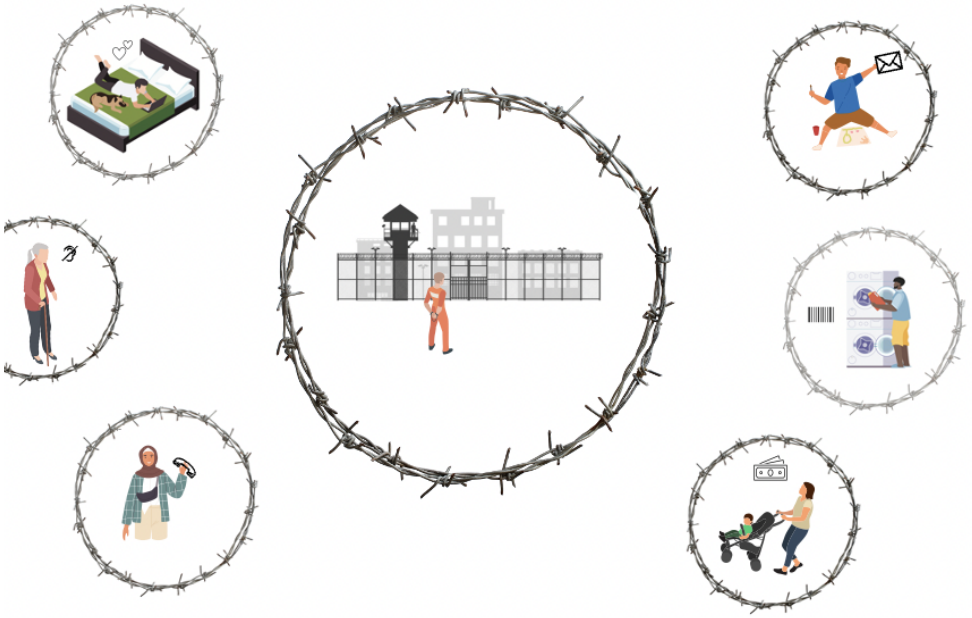
Carceral Ricochet:

Loved ones in the shadows of Canadian prisons and jails

EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF INCARCERATED PERSONS IN CANADA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY



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SSHRC CRSH

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While the seed was planted long ago, my privileged position as a criminology professor and researcher at the University of Ottawa made this project possible. I owe the courage to undertake this research to Melissa Beaulieu, who first visited my office in 2016. Together, we decided to confront our family baggage. I will be forever grateful for her enthusiasm which kick-started this research.

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The raison d'être of this research is to relay the voices of those who are living or who have lived through a loved one's incarceration. No acknowledgement will suffice to express my gratitude to everyone who chose to share their lives and experiences with the hope of making their realities known, understood and thus generate change for the betterment of others. I am in awe that between your family and work obligations, health concerns and prison visits you have found the time and energy to participate in these interviews. Thank you for your generosity.

Research Objectives

While imprisonment is legally conceived and recognized as an individual's sentence, the scientific literature has found that an extended carceral experience exists (Touraut, 2012). Within this carceral extension, family members of incarcerated persons are subject to a "sentence," which affects their material and social realities. Our research aims to explore the various challenges that family members of incarcerated people in Canada face. How do family members cope with the constraints imposed by both federal and provincial carceral institutions?

This research explores how penal sanctions surpass their physical, legal, and social boundaries. To do so, we have developed the following research objectives:

- Document the diverse manifestations of prison sentences in the lives of family members of incarcerated people. We wish to identify and understand the social, organizational, practical, relational, and identity-related challenges that family members face due to the material and symbolic effects of a loved one's incarceration.
- Identify how family members of incarcerated people manage and/or overcome the challenges they encounter. We wish to analyze the various strategies that family members employ, whilst mobilizing their resources and supports, to manage the collateral consequences of incarceration.
- Understand how family members manage the potential stigma they may experience in their daily lives. In understanding these challenges and the ways in which family members cope with them, we wish to analyze the diverse identity-related strategies that family members employ to manage stigma within their various social spheres (work, school, extended family, etc.)
- Reconceptualize how incarceration impacts relationships and communities. In analyzing our findings, we reflect upon incarceration's ripple effects and the stigma associated with it. Carceral punishment is conceptualized as an individual and collective process of vulnerability and exclusion for people deprived of their liberties.

This research contributes to breaking the social invisibility that characterizes the loved ones of incarcerated persons, an important but overlooked segment of the Canadian population. We aim to compensate for a flagrant lack of discourse surrounding the sometimes taboo lived realities, which are too often neglected by researchers and political actors, and are generally unknown to the public. In focusing on the experiences of prisoners' relatives from their perspectives, this research aims to provide a safe space for loved ones to

share their experiences with the academic community and thus raise awareness among the public and decision-makers with an intention for change.

Research Methodology

After obtaining an ethics approval certificate from the University of Ottawa's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (N051616), we recruited participants using diverse and indirect strategies. We identified and contacted multiple community organizations within Quebec and Ontario working directly with our population of study, such as the Canadian Families and Corrections Network, Mothers Offering Mutual Support (MOMS), Continuité Famille Auprès des Détenus (CFAD) et Relais Famille. We also identified and contacted community organizations within Quebec and Ontario, such as Alter Justice, who deal with broader issues affecting our population of study. We received an incredibly positive response from these community partners, all of whom disseminated our recruitment flyers internally and on their social media platforms (websites, Facebook, etc.) (See the recruitment poster in the appendices).

We conducted 16 interviews with 17 family members in 2016-2017 during the first phase of the research. This exploratory phase allowed us to define and focus on our research objectives and establish guidelines for our analysis. Following the reception of a SSHRC grant, we were able to conduct an additional 25 interviews with 26 new participants[1] between August 2018 and October 2019. We also took it upon ourselves to contact all past participants in May 2020 to find out how the COVID-19 pandemic was affecting them and their criminalized relatives; 8 participants agreed to participate in follow-up interviews.

Interviews were conducted in French and English in 2 provinces: Quebec and Ontario. These two provinces, representing nearly 62% of the country's population in a relatively small geographic area, have allowed us to access a diverse population. Apart from 3 interviews conducted by Skype or telephone, all initial interviews were conducted in person at participants' chosen locations (public place, participants' homes, or the researcher's office at the university). The follow-up interviews regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in May 2020 were all carried out by telephone or video conferencing apps. All interviews lasted an average of 98 minutes.

Interview Location	**Quebec**	**Ontario**
Number of Participants	**16**	**25**

The research was carried out using a random sample; we interviewed everyone who responded to our call for participation. We did not refuse anyone who wished to participate, nor did we ascertain whether potential participants met our research criteria during the first telephone contact[2]. The researcher only became aware of the respondent's personal

characteristics and specific elements during the interview itself. Beyond the geographic criterion (Ontario/Quebec) previously mentioned, our sample reflects spontaneous diversification criteria.

The first diversification criterion is relational; we interviewed people with diverse intimate and/or family ties to someone who is or has been incarcerated in Canada. Parents, specifically mothers of prisoners, make up the majority of our sample. The other participants are siblings, spouses, children over the age of 18, uncles and aunts, and grandparents.

Relationship with the incarcerated person[3]	**Parents**	**Children**	**Spouses**	**Other extended family members**
Number of participants	**25**	**7**	**7**	**6**

While the genders of participants and their criminalized relatives were not retained as a criterion for diversification, it should be noted that except for 4 participants, all participants were women.

Participant Genders	**Women**	**Men**
Number of participants	**39**	**4**

The second diversification criterion is location: the provinces in which incarceration occurred. In some cases, individuals were incarcerated in more than one province.

Location of Incarceration[4]	**Quebec**	**Ontario**	**Other Provinces**
Number of Inmates	**17**	**27**	**3**

Prisoners, whose loved ones participated in this research, were previously or currently detained in provincial jails (12), federal penitentiaries (15) or both types of institutions (14).

Types of Institutions[5]	Provincial Institutions	Federal Institutions	Provincial and Federal Institutions
Number of Inmates	**11**	**15**	**15**

This was a first experience for some participants, whereas others had lived through their relatives' multiple incarcerations.

Number of Times a Relative was Incarcerated	First Incarceration	Multiple Incarcerations
Number of participants	**21**	**18**

A majority of the people we met testified after their relatives had been released from jail or prison.

Incarceration Status at the Time of the Interview[6]	Detained	Released
Number of participants	**19**	**24**

We acknowledge that this study's participants are not representative of all individuals who have loved ones incarcerated in Canada. It is particularly noteworthy that our sample does not reflect the over-representation of Indigenous and Black people in the Canadian prison system.

Our research is based on the testimonies of those who voluntarily responded to our call for participation. Our means of recruitment (posters, organizations and social media) resulted in an initial selection bias; only relatives in contact with the organizations requested, frequenting billboards or connected to certain social networks were exposed to/aware of our call for participation. It is also reasonable to assume that various factors such as availability, ease of expression (language barriers), confidence in researchers, desire for change, and the need to testify, etc. influenced the decision to participate, which is inevitably influenced by individual experiences and socio-demographic characteristics.

Overview of the Literature

While the literature has extensively analyzed the institution's and incarcerated person's perspectives of the prison experience, few studies have focused on the effects of incarceration on prisoners' friends and family members. This research project situates itself within an internationally underdeveloped scientific literature, which is almost non-existent in Canada. Apart from Hannem's (2008) thesis, no study carried out in a Canadian context has attempted to holistically describe and analyze the experiences of individuals related to those who have been deprived of their liberty. Our study's research approach also sets it apart from the only other Canadian study on this issue, the Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN), which was published over 15 years ago in 2003. This report remains a strategic document to guide policy without analytical and theoretical aims.

Despite the long-established relationship between family support and the reintegration of incarcerated persons, the effects of incarceration on relatives were largely ignored by researchers until the mid-1990s. The social invisibility (Lehalle, 2017) of relatives during sentencing means that they are seen by the Canadian penal system as "collateral or indirect" damage (De Saussure, 2019) or even "social costs" (Pires, Landreville & Blankevoort, 1981, in Ricordeau, 2008). The literature on relatives of prisoners is rarely Canadian and is generally devoted to a specific aspect of the experience of relatives of prisoners. Specifically, this literature has often focused on:

- The material consequences of incarceration and the economic insecurity of households that experience reductions in resources and increase in expenses (Ricordeau 2008; Hannem, 2012; Touraut, 2012; Schwartz-Soicher, Geller & Garfinkel, 2011; Lehalle & Beaulieu, 2019);
- The psychological and physical consequences (Hannem et Leonardi, 2014; Touraut, 2012; Turney, Schnittker & Wilderman, 2012);
- The relational consequences of incarceration and notably, the stigmatization that it elicits (Hannem, 2008, 2012; Ricordeau, 2008; Touraut, 2012). In Canada, a handful of master's theses have studied parents' (Magnan, 2011) and spouses' (Arseneault, 1986; McCuaig, 2007) experiences. Other researchers have centred their analyses on incarceration's impact on couples' intimacy and sexuality (Cardon, 2002; Comfort et al., 2005; Vacheret, 2005; Ricordeau, 2012). Finally, a recent Canadian study explored the lack of support and programs in Canadian public policies to assist the children of detained persons (Knudsen, 2019).
- The temporal aspect of prison sentences and how relatives also live these sentences (Ricordeau, 2019b); and
- The emotional and behavioural impacts that a parent's incarceration has on their children (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999) including their children's potential for future criminality (Tasca, Rodriguez & Zatz, 2011; Dallaire, 2007; Ricordeau, 2019b).

This relatively new literature reveals that the ways in which detainees' families experience incarceration is difficult in nature, especially during their contact with the carceral institutions. The various physical and institutional barriers put in place in detention facilities, as well as outside of them, are problematic and discourage families and friends from visiting their relatives in detention (Christian, 2005; Touraut, 2012). Although visits are described as the best way for families to maintain relationships with detained persons, European research denounces the difficulties in obtaining visitation rights and the administrative burden of the institutional regulations and policies (Touraut, 2012; Ricordeau, 2019a). Further, two Canadian studies report the negative consequences of ion scanners technology use on relatives of people detained in Canadian penitentiaries (see Garneau & Lehalle, 2021; MacKenzie, 2019). Research in Europe and the United States also shows that institution staff attitudes are characterized by apparent disdain and lack of respect towards inmates' loved ones (Cox, 2019; Ricordeau, 2019). In light of these difficulties, some studies highlight the importance of support groups from which some people seek help and information to cope with this hardship (Cox, 2019).

This literature, most often foreign and focused on one or more aspects of loved ones' experiences, has informed and guided our holistic research in the Canadian context.

Research Results

CONTEXT: FAMILY MEMBERS' REAL OR IMAGINED FEAR OF PRISON

Participants' experiences are characterized by unique realities, which result directly from their contact with the carceral system, and which will be explored and developed in this research report. It is worth noting in this preamble that family members' emotional connections with their detained relatives largely shape their prison-related experiences. The pains of imprisonment are thus shared by virtue of the relationships between family members and detainees. The phrase, "his suffering becomes my suffering," reveals that certain relatives feel as though they "serve time with" the incarcerated person. To this effect, participants suffer from the knowledge that their loved ones have not only lost their liberties but that they are also hungry and cold, they live and sleep in fear, they are humiliated, they must wear orange jumpsuits and sleep without pillows, they do not receive newspapers or postcards, and they frequently have their belongings thrown out or forgotten when they are transferred between prisons. These non-exhaustive examples illustrate how the all-encompassing and totalitarian nature of the prison extends into social and domestic life spheres.

Family members suffer from what they know about the prison, but they understand they do not know everything. Prisoners only "sometimes" share their difficult experiences with their family members, who must then deal with the uncertainty of not knowing the true extent of their detained relatives' realities. To understand their incarcerated relative's experience, family members are often reduced to relying on the prisoner's non-verbal expressions, physical effects on the body, and words spoken or unspoken. These observations may serve to appease family members at times, but more often to exacerbate their fears of the prison, an environment about which they know little or nothing. A collective imagination, perhaps more sinister than the institution itself, sometimes feeds these perceived or communicated indicators. When imagining the prison, as portrayed in the media, loved ones' minds are invaded by various fears.

Participants' testimonies reveal that they are omnipresently preoccupied with their incarcerated loved ones: are they eating enough? Are they safe? Are they receiving adequate care? Are they suicidal? Most participants confirm that they have felt genuinely scared for their incarcerated loved one's physical integrity and security. It matters little whether family members' fears are well-founded or not, given that they feel and experience these fears to such a significant degree. In many respects, family members' experiences can be analyzed as a sounding board for or reflection of the pains of imprisonment, which overflow from prison walls and onto the intermediary: the family member who "knows, feels and guesses," and who often "fears" the worst. In this context, relatives are subject to their own prison system experience.

Retrieved from Lehalle, S. (2019). Les sens et non-sens de la peine infligée à l'entourage des personnes détenues, in D. Bernard et K. Ladd (dir.), *Les sens de la peine*, Bruxelles : Presses de l'Université Saint-Louis, 32 p.

I. FACING THE PRISON SYSTEM AND SECURITY LOGIC AS A FAMILY MEMBER

The prison's security structure influences and impacts all those who find themselves in contact with it, whether directly or indirectly. As such, family members of incarcerated people are no exception. This section discusses various correctional practices and politics, and their direct and indirect effects on family members: the communication of information, goods that relatives can or cannot provide to their incarcerated loved ones, telephone procedures, postal service, and ways in which family members must register as visitors. The visitation issue is addressed in-depth, by detailing the different control and admission procedures that family members must go through, as well as the various types of visits permitted in detention facilities. Given that intermediaries such as correctional personnel most often facilitate family members' communication with the prison, we will then explore participants' relationships with correctional staff, focusing on the aspects that participants deemed most important to them. Finally, this chapter will conclude by discussing the prison system's limitations and shortcomings, as identified in participants' testimonies.

1. The effects of correctional policies and practices on family members

Family members who choose to maintain contact with and provide support for their incarcerated relatives must learn to understand and submit to numerous institutional rules and regulations. Rosalyne's[1] testimony illustrates diverse themes, which will be analyzed in the following sections.

> *He sensed that the battery in his hearing aid was about to fail. So he called me and said, "Look, go to this place with this battery number for my hearing aid and bring it to the reception desk." The next morning, at 9:00 a.m., I was at the store opening to get his battery because he wouldn't hear at all. Then, I go to [the prison], carry the small bag with the battery. "Oh no, ma'am, it doesn't work like that." I said, "But how does it work?" "It's the prison nurse who will judge if your son needs his battery." And here I am, a kind of answer that is totally illogical for me, that it is the prison nurse who will judge whether or not he needs his battery for his hearing aid. [...] "Your son has to go to the nurse with his device and his battery, and then your son will call you back when he has seen the nurse to give you the procedure." I said, so I was naive because sometimes I'm naive, "So he sees the nurse today?" "Oh no ma'am, it's by appointment. I said, "But when is he going to see the nurse?" "I can't answer that, ma'am. And the person who is at the reception, she can't give me an answer because there is no communication, there is no coherence between all these people who manage a building. So, she, she doesn't have the information, she can't give it to me... I said, "Is my son going to be informed that he has to re-communicate with me, after seeing the nurse?" "I don't know ma'am" [...] It's very big there. It's very hard to take, it's hard to deal with. Very*

[1] For the purpose of this report, some quotes have been translated from French to English by the researcher.

> *difficult. When I got into my car, honestly, from prison, I started to cry and I said, "Come on, it doesn't make sense. He won't hear anything." So, how many days will it last [...] he couldn't hear anything and you know, going out, coming in from your cell, coming to eat, not eating, listening to television when you are deaf. So, he too had to live through some moments. So, he calls me back 48 hours later [...] So I go back and I ask the person "Is my son going to get his battery today?" "No ma'am, we have to check here to see what's in your bag that you're giving us." I said "So how many days?" He went like this: "7 days." [...] So, this is something you don't know, you don't know how, [or] why.*
>
> *-Rosalyne, mother.*

A. Access to information

Participants provided a unanimous account regarding the lack of information that the correctional system has made accessible and available to them.

> *As for the internet, the sites are not up to date, we call, we never get an answer. It is almost unimaginable.*
>
> *- Zora, mother.*
>
> *I am someone who is structured and organized. So the first question I ask the officer is: do you have a booklet that explains how the prison works for us? The contact visits, the visits in the trailers, whatever. What is your protocol for visitors, detailed. He says, "Oh, we don't have that." So I say, "Well, you must have someone who explains the sizes of the pictures, how many, what is this, what is that. What you can send, what you can't send." It's always nebulous.*
>
> *-Normand, father.*

Family members must discover the detention facility's operating protocols and procedures, what is prohibited and permitted, for themselves. More often than not, family members learn by trial-and-error, marked by mistakes and reminders or reprimands from correctional staff.

> *You learn as you go.*
>
> *-Fanny, mother.*
>
> *I didn't know how things worked there. I had no experience [...] And so I go in. You know, I want to put money into the Canteen and, you know, I have my purse with me and, you know, the Guard was really rude, by the way. And, you know, "Do you have a cell phone?" "Yes," and like, "Well, now you're not allowed to have a cell phone past the Gate." I'm like, "Well, I didn't know this. How am I supposed to know?" There's nothing at the Gate and really, so the first experience was that the guys at the jail shout at you. (crying)*

-Gina, mother.

Uh, a lot of frustration and then misunderstanding. That would really be the two main words I could give. Uh, because you, you don't know what's going on. Nobody talks to you, nobody talks to you. You don't have a number to call [...] in prison, when you go there, they tell you as little as possible, they don't tell you anything. Uh, they don't tell you the same things. Among themselves, they contradict each other [...] If you do something wrong, they refuse you. That's all! Then they don't say why.

-Patricia, spouse.

Where the detained person is concerned, the institution's silence is poignant. Family members in this study complained that they have not been informed of institutional transfers, loved ones' injuries and hospital stays, prison or jail lockdowns, or changes in visiting hours, etc.

Nobody called us to tell us that our son had been injured. Nobody called us. And anytime he was moved, nobody called us to say he was moved.

- Diane, mother.

Not only are family members faced with a lack of information, but the little information they have access to is inconsistent.

So, and now the, the rigidity of the system, you know, and the - It would be - The officers that were guarding it, you know, depended on who they were, they were enforcing the twenty-minute rule. So, on the last day, it was very rigid and we were told to, you know, leave and that was it. And, we didn't know it was the last day. We found out later, when we came back to see him for the second time, they told us that he had been discharged from the ICU and was now in a recovery room. So we tried to go in and they said, "No, it's - The protocol on the way back too, because he's no longer in the ICU. He - But, they gave us twenty minutes - But, at that point, he hadn't been able to - He hadn't been forced to get up and walk because, you know, if you've been unconscious for ten days or so, and you have to be recovered enough to be able to - So, they kept saying he'd be sent back to the prison soon. And, I just couldn't understand that he would be so rigid. So, by that time, he had been taken away on July 15, I think, and now it was July 26. So they went back. They said, "You can't visit him or just once a day, you can visit him," but that must not have happened because on the 27th they took him back to Bath. I went to visit him and they said, "He was taken back to max [maximum security]".

-Felicity, mother.

B. Institutional authorizations and prohibitions

Given that provincial jails and federal prisons offer various regulated means of contacting incarcerated people in Canada, it is generally the incarcerated person's

responsibility to provide their family members with the contact procedure information. It is important to note that there are specific procedures one must follow to obtain “authorized family member” status, which is then subject to additional institutional regulations and restrictions regarding phone calls and providing money and clothing to inmates.

The institutions censor **mail** contents and containers, which participants discover over time as the prison and jail administrations return their mail to them opened and read. Varying types of paper and envelopes are permitted depending on the institution and, in some cases, even the letters or drawings themselves may be subject to prohibition depending on the pencils or crayons used to write and/or draw them. News clippings and Christmas cards with glitter and/or three-dimensional decorations/pop-ups are also prohibited. Further, the institutions only accept a certain number of photos by mail and they must adhere to institutional standards and formats.

> *My son loves political cartoons. There was a big one about Donald Trump recently [...] So I cut it out and sent it to R. Of course, I got it back because you're not allowed to send anything from the newspaper and they're not allowed to send newspapers. [...] the cards you colour yourself, then you colour the envelope, fold it and write what you want on the card, put it in the envelope and seal it with a sticker. A sticker that doesn't have glitter on it and has the same back as the stamp. You are allowed to put a stamp on an envelope. [...] So I got all this stuff, I coloured it myself. I did hours of work [...] you can't send a stamp. When R moved, you know, it takes time to connect with the canteen and you have to place your order and the money has to be transferred. So you end up with a four to six weeks delay where you don't hear anything from the person because they don't have a stamp. (laughs) You know? That kind of thing drives me crazy. Well, I wrote a letter with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. So I didn't send him a stamp. [...] Of course, I got it all back. So not only did he not receive my letter, he didn't receive it [...] because it's "contraband." The "contraband" drives me crazy. And the most recent one, on my letter, I put my address sticker that I put on for six years. All of a sudden, they forbid me to put my address sticker on. Which I have no problem with. I can write it on my thing. But I used it (...) for six years and nobody cared.*
>
> *-Diane, mother.*

In addition to the delays inherent to communicating via mail, family members consider this method of contact to be unreliable and vulnerable to violation of their privacy, given that correctional staff open and read their letters.

> *Actually, posting a letter is unreliable depending on the attitude of the inmate, they could withhold – It’s illegal but they do it. They can withhold personal mail. And they have done it. [...] I don’t know where that letter went. No, some letters just get “lost” all the time.*
>
> *- Mona, sister.*

Material provisions (whether they are mailed to or deposited at the prison) are important, if not necessary, to ensure that the incarcerated person has access to their own clothing (this is permitted in some jails and federal prisons). These provisions are strictly regulated, and relatives are not always aware of the existing institutional restrictions. Relatives who meet certain institutional criteria regarding their relationship with the detained person may bring clothing and/or personal effects to their incarcerated loved one during specific periods (typically within 30 days of institutional transfers and prior to court hearings). Family members may occasionally receive authorization to purchase certain items for their incarcerated relative from prison- or jail-approved suppliers. The prison or jail administration identifies these items and provides family members with a list to choose from.

> *[...] I was bringing a watch for my son, but it's not marked on the sheet that it takes only digital or needle watches, it doesn't matter. It's not marked, there's nothing marked. And I arrive with a hand watch. [...] Because it's not clear. So, I arrive, I know that there are some with needles in the provincial. I arrive, and then the gentleman says, "Well, from today on, you need a digital watch. "*
>
> *- Normand, father.*

Relatives are not permitted to purchase items or have their purchases delivered but must send the required amount of money to their incarcerated loved ones directly. Inmates may then purchase a limited variety and number of overpriced goods from the canteen.

> *My son read The Economist by that time for about fourteen years. You know, since he was a teenager. [...] I said, "I want to send him his subscription to The Economist. I'm just gonna reroute it over, over to you." "Oh, no, no, no. We have the Canteen and he can get whatever magazine he wants from the Canteen." I said, "That's great. So, you have The Economist in the Canteen. Fabulous." And they said, "No, no, we don't have that." [...] I mean, it's like that with every single thing.*
>
> *- Diane, mother.*

> *And the food thing, as well, my son put money for the Canteen and, you know, ... the Canteen, things are so expensive. Hugely expensive. And at first, I thought, well why is the jail profiting from this? Like, I don't mind if it's for buying new books for the inmates to read or whatever…. Well, are they having some company that charges $5 for a tube of toothpaste? That's ridiculous. No one with other stores that we shop at, that are still making a lot of money, charge that. So, why is it okay to charge them more and the stress on the families and the expense of trying to provide something for them, to me it's just, it's just another insult and taking advantage of people that have no other choices. I don't know.*
>
> *- Gina, mother.*

To send **money donations**, which allows detained individuals to make necessary purchases (phone card, meals, toiletries, etc.), family members must comply with strict authorization procedures after an account has been opened for the detained individual. This process can take four to six weeks, during which the inmate is not able to make purchases and is therefore dependent on donations from the institution and fellow prisoners. While money from family members may be transferred between federal penitentiaries, this is not the case at the provincial level as each establishment has its own system. As such, family members must often repeat these procedures so that their incarcerated loved ones may access funds.

The length and frequency of **phone calls** are formally and informally regulated within each institution. In certain institutions, phones are limited in number and access time and are sometimes monitored by correctional staff. In addition to the material and institutional restrictions, power dynamics between inmates further affect inmates' ability to phone their loved ones, as certain inmates monopolize and control access to phones within their unit or range. Given that family members cannot phone their incarcerated relatives directly, only those inmates with the means to purchase calling cards can call their loved ones.

> *You have to pay for the phone calls he makes. There are processes and protocols in place in prisons. They can only make phone calls and they have to, by submitting a form in a timely manner, request a certain amount of money to put on their calling card which they then use to make calls. And your phone number has to be approved, pre-approved for them to call.*
>
> *- Dem, spouse.*

More often than not, it is the relatives who must accept collect calls at exorbitant prices. In order to receive these calls, relatives must be able to provide an approved landline number, not a cell phone number.

> *We don't have a landline, so the phone is a problem. He can't, he couldn't call me from [the prison] at all...After he moved to [another prison]...So the next time I remember talking to him at my sister's house. We had to arrange a time for him to call me and for me to be there. That was it... It's complicated, you know? It really was. Until he could get a phone card. Then he got his phone card and then it was, like, thirty days from then he could call me. It was forever and ever and ever. But eventually, he was able to call me. But it was costing us a hundred dollars a month and it's not like we were talking for hours. I mean, he, he would tell me that the inmates that were there, that were - It wouldn't pick up. They had rules, but they didn't follow them, you know?*
>
> *- Dem, spouse.*

This restriction to landline numbers imposes additional costs on relatives and, above all, requires them to stay at home so as not to miss the expected call.

> *At first, he called me regularly, every day. And that's another matter, the first month before I knew that collect calls are a fortune [...]. The bill was up to $1000 [...] but the other months after, it was... I talked less, but I had to cut the conversation. I would say to him "look, it's not because I don't want to talk to you, but there he would say that's it I've tired you out". He would say, "I'm going to stop tiring you". "You don't tire me, it's because it costs a fortune". [...] And then when he called me collect, I had to get a house phone. I thought, yeah, but when I'm not at home? [...] The first month it was $1600 but that's it, we talked every day for an hour and after that, it was $500, $500, after that $400...*
>
> *-Georgette, mother.*
>
> *The first time I met him at the beginning, when I met him, we talked, and... you're never going to tell a guy who's doing a life sentence, who doesn't have a family, call when you're bored. The first month, it cost me $1,200 for the phone, because I don't know how much a collect call costs.*
>
> *-Mary, spouse.*

If participants wish to visit their loved ones in detention, they must submit to the control of the prison authority to be investigated and approved as acceptable visitors. This approval process is often lengthy (3 to 4 weeks for an accelerated procedure and up to 6 to 8 weeks under normal circumstances) and must be repeated in cases of federal transfers.

> *When he left X to go to the federal government, I was... oh my god I think (cries)... three to four weeks without news, without phone calls. Then, there was a document to fill out and then before it was approved, all that, it took at least 6 to 8, 8 weeks or so before I was allowed to go and visit him.*
>
> *- Joyce, mother.*
>
> *I didn't have direct contact with him, really, until six weeks. Something like that. That's what I remember. I went to see him once or twice in X while he was there and then I couldn't go see him when he was in V - Well, it was all the paperwork that had to be filled out and all that and I tried to get things done ahead of time, and they wouldn't allow it. It was like, 'Oh, no, you have to wait until he gets here'. "Well, I know where it's going. Why can't I just start this process so it doesn't take so long?"*
>
> *- Dem, spouse.*

C. Correctional visits

Family members face a new set of challenges and limitations each time they visit their loved ones in detention, as the visitation policies and procedures vary between institutions. As they strive to maintain relationships with their incarcerated loved ones, relatives face several geographic, personal, administrative, and institutional obstacles.

First, several research participants mentioned the **distance** from the facility and having to drive several hours to get to the institution where their loved one is located.

> *But they were arranging for a visit. For us to go to [the institution] to visit him and we were, like, not, you know, the wealthiest either, right? [...] Um, so once a month, essentially, I would do that long trip up to visit him. [...) So, it was, like, eight hours.*
>
> *- Nathan, son.*

Those who can make these long trips must then also find a place to stay in or near the town where the institution is located, which requires additional planning and expenses. In some cases, visits are not possible simply due to the distance between the family member's home and the institution. Distance often impedes frequent visits or makes them impossible.

In addition to the distance-related challenges, institutional visitation regulations are difficult for family members to navigate and manage. These procedures vary between provincial and federal institutions, between the institutions themselves, but also according to the stage of the judicial process (charged versus sentenced). Relatives must learn how to use the visitation reservation system (if one exists), the established visiting days and times, the institution's entrance protocols, the search and security procedures, as well as the types of visits permitted (closed or open).

Moreover, **visiting hours** within a single institution may vary depending on the individual's confinement sector. Participant testimonies reveal that detention centres do not notify family members in advance if their incarcerated relative is transferred to another wing of the institution or when a confinement situation prevents visitations (i.e., lockdowns and/or segregation).

> *And my son, when he first got there, he moved from Maximum Security to General Population to Protective Custody to Maximum and I didn't know each set – Like, how would I know any of this? I didn't know that each section has its own days and times for visits. [...] "Sorry, that's not a visiting time anymore. No visit." Well, how are we supposed to know there's a different visiting time if he moves. The visit was booked so why is someone not contacting us? And then they said, "Well, we don't have your contact information." Like, I'm sure you do. [...] I said, "I want to make sure you have my contact information so this doesn't happen again." And they go, "Oh, is your phone number blah-blah-blah-blah?" "Yes, that's it."*
>
> *- Gina, mother.*

More specifically, participants expressed frustration regarding the various existing **visit reservation systems.** When participants call to schedule a visit, they are often placed on hold for long periods of time and must restart the call process each time the line cuts out.

Participants sometimes feel that their efforts are in vain, as when they manage to get through to someone, they are informed that the visitation slots have been filled and they will have to call back the following week to reserve a spot.

> *You have to book in advance, a week in advance... No, 24 hours in advance minimum and then maximum one week in advance... Then, to call, it's a whole process... I don't know if it's the same everywhere, but they don't put you on hold. Uh, they hang up if it's busy. Yesterday, I called, I called 268 times before I got the line...I have it on my phone, like, the number of times you call, because it hangs up. Then you have to call on and off like that, until it answers. So someone who works can't call to see his spouse or his son, it's impossible. Then, there, it's someone who answers you, who puts you on hold. Then, there, you have, are on hold, but without music. So you don't know if it's still, you know, online. Yesterday, I waited, like, 25 minutes. Well, that's the longest I've ever had to wait. And then, a lot of times, it's to make you say that... there's no more room because he's in the work stuff. They do that two nights a week.*
>
> *- Patricia, spouse.*

> *Then there were the reservations for visits where you had to call... there were 2 days where you could call between such and such a time. Often, the line was busy, sometimes when the line was not busy, we were told that it was full.*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

Participants' accounts reveal that email booking systems are still very rare. When a booking system does not exist, visits are sometimes allocated on a first come-first serve basis, which creates a lot of uncertainty around whether a family member will be able to see their incarcerated loved one. In addition, the institution limits the **number of weekly visits allowed** and the **number of people** who can attend said visits.

Even participants' confirmed visits have been limited or cancelled because the detained persons were not notified of the visits and/or participants were not informed that the institution was in lockdown. Various factors may affect the **contact time** between detainees and their relatives; for example, the length of time it takes for relatives to enter the jail or prison due to the numerous security protocols or correctional officer staffing shortages. When visiting time is lost due to factors beyond participants' control, the institutions do not allow additional time, even when relatives have travelled great distances and/or rearranged their schedules to be there.

> *N: So we get there, this was my first time going to F*Federal. I got there, I say to myself at the same time, I'm going to see my son. Her, she was no longer able to anymore, she did not have the right key to open the locker and put our stuff. It took 40 minutes. They had to bring someone in and anyways. During that time, I couldn't get in.*

> *C: So, visitation time is also decreasing.*
>
> *- Normand & Claudette, parents.*

> *The worst ones are the old ones who go in and have 10,000 pieces of jewelry, 10,000 watches, 10,000 money changers in their pockets and don't understand that you have to take them out. So, you know, it takes like 15 minutes. But that's 15 minutes they're taking away from your visit.*
>
> *-Patricia, spouse.*

Participating family members explained that during each visit, they had to comply with various control measures that the institution deemed necessary for "security reasons." Participants have been subjected to searches, have had to fill out various paperwork, and pass through metal detectors as well as ion scanners for any traces of drugs on their persons[8]. The use of drug-detector dogs is also common in some institutions.

> *The little ones are a little afraid of dogs and you know, they're not, they're not little dogs, they're not little poodles. They're like Labradors, German Shepherds, massive ones [...] We have a little circle and we get on top of it. Let's say, I'm here and the other one is there. There is a distance between the two so that the dog can pass. They turn around us with the dog. And we told them, if you're afraid, you can close your eyes, but the dog is nice. And that's what he did. For example, the people, the gentleman, the dog handler, he's dealing with children, so he's careful. He's careful. And he was talking to the girls, he was telling them, he's not dangerous, he's just going to smell you. That's the same thing. That's the same thing.*
>
> *- Claudette, mother.*

> *The dog for a community party sat in front of my son but never in front of me. I had to choose between my son and my spouse. Seeing that my son was panicking a bit, I called my parents to come and get him and I did the strip search.*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

Several participants have had to sign consent forms to undergo potential strip searches to be granted access to the institution for visits. Two of the participants interviewed were obligated to submit to strip searches to maintain their visitation privileges. Additionally, some institutions show visitors videos highlighting the consequences of having drugs or traces of drugs on their persons or belongings when entering the prison or jail. Participants have found this added security strategy difficult to deal with and even frightening in some instances.

Participants have also expressed frustration regarding the lack of consistency during their visits in terms of **the items they are permitted to bring or prohibited from bringing into the institution**. For example, mothers who bring their children into the institution are permitted to bring a snack or bottle for their child during a given visit, but are then

reprimanded and sometimes prohibited from visiting for attempting to bring these items into the institution the following week.

> *Once, like, I brought pictures, but I had like too many. Then, you know, I was like showing my friends, my things... my people, because, you know, we just moved to a new town. So, you know, I was showing my house, my stuff, you know, to my dad. And then, uh, the moment she said, like, "Ah, well, there, you know, there's too much, na-na-na," she saw in my face the kind of like... And then I started to get, uh, like emotional. And then, like, I didn't want to, like, cry or anything because I was like, "Hey, who cares, it's just pictures, whatever." It doesn't matter. But it was so important to me, like, because it was like my life that I was bringing, like, to my dad.*
>
> *- Olivia, daughter.*

> *[...] it's like I was being searched, but there was a tall blonde who came home with a Tim Hortons coffee in the visiting room and brought it to her husband with a lot of stuff. It was no big deal. But the woman next to me who was there with her newborn baby had to leave the bottles at the control... But she, the tall blonde, she was allowed to... (laughs). I saw these kinds of injustices there [...].*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

ION SCANNER: AN ADDITIONAL TEST FOR LOVED ONES

In 2004, the ion scanner (Ion Mobility Spectrometer) was installed in all federal institutions as a result of the "War on Drugs." Aimed at facilitating "discreet searches of inmates, employees and visitors" to detect illicit substances within the detention facility, the ion scanner allows correctional officers to take samples from the individual's belongings upon entry (i.e. wallet, keys, clothing, outerwear, etc.). If an individual receives a positive result from the ion scanner, a second test is then conducted on a different item than the first. An interview with the manager or supervisor on duty follows this second test should it yield another positive result. During this interview, the individual in question is invited to explain the reasons for which traces of illicit substances were found on their person and/or belongings. Interviews for this study as well as other research[9], indicate that the relatives of incarcerated people often do not know the reasons for which these traces have appeared on their person or possessions. After the interview has been completed, visitors are then subject to a Threat Risk Assessment, which along with the two initial ion scanner tests and their interview will determine whether this individual will be permitted to have a contact or no-contact visit, or if they will be denied entry to the institution.[1]

Family members in this study experienced significant stress during their interactions with the ion scanners, as they recognized that a positive test could result in denied visits and impact their incarcerated relatives' files.

They make you feel like you can't be trusted. I'm 58 years old. I've never broken the law in my life but every time I go in there, I go past that ION Scanner and I'm terrified, terrified [...] if you go through the ION scanner and you test positive, then they change your visit because of it. It goes on Jacob's record and will impact his parole and his ability for Early Release.

- Inès, mother.

This section will later explore some of the strategies that relatives have developed to cope with the stress of the ion scanner. For instance, some relatives develop specific routines before their visits to avoid any possibility of contact with and/or contamination from illicit substances.

[1] Commissioner's Directive no: 566-8

Many institutions implement **dress codes** for visitors, mandating that individuals entering the institutions must wear clothing that the correctional staff have deemed "appropriate." Some participants were almost denied access to the institution while others were asked to return to their vehicles or residences to change their clothing. Participants have accepted these controlling measures for fear that they would otherwise lose access to their incarcerated loved ones.

> *One time I didn't have the right sweater. One time I had a camisole with a jacket, I thought it was nice. I thought I was clean, but it didn't pass.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

In addition to the institutions' admission security measures, participants report that the actual **infrastructure** of the institution itself is intimidating; however, some relatives appear to be familiarizing themselves with it. Certain family members in this study describe the places that they are "allowed" to see during their visits to the institutions in detail.

> *When I first came to [the prison] to visit my son, when I saw the building, because you don't walk around there every day. I had never seen a prison environment, never in my life. [...] I was very impressed. This is really very personal. For me, the big door of the prison made me think and go back very far in my past and the Berlin Wall. So I was kind of traumatized, I had this image and it still happens sometimes. I had a lot of nightmares after being in [the prison]. ... I felt like a prisoner. [...] I was shaking, I was cold. Finally, we go to the waiting room, there are not enough chairs for everyone to sit down either. And there we wait for someone to come and get us or call us. On television, there is something written. So now, we all move around. Before, we have like a cordon there, identified that the office of the visitors gives us then, therefore we are like sheep, you follow the person, you do not know where you go. There is nothing, no information, we move on. We have to move forward, we move forward. There is another door, another place, another control. Show your identification, we pass, we cross the garden there, the yard. There too, there is another door, another control*

> *and then you enter a kind of corridor and there, there is the last control before going to the visiting room, So that's a lot of controls and you leave your bag at the reception desk there, locked.*
>
> *- Rosalyne, mother.*

> *I remember going and pulling up to X Institution on this huge property and there was, just, this long road that drives into there and, uh, you know, there's, there's something gothic about driving onto that property that stuck with me. And, uh, when we got there, you know, you go through these gates and you get, you know, processed at the front and, like, it's very, um, sterile and very security-oriented and, uh, very […] um, what are the words to describe it? Um, there's no feeling to it, right? You're just, like, a piece of machinery going through this system. You know, for a child, that's a very scary place to be, right? So, I got in. We made it through the Security thing and at that time, the way the visits worked, when you were in evaluation, there's no open visits. So, the visit that I got to have with my father for the first time was behind Plexiglass. And there was a phone […] I don't know what I thought about the system but I know, you know, if I think about what I felt, looking back, you know, um, I, I hated it. I really hated that symbol of authority that had taken my father from me.*
>
> *- Nathan, son.*

Visitors are permitted access to the visiting room(s) after they have passed the various security and administrative evaluations. Physical contact between visitors and their incarcerated loved ones is strictly prohibited in provincial jails and during the evaluation period at the beginning of a loved one's sentence. These types of visits take place in **visiting rooms or ticket offices** in which glass separates the visitor and their incarcerated loved one and they may only communicate using a telephone handset. Participants in this study describe the issues they have encountered with faulty handsets, inappropriate places to bring children when visiting, as well as intrusive background noise and lack of privacy due to the close proximity of visiting rooms.

> *The visits also, he does not have the right to have a contact visit, in a certain department. There is a glass window, we are obliged to have a glass window between us, it is terrible. And there, you shout, you hear the others shouting next door. It was crazy and they are regulars. Often they choose the best spot. I hate that, the no contact, it's terrible. And then you can take him in your arms right at the end.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

> *Really what you want to do is you want to hug your loved one, right? You really do want to hug them and no, it's over the telephone and with glass between you. So, it's very, very hard. Very hard. Very inhumane. I, I don't have anything good to say about it, actually.*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

> *When we go to see her, she's happy. She taps on the glass and then she sticks her cheek and then she flatters him and then she... you know. That's a tough one. The other time she was trying to hug him through the glass, you know. It was like... that was rough right there.*
>
> *- Patricia, spouse.*

> *Because, through a window, that's it, at X I've been there a few times, but it's always through a window. That's something there, the first times, you get into the emotions. They are like in a little jar, I would say there...*
>
> *- Georgette, mother.*

> *There is a window, we are obliged to have a window between us, it is terrible. And there, you shout, you hear the others shouting next door. It was crazy and they are regulars. Often they choose the best spot. I hate that, the no contact, it's terrible. And then you get to hug it right at the end. There are all kinds of details to respect that I didn't know, but once you know them... you enjoy your visit.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

In general, participants indicated that they appreciated the physical closeness with their incarcerated relatives that **authorized contact visits** allowed them. In those moments, they were finally able to touch their loved ones and establish a degree of proximity, even though certain intimate forms of contact such as kissing and whispering in the ear remained prohibited.

> *In the end, I didn't even enjoy my visits. I was always on the lookout to see what was going on because I was always afraid that something would happen. As soon as we touched hands, as soon as we were too close to talk, if we talked in our ears or whatever, you heard "security control".*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

While participants described the prisons as cold, sterile places, they acknowledged that the visiting rooms are better equipped and more conducive to receiving children, as most of these rooms are outfitted with play areas. Regardless, participants felt that they could not speak freely because they knew that they would be overheard by correctional staff, other visitors or even an institutional recording device.

Private family visits [10] (PFV) – commonly referred to as “trailers” – are rare, according to participants. These visits depend upon the incarcerated person’s behaviour, the institution’s policy on visit frequency, and the availability of the physical trailers to host the visits. Depending on the institution, the visits can take place every few weeks to every few months.

> *The trailers are still nice. (Laughter.) But, uh, it doesn't always happen quickly. Like at [such and such a penitentiary], there were a lot of requests and then there are just three units. So, if it's a weekend and then the turnaround isn't quick, there ... in the regulations or whatever, there, it's marked about every six weeks, but, uh, you know, it's often ... it was often*

> *two months of waiting and, uh ... it also depends on each security, each level of security.*
>
> *- Ariane, spouse.*

Participants have mixed opinions regarding the visits, but some do find them enjoyable as these visits ultimately allow for quality time with their incarcerated loved ones.

> *You know, it's not just hell, I have a lot of fun there, sometimes with my husband, on weekends, I'm not able to climb the stairs there because I'm laughing so hard. And we have had moments as I told you at the first PFV, where we are there (breathing), what are we doing. Then there are other PFV's I got out of there and I was bawling because I didn't want to leave, because I found it hard to leave, and I don't want to leave him there, and I want to take him home. And there are other times, can you put a little chair on the edge of the door for me, I can't wait to go. Not that I can't wait to leave, but I just can't wait to get the hell out of here because I want to get back to civilization.*
>
> *- Mary, mother.*

Many relatives have described feelings of ambivalence regarding private family visits due to the accompanying limitations. While residing at the detention facility throughout these visits, relatives must comply with the institution's conditions and security protocols as if they were prisoners themselves.

> *At the end, at [a penitentiary], I would arrive with my bags, a little list practically made on the corner of the table. And they would look at... it depended on who came home at the end of the week, but sometimes they would barely look at what I had and then say, "That's nice." Because they also came to know the guys, if they were all-hooked or not all-hooked or... Then, you know, the family, that comes with it too. We still see each other regularly. But, in the beginning, at X, I used to bring my things in, but in my sports bag I used to put my things in, ... Everything was listed. Obviously, I have three pairs of socks, I have two pairs of socks, I have a make-up pencil, I have diapers for the little one... it was my boyfriend who had to buy the diapers on the grocery list. I couldn't buy any, bring any. So, uh, that's it. That's why I had to take my stock out one by one. That's right. This is... He would check off his list. Then the bag, my bag, it stayed in the locker. They didn't even put the, the bags in there, or the suitcases or whatever, there. Then, uh, that made it so. That too, that, again, it depends on the level of security.... family visits, well, it's still...*
>
> *- Ariane, spouse.*
>
> *When I go to visits, when I go to conjugal visits...I take a lot of pills...4 times a day. But when I go to the penitentiary, I often just take them in the morning and I let go of the rest of my medication, because otherwise, I have to leave, I have to get dressed, I have to walk to the pills, there, they're there, they're leaning, they're waiting for me to finish taking my pills. If I'm*

> *lucky, they don't look in my mouth, you know, to know, to make sure I've swallowed them. And then I put them in the little box and come back. Although I have some narcotics, but I never put them in, pain medication and all that. But I never put them in. ...You know, you have to take them outside. So, I know a lot of mothers, people who decide not to take their medication, putting their health at risk for three days because it's less trouble than if they come to get you at 7:30 am, then you have to get dressed. [...] Also, they search you.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

In addition to the extensive searches of their person and belongings, participants reported having to consent to "counting [11]." This means they must obtain special permission to access any necessary medication and they are not permitted to move freely within the institution. While the visit provides a rare opportunity for freedom, autonomy and happiness for the imprisoned individual, their relatives must subject themselves to voluntary confinement and deprivation, and take on numerous financial costs.

> *You know, at the beginning, the first ones are a bit more difficult. The departure after three days, well, it becomes a little sad, but otherwise, you get used to it. It's like a little routine that's still there, that's done..... It's true that, sometimes, it's long. Because, listen, in winter, you're in a little three and a half or a little four and a half and then, uh, what do we do? We had board games, it wasn't so bad, stuff like that, but it's, it's a life that's not quite a life either, there. You know, when you're in your house, you have a lot of things to do in your day. But here, it's limited to this food, to these games. You know, there's no... there's no more you can do in your day.*
>
> *- Ariane, spouse.*

> *Oh my god, it was really to please him because I hated it, it's dirty, it's disgusting, it's... and you're locked in uh.... I mean, you're locked up there... just to take, you know, I take Lactaid, because I'm lactose intolerant, I couldn't even have that on me. Fuck, I had to call and have the guard come and get me. Or like, you want to take Advils because you have a headache, I have to call the janitor, he has to come and get me, he has to take me to my locker like at the reception, I have to take it in front of him and come back. You know, I found it there... And inside, it's dirty. They do the maintenance in there, and it's disgusting, and it's dirty, and... You know, you cook in everybody's dishes and, you know.... I'm not Mrs. Blancheville, but I was a little disgusted, because it was really to please him. And I mean, you can't do anything... all we did... we played cards, we watched movies and I made him food. His fun was making his grocery list. You know, he can pick out special things that he doesn't eat often. He doesn't have the same list, but he still has more choices. But he has to pay for that grocery store too, you know. I'm the one who pays for that...for the trailers, the family pays for the groceries. He chooses what he wants, the order is placed in a grocery store and the day you arrive, your order arrives at the same time as you. But it is the parent, the family or the girlfriend who pays.*
>
> *- Alexandra, mother.*

> *You have to be there by noon on Friday and then you're let out at about 10 on Monday. And seven times I went down with my granddaughter and we spent the weekend [...], for him it was freedom because he could go and we stayed in this little bungalow type place with a fence. But there was a yard with some grass and you know, we could cook and he would plan all the food. They'd buy the food. He puts a list. So, he puts a list. So, he would make the menu and he's a good cook. So, his job was to plan the menu and it gives him something to do. Because when they're in jail, they don't make any decisions, right? So, this was one thing that he could plan the weekend for the food and everything. And, but, for me going it, I can't take my camera. I love to take pictures. I can't take my phone. I don't have my computer. I can't phone anybody. So, you're completely cut off. So, you know, my daughter is completely cut off with her baby and I'm completely cut off with everybody. Like, I'm a free person. I can talk to whoever I want when I want to talk to them. [...] The first time I went it took me two weeks to get over it, I think [...] I couldn't believe it. And for him, it was so good. He was, "When can we do the next one?" And I'm thinking, "I don't ever want to do that again."*
>
> *- Kim, mother.*

Participants described the sadness they experienced due to their inability to see their incarcerated loved ones and their feelings of powerlessness due to the institution's control over their relationships and daily lives. Visits, whether separated by glass or facilitated in common rooms or private trailers, are precious but difficult moments for family members. Participants' testimonies illustrate the various challenges they face each time they enter a detention facility. The demanding and sometimes inconsistent institutional visiting policies and practices challenge family members' coping capacities.

> *[...] the jail here [1st prison] is the worst for – You're just treated like, you know, like a nothing. So, you're shuffled [...] And you go and, for me, with, when you have the phones and stuff it's, like, it's, like, if you're all sitting in a swimming pool. You know how loud it is inside a public swimming pool? So, I have a hard time hearing and the phones don't always work that great kind of thing. And you're – You know, they may have fifteen different phones and there might be, you know, five people in visiting and they put them so you've got somebody right beside you talking, instead of spacing them out. So, I hate visiting in provincial jails and I don't, most of the time. At [2d prison] it's a little different. You go and you stand outside. First come/first serve as they have one place to visit, cubicle, and you stand out. There's no seat. There's no roof. ... I don't like visiting provincial jails. And in [federal pen], I only went a couple of times, for, like, a day visit, you know, a three hours visit because to drive three hours to visit for three hours to drive three hours home was – And he never wanted me to go on the weekend. It's busier on the weekend. He doesn't like being around a lot of people, which makes jail really difficult for him. [...] You know, the thought of being in a room with a whole lot of people visiting, kids running around [...]. We went to Social one time and actually my daughter came and her daughter and*

> *myself [...] and my son said, "Don't look at anybody." And other moms have said that. So, when you go and you visit and so, you're all sitting in the gym at tables to have this Social and there's food and to eat together and stuff. "Don't look at anybody, because that can cause problems." Say, you know, I'm looking at a woman there or somebody's girlfriend, I might be judging her and then that guy's going to come and beat up my son later, right? And it's, it's – And, so, it's like that and the same with visits. Like when you go on a weekend to visit. So, when you go and it's the weekend visit or the 72-hour visit, I don't have to deal with any of that.*
>
> *– Kim, mother.*

2. Family members' interactions with correctional staff

In addition to the institution's regulations and procedures, relatives often view their interactions with correctional staff as problematic. Conversely, participants in this study have also emphasized their positive interactions with correctional personnel.

> *[...] they've always been very good to us, you know. We could have gotten some, some people, you know, some, some agents there that, no, you know, like, no airs and graces there, like, well, well strict then.*
>
> *- Olivia, daughter.*

> *Well, I think that, like them, it's their job [...] it's like any business, there are kind people, there are kindless people. Of course, when you arrive at X, the person has a certain air of seriousness because of the nature of the institution. But there have been times when we've made jokes. We have very funny people, who, uh, who made jokes with the kids or whatever [...] going there once, I probably wouldn't have the smiles I had going there every week. So it's kind of a relationship that you develop with people as you go along. [...] I think they are also able to distinguish between my work with the inmates and my work with the family. [...] most of the guards were, there, quite correct, there.... there were some faces, sometimes, that you say: "Ah, him, in the morning, he did not want to be there, you know. But sometimes, I say to myself, it's like everywhere. You go, you go to the cash register, to the grocery store and then, maybe, sometimes, the lady, she's not tempted to answer you either, there." It's just the nature of the institution that there's a seriousness that hangs over it a little more, maybe, than at the grocery store. (Laughter.)*
>
> *- Ariane, spouse.*

On some occasions, participants reported positive interactions with certain correctional personnel.

> *And you have agents like I had where he was, the agents he had when he was at [a penitentiary], they were all people I could call and talk to. When he had his bypass and he had a nasty breakdown, I was able to call his case*

> *management team. I was able to call Martin* and say Martin*, I'm concerned about his mental health.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

> *(comparing with other institutions) So, they were so nice, you know? And, they said, "Oh, we understand. This must be so hard." They were women guards. They were very understanding. You know, so, that helped a lot. That helped a lot. That they were not mean to me because, you know, you hear about families that aren't treated well. And, that made it easier, for sure. And, she said – I can't remember how she, like, exactly she said but it was something a little bit encouraging, you know? […] this one guard in X, she just stood out because she had this huge smile. Like, she was so nice. "Oh, yes? You came from out of town!' It is like, you felt good. I was so shocked at the way they treated me.*
>
> *- Tara, mother.*

Apart from these rare and surprising positive interactions, the majority of participants' encounters with correctional staff were deemed unpleasant, degrading and even harmful in some cases.

> *But you feel so unregarded as, as an individual, I think, right now. It's as if, let's say, they don't care about you. You know, for them, the inmate's family and then the inmate and then his life in general, it's nothing. For them, it's just a number that did something. He has a file and that's it [...] Because I had absolutely nothing against prison officers before. I thought it was a very commendable job. But, now, there... (Laughs.) [...] Some are really good at it. Then, like, the decent ones, ...it's, it's how exactly they approach you when you go... in a store then they were doing customer service. The other ones, they talk to you like you're the last, uh... you know, it's not... Anyway. I was really surprised that they had so little consideration for the people who go there... I would have thought that they would have more discernment about that... Then to, to have more, understanding towards the family. You know, to take them more into consideration, not to act as if you were just a number and you... I go to see my boyfriend in prison, but it's like going to see my grandmother at the seniors' center, you know. For them, ... in their approach, they don't take into consideration that they're talking to people who are, who are hurt and who perhaps need tact ... they don't consider that this is an ordeal that you're going through.*
>
> *- Patricia, spouse.*

Too often, interactions between family members and correctional staff are described as bad experiences. The passive and negative attitudes of correctional staff exacerbate participants' existing experiences of feeling ignored, invisible and consciously uninformed by the institution. Correctional officers' non-verbal cues as well as their words – spoken or unspoken – make family members feel mistreated on an interpersonal level.

> *I would say, for the most part, it was either total disinterest. You could be just a fly on the wall, you know? Or they could be downright insulting and rude to you. And that happened on several occasions.*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

> *I'm lucky, it never happened to me, but there was a guard at the [penitentiary]. The lady arrived, an older lady, she came to see her husband. It had been in the newspaper - he had abused many children. The lady comes to visit him, she looks down. She doesn't want to be there, but it's her husband and she decided to stay with him. You see that she shakes, it is her first conjugal visit, she shakes, my heart bleeds, ... then they search here and there, instead of being nice and being polite with her. There, they start, well your underwear, she takes out her two small pairs of panties, "show them", there he makes her show her panties too. And there, your bra, and there she takes out the bra... and there he continues, but at that time at the B*, we did that in the entrance. There, you have all the guards that come in and out during the day, it's a shift change at that time. All the employees..., at that time, they were building the hospital, all the construction guys and you are there showing your underwear.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

Participant accounts frequently reveal that they feel as though correctional staff treat them like criminals.

> *When we go there, we feel like thugs.*
>
> *Normand, father.*

> *You feel like you're being treated like you are a criminal as well. They look at you with scowls… the majority of them are absolutely rude.*
>
> *- Gina, mother.*

> *The system makes me feel like a criminal. When you go in, they treat you like shit. They make you feel like you can't be trusted. I'm 58 years old. I've never broken the law in my life but every time I go in there ... I'm terrified, terrified.*
>
> *- Inès, mother.*

> *So sometimes I go to visits and sometimes I have to remind the guard that I am a Canadian citizen... But how many times I see them denigrate either the families or someone. It's like they forget that we are citizens.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

> *Well, I think that the people who receive us should be more sympathetic. In the sense that when I say friendly, not listening, first of all we don't tell our lives when we go there, we don't have time and all that. But, just to understand that we are going to meet someone .... in the sense that, I am not a delinquent, understand, I don't have a criminal record, ... I think that if we were received a little more pleasantly, I think that it would have an impact for us with our prisoners. I arrived at the small window, I am already at the end there. I arrived there and I was angry. My son knows me, he said*

> *calm down. I said hey, we're being treated like idiots here. You see, I found that hard and I must admit that yes, it made me sad because I said to myself, look, I come to visit my son to make his life a little sweeter for the rest of the week and I see him, I am angry. You know, in the sense that...! ...I Fuck, you'd think that the staff should be a little more gentle, that they should soften up. But I understand that they too must be tired, fed up, it's their job. We understand that they are not giving of themselves, but yes, to be a little more welcoming, I think so.*
>
> *- Zora, mother.*

This treatment intimidates and sometimes deters relatives from visiting their incarcerated loved ones. Hannah, an aunt whose nephew is incarcerated, reports feeling apprehensive about visiting her nephew having been privy to the treatment her sister experienced as a visitor.

> *G (sister of the interviewee) said that she felt really humiliated. She said that they do treat you like you're guilty too. So, I haven't gone yet. They can think about what they want. I can't control what they think. I'm a good person. I want to visit my nephew. It's an important part of his rehabilitation to know that there are people on the outside that care about him. I will just do the best I can. I will treat them like people. Hopefully they'll treat me like one.*
>
> *- Hannah, aunt.*

While this research does not allow us to analyze the role of stigma in correctional staff's treatment of inmates' family members, it is clear that correctional officers' attitudes perpetuate the stigmatization of relatives (Comfort, 2003; Hannem, 2011; McCuaig, 2007; MacKenzie, 2019). Mary, who worked in the corrections field and became the spouse of an incarcerated man, illustrates the differential treatment of relatives:

> *I expected to get there and have the same service as when you go there like today you show up in jail, a lawyer shows up, I expect to still have the service... no, no, I found out overnight. I went from being a super respected person in corrections with an A security clearance. [...] I never had a drug detector, I never had the tracking dog, never, never. [...] And from one day to the next, I came back as a spouse and I became like ... I say all the time, like a second class citizen in my own country, a second class citizen and that was like the most striking. Well I told the guard, well I don't understand! I go into a supermax in Quebec, and there is no problem and then today, he tests me for drugs [...] I didn't understand how you leave one day, on Friday you are a respected person in the correctional service and a month later, you go to visit this guy and you are suddenly a drug courier. Fuck, I think that's the hardest part since I've been with him. [...] I say all the time, I chose this life. I chose to marry him. The mom and dad, the sister, the brother, the kids didn't choose and it's that part that's so hard in corrections. And whether it's federal or provincial, it's the same thing. It doesn't change.* - Mary, spouse.

Participants' interactions with staff engender emotions of frustration, humiliation and shame. These experiences compound over time and become a significant source of stress and suffering for family members. Correctional policies and practices thus reproduce and extend the pains of imprisonment to prisoners' family members. Participants' accounts allow us to explore the correctional system's various limitations and deficits, as participants identify them.

3. The correctional system's deficiencies

The experiences of family members point to functional deficiencies in the skills that staff should have in their work (hard and soft skills), but also to emotional and moral deficiencies of the prison institution, its policies and its employees.

Operational Deficiencies ***Institutional functionality***	**Value-based Deficiencies** ***Institutional Values***
Lack of resources	Lack of intimacy
Lack of reliability	Lack of respect
Lack of organization	Lack of humanity
Lack of professionalism	Discrimination
Lack of efficiency	Lack of justice
Rigidity and lack of flexibility	Lack of security (by excessive treatment or disregard for the sense of security of prisoners and families)
Lack of consistency	Lack of compassion
Lack of coherence	
Lack of transparency	
Lack of information	
Lack of communication	
Lack of accountability	

A. Operational deficiencies: Failures in institutional functionality

Participants described numerous ways in which they perceived the institution's operational failures. As family members, they have received a resounding lack of material

and human resources from federal penitentiaries, but especially from provincial jails. In addition to lack of physical space, the institutions' infrastructures and equipment and infrastructures are often dilapidated, specifically the limited visitation rooms and faulty telephones. Participants have also reported a lack of correctional staff, which has a direct impact on the level of information (i.e., the absence of a point of contact within the institution and lack of communication with family members) and service (i.e., limited or cancelled visits) they receive.

Family members in this study have found the institutional procedures confusing, inconsistent, and often poorly explained to them. Many participants' experiences oppose the correctional system's stated objective for inmates to maintain positive familial and social ties while incarcerated. Further, participants have observed a lack of logic and consistency in the application of protocols and procedures, which vary between institutions and often within a given facility. The explicit and/or implicit permissions that staff grant during any given week are often revoked the following week, as if they had never occurred.

> *Then she says to me... she says, "No, snacks are not allowed." I go, "Let's see, I've been coming twice a week for two months, I have a snack all the time, there." "No, that, we don't want snacks. It makes a mess."*
>
> *- Patricia, spouse.*
>
> *The only consistency over there, is inconsistency.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*
>
> *And, really, that's why I say there's no consistency between the services and the people who are running all this big machine.*
>
> *Rosalyne, mother.*

Participants' accounts reveal the ways in which relatives struggle with the prohibitive rules that correctional institutions implement sporadically, and the institutions' tendency to explain these inconsistencies as misunderstandings, errors or lies. Participants describe institutional practices as ridiculous and illogical, as they remain generally uninformed of the institution's procedures and the justifications for those that appear to be implemented at random. Why must children wait until they return home to mail the drawings they made during their institutional visits to their incarcerated parent or relative? Why are such drawings only accepted if they are made using specific coloured pencils, but prohibited if markers are used? Why is the reception of a "prohibited drawing" grounds for a negative entry in the incarcerated person's file?

Family members' experiences illustrate confusing and frustrating interactions with an institution they perceive to be rigid, unreliable, unorganized, and unprofessional. The lack of communication, explanations, and recourse options for family members contribute to

relatives' negative perceptions of the correctional system as lacking transparency and accountability.

B. Value-based deficiencies: Flawed institutional principles

> *I know it's not a daycare. I know it's not supposed to be pleasant, but surely it should be humane.*
>
> *-Erika, mother.*

Participants' experiences highlight the correctional system's general lack of interpersonal skills and consistent values. Confronted with a state institution that appears both illogical in its policies and disrespectful in its practices, relatives' testimonies illustrate the correctional system's failure to apply and personify democratic values.

Provincial jails and federal penitentiaries do not appear to convey the positive values expected of state institutions and public services. Participants who were unfamiliar with the correctional system were shocked and overwhelmed by the significant gap between the system they believed to embody Canadian social values and the reality they encountered.

> *Well, it was a shock! It's a shock to think that this is what our jails are like. This, and this was here in Ottawa, right? So, here we are in the Capital City of Canada. One of the best nations in the world to live in and this is how we treat people who haven't even been found guilty of anything yet, right? …It was a shock. It was a shock to my system. I have to tell you, it really rocked me. It rocked my world.*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

In family members' eyes, the carceral institution's procedures and protocols show an obvious lack of respect for relatives and the challenges they face as family members of incarcerated individuals. In submitting to institutional rules, surveillance and, to some extent, confinement, relatives experience the deprivation of autonomy, independence, intimacy and privacy in ways similar to prisoners' experiences [12]. Movement restrictions and the removal of visitors' personal items and clothing illustrate correctional staff control over relatives' bodies.

> *You know, I was wearing a headscarf. It's pretty obvious to me, you know, when someone's going through cancer treatment, there's a certain fact of headwear. And one time I went for a visit and, you know, I've read the thing. "No hats and jackets." There's a sign about that. But, to me, you know, I'm not wearing headgear to be stylish. It's because, you know, I've lost my hair... But then one time I, I went to visit, they asked me to remove it. And the person before me had a hijab in, so problem... But, you know, to me if there's a religious exception, to me, cancer would be put in that, to*

> *me. It's an out of respect thing. And I said to the Guard, "You know, I'm going through cancer treatment right now." And he's, like, "Oh, there's no headwear. You'll have to ask my partner." So, he goes for me to go through the metal detector and his partner in there doesn't say anything. And the other guard, "Are you going to let her wear that?" Like, and just like that whole tone. And, he's, like, "Yeah, I'm fine with it." So, they let me in.*
>
> *- Gina, mother.*

Mirroring the treatment of prisoners, correctional guards escort and secure relatives into various rooms, regulating their movements, determining when and where they should wait in line and the wait times for entering the institution itself.

> *And so, we'd go through and then you go through the metal detector and then you have to be sniffed by the dogs and then you go through here and then you have to sit and wait. So, for a little kid, it was – The first two times I took her, she cried. She was scared. "Who are these people? Why are they touching me? Why are they –" You know – "Why do I have to go through this intimidating-looking thing?" One time I took her, she had to go to the bathroom and she was, she was potty-trained and I asked them, like, it's quite a process. I said, "She has to go to the bathroom. I know there's, on the other side of that door, can she go to the bathroom?" "No." She ended up – She was about three then, wetting her pants.*
>
> *- Kim, mother.*

Family members are subject to various surveillance and risk management procedures, which prioritize security logic to the detriment of visitors' dignity and privacy. Such procedures include searches, mail screening, phone call monitoring and recording, handling of clothing, and interrogations. Family members feel as though they are forced to pay for maintaining their relationships with their detained relatives due to the correctional system's perception and treatment of family members as risk factors and potential smugglers [13]. The price to maintain these relationships is high, as participants describe the procedures to which they "voluntarily" submit and which violate their autonomy, integrity, independence, intimacy, and privacy. Olivia, Maude and Alexandra illustrate this resignation to accept any treatment for the sole purpose of seeing a loved one, even a request for a strip search. This treatment is thus experienced as a form of violence.

> *The strip search, you know, she explained to us... Now she says, "You get there, sometimes, you know, we're all inside, they're going to search the, the visitors." Then she says, "If they tell you, 'It's a strip search. You say 'no' [...] You don't want to." And I was like, "Yeah, but I can't go see Dad [...]." But she says, "No, but don't get searched, like, naked." She says, "You don't want to go through that." Well, I was like, "Yeah, but to go see dad, I don't mind."*
>
> *- Olivia, daughter.*

> *[...] I've never been strip-searched because I would never have gone back in my life. But I know that I signed the paper as if it could happen.*
>
> *- Alexandra, mother.*

> *(talking about the naked strip search) Well yeah, it wasn't forced, but like forced. [...] or else I had to go to the visiting room for an hour. (silence). But then you see your husband, your partner panic, and you know, so many things were happening that it's like, "I have no choice." It's really like "I have no choice." Inside, it's like "I don't have a choice, I have to do it, maybe they'll let me go afterwards because…" (silence). And it was... two officers and there was the one who wouldn't let me go... who controlled everything, everything, everything, everything. The worst thing was that on the phone I always told Olivier* "If one day it happens, I'm leaving." But... I had no choice...*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

> *It's violent, it's like being treated as if I were a criminal myself, as if I was the one who made my son like that, as if it was because of me.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

Some participants have gone so far as to assert that the institution's visitation protocols and related security measures are dehumanizing processes. The institution's flawed values accumulate and appear to result in the institution's refusal to acknowledge relatives' dignity. Participants thus perceive the institution's lack of respect, humanity and compassion, as well as the practices which deprive relatives of their autonomy and privacy, to be purposeful and structural in nature.

> *[…] one guy's sitting there and he's got both legs up on the desk and I stood at the window and he didn't even bother turning his head. Like, it is just so disrespectful. And I thought, "I've worked in offices all my life. I would never allow anybody to come in and see me with both legs up on the desk, splayed out like this when I'm supposed to be working." And it just conveys such a level of disrespect to families, right? And it makes you feel that much more ashamed. And that's what it's designed to do. That whole process when you go in the door is meant to shame and blame. Right? That's what they're doing. And it's working.*
>
> *- Jeff, father.*

> *Violated. Made to be a criminal. Victimized one more time. Humiliated. Ashamed. Being accused before doing anything wrong. I feel like the Correctional Services of Canada looks at visitors and family as the enemy and I believe that they've set up structures to make you feel that way.*
>
> *- Inès, mother.*

Participants' accounts reveal that relatives are even more shocked by the institution's treatment of them, as it contradicts their beliefs concerning public service standards.

> *I'm a 58-year old, law-abiding, tax-paying citizen. Don't treat me like garbage. I'm not garbage. I don't treat you that way. I am respectful. I say please and thank you and I say good morning when I walk in...*
>
> *- Jeff, father.*
>
> *And, I got worried and shocked and, to me, they're doing a public service. Some of the public is coming in and if I go to any other institution or place with public services, I should not expect to be treated that way.*
>
> *- Gina, mother.*

Family members come away from these experiences with tarnished beliefs and perceptions of the justice system, public services, and state authority figures. The correctional system has not only failed them but has subjected relatives to unnecessary additional suffering and collateral damage. Certain participants have expressed their resentment and mistrust towards the correctional system and its actors, and while others have expressed suspicion that correctional officers are responsible for importing drugs into the institutions. These testimonies further illustrate relatives' collective negative perceptions of the carceral system and justice actors.

> *Especially in Closed Visits, there's no way we could pass anything to "X". No way. […]. It's coming in through the guards who aren't scanned. It's coming in through the workers who aren't scanned. It's coming in through volunteers and contractors who aren't scanned, right? We're not bringing stuff in. They're, you know, it's like they're guarding the henhouse and the whole back of the barn is open, right? […] it's really just intimidating, so it's having a negative impact. It's not preventing drugs from getting inside prison. […] all the visits are Closed. So, that drug did not come in with a visitor.*
>
> *- Jeff, father.*
>
> *The frustrating part is that it's not a person-to-person visit. It's a through the glass visit. There's no possible way for them to pass anything. That doesn't make any sense to me.*
>
> *-Hannah, aunt.*
>
> *I mean they come in with backpacks, and big heavy coats, and all kinds of stuff. And I'm not saying it's just the correctional officers, there are volunteers, there are like the guy who filled up the vending machines- he comes in now his uh his uh – I'm not suggesting that he was bringing anything in by any stretch of the imagination but if you are going to apply this principle fairly, every single person should be subjected to the ion scanner.*
>
> *- Quinn, mother.*

Similar to Lee, Porter and Comfort's (2014) research on families of prisoners in the United States, our research identifies relatives' negative perceptions of the correctional system and its personnel. Family members' experiences not only reduce their level of trust in

government institutions but also challenge their perceptions of state values. Citizens are socialized to develop expectations of their government through their experiences and interactions with it (Lipsky, 1980). We have noted that participants' experiences and interactions with the carceral system have negatively impacted their perceptions of the government's values, practices, and standards. Despite these negative perceptions and general distrust of state actors, family members resign themselves to the carceral system's practices to maintain the precious bonds with their incarcerated loved ones.

> *[...] we stay in touch with him... And we will, no matter what the cost, we will continue to do that… We do everything we can to make sure that he still feels part of his family circle, and that he is loved.*
>
> *- Inès, mother.*

Participants assert that the cost of maintaining these relationships is high enough to make them feel as though they are serving a sentence alongside their incarcerated relatives.

> *We also suffer the pain of the other person.*
>
> *-Ariane, spouse.*
>
> *Then, it's like, (cries), I also feel like I'm spending time with him (cries). And, as much as I try to tell myself that it's not me, that I'm not the one who did it, but I can't help it...(cries) I'm counting the days, too. It's not easy.*
>
> *- Georgette, mother.*

While this study clearly illustrates the challenges that participants encounter within the correctional setting, their unique experiences do not end at the prison/jail gates. A loved one's incarceration is also a challenge outside prison/jail walls, as it impacts various spheres of family members' daily lives.

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF A RELATIVE'S INCARCERATION ON THE LIFE OF FAMILIES

1. Impacts on family and social ties

Participants speak about the ways in which their loved ones' incarceration impacts their social universe – their relationships with their relatives in custody as well as their nuclear family relationships and social circles.

A. Felt and imposed restrictions on relative's relationships with detained individuals

As we have explained, incarceration poses objective and material restrictions, which limit the means, frequency and context of family members' relationships with the incarcerated individual. These restrictions define relatives' ways of living with and relating to their loved one(s) in custody. The majority of participants discussed the difficulties they experienced as a result of the correctional policies which prohibit physical contact between inmates and their visitors for longer or shorter periods of time depending on the institution and initial security level of incarceration.

> *I mean, the thing that's really hard in the beginning and that I heard from other parents over and over and, I mean, it was four years before I could hug my son.*
>
> *-Diane, mother.*
>
> *I haven't been able to hug him since September last year.*
>
> *-Tara, mother.*
>
> *And, you know, really what you want to do is you want to hug your loved one, right? You really do want to hug them and no, it's over the telephone and with glass between you. So, it's very, very hard. Very hard. Very inhumane.*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

Carceral procedures have structural and structuring effects on family interactions, limiting not only their quantity but also their quality and expression.

> *You can't give gifts. You can't, you can't, sorry, you can't send them a birthday present. I can't send money on his birthday, right? I can't send him a gift. I can't send, I can't give chocolates to the staff because God knows, they'll think they're poisoned or worse or something like that. I mean, you cannot do anything. So, it, it, it takes away this sort of humanness.*
>
> *- Diane, mother.*

.

Nathan's testimony illustrates how the prison's structure affects, changes and controls family relationships:

> *But then seeing my dad behind this glass and I remember him, like, putting his hand up again the glass and I put my hand up against the glass and, um, you know, that was my first time going to the prison. And, uh, it was a very scary experience and it was very heart-breaking to see my father there. [...] Prison structure is all over your interactions in very particular sorts of ways. Where you can sit. How you can sit. How close you can get. When you can hug when you can't hug. You know? Or if you think about that experience where I put my hand up against the Plexiglas, the prison is literally mediating the physical contact that I can have with my father, you know?*
>
> *-Nathan, son.*

The available means of contact, combined with their costs and consequences, force family members to self-censor the form and content of their communications with their incarcerated loved ones.

> *It's the structure of the visits, well because I do not know if you have ever been to a detention center, but when you are behind the small picture windows, we are so closed to one another, I'm sorry, but even on the phone, I couldn't do it . I had a hard time concentrating and hearing what my son was saying to me. It feels like we're screaming all the time or everyone is screaming, or I don't even know. So it's super uncomfortable, we can't talk about just anything [...] Basically, we're talking about the rain and the good weather. [...] It's very impersonal. Me, I don't feel like it's designed to be pleasant for our inmates, absolutely not. And the phone calls, they were fine. It costs an [arm and a leg], it costs a fortune. He calls us all the time by collected fees. So, needless to say that me and a lot of other moms and dads have really big bills until we get the first bill and then we are like, okay. There, I think we'll talk to each other. I understand that they want to call us, but at the same time [...] it just makes no sense. [...] Of course everything is recorded on the phone, so for sure… Well, I'm not telling you that I didn't yell at him. But still.*
>
> *-Zora, mother.*
>
> *You know, sometimes he phones and just has to vent and guess what? I'm the, I'm the punching bag, right? And he'll get angry and he'll get frustrated and he'd yell and stuff like this.[...] You can't hang up on someone, especially when they're not doing that well, with depression and stuff. But the phone call is their only link to the outside [...] – It does upset me sometimes but I'm fairly certain it's not just me. That he needs this outlet. So, you know, I try not to take it to heart.*
>
> *Kim, mother.*

For some participants, the institutionally-imposed and self-imposed restrictions compound to become a very heavy burden. This often results in family members' ambivalence regarding possible interactions with their incarcerated loved ones. Family

members may then become reluctant to expose themselves to the prison or jail and to consequently reduce their contact with the incarcerated persons.

> *I broke up with him like 3 months after the strip-search, it might have been that I had an overflow and that I just needed to leave and that it was my way of saying: "uh, I need to breathe." But that I was not able to say it that way [..] at one point I said to him "I cheated on you and I'm leaving". Because the whole time I was on the bus, I was thinking about how to tell him that I needed to leave because I couldn't do it anymore. I didn't want to tell him that it was coming from his environment [the prison].*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

This degenerative effect on family relationships is often reported when participants discuss the ion scanner[14]. Some relatives limit their visits to the institution fearing they could test positive on the ion scan, as it would have consequences for them and their incarcerated relative. In such cases, carceral policies not only impede the maintenance and expression of family relationships, but also undermine the support provided to detainees.

> *The ion scanner is meant to keep families out. And you know what? It's working really well. And that's a shame.*
>
> *-Inès, mother.*

B. Nuclear family

The nuclear family, which includes parents and their children, is truly affected by the incarceration of one of its members.

> *One thing I would tell you is that when your loved one is doing time, you're doing time too. We counted every single day. We counted how many weekends there were. We were doing time, too. Everybody's in a holding pattern and it's really tough on the family.*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

A loved one's incarceration often results in generalized tension, which sometimes leads to relationship fragility and **arguments** between partners.

> *To say we were brittle with each other would be very, very an understatement. Yeah, we were, we were made of glass and we were walking on eggs. And we would fight at the drop of a hat and argue about things that we've never argued before. And it finally calmed down and we're a lot better now but it was very hard.*
>
> *-Jeff, father.*

Family members who reject the incarcerated individual create additional **tension** within the family unit and may distance themselves from those members who choose to maintain relationships with their incarcerated relatives.

> *I couldn't talk to my mom either because my mom really didn't have the same vision. And that's normal. And me and my mother never had that conversation and we'll never have it. Because we don't see it the same way. And that's normal. You know, I mean, he is my father; she's his ex. We don't have the same perspective. We don't have the same perspective of the story as he does either [...]. We just put it straight one day. We wanted to talk about it once. We felt that, there, ... we were raising our voices because, there, we started to, to have disagreements. Then we just went like, "What's for dinner?" Well, like... it kind of stopped right there because we were like, "Okay, we just realized that we're never going to have the same conversation about this. Then it's okay."*
>
> *-Olivia, daughter.*

> *I have a sister in law that never wants to have anything to do ever again with my brother. I have a father that moved over to Europe to get away from this, from this [...] I wish I would have never told my mother-in-law about the crime. Because, her reaction to the whole thing was completely upside down and I'm not gonna say that it's the only reason that my mother-in-law is a big part of the problem that has caused friction in our marriage. It came to a point where I told my husband it pretty much came down to whether he picks his mom or me. "I cannot deal with your mom." And, we went down to visit them in Toronto and I was in a lack of sleep and his mother mentioned something to me in the kitchen and things kind of blew up. And, between me and his mom and the kids were in the living room. They heard the whole thing and my husband just stood there and he froze. He didn't know what to say. He didn't know what to do. And, I said to him afterwards, I said, "As your wife, I would have expected that you would protect me. That you would step in and that you would, you would help." But freezing didn't really do much. And, I told him at that time, I said, "You know what? I don't want to have anything to do with your mom," [...] A few years ago, when this whole thing hit the fan, yeah, our relationship was not solid. And, over the last two years our relationship has gotten much more solid. It has less of an impact on our relationship that, like, my husband never had an interest, like, when I filled out the paperwork to go and visit down in Kingston or wherever my brother ended up. I asked my husband like, do you want to fill out or do you have any – Would you be interested to go and visit my brother, by chance? And, he said, "Nope, nope. No intention whatsoever." I was, I was okay with that but, it was, it was hurtful.*
>
> *-Carmen, sister.*

Relationships between siblings appear especially difficult when one of the children is incarcerated. The **fraternal relationship** seems to weaken in the aftermath of the events and some brothers and sisters sever ties, often temporarily, with their incarcerated siblings.

> *Then at first my family didn't want to see him, my daughter didn't want to see her brother. Now it's starting, it's maybe just 6 months that she's coming here with her daughters.*
>
> *-Joyces, mother.*

Participant accounts illustrate the extent to which incarceration disrupts the parent-child dynamic and creates an **imbalance** between the attention that parents provide to the incarcerated child and the attention they devote to their non-incarcerated children.

> *I resent him [my father] for not even considering that my mom might have something to do and he calls her multiple times a day on a daily basis every day, all the time, throughout the year. All the fucking time. [...] And it's, like, I needed to go and get groceries and my mom's watching my daughter and she'll be on the phone the whole time. Him just, like, bitching about how he hates his life. [...] And, it's enough so, yeah, I resent him on a daily basis.*
>
> *Mona, sister.*

The mothers we met spoke of the **reproaches** they endured from their non-incarcerated children who felt abandoned during their siblings' imprisonment. Of note, these mothers ultimately felt that their children's criticisms were justified.

> *Christmas was never the same, you know, for that time it was just … Fun things you would do at Christmas, he didn't want to do and, um, the guy didn't even put decorations up when the kids were, you know, my two girls were upset about that. But yeah, I couldn't, I just didn't think I was supposed to enjoy when a big part is missing and it just didn't seem right. She said to me, "Mom, we're still here. Like, look at us. We're here." "No, no, no, your brother, it's …" "Mom, we're right in front of you." And so, I had to do an [examination of conscience] and yes, what am I doing? You know, what am I doing, thinking I'm helping one problem and I'm creating another, you know?*
>
> *-Fanny, mother.*
>
> *You know, our kids were all, like, in their early 20's, we didn't keep them involved. You know, we sort of were just trying to protect ourselves and ... You know, try to keep our son, who had been arrested, on an even keel and we didn't do what we needed to do with our other kids (...). After they, you know, we had shared how we were treated. We kind of shut them out and stopped being parents to them. We didn't think we were, at the time. We thought we were protecting them. But in fact, what we did was we shut them out. That's what ended up happening.. And you know, when something like that happens, you, you focus in on where the problems are. So, I know now. And, actually, I've apologized to my, my other children and, I say to them, "I, I realize now that I stopped being a Mom to you guys. And they went, "Yep." They did. And they said, "We relied on our friends for support." So, they were, they were resentful of my other son. So, relations*

> *have improved. They've improved for sure, but it wasn't thanks to us […] And so, it took time for them to rebuild the relationship. I mean, now it's good, right? They do things together and it's good. But it's been six years, over six years now. So, it's different. But it took time. Lots of conversations that they had on their own that we weren't privy to.*
>
> *-Erika, mother.*

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON NUCLEAR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS…

In her thesis, a member of this research team conducted an in-depth analysis of eight unstructured interviews with nuclear family members of criminalized persons in Ontario and Quebec, which reveals the various ways in which justice intervention disrupts nuclear family members' lives and relationships.

Criminal justice intervention initiates a domino-effect of stressful events, over which family members have little to no control. While grappling with feelings of fear and hopelessness, nuclear family members often find themselves taking on additional roles and responsibilities within the family. Taylor's (2020) analysis highlights the stress that justice intervention places upon individual members' sense of selves, as well as nuclear family resources and relationships.

Of note, Taylor's (2020) research highlights the self-imposed nature of nuclear family members' moral and legal responsibilities for their criminalized relatives, in contrast to similar literature that focuses on family members' state-mandated responsibilities[15]. Participant testimonies reveal that when relatives take on personal responsibility for their criminalized relatives' consequences, they often experience feelings of guilt, failure, and self-blame. These feelings then lead to negative role re-evaluations, revealing that internal self-criticism is often as harsh, if not harsher, than that implied by the criminal justice system.

Participants' nuclear family resources are significantly impacted following their relatives' criminalization, as they often feel as though they are obligated to mobilize their financial and material assets to assist their justice-involved loved ones. Between the cost of pre-sentencing legal fees and the post-sentencing cost of phone calls, transportation and lodging to maintain relationships with incarcerated relatives, nuclear family members must manage considerable financial strain. These tensions are exacerbated as family members must often safeguard their relatives' possessions in their own homes while they are detained. With little warning, nuclear family members' lives are consumed by and revolve around justice system intervention.

While much of the existing literature on families of criminalized people in Canada highlights the resulting implications of stigma on relationships[16], nuclear family members in Taylor's (2020) study describe their relationships with criminalized relatives in terms of grief and loss. Using Boss' (1999, 2006) theory of Ambiguous Loss to develop a detailed portrait of nuclear family members' relational experiences in the wake of a relative's criminalization, Taylor (2020) highlights the severe interpersonal ramifications of justice intervention for participants' families.

For additional information, please consult Taylor's (2020) published thesis:
https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/40409/3/Taylor_Drew_2020_thesis.pdf

C. Extra-familial relationships

A loved one's incarceration also impacts extra-familial[2] relationships with extended family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances, etc. Participants report a range of positive and negative reactions, from support to threats, in their interactions with their immediate social circles or the public.

Relatives often face **moral judgment** from those around them. Participants describe experiencing both open judgement and perceived disapproval from others regarding their desire to maintain relationships with the detained individuals.

> *With my sister, we had, at the beginning there, I felt that she was judging me. I don't know if it was me. There were comments that she made and I really felt like she was stabbing me. Sometimes we would go to see him and then come back and we wouldn't say a word to each other in the car. [...] And I felt that she was judging me. But when I arrived the first time, I was with her and I was crying and she told me "well, it's like, it's not worse than at..." [...] But I never felt that she was a support. I couldn't cry about X. I always felt like she was cold and like... well like... "Maybe it's your fault". That's how I felt.*
>
> *- Alexandra, mother.*

> *Because sometimes, my parents are like, you know, they want to, you know, help me. They're not the worst, but at first it was really hard because they weren't available. Maybe it was too much for them, I don't know. But you know, some of the remarks they'll make, let's say I talk about it, my father will say, "Well, he says, your guy's been a liar since he was a baby anyway." Is it because I need to hear that on top of what I'm going through right now? Fuck, it's still judgments too.*
>
> *- Noémie, mother.*

> *The big sister, my big sister, she was giving me advice. Wait a minute... it was like, "Go to Europe. Leave everything, go away, you don't have to take care of him." They don't understand the kind of stubbornness that we have in wanting to help them.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

> *Then this... I got into a fight with a girl at the bar because of this. I'd punched a bottle of beer and I knew I was going to crush her in the face. [...] She was with her friends. Then they were laughing. [...] So, at one point, I looked at myself again and I asked them, I said, "Do you have something to tell me? Do you have something to tell me, like, honestly? Tell me, like." [...]*

[2] The term extra-familial here refers to individuals/relationships outside the nuclear family unit.

> *She turned around and said, "Do you want me to tell you? Your dad, he's a basement dick, uh. He raped the women, uh. Then you, you still talk to him. You live with him. Uh, that [you] should all die."*
>
> *- Olivia, daughter.*

> *I've had a friend say, you know, "Well, you should just walk away." I've had someone say, "Cut your losses. You've got two other kids."*
>
> *- Kim, mother.*

In the context of labour relations, participants spoke of reproach and judgment from their colleagues. They also witnessed their colleagues' **attitudes shift** towards them, simply because participants were "guilty" of having a loved one in detention.

> *They judged, first and foremost. They judged. So, I worked with a very large staff. Maybe forty people. And people who'd been very friendly before wouldn't look at me in the hallways anymore. And that was a real wake-up call. How I was judged, too. You know? [...] How awful is that, right? So, yeah, everybody in the family is judged. "Woah, what kind of family is that? What kind of family is that? Her son breaks the law. There must be something wrong with their parenting. There must be something wrong with their family, right? What goes on behind the doors of that family, family home?" So, we were all judged. Absolutely all judged.*
>
> *-Erika, mother.*

> *So, Joe, being the amazing business, like, the person that he was, I think they – Like, my till was short five bucks one night or something like that. Like, at cash out. So, he's like, "Oh, so thieving runs in the family" [referring to my brother's arrest].*
>
> *- Ophelia, sister.*

In addition to being subjected to others' disapproving judgments, participants openly described having experienced a **lack of support** from those around them. This lack or absence of support – be it from family, friends, co-workers, or society, is yet another consequence of having an incarcerated loved one.

> *I didn't have much support from my family at first. I found that very difficult too. But I was there to support my son.*
>
> *– Joyce, mother.*

> *You don't have a lot of support, it's hard to get over that. When will it end? I don't know when it will end. It seems like there's no end date to it. And that's it. It's scraping the lives of many, many people.*
>
> *- Anne, mother.*

In some cases, this subject has become a **source of conflict and tension** in relationships.

> *You know, I haven't had people talk to me anymore, but I have friends who had children about the same age as mine and who were raised quite a bit together who, you know... They don't want their daughters to come in contact with my son. And I understand that very well, but it hurts, you know, to be told that... You know, a friend I've had since our kids were little. Our children grew up together. And there... I understand that she's afraid that... Because my son, when he got out of prison, he "pimped" girls in a network of dancers... I understand that they don't want their daughters to come into contact with him. I understand very well, but it still hurts, because it's my child.*
>
> *- Alexandra, mother.*

> *And, I definitely find that that's, like, kind of ruined our relationship a bit because I feel it's not something I'm willing to budge on and I can tell it's not something she's willing to budge on either. And, that's just something that we've kind of, I think, mutually agree is not worth, like having much of a relationship over if we can't agree on that.*
>
> *- Kaley, daughter; speaking about her aunt.*

> *It was my family members who were the harshest, right? And, so, that's where the real stigma came. You know, and the worst insult for me as a child was to be told I'm just like my father. So, if I'm bad, I'm just like my father. That's what I became associated with. "You're just like your father because you're bad."*
>
> *- Nathan, son.*

Participants have indicated that although they feel disappointed, hurt, or frustrated when they experience negative reactions from their social circles, they are resigned to the fact that others will **distance** themselves from them and their incarcerated relative(s). Some participants simply wish to understand why their acquaintances feel the need to distance themselves and take this relational break.

> *At the beginning I lost many, many friendships [...] I fell too, you know like everyone else when you fall in love and then especially when you want to get married... We were telling everyone, no matter the situation. And... Yes, I have lost many friends. But at the same time (silence) I tell myself that these friends did not respect my choices. But... At the time I understood their fear. Some friends... They remained my friends, but their spouse was the one who was pressuring them. You know, "okay." You know, I have my friend Julie* who- I can go to their house and then at a certain point, uh, when they started having children, in the 2-3rd year, my friend's spouse said "you know, Maude, you want to go out, you're going to see each other, but I'd like you to not have contact with the children." I've had that kind of attitude there.... I've had friends tell me "you're crazy." (laughs) Who put me down.*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

> *My family, well, it's difficult because my brother, my sister-in-law are his godfather, godmother. They have really dropped out. Then they have two children, 28 and 30 years old, who became parents this summer. And you know, they, since he has his problems... you know, they are afraid of him. And I can understand them.*
>
> *- Noémie, mother*

> *I've had a friend say, "I can't keep up with the chaos you live in. I can't deal with –" [...] Just, you know, she'd come over to visit me and I'd be sitting there in a puddle of tears and, you know, "What's the matter?" And, "You asked me, I told you." And anyway, so, I lost a friend there.*
>
> *-Kim, mother.*

> *Another friend of 20 years calls me and I was crying, I was crying a lot. But I answer the phone because I thought it was my son calling me. He was incarcerated at the time. "Let's see Rosalyne, why are you crying like that?" I said, "I'm going to tell you something." I was crying, crying, crying. "My son is in prison". [He said,] "No more! It's over! Finished!" It was one of the people on my will to liquidate, the liquidator of the will. He resigned. It is very, very, very, very difficult! [...] There are people [in the support group who have said] "Ah, my sister doesn't talk to me anymore, my mother doesn't talk to me anymore, my brother doesn't talk to me anymore, my neighbours don't talk to me anymore." Me, in a way, we're lucky because we don't have a family.*
>
> *- Rosalyne, mother.*

Some participants have not only faced negative judgment, but also occasional **retaliation** in the workplace. Noémie describes the need to defend her rights to her employer, as her son's situation impacted her health and ability to work, particularly due to the leave of absence she had to take from work. Meanwhile, Maude was forced to change jobs completely.

> *And they [my bosses] wanted me to sign a paper saying that if I was, if I was absent due to illness, it had to be really serious, otherwise, even if I felt sick, I had to report to the office. I didn't sign. And I was working two days a week. The first day I arrived, my coordinator gave me 10 files, which was a carbon copy of my guy's [my son's] problems. I went to see her, I said, "I don't know..." I was also scathing, I said, "I don't know where your clinical judgement is [...] although I am still a little bit sick, well I have one and I don't think that I will be able to help this person at the moment with what I am going through, so give me another one." Fuck, I had a lot of pressure not to be absent. I wasn't really happy about it. And the problems weren't over yet. Even in January, my boss said to me, she asked me, "And your guy, how are you doing? I said, "Ah, I'm fine," it was like minus 30 outside. I said, "My son has been running away for a week. We don't know where he is." My boss was there at that meeting, beating me up. She said to me, "I don't know how you do it, I wouldn't be able to come to work." I looked at her, I said, "Do I have a choice?" So you know, that's it. The health office tried to*

> *box me in, the union defended me. I even got money for reparations, basically.*
>
> *- Noémie, mother.*

> *In the school environment, well, that's it. My ex [...] also called the principal and the director of the school board. I was met. And at the beginning of each year we have a general assembly that meets in an auditorium with all the employees [...] And um [...] the DG of the school board at that time said, "The school board will never endorse a person marrying an inmate [...]." I'm sitting in the auditorium and I know that it's about me, there are not 15 people like that there... But it started because of my ex-spouse, the father of my son, who didn't appreciate the situation and went to the school board. So from that moment on, I tried to... [...] to keep quiet and I withdrew as an educator so that the parents wouldn't be afraid because I was also met by the school principal. So at that time I... I withdrew and I fell into administration [...] I totally withdrew from what I liked [...].*
>
> *- Maude, spouse.*

It is important to qualify these testimonies by noting that several participants have received **unconditional support**. Some have even been able to speak about their experiences without embarrassment or fear of creating tension within their relationships. This is particularly true for Mary, who has never hidden the fact that she married an incarcerated man.

> *[...] I'm lucky, because I have people around me, and many professionals, I have friends who are social workers, I have friends who are nurses. I have a network of professionals who know about it, my family doctor knows about it. You know, how many women don't talk about it, either to their family doctor, they won't talk to them, you know... I knew a woman who was married, who had two children and nobody knew that her spouse was a guy inside. She said she got pregnant on a trip and then she decided to keep the kids. [...] At Christmas, my husband, my husband has a list of 150 people that he can call at Christmas, he can call a lot of people, all my family, all my friends, three-quarters of my friends. My girlfriend says, "Give me his address, I'll send postcards." I have friends all over the world [...] they send postcards, often I know what's going on in their lives through him.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

> *I don't think I could ask for anything better. Where I worked, the church I worked at, the Minister was quite involved and knew and was praying with other people at the church. His boss, too, like, everybody was saying, anything I need. Just let them know. Work, my work, the same thing. "Is there anything we can do? Let us know."*
>
> *- Dem, spouse.*

> *I had offers to help me last year or so, in November, last year, when I was not doing well. One of my friends came here, she brought all her stuff, we cooked together, we made pies and stuff to warm up. And you know, she's a*

> *hard-working girl, she has three kids. I mean, she has her own life. That, it provided me with so much… Well, this shows an incredible generosity, I was flipping out when that happened. No, I had a lot of support.*
>
> *-Anne, mother.*

Other participants have attested to the open-mindedness and various **accommodations** that their employers have put into place.

> *[...] and I'm lucky, they always knew where I worked because I had my office, my office number, they had called my employer to tell him that we would have to collect calls from the penitentiary. And my boss said yep, and so what. But, not everyone is like that. I don't hide it, all of a sudden when you hide it from your family, from your employer, you're already living a lie, who do you talk to and do you have the right answers.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

> *I work in a health care facility there, with my employer... yes, my immediate supervisor knew about it, because you know sometimes I needed time off. Or you know, sometimes I would cry at work or, you know... So yeah, she knew. Most of my colleagues who were close to me were aware and supportive.*
>
> *- Alexandra, mother.*

D. When the cases are mediatized….

On a larger scale, some participants have had to juggle the social tribunal's judgement, as the crimes of their sons or spouses have ended up in the **media**. Some spoke of being harassed by journalists, others of the media coverage's negative impacts on their daily lives. Some testified that they had received threats and feared for their safety due to the extent to which their stories were published in the media. Others simply mention their relief that their loved one's crime has occurred under the media's radar.

> *And we'd come to Court in the morning and all the camera people would rush out to take your picture as you're, as you're coming in, in, into Court. I mean, really … It's one of the worst moments of, of, of, of our, of a person's life and, and then this swarm of vultures comes. That's the only way I can describe it.*
>
> *- Diane, mother.*

> *[...] What I found most difficult in all this, among other things, is that the media makes a big deal out of a basically harmless gesture, they don't contextualize it. They don't have the history of the character, they just sensationalize it and that gets me every time. Because I live in a small town, I live in the countryside, people know me.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

> *Well, I guess even when it started, okay, when it, when he was first arrested it was in the front, um, on the radio station. I was getting phone calls. It was on TV. Um, cross Canada, because I knew people in Vancouver and Winnipeg and I got calls from there. Then I checked it out and it was even on the East Coast, that it had hit the news. [...] We had our house egged. We had our window broken. Um, we had penises drawn on our car … Oh, I guess the biggest thing that happened was there, the doorbell rang a couple of times and I, I would go to the door and there wasn't anybody there so I, just, like, okay. Um, weird. But I looked up the street, down the street, didn't see anything, went back into the house. It happened, you know, a few times like that and then there was a note left on the door, that they would take my child … and tie her and rape her (crying). So … we ended up having to call the police because it was our, our safety, right?*
>
> *- Fanny, mother.*

> *So when I went there, I remember, I was on the stairs. Then there were the journalists who were on the stairs in the courtyard [...] Then the journalists were talking. "Oh yes, his daughter, Olivia*, how old is she? Na-na-na." "O.K., what does she look like?" "Yes, she's a blonde. Na-na." Then they had pictures of me, like. Then they were talking about me, they wanted to ping me, like, to talk to me or pose me or whatever, to know if I was going to be there. But, how much, like, you, you, you want to, like, go get some juice [...]*
>
> *- Olivia, daughter.*

Our study found that the social messages conveyed in the media and by the public at large affect the interactions of those who have an incarcerated family member. The reactions that family members of incarcerated people encounter are intimately linked to the stigma associated with incarceration and crime in our society. Diane explains that family members are more exposed to the **social reactions** to incarceration.

> *There's a whole, I mean, in a way, there's an unreality to people in prison. They don't have to face the public. They don't have to look at their neighbours. You know, they don't have to do all, all that, you know?*
>
> *- Diane, Mother.*

Judgment, tension, and loss emanating from various social circles are common despite the support that participants have occasionally received. Participants' loved ones' incarcerations significantly affect their families and social ties. These relational difficulties come in addition to the consequences and new realities with which participants must cope – particularly in terms of their health and material concerns.

2. An undermined family economy

Our research documents the material consequences of incarceration and family members' economic insecurity as a result of reduced resources and increased expenses.

Internal costs (i.e., collect calls and canteen purchases in prison) and external costs (legal fees, transport, insurance, moving, etc.) greatly affect the family economy.

> *Oh, the money that my mom has actually put in the Institution or Family Hut, she should get a plaque. She should get multiple plaques for, like, supporting the Institute. All these moms should. They all go through that. They all have to budget the phone because that's their son. (...) [It's their only] way of communicating with them and if they lose that, you may lose your child.*
>
> *-Mona, sister.*

> *And the food thing, as well, my son put money for the Canteen and, you know, I'm lucky I'm in a financial situation, I'm able to do this. It is within our family budget to try and support him, but we want to. But families that can't afford to do that and because […] And, as I said, he's not very big but the food, the amount they get is not enough. He's hungry, so he's having to supplement with protein bars and energy bars from the canteen so he's not hungry. And he's learned from other inmates, you know, save one thing from your meal so that when you're hungry later, you have something to eat. Because at least you'll have food in your stomach... But … And, and another thing, the Canteen, things are so expensive. Hugely expensive. And at first, I thought, well why is the jail profiting from this? Like, I don't mind if it's for buying new books for the inmates to read or whatever. [...] Well, are they having some company that charges $5 for a tube of toothpaste? That's ridiculous. No one with other stores that we shop at, that are still making a lot of money, charge that. So, why is it okay to charge them more and the stress on the families and the expense of trying to provide something for them, to me it's just, it's just another insult and taking advantage of people that have no other choices. I don't know.*
>
> *-Gina, mother.*

> *I always worked, sick, not sick, I went to work. The only time I didn't come home was when my kids were sick. And then, you know, you manage to save a little bit of money. But here, all my small savings went to lawyers, doctors, therapies, [...] I came to change my insurance, well, I'm no longer insurable because someone who has a criminal record. [...] It costs me double the insurance because I live with someone who has a criminal record with us. [...] There, you get put in the way. And it seems to me that I don't need that right now, to be put in the way.*
>
> *- Anne, mother.*

While some families are in a better position to absorb these costs, economic precariousness sets in and debts accumulate for others.

> *We're fortunate we had the means. He could call us as often as he wanted. We were able to put money into his accounts so he was able to buy stamps and we were able to visit him once a week. That's the optimum condition, right? Situation. So, if you have no means, how do you keep up that relationship without going into debt?*

-Erika, mother.

Kim's testimony illustrates the many ways in which a loved one's incarceration presents economic and professional development challenges for those who support them.

> *We claimed bankruptcy a couple of years ago. Just, you know, everything. It's always – It's – I've never been able to get a proper job because I can't..[...] I could never have got a job with everything that I've gone through with him because of the number of times I've been in court... going to visit him… So, yeah, I could not have held down a job where I had to be there all the time because I would have – Even if I'd been able to do it mentally, I would have had to miss too much, you know, with the crisis of my son…. And, you know, like, on a bad day for my son, if it's six phone calls, that's two hours out of my day. Days aren't that long…I think for everybody it's set us back, financially. A big one, you know, because of job and because it's expensive having a kid in jail. And just expectations of what I thought I might do with my life. I kind of have put that on a back burner. [...] It has completely changed my identity because I, I, my idea of what I thought I was gonna do as a career, no. My control over, you know, because – Over having a job and financial stability, no. Any control over, you know, I'm walking this way and I –. It's all fine and stuff like that but I sort of feel like I've been floating along with not my purpose but, I mean, I'm being a mother, yes.*
>
> *- Kim, mother.*

While some families can cover these expenses or take on additional debt, for others like Beatrice, these costs are prohibitive and prevent her from supporting her imprisoned son through visits, calls, or giving him money for the canteen.

> *This is my way of making amends because I feel a lot of pain and empathy for the [victim's] family. Even that, we gave an amount of money that we don't have. We gave it to the family. We borrowed to give it. It's certain that they will probably sue us, that's what I've heard lately. And you know, you can't buy anything, you can't buy peace.*
>
> *- Anne, mother.*

3. Health put to the test

A loved one's incarceration is an ordeal that also results in **psychological** and **physical** consequences for those around them. Participants often identify consequences such as anxiety, worry, sleep disturbances, excessive weight gain or weight loss, tension issues, and extreme physical as well as emotional/mental fatigue.

> *And so, I would say, for the first six months after it happened, I was in shell shock. I was frozen. And I, I really didn't know how to help myself get through it.*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

> *Well, basically, I've always had problems with... [...] panic attacks. But, actually, I used to have them like not. But... When it, it started, it was... it was terrible, there. I started having insomnia. I couldn't sleep. I... if I slept two hours a night, [...] Now I was having panic attacks all the time [...]. Then it just wouldn't stop. You know, my mom put me in the hospital three times in one week, you know, like. Because I wasn't breathing. I couldn't even stand up, you know, walk and then, like, it was like... I was in total panic.*
>
> *-Olivia, daughter.*

> *Just the mental – You know, it's affected me. I'm on medication. I have anxiety. […] You know, sometimes I just want to be held. <laughter> And the thought of if I have to, you know, get dressed suitably and go out in society everyday kind of terrifies me. So, you know, it's affected my mental health. It's, you know, I still cope. It's affected my health. I ended up, you know, at The Heart Institute with – Getting tests for chest pains. My youngest has always, she's always worried about me. The effect it's taking on me. And, you know, she'll say, "You're not the same person you used to be." I'm not, you know – It's changed me a lot. I used to be a lot more easy-going and happy and sort of I always now feel like tears are just right there, you know?*
>
> *- Kim, mother.*

> *Well, I'm still made of glass. Like, it takes nothing for me to be in tears and I wake up and a lot of mornings I'll come down and I'll say to Jeff, I'm just having a rough morning. I just fall apart. Sorry… Yeah, you realize that you go for months and think, "I haven't drawn a full breath. Gasping all the time. <inaudible 0:17:01.9 crying> It's like I said to my sister one day, I said you know when you paint a room a bright colour and you always have to put a gray primer coat underneath? Even when there are bright days, that primer coat's always there. I'm always sad. I'm never not sad.*
>
> *-Inès, mother.*

This grey cloud hangs over family members' well-being and persists over long periods in instances of multiple incarcerations, as is the case for Beatrice's son.

> *It's so bad. It's so awful... It's hurtful. It crushes me to see him there...And he always stays for years. [...] I miss him, you know, and I feel bad for him because for much of his life [...] it's, like, it's, like, from 17 to 27 years old he will have spent 9 years inside. He has only been released for a year and three months in ten years. So I can't even understand, like, I feel so bad for him that he didn't have a life, a girlfriend, he didn't start, you know, anything. And I worry about his future. I'm worried about when he comes out, what will he do this time? What, you know, if he's gonna go back to that scene of life? And so, and because I know that every time you get into trouble, it just gets worse and worse. You know, more and even more time, so that's what worries me. Let him get out and get in trouble again. I don't want him to spend his whole life over there.*

-Béatrice, mother.

In cases where relatives are not worried about potential recidivism, family members experience constant anxiety about their incarcerated loved one's future. These long-term implications cannot be considered calmly.

> *It never ends and it never will end. It will be with our family always. It will impact my son's earning potential, even though he's very well educated, already had a university degree and now has, you know, a community college certificate as well from the time he was Inside. Very well educated. He will never meet his own potential. We might end up supporting him for the rest of his life, the rest of our lives. Who knows? Because he doesn't make enough money doing what he's doing to support himself. We feel it's important for him that he lives on his own so he, you know, we supplement what he brings in to make sure he has enough to live on. So, his life will never be what we envisaged for him. What he envisaged for himself. So, when we die, you know, will his siblings feel an obligation if he's not been able to get back on his feet? If he can't get a job that pays more than minimum wage? To be able to support himself, will they feel a financial obligation? I have to tell you, I, I have this incredible urge to save, save, save, save, save so that when we die we can leave enough money, you know, for all of them so that they won't have to feel they have to maybe support him. Not fully, because, you know, he is getting work but it's pretty tough to live on minimum wage. Anyway, so, it's the gift that keeps on giving. And not in a good way. It's the skeleton in the closet but the implications are far greater than just having a skeleton in the closet, you know, in terms of my son that was incarcerated, for the rest of his life, you know, how is he going to be able to feel good about himself? Everyone wants a job where they can contribute. He really wants to be able to contribute. Tough in minimum wage jobs to feel like you're really contributing. People kind of treat you like shit, you know? So, you know, what does that do to his sense of self-worth? And then how does that eat away at us as his parents? Yeah, it's the gift that keeps on giving. I would say it's never over. It's never over. It gets better but it's never over. It's never over. It's a life sentence*
>
> *-Erika, mother.*

Sometimes relatives' physical and psychological ill-being is directly attributable to the prison environment. Participants mention many causes, such as their concern for their imprisoned relative's safety, the after-effects of searches during visits, and treatment from certain correctional staff.

> *The last two nights, I haven't slept. I've had dreams about that bloody ION Scanner, you know? And, like, literally waking up four and five and six times a night, having dreams about it because it's so frightening to me.*
>
> *-Inès, mother.*

For some, this ordeal results in an increased consumption of pharmaceuticals, tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs. While the people we spoke to did not mention self-harm or attempted suicide, the symptoms of ill-being that participants discussed during their interviews are very much in-line with those mentioned in the report (CFCN, 2003).

III. STRATEGIES AND ADAPTATIONS

The people we met described having to assume, manage and react to the new reality of their loved one's imprisonment. The long list of difficulties and challenges that we have discussed in the previous sections have led family members to adopt strategies, which are simultaneously individual and collective, active and passive, voluntary and involuntary, successful and unsuccessful, favourable and damaging.

We distinguish the strategies employed to improve the incarcerated person's situation from those aimed at managing the security imperatives and constraints of the correctional environment. We then present the strategies aimed at reducing the impact of incarceration on participants' lives and those which relate to managing their social interactions outside the institutions' walls.

1. Strategies aiming to improve the situation of incarcerated loved ones

Even though participants invested themselves in various stages of their loved ones' criminalization, we were able to identify a range of strategies developed at different phases in the judicial process.

Some relatives attempted to assist the accused by becoming involved and by collaborating with police during their loved one's arrest, the police search and the investigation.

> *We have no experience with the police. I have stories to tell others now. Don't talk to the police. They are really, really nice to you. Really, really nice to you. And, of course, growing up as a good citizen, you trust the police. Well, I've learned not to trust the police anymore. I would never share anything with the police again because they turn it around and use it against you. We have really learned this lesson.*
>
> *-Érika, mother.*

> *At first, when the police came to the house, they told me they would be there to question me and an officer came. And, being a very law-abiding citizen, you know, you think, "Okay, so, I'll say it." Yes, I greeted the officer. And, they questioned me, I think it was for almost three o'clock. They would ask me to explain to them the context and of course I would provide them with the context of the period when he was really ill. He was depressed and slept for days. So I gave them all the details of what he had done. How did he do. And, later, I found out that some of this material had been used against my son.*
>
> *-Felicity, mother.*

Others became involved during the court process. They spoke to the judge and established a strategic reintegration plan to present at the hearing.

> *We made a second request so that he could be released. So, I put my file together and then we came up with this. The judge, uh the crown absolutely wouldn't let him out. [...] And at lunchtime, she took the time to look at my file and then, I passed her in the hallway. And then, I don't know, I don't know if, what happened, but she allowed him under very severe conditions though, but she allowed him a release.*
>
> *-Anne, mother.*

> *So, what did I do? I made a Powerpoint presentation. And, you know, basically included different things in terms of Smart Recovery, his doctor, us. So, there was a plan and it was a multipronged plan. And, I think it blew them [the court] away. They weren't expecting that, you know, we were willing to, to go to a little bit of effort here in terms of putting together a thoughtful plan with our son.*
>
> *- Dorothy, mother.*

At the time of incarceration, the people interviewed tried to improve the situation of the incarcerated person by giving their time, their energy and their money. The preceding sections have amply illustrated these strategies; however, beyond the visits and letters, the relatives we interviewed told us of the many efforts they had made to improve the daily lives of imprisoned people. Their goals were always for personal development through educational, playful and emotional strategies. They wished to occupy, educate, and entertain their incarcerated loved ones, but also help them to maintain contact with the outside world.

> *We started playing scrabble from a distance. I did a Scrabble board. I made little cutout letters that I put in an envelope. Then, there, I was picking up letters. Then there I was making up words. Then there I was telling him: "Well, I put this letter in this specific space." Then there I would pick up letters for him and I would send them back. Then he sent me a word back through the mail ... uh, another mail after. Then we played Scrabble. (Laughs.)*
>
> *- Ariane, spouse.*

> *C: Over the phone, what we did a lot was playing Battleship. Here we play Battleship, the girls have their game and daddy makes a grid with a pencil and paper. And then they're playing Battleship over the phone. But, in prison, they don't have the Battleship game. But over the phone, it's a great game, it's done well.*
> *N: At one point I sent him a drawing of Snakes and Ladders. So he could tell I'm here, I'm here. [...] I had taken a picture of our game and sent it.*
> *C: Yeah and you see that the scale goes down from 15 to 8. Then, we could play that too.*

> *N: Yes, those are ideas that we had. [...] the kids will read to him or get a joke book. [...] They are going to read jokes to dad. So, he finds the jokes.*
>
> *-Normand and Claudette, parents.*

Relatives' attentive and creative efforts are not always fruitful. Their strategies are sometimes hampered by the correctional administration, which then generates other strategies that we present in the following section dedicated to managing the correctional system.

> *It's been a little while since they played Battleship with Daddy because he didn't have a pencil, he didn't have room to write, the phone has nothing. It is not necessarily adapted for that.*
>
> *- Claudette, mother.*
>
> *On September 13, I visited him. It was an open visit and it was at that maximum security level and after that I was not aware that when I got home, when he called later, he said, "I hate that they - I was strip-searched and it really humiliates me." He used the word "humiliate." They strip-searched him after he visited his family. So, you know, a person who is so vulnerable and so anxious and anxious and paranoid, when they are told to do a strip search. - It broke my heart and I just cried and said, "I'm not going to visit you. I'm not going to visit you. I can't let that happen to you." .... So I didn't visit him.*
>
> *- Felicity, mother.*

Relatives must often mobilize during their loved ones' incarceration term, but also for the long-term, as planning for the future is often a concern. Some family members will play an important role during the parole process, particularly in offering material support (housing, for example).

> *I see all the obstacles he meets and I mean ... [...] When I saw that when he would get out he wouldn't have a place to go, I bought myself a house, [...] ...] I gave myself a lot of responsibilities on my shoulders.*
>
> *- Joyce, mother.*
>
> *We had the process before the parole commissioners. Then, uh, even I attended the meeting and then ... I was his assistant. Then, uh, I had the right to speak. Then also now, every week, her worker, she calls me every week to find out if it went well, is he respecting his conditions?*
>
> *-Ariane, spouse.*

Even if end-of-sentence support is not always officially included in the prisoner's release plan, many participants explained that they have put various strategies in place to ensure their criminalized relative's future well-being. Whether it is providing or financing

housing, negotiating or creating jobs, finding support programs, or facilitating family and social relationships, participants mobilize themselves on various fronts. These fronts will also be addressed in the following section discussing strategies aimed at reducing the impact of incarceration on relatives' daily lives.

> *When they [the judge and the lawyers] decided to release him, he was coming to my house. [...] But I said, but there he isn't well, he needs to be stabilized. [...] There, I asked them to release him from prison but that he goes to therapy, but directly, so he does not come by my house. Hey, he was with me for two months and I was this kind of ... I was like a psychiatric hospital. He was in psychosis.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

> *So I fought tooth and nail and I found a higher education institution that was dispensing correspondence courses on paper because they were not allowed to use computers. And so, he was able to take a certificate program while he was there.*
>
> *-Erika, mother.*

2. Correctional system management strategies

Faced with the difficulties that correctional procedures present, interviewees describe dealing with a lack of information, transparency and consistency in the correctional system. Above all, relatives in this study try to obtain clear and reliable information from correctional authorities.

> *Well, we have already been told, it's not bigger than 5X7. Then, we were told that we could send the big pictures there.*
> *N: 8X10.*
> *C: 8X10. Then we said "can we talk to someone rank higher up to make sure because ..."*
> *N: No, oh that was crazy there. I call. It was at (federal penitentiary). "Can I know what are the photo sizes accepted." She said to me, "Ah, 5X7". I said, "8X10, can we send that, those are the school photos?" She said, "Yes, there shouldn't be any problems." I said, "No, no, I don't want to know if there shouldn't be any problems, ma'am, I want to be sure. What are your policies?" So, she said, "Wait a minute sir." They transferred me somewhere else, someone was talking to me.*
>
> *C : That person ended up saying, "If it's not a poster, it's going to be okay." Okay.*
>
> *N: Perfect, I'll take your name ma'am. She said, "Wait a minute, I will go find out." (laughs) No, no, but yeah, she's there to answer, but when I say I'm going to take your name, "Well, I'll go find out."*
>
> *- Normand et Claudette, parents.*

When relatives are confronted with a practice or policy that they feel is unjustified, they sometimes adopt proactive strategies to circumvent the limitations imposed by the institution. To bypass call limitations or their associated high fees, relatives will seek to obtain a local phone number or to forward the calls.

> *So, my house phone transfers calls to my cell phone, this one, mine over there, let's say. So then, I was no longer missing his calls. And now, I added from where he is. Then, he can call me anytime. And there I found, well I don't know if we can, but anyway, I won't ask it, a three-way conference. So, let's say he wants to talk to a friend. Instead of him calling, then costing him that much per minute, because his close friends are all allowed over there anyway. It's just that it's expensive. So he calls me, I'm calling his friend so the three of us are talking. Well, I put the phone over there and they both speak together.*
>
> *- Georgette, mother.*

To get around the photo submission limitations, loved ones get creative.

> *I send him pictures so he can see what's going on. [...] I'm sending him pictures because the prison he's in right now, he, they only let you have three pictures or something like that. Three photos. So instead, I write letters and put the photos in the Word document, right? And I print them. So he has the right to do that.*
>
> *-Kim, mother.*

The strategies sometimes consist of adopting behaviours aimed at avoiding confrontations with the carceral institution.

> *I'm approximately the 5th person waiting to donate money or to register at the front. I am approximately the 5th person and there is a poor little lady who is there. She didn't do anything, the lady. She's just like me, us, we haven't done anything. And then, she gives $100 for her son. Two men are there, plus the lady. The two men start to find this funny, "Well, we won't even have enough to eat at McDonald's together tonight. With that money." So, I am at the back, and I'm beginning. "Hey guys, what you are doing is not right," and then I start. Then, it wasn't long until I had guardians coming close to me. So then I said, "It's okay, I'll calm down." So then, I stopped doing... and, because I dared to say something, when it was my turn, I was bringing a watch to my boy, [...] There, I arrive, I know that there are some with needles inside at the provincial level. I'm coming, and then the man, he said, well, from now on, it needs to be a digital watch. [...] the man wanted me to piss me off. I said perfect, I didn't persist ... I was frustrated. I didn't make a sound, because you, you always have to be polite, even if they piss you off. It's how it works. Well, that's an abuse of power.*
>
> *-Normand, father.*

These avoidance strategies, which lead to relatives' self-censorship, are particularly noticeable when relatives seek to avoid a positive result on the ion scanner.

> *But me, if I am positive when I enter the prison, they can take away my visits, [...], You always have that risk. Because there, all of a sudden, I was almost paranoid. [...] I have a wardrobe whenever I go to visit. It's just to go for visits to make sure. [...] It's like, I had my car washed once a week (laughs).*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

> *I did not go today because I was afraid to test positive again. And before going in, the last time, we took all the clothes that we were going to wear and we washed them and put them in the dryer and we did that on Friday night. [...] And then we got up in the morning and we took a shower. And then we went from the shower to the laundry and we wore the clothes from the dryer. We put nitro gloves on our hands when we got in the car, right? Just in case, you know, because you pass by the Tim Horton's. You take something. There is, there is all this stuff - [...] So we put on nitro gloves. We washed our jewelry. We washed our rings. We only took one piece of identification. Our driving license. [...] We washed it. We washed our glasses. All of that. All of this to go see Jacob with a visit behind-closed-door, behind a glass plate.*
>
> *- Inès and Jeff, mother and father.*

> *We were really careful. We never stopped on our way. We always put our money in a bag.*
>
> *-Erika, mother.*

Conversely, relatives will sometimes adopt confrontational strategies with the institution and its staff, by means of humour or direct opposition.

> *Then, there, she says to me ... she says: "No, snacks are not allowed." I say: "Come on, I've been coming twice a week for two months now, I have snacks all the time." "No, these, we don't want them in the ... we don't want them, snacks. It does damage. " There I was, "Well, you pay an inmate to clean. I mean, it's not even you guys who do it. What does that change for you?" "No, it's not tolerated. She can have the milk and that's it." Also, no crayons (made of wax) for drawing. And then no ... "She brings a lot of toys." I said, "Well, yes, but, you know, for an hour in a small hole in the back of a row. I mean, I will for sure bring her some toys.*
>
> *-Patricia, spouse.*

> *You know, they're reading our mail. So, "Hello, sir ..." You know, we wrote... stuff, to see if there was going to be... We said hello to people who were going to read our mail. It was really funny. We know how to play.*
>
> *-Ariane, spouse.*

> *There was a guard at the institution X. The lady has arrived, a lady of a certain age, she is coming to see her husband, it had been in the newspaper, he had abused many children. The lady comes to visit him, she looks down. [...] She shakes and she shakes and they search her and then, instead of being nice and being polite with her. There it begins...your underwear, she takes out her two small pairs of panties, "No no, show them," then he makes her show her panties like this. Then, her bra, she takes out her bra, there is one on her back, all of a sudden, you show her like that you know, she shows him her other bra. Well, then he continues but, at that time at the B*, we were doing that in the entrance hall. Over there are all the guards coming in and out of their shift, it's a shift change at that time of the day. All of the employees who were doing, at that time, they were building a hospital, all of the construction guys and you're here showing off your underwear. There, the lady ... listen, I wanted to hit the guard. A part of me, I will lose my visits, but now it's nonsense. So I decided that I would get revenge. All of a sudden, the lady passed, I had arrived, and he started. He says, your bras, and I show them, "A white one, a black one," and then, I start. But the x-ray guy, he's laughing so much and he's trying not to… at one point he says, "Your lube." I take it out. He says, "I don't understand why you bring lubricant, we have some here." I say, "Well that's because that one is good for anal." There we are, he didn't stay doing that for too long. Afterwards… Yes, I know, I have an incredible sense of humour sometimes. But, that, it was too much. (humour)*
>
> *-Mary, spouse.*

Some react to these obstacles with strategies aimed at soliciting exceptions or changes from resource persons such as the Chaplin or the Superintendent.

> *So I write a letter. I write a letter to the director, to the superintendent, no matter how they are called, and it goes to the other one... You know, to the person, the assistant. And then the assistant calls you and you discuss with the assistant. And then they say they are informing themselves. They will call you back. And then you give them a few weeks to answer you back, because everything is slow inside an institution. And then they won't call you back. So you call them and leave them messages to call you back. Then you tell them: "Should I ask all my friends to write letters so that my son can have reading material? You know, then they say: " Well the chaplain is responsible for the reading and we have reading material over here."*
>
> *- Diane, mother.*

A few relatives adopt strategies of public denunciation when they call on the public, media, Members of Parliament, or Ministers.

> *N: All of his stuff got stolen. I had all the bills. So him, he, I made the complaint. I went to see the deputy, and then the deputy, eventually they said ok.*

> *C: He made a complaint. [...] A refusal. A second level complaint, another refusal. And then we said ok, now we get on board.*
>
> *N: It's me who pays at the end. Even if it's for him, it's me who pays.*
>
> *C: We went to see the deputy. The deputy called. And then we got the call, right? We got a call from a high-rank person in the prison. And then, well, they agreed to reimburse us a certain amount.*
>
> *- Normand and Claudette, parents.*

> *Sometimes I am a bit of a claimant about the system. Sometimes I write open letters. [...] I once wrote an open letter in the newspaper. [...] I was saying who are you to judge. That was my theme. I find that all the media they're making a big outcry about somebody who's just been incarcerated and it's like, they look like a bad person in front of everybody. Imagine the parents of these children, we are ... we go with the ... we are as poorly considered as them. I was saying that it's a personal story, it's mental illness, it's life.*
>
> *-Maryse, mother.*

Some participants even developed information and mutual aid strategies for other families of imprisoned people.

> *Once, I didn't have the correct t-shirt. Once, I had a tank top with a jacket, I thought it was beautiful. I thought I was clean, well it didn't pass. So there is a very nice lady who lent me a t-shirt. She had an extra t-shirt, she lent it to me.*
>
> *-Maryse, mother.*

We also met relatives who created a support group.

> *Well that was really well. P and I, because of our experience, we said, "You know, there's nothing out there. There's nothing at all." And, uh, we did it, we reunited with two others. A lady from the community and the John Howard Society, and we've created a support group. And we're doing it now, we're in our sixth year and we meet every Thursday. And we are doing outreach work to educate others, I'm sure you know that. And, uh, I think it was ... to share our experience so ... Because we're ahead of most of them. Um, so they can learn from our experience. To redirect them, to help them find information. And I think it's, I think it's been the biggest help because by coming out of such an ugly time in my life, I can shed some light on a path that is so dark for other mothers.*
>
> *- Fanny, mother.*

Others have contributed to an information and advice document for families.

> *C: We participated in the conception of a book.*
> *N: Of a small document.*

> *C: To help, to help people.*
> *N: Uh, to give tricks, per example, since we live in region, but we are not in the F*CITY. So, what I did, I didn't have a cell phone, so I bought a cell phone. It has a number from F*CITY. Like that, when he calls, it's a local call. So, it costs him less per minute. In the end, I'm the one who saves, because I'm the one who pays for the calls.*
>
> *- Normand and Claudette, parents.*

3. Strategies to mitigate the impact of incarceration on personal life

Facing the collateral consequences of a loved one's incarceration, relatives must make numerous adjustments to minimize its negative effects and its impacts on their daily lives. Some relatives will reduce their visits to detention centres to minimize personal, financial and social costs.

> *I did not go today because I was afraid to test positive again. And before we went, the last time, we took all of the clothes we were going to wear and we washed them and put them in the dryer [...]. And then we got up in the morning and took a shower. And then we went from the shower to the laundry room and put all of the clothes in the dryer. We put nitro gloves on our hands when we got in the car, right? Just in case, you know, because you pass by the Tim Horton's. You take something. There are, there are all these things [...]. We washed our jewelry. We washed our rings. We only took one piece of identification. Our driver's license. We washed it. We washed our glasses. All this. All this to go see Jacob with a closed-door visit behind a glass plate.*
>
> *- Jeff, father.*

> *Um, the first time I visited him as an adult, yeah it was pretty tough. Of course he'd been behind glass and um, and it was pretty tough to do, but I'd still go. I'd go every week and visit him. I did that a lot. So, the last couple of times that he went in, uh, I didn't go visit him. I refused to. I told him, "I'm not visiting you in jail anymore. I can't. I don't care how long they keep you for."*
>
> *- Ida, mother.*

Conversely, others will increase their visits to the institutions to minimize their experience of distance and separation with their loved ones. In all cases, sacrifices are made based on what is feasible for relatives, including the personal and material resources at their disposal. These resources are at the heart of family members' daily experiences and they will often determine the frequency and the type of contact that relatives are able to maintain with the incarcerated person.

The cost of phone calls often forces relatives to reorganize their budgets, reduce the length and frequency of calls, set unwanted boundaries with the detained person, or manage the logistics of making three-way calls.

> *Phew, fuck! (laughs). Suddenly, I said well ok, I explained it to him. When you call me during the day, you talk for half an hour, it costs 10$. When you call me during the evening, it costs 5$. Me, I'm ready to put 500$ per month of phone calls, all of a sudden, manage your budget. Because at some point, I can't call you. And that too, is difficult.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*
>
> *We don't have a landline, so the phone is a problem. He can't, he couldn't call me at all from [the jail]. So to call my sister, thank God, she took all of his collect calls and told him he could call anytime he wanted. It was really good.*
>
> *-Dem, spouse.*
>
> *Some places I found had FunGo numbers on the internet. You download the number of the place, like that when he has a calling card, it just costs you 0.50$ to call with your smartphone.*
>
> *-Georgette, mother.*

The cost and duration of transport to the place of detention also determine the frequency of visits. In many ways, incarceration represents a high cost in time, energy and money. To manage and limit the impact of incarceration on their lives, participants reorganize their daily lives, their schedules and their routines. Some even sometimes go so far as to reorganize their living environment, as their house is often adapted to this new situation.

> *He was at [A* Institution] at that time, a 3-hour drive. At that time, I was taking a class at [university] on Saturdays. I was going to see him on Fridays, I was coming back to [university], I was going to class, I was leaving on Sundays, I was going to see him. [...] After that, I reorganized my work schedule to have two days. And Friday, Saturday, Sunday offs. I was leaving on Fridays, I rented an apartment in [A* city]. I had a house here and an apartment there.*
>
> *- Mary, spouse.*

Some move closer to the detention facility to facilitate their trips, others adapt their housing to better welcome the detained person at release or to remove themselves from this situation, which they deem to be too difficult.

> *In fact, the house, it's not been that long, it's been three years since I bought it. I was staying in an apartment in Montreal. I bought the house, a lot for him to have a room because I wanted to take him back at his release, and I wanted him to go to school, and I wanted to give him a chance to do something of his life.*
>
> *- Alexandra, mother.*

> *When he stays at my place for a long time, it's hell. So, I want to move out and I don't want to give him my address, I don't know if I'll be successful. I want to have a place of my own, quiet, and he doesn't know where I'm living. I'll just give him my phone number.*
>
> *-Maryse, mother.*

These adjustment strategies sometimes also concern professional careers. For some parents, this experience prompts them to take an anticipated retirement. Conversely, some will work more and for a greater number of years to save money and feel less stressed about the imprisoned person's future.

> *The health unit tried to put me aside, [...] I was followed by a psychiatrist, adjustment disorder with an anxio-depressive mood due to major family stress. And when I was ready to return at the end of September [...]. And then, the girl at the health office when she called me about it like a week before, she said no, we refuse, she tells me three times on the phone, "You know Mme Noémie*, you can retire too, eh" [...]. At first, my retirement was planned for February 2019. I retired in August 2016.*
>
> *- Noémie, mother.*

Some relatives will change jobs to have schedules that are more flexible and compatible with visits and calls.

> *I could never have gotten a job with everything I went through with him because of the number of times I went to court. Just going to see him. Just the mental - You know, it affected me. I'm on medication. I have anxiety. The thought of, you know, sometimes I just want to be held. And the thought of having to, you know, dress appropriately and go out socially everyday kind of terrifies me. So, you know, it's affected my mental health. It's, you know, I'm still coping. I'm self-employed, so I can, I can have some control over when I do what. So, if I have a court date, I can set it in advance [...]. So, yeah, I couldn't have been in a job where I had to be there all the time because I would have - Even if I could have done it mentally, I would have had to miss too many things, you know, with my son's crisis.*
>
> *- Kim, mother.*

Others set up a new career path and professional status to facilitate the detained person's reintegration upon release.

> *I'm starting to work on boats. And that's what we want to do, is build a boat company and "X" can have something to do.*
>
> *- Jeff, father.*

Parents in this study have described the need to anticipate the future consequences of their children's incarceration. They reorganize their inheritance and try to put a plan in

place for the future that allows them to be a little less stressed for their criminalized loved one.

> *I'll send him money from time to time if I see that it's for the right purpose. You know, that's something, I have to think about my will too. I'd have to make a trust, I can't give her money, $20,000 at once. Hey, I'm going to be dead. But hey, I'll try to make sure he gets a little bit every month. Somebody manages that, that's all kinds of stuff to think about. Because he's going to go back to jail.*
>
> *- Maryse, mother.*

Relatives sometimes have to adopt strategies that lead to distancing from the incarcerated person because they aim to minimize the impact of incarceration on their lives. Some will avoid or reduce visits to avoid being exposed to carceral treatment. Others will refuse to be the guarantor of the person upon release to avoid the role of at-home surveillant and the legal responsibilities attached to it.

> *So, my mom ended up, like, standing – And, it was, like, the hardest thing she's ever done. She, like, stood in front of the judge and she's, like, like, "I can't." Like, she's, like, "I work. My husband works. We live in the middle of nowhere. […] So, she's, like, "So, you're saying that, like, one of us has to be home at all times just with him?" And, she's, like, "I can't, I can't guarantee that we're gonna do that and I can't say that – Like, he's already run away once and he clearly knows how to get money." […] Like, my mom's self-employed. My dad worked for – He worked throughout the time. He did, like, lawn care, like, meter reading. So, like, we don't have, like, paid sick time. I was starting my career, so I didn't either. So, she's, like, "So, you're asking one of us to take – It may sound stupid but you're asking one of us to take, like, an unpaid leave to watch him."*
>
> *- Ophelia, sister.*
>
> *He goes back to jail and the lawyer starts calling for [me] to be his Surety again! I'm, like, "Are you on crack?" He attacked the lady upstairs from me. Like, I got subpoenaed to go to Court. I went to that Court. I'm not telling that – I'm doing everything so I won't be the Surety. I'm doing everything. I'm doing – And, he's laughing. He's in the bullpen laughing at me, right, because I'm doing everything so I won't be the Surety. I don't want him back. Stop sending him back to me, you know? You've been doing this for 10, 12, 14 years. Stop sending him back to me.*
>
> *- Tammy, ex-spouse.*
>
> *And, so, the last time, couple of times I've spoken to him on the phone he said, "Oh, I could be up for parole next year and live in a halfway house." And, he said, "Oh, I'll tell them to call you." So, I thought – Like, part of me thinks, "I don't want to be involved anymore." And, you know, he's not coming to live with me. Like, I haven't told him yet, but I'm actually going to be moving. I'm going to be downsizing and moving.* - Tara, mother.

The difficulties encountered during the experience of a loved one's incarceration create a significant need for support that some meet by attending support groups or seeing therapists.

Some people have developed personal strategies to manage the emotions and stress they experience.

> *So uh, I don't know, it was like, I put it in a drawer and I told myself, "I will think about this later." [...], One day per week, I would spend my day sleeping. I wouldn't do anything. And you know, that normally doesn't happen for me. But, one day per week, usually Thursday, I was so tired, I just took my little one to daycare and returned to sleep. And I would sleep all day.*
>
> *-Patricia, ex-spouse.*

> *So the main thing was her room. It was a sanctuary. Everything that was left that day was the way it was. And it had to stay that way, because he was coming home. (crying) [...]. So, I was sleeping in his room and then my husband ended up taking the mattress out of his room and he was like, "This is crazy. You can't do that." It was just that I could still smell it and I wanted to stay in his room until I lost his smell. And, uh, which may sound weird but not [...]. That's what we lived with. You know, two years anyway, like, [...] and I got used to it. And, uh, eventually I put things away. I didn't throw anything away, I just kept everything and put it away. I also told him that, you know, that I had done that and he said, "Mom, you should have done that from the beginning." And I said, "I thought it would be fair to pack you up and leave you, you know?"*
>
> *-Fanny, mother.*

4. Strategies for managing social interactions outside the walls

Faced with the difficulties encountered or anticipated in their various social circles, relatives also develop strategies for managing their daily social interactions, which often take the form of avoidance. This avoidance appears in the form of withdrawal from certain conversations, persons, places and communities.

> *I was very involved in my faith community here and I don't know if that's part of it, but I've really withdrawn. I haven't attended church since September.*
>
> *-Hannah, aunt.*

> *We didn't even go to the grocery store in the village anymore [...]. We moved because of that, we couldn't stay where we were.*
>
> *- Olivia, daughter.*

Erika's testimony illustrates how avoidance is a preventative strategy that relatives implement, even with generous friends.

> *The few friends I let in and everyone else walked by. I couldn't cope. I couldn't cope. I will never forget, I will never forget because a lot of people are nice. I have a lot of nice friends that I shut out and I couldn't, I couldn't handle it. I'll never forget, it was a summer day and I had the garage door open because, I don't know, I was cleaning or sweeping or something. And a friend that I hadn't let into the circle stopped and came out and she had a gift basket for me. And I had a panic attack. I had never had a panic attack in my life. But just seeing her, I couldn't, I couldn't cope and I ran into the house. And she left it on the doorstep. I had a panic attack. I couldn't say a word. And she was a good friend. I had known her for years. So it takes away your confidence, that kind of experience. It takes away your sense of identity, of who you are as a person. You blame yourself.*
>
> *-Erika, mother.*

Quite often, the family members we met explained that they limit their social interactions to avoid moral judgments about the incarcerated person and themselves. They will generally not talk about this aspect of their lives with new acquaintances and avoid the subject with those who already know.

> *If I meet a new person, they don't know I have a son.*
>
> *- Kim, mother.*
>
> *But, like, you know, at school, I don't... I don't tell my teachers now. Forget about it.*
>
> *- Patricia, spouse.*

Kalinda, whose spouse is incarcerated, explains precisely how having an incarcerated loved one influences her ways of being and acting in all of her relationships. With the exception of a few individuals who are close to her, she explains that she hides this part of her reality from the rest of the world, which greatly affects the nature of her social interactions.

> *My best friend, she knows it. Well, I have two friends [...]. The two of them know it and then, well, of everyone we know in common who comes from my country. That's all. Not my job, not the school either when I was in school. That's a lot of barriers. Even, you know, as a colleague, you can't develop relationships because you're careful what you say. You know, when he calls, everybody can hear what it says. Because, you have some kind of resistance. Because it's hard at that time to connect with people. Because, you end up just having "basic" relationships. But you can never go deep. It's stupid, but that's part of the loss now.*
>
> *- Kalinda, spouse.*

Most, if not all, participants use similar strategies to maintain a semblance of normalcy in their relationships with others. Erika's detailed testimony illustrates the stigma she experienced and wished to prevent through these avoidance strategies, which she felt were essential to her healing process.

> *I can't imagine too many people would do it, who would do it, who would share it openly because the stigma is incredible. The shame, not only of the person who came into conflict with the law, but the shame sticks to everyone in the family like glue and we all have to have played a part in his bad decision making. We all must have played a part in that. It sticks to you like glue. (about her other children) None of them have stable relationships. There weren't many times when I thought, "Oh, my God. How do we introduce this to future in-laws?" You know, "How do we even present this to future in-laws?" I don't know. Thank goodness none of them are in stable relationships!*
>
> *So, we've all been judged. Absolutely all of us judged. And so, how did I deal with that? I changed jobs....and that helped me tremendously. Nobody knew me there, right? It helped me tremendously and, of course, over time, you know, you start to heal. Everybody starts to heal. I told our whole family that they started to heal from it. But there are always scars, right? There are always scars. And I also have to say that in my new job, you know, everybody has pictures of their kids on their desk, right? Others would talk about what they did with their kids. What they did, you know, blah, blah, blah. I never do that. I would say I keep my personal life very private. Very, very private. And you know, people say to me, "Oh, you know, come and have a drink with us after work or whatever," and I say, "Oh, you know, I'm a very busy person. I'm very, very busy, like outside of work. So I don't hang out with the staff, you know? And I tend to work in my office and, you know, do what I need to do and I keep my work life well separated from my personal life. And that's how I manage now. I would say that's worked pretty well for me over the last six years, I guess. You know? Six, seven years, so it's worked out pretty well for me since I switched jobs.*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

She explains, however, that her husband adopts a different compartmentalization strategy. He practices avoidance of the painful topic of conversation without imposing social isolation on himself. He attributes this difference in strategy to the types of social interactions that are unique to the male gender.

> *I told my husband about it and said, "If there was a support group for men, would you have gone?" He said no. He said, "I'm shutting it down. It's one part of my life and I have all these other parts of my life." Whereas with me, it encompassed me. I think women carry their grief differently than men and I said, "Is that just you or would you say you can generalize like most of your friends?" And [my husband] said, "Yes, let me give you an example." He said, "When you go to lunch with your friends, what do you talk about?" I said,*

> *"Well, we talk about our kids. We talk about our jobs. We talk about our families and our parents and things like that." I said, "What do you talk about?" He said, "Sports." He said, "We never talk about our families. Maybe we talk about work a little bit," he said, "We talk about sports and we talk about stupid stuff." He said, "We don't talk about family."*
>
> *- Erika, mother.*

While avoidance seems to be a preferred strategy, some of the people we met told us that they adopted the opposite strategy. Participants sometimes demonstrate a proactive attitude in disclosing the information.

> *I started working. I called the executive director immediately and, uh, she wasn't there. So I emailed her and said when she got here, she called me and said, "I've already discussed it with the president and with the board. I did it on Friday." She told me that at the time Brian was arrested, she had called the Chairman of the Board and I said, "Well, I'm afraid the press is out there trying to find out things." Anyway, we agreed on an email that she sent me and said, "What do you think about this?" And I thought it was good. I changed a few things. And we sent it out to the whole agency. Everybody knew right away.*
>
> *- Diane, mother.*
>
> *My network that I have right now I have friends (silence). They know everything, they know everything, everything, everything. I wrote it even on Facebook... I'm not afraid anymore. I'm not afraid of the judgment anymore. My employer knows it. I'm not afraid of it anymore.*
>
> *- Maude, spouse*
>
> *But there are even clients who knew about it and I never hid the fact that I was married with a guy inside. That was never hidden. Everyone knows it, or what I'm working on, or what I already have, everyone knows it.*
>
> *-Mary, spouse*

Concluding without a conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from the testimonies of loved ones of incarcerated people? How difficult is it as an experience? How the prison system does nothing to help them and creates unnecessary suffering? It does not seem possible to write a conclusion that does their experiences', justice. Any concluding remarks would be inherently reductionist given the complexities of their realities and we would unjustly generalize very personal and subjective situations. We will share our analysis of such extremely detailed and rich interviews in scientific publications. Only the voices of participants matter in this report.

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[1] Note: on two occasions, the interviews were conducted with two participants simultaneously.

[2] Only two interviews were excluded from our analysis in this report. In one case, the person had been incarcerated outside of Canada, and in the second case, the person had received a non-custodial sentence.

[3] One of the participants had more than one incarcerated/criminalized family member.

[4] In three cases, the location of the person's incarceration was unknown to the researcher, either because the information was unavailable or the incarceration occurred outside of Canada.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] The term "released" refers to all those who are no longer physically incarcerated. This includes people who are on probation, parole and who reside in rehabilitation centres.

[7] A mother, age 80+, of a man who is provincially incarcerated.

[8] Participants have only encountered ion scanners in federal penitentiaries.

[9] See Hannem, 2011; MacKenzie, 2019.

[10] Private family visits last up to 72 hours and can usually occur once every two months depending on the availability of trailers within a given institution.

[11] Periodic count of detained individuals.

[12] See Chamberlain, 2015; Sykes, 1958.

[13] See Hannem, 2011

[14] See pages 20-21 for a complete description.

[15] See Cernkovich & Giordano, 1987; Cook & Gordon, 2012; Cook, 2013; Hil, 1998; Holt, 2009a; Laub & Sampson, 1988; Shaffner, 1997.

[16] See Hannem, 2012 ; May, 2000 ; Melendez, Lichtenstein, & Dolliver, 2016.

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