might indicate a family system that is likely to be experiencing a depletion of family resources, and may present decreased capabilities to support their children to achieve reintegrative outcomes. Not surprisingly, the parents’ account indicated a lack of concern in assisting their children in accomplishing legal requirements, and a continuous use of coping strategies such as avoidance, elimination and assimilation during the period of prison resettlement. This may signify that these parents were likely to promote favourable conditions to successful reintegrative outcome on the condition that this support did not generate further demands.
FACES IV.

Despite the difficulties in adaptive processes generated by prison experience, the family self-questionnaire demonstrated that a reasonable number of families participating were operating at healthy levels of family functioning. In general, the family resources appeared to be converged on their degree of emotional bonding towards family members, and their difficulties were likely to be on areas of communication and on the expression of leadership, and roles and rules changing in the family. However, as observed in the individual family assessments, the accuracy of this data would be dependable on an individual appraisal of family context and the inclusion of other family members.

The nuclear family and the family of origin had different perceptions about their family patterns of interaction. The nuclear family perceived their family to have, in general, a good degree of family connection in the family. It was contested that this overall strong emotional closeness could have been a factor in the partners’ motivation in supporting their husbands in accomplishing reintegrative outcomes. In regard to flexibility dimension, the nuclear family disclosed a moderate to high degree of flexibility to negotiate rules, roles and leadership. Typically, flexible relationships would have a more cooperative style of decision-making that could contribute to the decrease of tensions when negotiating the balance between family demands and reintegrative processes (e.g. parole conditions). Despite the apparent overall good degree of family flexibility perceived by this group, these results would need to be considered on an individual basis.

The family of origin had a more heterogeneous view of their degree of connection and adaptability to circumstances. Two oppositional groups divided the families of origin. Some perceived their families to have reasonable degree of emotional bonding towards one another and another to lack such strength. While half perceived their family to have difficulties in areas of family adaptability, the other half felt that the family had a reasonable degree of
flexibility. On the balance, the family of origin demonstrated a predisposition to maintain the family status quo and some degree of difficulty to bargain roles, rules and leadership in their families. As a result, it is probable that this perception would reflect the family of origin’s inclination to use coping styles that attempts to maintain establish patterns of interaction.

Despite the fact that the family of origin has shown a superior concern for their ability to communicate in comparison to the nuclear family, both groups appraised their families as holding an overall good to high level of family communication — an outcome that was opposed to previous findings and in disagreement with their overall responses of a degree of dissatisfaction with family life. Therefore, the data implied that these families were possibly overstating their level of family communication.

The overall comparison between the nuclear family and the family of origin demonstrated that the family of origin appeared to be experiencing more difficulties in their adaptive capabilities, more problematic family functioning, greater degree of dissatisfaction, and more concerns about their family’s level of communication. It was argued that this overall negative perception of internal family resources might be a product of their extensive exposure to prison system, and therefore probable depletion of family resources.

**Family social support.**

The families participating in this research reported that their social support system was mainly comprised of their extended family members and friends. They also listed the small community agency that recruited the participants as a source of emotional and financial support. The partners of first-timers seemed to require more information to navigate the complexity of the prison system, whereas the partners of recidivists had a better knowledge of the prison system but appeared to have exhausted the reduced support system in their
region. The small community agency appeared to provide more financial assistance to the partners of prisoners and emotional support to the family of origin.

**Limitations**

This study experienced challenges in some methodological aspects as well as limitations of the researcher that potentially influenced the findings. The first difficulty faced by this project was the restricted number of prior studies on the topic, which were predominantly outside the Australian context. Secondly, the researcher had to face the scarcity of organisations authorised to work with families of prisoners in the State of Victoria. In addition to the high degree of difficulty in the process of obtaining ethical approval that was a somewhat disheartening experience, which diminished the prospect of enlarging the sample size. Given that the majority of organisations involved in the research received governmental funding and the vulnerability of the targeted population, the project had to be subjected to the approval of three independent organisations and two governmental bodies, which delayed immensely the commencement of data collection. This adjournment had a detrimental effect on the execution of this research since some agencies that committed to recruit family members withdrew practical support due to the change of circumstances. As a result, the number of locations of recruitment and the likelihood of increasing sample size was reduced. Furthermore, the recruitment of families of ex-prisoners was an arduous process since these families have usually a high degree of suspiciousness of institutional bodies. In fact, the study could only be completed with the assistance of a worker who had a good relationship with the families and reassured them of the benefits of disclosing their experiences to an independent researcher. Despite this, the factors above also had an impact on the diversity of the families participating in the study. For example, there were no family
members of female ex-prisoners in the sample, and findings related to the re-integration of
these prisoners may be quite different from those related to male ex-prisoners.

Although both qualitative methods appeared to be adequate for the achievement of the
aim of the study, the reduced sample size restricts the generalisation and transferability of the
overall findings, particularly the data of the self-report questionnaire FACES IV. The use of
the psychometric test created some degree of difficulty of execution and problems with the
reliability of the data collected. First, the application of this psychometric tool to a population
with limited literacy abilities was quite demanding. Although some words on the answering
sheet were adapted to suit the population in question and the statements were read aloud to
minimize discomfort, some participants appeared to be intimidated by the task of filling out
the test. Further, the lack of Australian norms, the limited sample size, and the absence of
other family members (e.g. the prisoner) were potential obstacles to the validity and
reliability of the data provided.

Another limitation of this study was the reliance on self-report from all participants.
The opinions of professionals and experiences of the family members were likely to be
affected by several sources of bias. These may include selective memory, exaggeration of
events or outcomes, recollection of incidents that occurred in different times, or attribution of
negative events or outcome to external sources. For example, the professionals appeared to
have an overall negative view of the families of prisoners, which might be explained by
symptoms of depersonalisation frequently found in Burnout Syndrome (Dennis & Leach,
2007) and/or the lack of training and understanding of Family System Theory.

The limitations of the researcher also need to be acknowledged. Two main aspects
had the potential to affect the analysis of the data: the fluency of English language and the
cultural background of the researcher. Even though the researcher has lived and worked with
disadvantaged families and ex-prisoners in Australia for over five years and was aware of
their context, the nuances of regional language produced some level of strain to determine the meaning of some extractions of the data in the transcripts of the interviews. Therefore, the assistance of a second coder who was a native Australian and had an extensive experience with prisoners and their families was paramount for the rigour of the study. The researcher also acknowledges the interpretation of the data may have been also affected by her gender, cultural, social economical and academic background, and that the participants may have a different interpretation of their own circumstances.

**Implications**

The findings of the present study are complementary to the Offenders’ Reintegration model that identifies the significance of family ties in the process of prisoners’ re-entry. Moreover, the employment of the Family Stress Theory and Resilience framework contributed to bringing to light some aspects of the family dynamics that occur during the time of imprisonment and prison release that may influence reintegrative outcomes. These results may have some implications for correctional practices and/or policies.

The findings indicated a need for a more comprehensive assessment of ex-prisoners’ context that takes into consideration the marital and family patterns of interaction and their resources, which may assist with the detection of risk and protective factors during prison resettlement. Essentially, the study observed the distinct patterns of interactions between the family of origin and the nuclear family, and the distinctive viewpoints of families involved with the prison system for the first time and families with recurrent experience with custodial system. These outcomes suggest that families in these categories may have different needs and therefore require different approaches.

Regarding the family of origin, the findings indicated that despite the overall lack of confidence in the ex-prisoners rehabilitative prospects, the lack of interest in becoming
involved with the ex-prisoner’s accomplishment of legal obligations, and marital pressures, the majority of the family members were willing to provide some level of support to their children and siblings. That is why, perhaps, the identification of aspects of family emotional bonding and the level of family resources could indicate the predisposition of family members to become involved with the process of resettlement or ascertain the type of support available to the ex-prisoner.

The context of partners of ex-prisoners appeared to have a higher degree of complexity in comparison to the family of origin, especially partners with children in their care, as a consequence may require a more intensive approach. The majority of partners had a high level of commitment to the relationship and were inclined to assist their spouses with correctional aspects. However, they demonstrated reduced abilities to deal with the demands required to support the ex-prisoners to achieve reintegrative outcomes. The accumulation of financial and emotional strain through imprisonment, the detrimental effects of incarceration on prisoners, and on the couple’s ability to communicate, as well as the demands produced by re-entry appeared to increase the pressure on the couples’ relationship. These tensions were likely to have an effect on the ex-prisoners adaptive processes in the family, or perhaps, be a contributor factor to re-offending behaviour (e.g. family arguments leading to intimate partner violence or homelessness, drug relapse, etc.). For the partners, the lack of financial resources emerged as a significant source of stress that needs to be taken into consideration in any psychosocial interventions. In terms of a couple’s relationship, the identification of feasible difficulties in communication and tensions in the relationship could reduce the risk of intimate partner violence post-release or family conflict that may contribute to re-offending behaviour. The facilitation of planning, communication of realistic mutual expectations, and guidance about some common issues associated with prisoners’ experience prior to prison release and follow up could also be advantageous in reintegrative programs in that it may
help to prevent difficulties that may impede successful family reconnection.

While the overall findings demonstrated that families of first-timers had a greater need for information, more confidence in the custodial system and ex-prisoners’ rehabilitative prospects and greater predisposition to assist the ex-prisoner in reintegrative outcomes, the families of recidivists appeared to require less information, have less confidence in custodial systems and the ex-prisoners’ rehabilitative prospects and less inclination to engage in reintegrative outcomes. Although any recommendations in this matter would need to be subjected to further research, the overall findings suggests that there is an increased likelihood that the accumulation of family burdens in family of recidivists may impair their abilities to engage and invest in rehabilitative outcomes.

It might be the case that the inclusions of family with extensive contact with the custodial system in correctional processes (e.g. provision of accommodation) without assessing the family’s level of resources may be counterproductive to successful reintegration of the person into society. This is particularly important when the imbalance between the complexity of issues associated with prison re-entry and the depleted family resources across the time are considered. For example, the accomplishment of some tasks, such as the provision of accommodation, by a family system lacking resources is likely to promote family crisis. Tensions in the couple relationship could possibly hamper successful family reconnection, or sometimes contribute to further offending behaviours. As a result, a comprehensive assessment of the prisoners’ family relationship would be required.

Corrective services could have a role to play in working collaboratively with the family in order to evaluate and address the aforementioned issues with prisoners and their families, and possibly prevent adverse outcomes. However, this would represent a considerable change in their strategic approaches, practices and policies. The dominant paradigm in corrective services in Australia is based on RNR model, and therefore the
delivering of programs addressing criminogenic needs of prisoners. For example, in the state of Victoria, corrections services assess the prisoners’ global needs in relation to accommodation, finances, employment, health, and legal matters; however, they delegate the task to deliver support services for prisoners and their families to community service organisations.

Although there are some initiatives to promote family connection, such as parenting program, these are limited to a small number of prisons. Thus, the incorporation of family practices into corrective services appears to be a distant reality at the present moment, and possibly in the future, given that the maintenance of family connection is not considered to be part of correctional services responsibilities. The existence of a multi-systemic assessment of prisoners and their families would entail the development of skills in the workforce and an overhaul in current practices and policies.

**Suggestion of Future Research**

The study raises questions regarding aspects of the family of origin and the nuclear family patterns of interaction that may affect ex-prisoners adaptation in the family system. There is an overall demand for research with a larger sample size and the inclusion of quantitative methods in order to explore the areas of significance in the family of origin, such as family emotional attachment and family flexibility, and further refinement in areas of concern in the nuclear family like the couple’s patterns of communication and flexibility to manage roles and rules in the family. In addition to further exploration of the characteristics of families involved with the custodial system for the first time and the complexities of families of recidivists, future research could focus on testing the hypothesis that families of recidivists have reduced family capabilities to be engaged and invested in the process of prisoners’ resettlement. Another aspect of family life that needs further exploration is the
familial social support system. Finally, research on interventions and/or policies that would increase the probability of improving families’ relationship and their contribution to ex-prisoners’ successful re-integrative outcomes is highly recommended.

Final Reflection

The researcher needs to acknowledge the admiration for the strength and truthfulness of the narratives of the families participating in this study. The author was quite surprised by the level of intimate details disclosed by families and the evident demand for someone to listen to their stories. Although the content of the interviews were quite distressing at times, many of the family members expressed gratitude and were willing to disclose information in an attempt to change corrective services approach.

The overall findings points to a high degree of complexity in family relationships and a multiplicity of needs that are likely to impact on prisoners’ reconnection with their families, and may consequently have an effect on reintegrative outcomes. Perhaps, the acknowledgment of the existence of these intricate dynamics could contribute to the idea that these relationships have areas of strength and growth that need to be further explored and contextualised, and for this to occur family engagement is necessary. As result, an overhauled attitude to prisoners’ family members in their social ecological system needs to follow.
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APPENDIX A

The Sampling of Professionals Interviewed in Study One
Table A.1

*The Sampling of Professionals Interviewed in Study One.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee's profession</th>
<th>Gender, age and professional experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker/Family Counsellor</td>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: early 30’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this role: 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this profession: 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional field: Counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Counsellor</td>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: late 30’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this role: under 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this profession: 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional field: Counsellor/Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development worker</td>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: late 40’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this role: 3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this profession: over 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional field: Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO of non-profit organisation</td>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: 50’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this role: 2.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this profession: 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional field: Mental Health (Alcohol and Other Drugs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist 1</td>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: mid 50’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this role: over 13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working in this profession: over 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional field: Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist 2</td>
<td>Gender: female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age: early 50’s</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gender: Female</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Forensic Psychologist (Stakeholder)</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX B

Ethics Approval
The Endorsement Letter of Deakin Human Research Ethics Committee

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
Human Ethics Research
Office of Research Integrity
Research Services Division
70 Elgar Road Bunwood Victoria
Postal: 221 Bunwood Highway
Bunwood Victoria 3125 Australia
Telephone 03 9251 7123 Facsimile 03 9244 6581
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Memorandum

To: Dr Terry Bartholomew
    School of Psychology

B

cc: Mrs Ana Gabriela Fortunato Costa

From: Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC)

Date: 02 November, 2010

Subject: 2010-212

Heintegration begins at home: exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

Please quote this project number in all future communications

The application for this project was considered at the DU-HREC meeting held on 01/11/2010.

Approval has been given for Mrs Ana Gabriela Fortunato Costa, under the supervision of Dr Terry Bartholomew, School of Psychology, to undertake this project from 1/11/2010 to 1/11/2014.

The approval given by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Human Research Ethics Unit immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- Modifications are requested by other HRECs.

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

DUHREC may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Human Research Ethics Unit
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au
Telephone: 03 9251 7123
The Endorsement Letter of Corrections Victoria

Department of Justice
Corrections Victoria

Level 22
121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone: (03) 8844 6600
Facsimile: (03) 8844 6611
www.justice.vic.gov.au
DX 210085

6 September 2011

Dr Terry Bartholomew
Deakin University
221 Barwood Highway
BURWOOD VIC 3125

Dear Dr Bartholomew

Research Project: Reintegration Begins at Home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

The Corrections Victoria Research Committee has considered your recent application to the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) for approval to undertake research examining the relationship between former prisoners and their families. Corrections Victoria (CV) believes that this research has the potential to result in a better understanding of the transitional phase ex-prisoners experience post release, and the impact this has on family reintegration.

CV is supportive of this research and your application. CV support is conditional on the researcher providing CV with an electronic copy of the summary of research findings and notification of publications arising from the research. As part of the ethics approval process you are also required to submit a summary of your final research report to the JHREC.

If you should need any amendments to your research please advise the Research and Evaluation Unit prior to submission of an amendment request to the JHREC.

If you have any queries regarding this correspondence, please contact Laura Wilson, Research and Evaluation Officer, Research and Evaluation on 8684 6567.

Yours sincerely

Helen Casey
A/Manager, Research and Evaluation

cc: Yasmine Faouzé, Secretariat JHREC
The Endorsement Letter of the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Justice (JHREC)

Department of Justice

Justice Human Research Ethics Committee

Level 21

121 Exhibition Street

Melbourne, Victoria 3000

GPO Box 123A

Melbourne, Victoria 3001

7 November 2011

Dr Terry Bartholomew
Deakin University

Re: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

Dear Dr Terence Bartholomew,

I am happy to inform you that the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) considered the project Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families at its meeting on 25 October 2011 and granted full approval for the duration of the investigation. The Department of Justice reference number for this project is CF/11/20523. Please note the following requirements:

- To confirm JHREC approval sign the Undertaking form attached and provide both an electronic and hardcopy version within ten business days.
- The JHREC is to be notified immediately of any matter that arises that may affect the conduct or continuation of the approved project.
- You are required to provide an Annual Report every 12 months (if applicable) and to provide a completion report at the end of the project (see the Department of Justice Website for the forms).
- Note that for long term/ongoing projects approval is only granted for three years, after which time a completion report is to be submitted and the project renewed with a new application.
- The Department of Justice would also appreciate receiving copies of any relevant publications, papers, theses, conferences presentations or audio-visual materials that result from this research.
- All future correspondence regarding this project must be sent electronically to ethics@justice.vic.gov.au and include the reference number and the project title. Hard
copies of signed documents or original correspondence are to be sent to The Secretary, JHREC, Level 21, 121 Exhibition St, Melbourne, VIC 3000.
If you have any queries regarding this application you are welcome to contact me on (03) 8684 1514 or email: ethics@justice.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Yasmine Fauzee
Secretary, Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee
Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee

UNDERTAKING

Project Title: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

Reference No. CF/11/20523

I acknowledge that I have read the conditions outlined in the current guidelines of the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC), and undertake to abide by them.

Reporting requirements:

- **RE: Amendments**: I will ensure that an Amendment Request Form is submitted to the JHREC if amendments to the project are required (e.g. staff changes, extension of completion date and adjustments to aims/methodology).

- **RE: Amendments**: If my JHREC application included a Department of Justice (DOJ) letter of support, I will advise the DOJ contact officer of proposed amendments before an amendment request is submitted to the JHREC.

- **RE: Annual Reports**: I will ensure that annual reports are provided if my project extends 12 months in duration.

- **RE: Completion Reports**: I will ensure that a completion report is provided at the conclusion of the research.

- **RE: Long term/ Ongoing Projects**: I acknowledge that if my project is an ongoing/long-term project I need to provide a completion report at the end of every three-year period and renew by submitting a new JHREC application.

Name of Principal Researcher: ______________________________________________________

Signed (Principal Researcher): ______________________________________________________

Date:  ______________________________________________________

(Note: please ensure you submit both an electronic and hardcopy of the undertaking form with the original signature)
APPENDIX C

Recruitment Advertisement Addressed to Professionals
To Whom It May Concern

We are researchers in the School of Psychology at Deakin University. We are conducting a project to explore family members’ and former prisoners’ expectations and experiences of prison exit and re-entry into society. We are also interested in the views of those who work with these families. We are seeking volunteers to be interviewed for the study. It is hoped that the information gathered will assist services to bridge the gap between correctional / transitional services and family needs. It may also help to identify and propose services that will be more suited to the family’s needs. You are being asked to take part in the worker interview component of the study.

Worker participants will be asked to meet with a researcher once. The meeting will last for about one hour and will take place at the organisation, at a mutually convenient time. The researcher will ask questions about your views of the experience of family members and former prisoners in seeking employment and accommodation, and issues relating to health and family life after prison release.

Although the researcher who interviews you will know you are an organisation employee, you will not be identifiable in any reports of the results. Although organisation knows that you have been given this invitation, and support the research, they do not wish to influence your decision to participate. Whether you participate or not will have no bearing whatsoever on your relationship with the organisation.

You are free to withdraw from the project at any time. You may also decline to answer any questions at any stage in the project. Withdrawing from the project or declining to answer any question/s will have no consequences for you or your relationship with the organisation.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the attached slip, place it in the enclosed envelope and put it in the box provided on the desk at reception at the organisation. If you need more information before you volunteer, please contact Professor David Mellor or Mrs. Gabriela Costa on the number given below.

Yours sincerely

Professor David Mellor
School of Psychology
Deakin University
Telephone ((03) 9244 3742
Email: david.mellor@deakin.edu.au

Mrs. Gabriela Costa
Doctor of Psychology (Forensic) - Candidate
School of Psychology
Deakin University
Telephone 0423 590 442
Email: agf@deakin.edu.au
Research project

Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

If you are willing to participate, please write your name below and place it in the enclosed envelope and put it in the box provided at the organisation reception desk.

Yes, I am willing to participate in the study of the post-release experience of families.

Name: ...........................................................................................................

Preferred contact details: ...........................................................................

Day and time that would be most suitable for the meeting (e.g., Saturdays at 2.00pm etc.). This interview will last approximately one hour.

...........................................................................................................

Many thanks for considering taking part in this study.
APPENDIX D

The Plain Language Statement and Consent Form Addressed to Professionals
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

Plain Language Statement  - Invitation to Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the Interactive Relationship Between Former Prisoners and their Families’ Participants

Hello

We are a team of researchers from Deakin University. We want to know what are the expectations and experiences of family members and former prisoners during the time of prison release and how it affects people trying to go back into society. In particular, we are interested in issues such as employment, housing, health and family relationships.

We are inviting you to help us in this project by being interviewed about your experience in managing housing, health, employment, family relationship and social connection after the release of a family member.

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign the attached Consent Form.

If you agree to take part, you will have an interview at the organisation and we will ask you about the challenges faced by you and your family member after release. The interview will ask you questions how you feel about these challenges and solutions that you may have found. The interview will also ask you about how successful your family is managing housing, health, employment, family relationship and social connection after the release of a family member.

Ex: What has changed in family life since your family member/partner (or you) returned from jail?

We are also going to ask you if you agree or disagree with some sentences.
Ex. Family members are involved in each other lives.
If a family member under the age of 18 wishes to participate, the parent or guardian will need to sign a consent form.
The time for the interview is about 60 minutes. You can choose not to answer any questions at any time and for any reason. With your permission, the interview will be voiced recorded. Your responses will be written in a Word document.

If you find the interviews to be distressing in any way or for any reason, you are free to withdraw from the interview session or from the project entirely. If you are distressed during the interview, you can see a clinician at the organisation.
If you wish to withdraw participation after the interview is completed, you can send the revocation of consent form attached to this document to Deakin University. Your responses will be removed from the project before the written responses are analysed.
Your participation is **completely voluntary**. If you decide not to participate, this will not affect your relationship with the organisation.

In the results, you will not be identifiable in any way. The research findings will be communicated in general terms and will not contain any identifying information. The written responses and consent forms will be kept in separate locations in a secure location at Deakin University. All information will be kept in a locked cabinet at Deakin University for a minimum period of six years from the date of the final report.

Please **do not** discuss any illegal matters that have not been before the court. If you do so the researcher has a duty to disclose the information.

If you are concerned about the participation in this project, you can also contact the secretary at the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) on 03 8684 1514 and quote **CF/11/20523**

Please ask any of the research team any questions before you sign the consent form. Only sign if you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.
The researchers responsible for this evaluation are listed below. Their address is School of Psychology, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, Vic 3146

Professor David Mellor (03) 9244 3742  david.mellor@deakin.edu.au
Mrs Gabriela Costa: 0423 590 442  agf@deakin.edu.au

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:
The Secretary, Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood 3125, Victoria, Phone 03 9251 7123 or research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

In contacting the Secretary, you will need to provide the name of one of the researchers and quote the project number **2010-212**.

Date:  /02/2012
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families’ Participants

Consent Form

Full Project Title: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families
Reference Number: 2010-212

I have read, or have had read to me, the letter about the research and I understand it.
I agree to take part in this research if it is run as explained in the letter.
I agree that:

- I volunteer to take part in the study.
- I will not be identifiable in any reports.
- The results will be used for research work and in any publications.
- My individual results will not be given to any person.
- There is no punishment for not participating in the study.
- I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- If I withdraw it will happen immediately.
- If I withdraw none of my information will be used.
- I have been given a copy of the letter and this consent form to keep.

Participant’s Name (printed) ..................................................................................................................

Signature ..................................................................................................................................................
Date ........................................................................

Declaration by researcher*: I have given a verbal explanation of the research project, its procedures and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher’s Name (printed): Mrs Gabriela Costa

Signature ..................................................................................................................................................
Date ........................................................................

Note: All parties signing the Consent Form must date their own signature
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families’ Participants

Revocation of Consent Form
(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Full Project Title: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families
Reference Number: 2010-212

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University or the organisation.

Participant’s Name (printed) …………………………………………………………………………………

Signature ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Date ……………………………

Please mail or fax this form to:

Professor David Mellor
School of Psychology
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood Vic 3125
Phone (03) 9244 3742
Fax no. (03) 9244 6858
APPENDIX E

The Interview Protocol Addressed to Professionals
Semi-structured interview (professionals):

Interviewee’s name:

Date of interview:

Interviewee’s professional role:

Time in role:

Prior experience with family clients (nature and length):

Prior experience with forensic clients (nature and length):

1. What do you see as your role with families who have a member returning from prison?

2. In your experience, what are the major challenges for a family when the loved ones are incarcerated?

3. In your experience, what are the major challenges for a family when the loved ones return from incarceration?

4. In your experience, what are the major challenges that ex-prisoners face when returning from incarceration?

5. In your experience, what are the expectations that ex-prisoners place on families during the process of re-entry into the community?

6. In your experience, what are some of the expectations that family members place on ex-prisoners during the process of re-entry into the community?

7. In your experience, what kind of family factors relate to the family’s ability to assist in the ex-prisoner’s re-entry into the community?

8. We define family cohesion as the "emotional bonding that family members have toward one another". There are specific indicators of family cohesion such as emotional bonding, coalitions among family members, time spent with each other, space, friends, decision-making, and interests and recreation. How would you characterize these families in terms of family cohesion?

9. We define family adaptation as "the ability of the marital or family system to change in its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress". How would you characterize these families in terms of family adaptation?
10. We define family communication as “the dynamic component that aids or hinders family movement along with family cohesion and adaptation”. How would you characterize these families in terms of family communication?

11. Do you see any differences in the family functioning (cohesion, adaptation and communication), of families of first time prisoners (first incarceration) and recidivists?

12. In your experience, how do aspects of family cohesion, adaptation and communication contribute to a successful re-entry into the community?

13. In your experience, how do aspects of family cohesion, adaptation and communication reduce the prospect of a successful re-entry into the community?

14. In your experience, are there aspects of a family’s history that contribute to a successful re-entry into the community?

15. In your experience, are there aspects of a family’s history that reduce the chances of a successful re-entry into the community?

16. In your experience, are there aspects of a family’s history that contribute to reoffending?

17. In your experience, how do correctional factors (e.g. time served in prison, parole conditions, etc) affect the family’s ability to assist in the process of re-entry into the community?

18. In your experience, how do correctional demands (such as parole conditions, drug testing etc) affect the family’s capacity to assist the ex-prisoner to attain employment, housing, welfare and/or to seek treatment for mental and physical health?

19. What do you think are the most useful support services that families and ex-prisoners receive during the processes of prison exit and community re-entry? (Corrections, Mental Health/AOD, Welfare, Housing, etc.)

20. Could you identify any key areas of unmet need in relation to prisoner return to the community?

21. What does the term reintegration mean to you?

22. In your opinion, how does reintegration relate to rehabilitation?

23. In your opinion, how is reintegration different to rehabilitation?

24. What constitutes a successful reintegration in your opinion?

25. What are the biggest challenges you face when doing this type of work with families/ex-prisoners?

26. Any other comments or queries?
APPENDIX F

The Interview Protocol Addressed to the Family System
Semi-structured interview (family system):

**FAMILY BACKGROUND:**

Date of interview:

Interviewee’s names ___________________________ age: ____________

Interviewee’s names ___________________________ age: ____________

Interviewee’s names ___________________________ age: ____________

Interviewee relationships with ex-prisoner:

(a) mother (b) father (c) partner (d) Child/biological (e) step child

Current living arrangements of ex-prisoner?

(a) alone (d) with others

(b) with parents (e) with Children

(c) with partners (f) with partner and

children

A) About the family system:

1. What were the major challenges that your family faced when (your family member) had to go to prison?

2. How long has your family member been in prison? Was his/her first time in prison? (If **first timer, skip question 5**). How long have they been back in the community?

3. Was this release easier or harder for you/your family? Why?

4. How would you say that your family gets along with each other?

5. Was this situation different when your family member or you were in jail?

B) About the time of incarceration:

6. If you received help, what kind of assistance do you think was most helpful at that moment? What kind of assistance you think was least helpful?
7. How frequently did family members get to visit your (family member)? Tell me about your experience of family visits?
8. How do you feel that you and your family member maintained connection during the time of incarceration?

C) About the time of pre and post release:
9. Tell me what kind of things you were hoping to achieve when your family member (or you) was about to be released from prison.

10. Have you talked to your (family member/ex-prisoner) about your expectations after release? If yes, tell me about it. If not. Why not?
11. What in fact happened after release? How was the transition between prison and community for your family (for you).
12. What were the major challenges your family faced when (the ex-prisoner) returned from prison?
13. Did your family (or you) receive any help during prison exit? (In terms of relationship, housing, employment and mental health). Who helped your family (or you)?
14. What kind of help do you find most useful during prison exit? What kind of help do you find least useful? Why?
15. How do you think services (Corrections, Mental Health, Welfare and Housing) could better help your family members (or you) during the transition from prison into the community?
16. Does your family member (or you) have to comply with any order or parole conditions? If yes.
17. Question addressed to family: How is this order or parole condition affecting your family life?

Question addressed to ex-prisoner: How has this order or parole condition been affecting your capacity to get a job? And how about to get accommodation? And how about mental health, or substance abuse treatment?

18. How was it for you and the rest of the family when your (the ex-prisoner) returned from jail? Tell me about how your family adapted to this situation.
19. How do you see you role as a family member in the transition from prison into the community?
20. What does the term reintegration mean to you?

21. *To the ex-prisoner:* What would it take for you to feel reintegrated?

22. Is anything else you’d like to say about this process of prison entry and release?

Thank you
APPENDIX G

Item Numbers of Balanced Cohesion and Flexibility Scales and Unbalanced
Disengaged, Enmeshed, Rigid and Chaotic Scales.
FACES IV Scales with Item Numbers

Two Balanced Scales

 Balanced Cohesion

1. Family members are involved in each others lives.
7. Family members feel very close to each other.
13. Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times.
19. Family members consult other family members on important decisions.
25. Family members like to spend some of their free time with each other.
31. Although family members have individual interests, they still participate in family activities.
37. Our family has a good balance of separateness and closeness.

 Balanced Flexibility

2. Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.
8. Parents equally share leadership in our family.
14. Discipline is fair in our family.
20. My family is able to adjust to change when necessary.
26. We shift household responsibilities from person to person.
32. We have clear rules and roles in our family.
38. When problems arise, we compromise.

Four Unbalanced Scales

Disengaged

3. We get along better with people outside our family than inside.
9. Family members seem to avoid contact with each other when at home.
15. Family members know very little about the friends of other family members.
21. Family members are on their own when there is a problem to be solved.
27. Our family seldom does things together.
33. Family members seldom depend on each other.
39. Family members mainly operate independently.

Enmeshed

4. We spend too much time together.
10. Family members feel pressured to spend most free time together.
16. Family members are too dependent on each other.
22. Family members have little need for friends outside the family.
28. We feel too connected to each other.
34. We resent family members doing things outside the family.
40. Family members feel guilty if they want to spend time away from the family.

Rigid

5. There are strict consequences for breaking the rules in our family.
11. There are clear consequences when a family member does something wrong.
17. Our family has a rule for almost every possible situation.
23. Our family is highly organized.
29. Our family becomes frustrated when there is a change in our plans or routines.
35. It is important to follow the rules in our family.
41. Once a decision is made, it is very difficult to modify that decision.

Chaotic

6. We never seem to get organized in our family.
12. It is hard to know who the leader is in our family.
18. Things do not get done in our family.
24. It is unclear who is responsible for things (chores, activities) in our family.
30. There is no leadership in our family.
36. Our family has a hard time keeping track of who does various household tasks.

Our family feels hectic and disorganized.
APPENDIX H

Percentile Scores and Levels of Balanced and Unbalanced Scales
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<th>Cohesion Percentile Score</th>
<th>Balanced Scale: Level</th>
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<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>Very High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX I

The Family Communication Items
Family Communication Items

42. Family members are satisfied with how they communicate with each other.
43. Family members are very good listeners.
44. Family members express affection to each other.
45. Family members are able to ask each other for what they want.
46. Family members can calmly discuss problems with each other.
47. Family members discuss their ideas and beliefs with each other.
48. When family members ask questions of each other, they get honest answers.
49. Family members try to understand each other’s feelings.
50. When angry, family members seldom say negative things about each other.
51. Family members express their true feelings to each other.
APPENDIX J

The Family Communication Interpretation Score
Table J1

*Family Communication: Interpretation of Scores.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage and Levels</th>
<th>Family Communication</th>
<th>Family Communication Raw</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very High 86-99%</strong></td>
<td>Family members feel very positive about the quality and quantity of their family communication.</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>49</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>High 61-85%</strong></td>
<td>Family members feel good about their family communication and have few concerns.</td>
<td>43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Moderate 36-60%</strong></td>
<td>Family members feel generally good about their family communication, but have some concerns.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Low 21-35%</strong></td>
<td>Family members have several concerns about the quality of their family communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Very Low 10-20%</strong></td>
<td>Family members have many concerns about the quality of their family communication.</td>
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APPENDIX K

The Family Satisfaction Items
Family Satisfaction Items

52. The degree of closeness between family members.

53. Your family's ability to cope with stress.

54. Your family's ability to be flexible.

55. Your family's ability to share positive experiences.

56. The quality of communication between family members.

57. Your family's ability to resolve conflicts.

58. The amount of time you spend together as a family.

59. The way problems are discussed.

60. The fairness of criticism in your family.

61. Family members concern for each other.
APPENDIX L

The Family Satisfaction Interpretation Scores
Table L1

*Family Satisfaction: Interpretation of Scores*

<table>
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<th>Percentage and Levels</th>
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<td>Family members are very satisfied and really enjoy most aspects of their family.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High 61-85%</td>
<td>Family members are satisfied with most aspects of their family.</td>
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<td>Family members are somewhat satisfied and enjoy some aspects of their family.</td>
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<td>Very Low 10-20%</td>
<td>Family members are very dissatisfied and are concerned about their family.</td>
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APPENDIX M

A Sample of the FACES IV Revised to Adapt to the Participants’ Need
FACES IV: Questionnaire

Directions to Family Members:

1. All family members over the age 12 can complete FACES IV.

2. Family members should complete the survey independently, not consulting or discussing their responses until they have been completed.

3. The sentences will be read to the participants. Please, tick the box with the most suitable answer.

4. We are interested to know how your family communicates to each other, how close you are and how the family adapts to life stresses.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Generally Disagree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Generally Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. Family members are involved in each others lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Our family tries new ways of dealing with problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. We get along better with people outside our family than inside.</td>
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<td>4. We spend too much time together.</td>
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<td>5. There are strict consequences for breaking the rules in our family.</td>
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<td>6. We never seem to get organized in our family.</td>
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<td>7. Family members feel very close to each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Parents equally share leadership in our family.</td>
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<td>9. Family members seem to avoid contact with each other when at home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Family members feel pressured to spend most free time together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. There are clear consequences when a family member does something wrong.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. It is hard to know who the leader is in our family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Family members are supportive of each other during difficult times.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Discipline is fair in our family.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
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<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Generally Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Family members know very little about the friends of other family members.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Family members are too dependent on each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Our family has a rule for almost every possible situation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Things do not get done in our family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Family members consult other family members on important decisions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. My family is able to adjust to change when necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Family members are on their own when there is a problem to be solved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22. Family members have little need for friends outside the family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Our family is highly organized.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. It is not clear who is responsible for things (chores, activities) in our family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25. Family members like to spend some of their free time with each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. We change household duties from person to person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Our family hardly does things together.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28. We feel too connected to each other</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Generally Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Generally Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Our family becomes frustrated when there is a change in our plans or routines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. There is no leadership in our family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Although family members have individual interests, they still participating in family activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. We have clear rules and roles in our family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Family members hardly depend on each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. We dislike family members doing things outside the family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. It is important to follow the rules in our family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Our family has a hard time keeping track of who does various household tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Our family has a good balance of separation and closeness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. When problems happen, we cooperate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Family members mostly operate independently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Family members feel guilty if they want to spend time away from the family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Once a decision is made, it is very difficult to change that decision.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Generally Disagree</td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>Generally Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Our family feels hectic and disorganized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Family members are pleased with how they communicate with each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Family members are very good listeners.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Family members show affection to each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Family members are able to ask each other for what they want.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Family members can calmly discuss problems with each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Family members discuss their ideas and beliefs with each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>When family members ask questions of each other, they get honest answers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Family members try to understand each other’s feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>When angry, family members barely say negative things about each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Family members say their true feelings for each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with:</td>
<td>Very Unsatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat Satisfied</td>
<td>Generally Satisfied</td>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>Extremely Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. The level of closeness between family members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Your family’s ability to cope with stress.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>55. Your family’s ability to be flexible.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>56. Your family’s ability to share positive experiences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>57. The quality of communication between family members.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>58. Your family’s ability to solve conflicts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>59. The amount of time you spend together as a family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60. The way problems are discussed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. The honesty in disapproval in your family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Family members concern for each other.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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APPENDIX N

Invitation Letter Addressed to Family Members
Dear ………………………………..,

We are researchers from the School of Psychology at Deakin University. We are conducting a project to explore family members’ and ex prisoners’ expectations and experiences of prison exit and re-entry into society.

We are seeking volunteers to be interviewed for this research project. The aim of the study is to find out how the family experienced the return of a family member from prison. The information could help organisations identify and suggest services that will be more suited to families' needs.

People who agree to take part will be asked to meet with a researcher once for an informal interview. The meeting will take approximately one hour. The researcher will ask questions about your experiences with issues such as employment, housing, health and family life. All family members are welcome to participate in the interview, including children over the age of 13. It would be up to your family to decide who wants to come along.

Even though the researcher who interviews you will know that you attend your organisation for assistance, your name and details will not be included in anything we publish. The findings of the project will be reported in general terms; no individual will be identified, or able to be identified.

Although your organisation knows that you have been given this invitation and supports the research, they do not wish to influence your decision to participate. Whether you participate or not will not affect your relationship with your organisation whatsoever. You will be free to withdraw from the project at any time. You may also decline to answer any questions at any stage during the project. Withdrawing from the project or declining to answer any question/s will have no consequences for you or your relationship with your organisation.
The family unit will receive a **40-dollar gift or petrol voucher** as compensation for their time.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the attached slip and put it in the reply paid envelope and post it to us. If you need more information before you volunteer, please contact Prof David Mellor or Mrs Gabriela Costa on the number below.

Please be aware that you **should not** discuss any illegal activity that has not been before the court during the project. If you do so, the researcher has a duty to disclose the information to the authorities.

If you are concerned about participating in this project, you can also contact the secretary at the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) on (03) 8684 1514 and quote **CF/11/20523**.

Yours sincerely,

Professor David Mellor
School of Psychology
Deakin University
Telephone: (03) 9244 3742
Email: david.mello@deakin.edu.au

Mrs Gabriela Costa
Doctor of Psychology (Forensic) - Candidate
School of Psychology Deakin University
Telephone: 0423 590 442
Email: agf@deakin.edu.au
Research project

Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

We will meet to discuss the project and if you are happy to go ahead, we will conduct the interview. If you decide you want more time to think about it, you can meet me at another time. You are free to withdraw at any stage.

If you are willing to participate, please write your name below and put this form in the reply paid envelope and post it to us.

Name: ............................................................................................................................

Preferred contact details:
..........................................................................................................................

Day and time that would be most suitable for a meeting.

Monday – Tuesday – Wednesday – Thursday - Friday

Time: ............ am / pm

Many thanks for considering taking part.
APPENDIX O

The Plain Language Statement and Consent Form Addressed to Family Members
Hello

We are a team of researchers from Deakin University. We want to know what are the expectations and experiences of family members and former prisoners during the time of prison release and how it affects people trying to go back into society. In particular, we are interested in issues such as employment, housing, health and family relationships.

We are inviting you to help us in this project by being interviewed about your experience in managing housing, health, employment, family relationship and social connection after the release of a family member.

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to sign the attached Consent Form.

If you agree to take part, you will have an interview at the organisation and we will ask you about the challenges faced by you and your family member after release. The interview will ask you questions how you feel about these challenges and solutions that you may have found. The interview will also ask you about how successful your family is managing housing, health, employment, family relationship and social connection after the release of a family member.

Ex: What has changed in family life since your family member/partner (or you) returned from jail?

We are also going to ask you if you agree or disagree with some sentences.

Ex. Family members are involved in each other lives.
If a family member under the age of 18 wishes to participate, the parent or guardian will need to sign a consent form.

The time for the interview is about 60 minutes. You can choose not to answer any questions at any time and for any reason. With your permission, the interview will be voiced recorded. Your responses will be written in a Word document.

If you find the interviews to be distressing in any way or for any reason, you are free to withdraw from the interview session or from the project entirely. If you are distressed during the interview, you can see a clinician at the organisation.
If you wish to withdraw participation after the interview is completed, you can send the revocation of consent form attached to this document to Deakin University. Your responses will be removed from the project before the written responses are analysed.

Your participation is **completely voluntary.** If you decide not to participate, this will not affect your relationship with the organisation.

In the results, you will not be identifiable in any way. The research findings will be communicated in general terms and will not contain any identifying information. The written responses and consent forms will be kept in separate locations in a secure location at Deakin University. All information will be kept in a locked cabinet at Deakin University for a minimum period of six years from the date of the final report.

Please do not discuss any illegal matters that have not been before the court. If you do so the researcher has a duty to disclose the information.

If you are concerned about the participation in this project, you can also contact the secretary at the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) on 03 8684 1514 and quote **CF/11/20523**

Please ask any of the research team any questions before you sign the consent form. Only sign if you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers. The researchers responsible for this evaluation are listed below. Their address is School of Psychology, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, Vic 3146

Professor David Mellor (03) 9244 3742  david.mellor@deakin.edu.au
Mrs Gabriela Costa: 0423 590 442  agf@deakin.edu.au

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

    The Secretary, Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood 3125, Victoria, Phone 03 9251 7123 or research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

In contacting the Secretary, you will need to provide the name of one of the researchers and quote the project number **2010-212.**

Date:  /02/2012
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families’ Participants

Consent Form

Full Project Title: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families
Reference Number: 2010-212

I have read, or have had read to me, the letter about the research and I understand it. I agree to take part in this research if it is run as explained in the letter. I agree that:

- I volunteer to take part in the study.
- I will not be identifiable in any reports.
- The results will be used for research work and in any publications.
- My individual results will not be given to any person.
- There is no punishment for not participating in the study.
- I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- If I withdraw it will happen immediately.
- If I withdraw none of my information will be used.
- I have been given a copy of the letter and this consent form to keep.

Participant’s Name (printed) ........................................................................................................

Signature ..............................................................................................................
Date ..........................................

Declaration by researcher*: I have given a verbal explanation of the research project, its procedures and risks and I believe that the participant has understood that explanation.

Researcher's Name (printed): Mrs Gabriela Costa

Signature ..............................................................................................................
Date ..........................................

Note: All parties signing the Consent Form must date their own signature
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families’ Participants

Revocation of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Full Project Title: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families
Reference Number: 2010-212

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University or the organisation.

Participant’s Name (printed) .................................................................

Signature .................................................................
Date ......................

Please mail or fax this form to:
Professor David Mellor
School of Psychology
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood Vic 3125
Phone (03) 9244 3742
Fax no. (03) 9244 6858
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Parents or guardians of minor children participating in the project Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

Third Party Consent Form

(To be used by parents/guardians of minor children, or carers/guardians consenting on behalf of adult participants who do not have the capacity to give informed consent)

Full Project Title: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families
Reference Number: 2010-212

I have read, and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.
I give my permission for ..............................................................(name of participant) to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.
The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant’s Name (printed) .................................................................

Name of Person giving Consent (printed) ............................................

Relationship to Participant: ...............................................................

Signature ................................................................. ............................

Date .................................................................
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND ASSENT FORM

An Invitation to Participate in Research

Title of project: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families

Dear ........ my name is Gabriela Costa and I am studying Psychology at Deakin University in Australia. I have a teacher there called Terry.

I am doing a project for my studies. I want to learn about what happened in your family when (dad/mum/stepdad/stepmother) came back home after being apart from your family. I want to learn how your family is getting along with each other after being apart for so long. I hope this will help me to understand more about how your family felt about having a loved one coming back home.

You are invited to take part in this research project because you are part of the family and I am sure you will have important things to say.

I am going to meet with your family for one hour. I will ask questions about how is your life with (dad/mum/stepdad/stepmother) after being apart for so long and I will record your answers. If your are older than 12 year old, I will ask you to rate some questions about how your family talk with each other.

I will not put your name on any information I collect. I will give you a false name so no one will know who you are. The tape will be only listened by my teacher from Deakin University and I. All the information about you and your family will be kept in a locked cupboard. Later when I write about what I have learned, I will give what I wrote to the organisation. I will give everyone false names so no one will know who they really are.

You do not have to join in this project. If you don’t want to, you can tell your parents or me, and we will not have a problem with your decision. But if you decide to join in, it is OK to change your mind and choose not to take part any more. You can do this at any time. If you do change your mind, you can tell your parents, or me. I won’t ask any questions about why you changed your mind, and there will be no consequences. If you decide not to take part, you can leave the room at anytime. No audio recordings of you will be used in my project at any time. If you feel worried about the project at any time, or have any questions, you can talk to me, or your parents.

Thank you for thinking about helping me to find out more about your family life. If you are willing to take part, talk it over with your parents who will also have received a letter from me. Please sign the assent form attached to this letter.

Mrs. Gabriela Costa
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND ASSENT FORM

Assent Form

Title of project: Reintegration begins at home: Exploring the interactive relationship between former prisoners and their families.

I understand the information letter given to me and I would like to participate in Mrs. Gabriela project.

Participant’s Name (printed) .................................................................

Signature .................................................................

Date .................................
APPENDIX P

Family Types and the Cohesion, Flexibility, and Circumplex Total Ratios
Table P1

*Table of Six Family Types – Cohesion Ratio, Flexibility Ratio, and Circumplex Total Ratio.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Type</th>
<th>Cohesion Ratio (1)</th>
<th>Flexibility Ratio (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balanced Cohesion</td>
<td>Disengaged Cohesion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>27/38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigidly Balanced</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>39/58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midrange</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55/53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbalanced</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>76/44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaotically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disengaged</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>81/44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbalanced</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>38/69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:*

(1) Cohesion Ratio = Balanced Cohesion / (Disengaged + Enmeshed / 2).
(2) Flexibility Ratio = Balanced Flexibility / (Rigid + Chaotic / 2).
(3) Circumplex Total Ratio = Cohesion Ratio + Flexibility Ratio / 2 or (Balanced Cohesion + Balanced Flexibility / Enmeshed + Rigid + Chaotic / 4).