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The Effects of Family Relationships on Children of Prisoners – A Study of Romania

LILIANA FOCA

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Huddersfield

April 2017

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Abstract

Whilst extensive research has been conducted on prisoners' families in the last twenty years, it has mainly focused on the effects of parental imprisonment on either the children, their non-imprisoned carers, or women partners of male prisoners. While research concludes that imprisonment has far-reaching effects on families in general, less is known about the impact of parental incarceration on family relationships and, more specifically, on how different relationships within the same family unit are affected.

The purpose of this study, which was conducted in Romania, is to explore the effects of family relationships on children of prisoners in particular. In doing so, children's and mothers' perspectives are analysed with respect to how fathers' incarceration has affected them at the individual level. It then explores the impact of fathers' imprisonment on the mother-child and mother-father relationships, highlighting their effects on children's wellbeing. Parenting practices are also discussed in the context of parental imprisonment.

The findings drawn from 15 interviews with children and 16 interviews with mothers suggest that fathers' incarceration affects not only children and mothers separately, but also the relationships within the family. The relationship between the child and his/her mother goes through changes in terms of emotional support, communication, trust and freedom (for teenagers), and household responsibilities. Mothers' and children's narratives on the marital relationship before and during incarceration reveal that parents' relationships are mainly focused on the children's wellbeing and the household and that children have positive views on parenthood. However, this narrative differences where where children and mothers were victimized by the incarcerated father prior to imprisonment.

The findings of the study are further explored using Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) attachment theory and Belsky's (1984) model of competent parental functioning. The thesis concludes with ideas for future research, and implications for theory and policies.

Keywords: children of prisoners, effects of parental imprisonment, family relationships, parenting stress, and parenting practice.

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List of abbreviations

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

COPING - Children of Prisoners. Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health

CSDD - Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development

PAM - Parenting Alliance Measure

CAI – Child Attachment Interview

AAI - Adult Attachment Interview

PSS – Parental Stress Scale

Chapter 1. Romania

Research on children of prisoners in Romania is very scarce. To date, there is published work on this topic that emerged only from “COPING. Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health”, a comparative study on children of prisoners in the United Kingdom, Germany, Romania, and Sweden. In order to better understand the context in which Romanian families and children of prisoners live, this chapter presents a brief overview of the country’s political, economic, welfare, educational, and criminal systems. Most of the summary does not rely on academic studies. Rather, it is a summary comprising data from Romanian and European official documents and statistics and from journalistic articles and investigations.

The political system

Romania’s political system is defined by the Romanian Constitution which dates back to 1991 and was last modified in 2003. The state powers are: legislative, executive, and judiciary. The legislative power is exercised by the Parliament which consists of two chambers: Senate and House of Deputies. The parliamentarians are nominally elected every four years. The President of Romania is elected every five years. The role of the President is to represent the Romanian state and to act as mediator between the state powers and between the state and the society. The President proposes the candidate for Prime-Minister and names the Government based on the Parliament’s vote of confidence. The President also names the judges at the proposal of the Superior Council of Magistracy. Justice in Romania is exercised by the High Court of Cassation and Justice and by the Romanian Courts: District Court, Tribunal, and Court of Appeal.

The political scene in Romania has long been subject to issues related to high-level corruption. For example, a survey conducted in 2015 at the request of the European Commission with business representatives in all EU countries (European Commission, 2015) showed in the case of Romania that 39 percent of the companies involved in the study believed that “bribes and funding political parties in exchange for public contracts or influence over policy making” are common practice (p. 41) and 84 percent were most likely to say that “the abuse of power for

personal gain is widespread among politicians, party representatives or senior officials at regional or local level” (p. 52). Since Romania’s accession to the European Union in 2007, the country had to implement the recommendations set by the EU’s Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) on judicial reform and fight against corruption. Although the 2017 CVM report (European Commission, 2017) acknowledges important steps made by Romania, it still recommends for actions against corruption, especially with regards to setting “objective criteria for deciding on and motivating lifting immunity of Members of Parliament to help ensure that immunity is not used to avoid investigation and prosecution of corruption crimes.” (p. 13).

Political instability and/or suspicion of public officials’ corruption negatively impacts a country’s economy and business investments. Thus, job opportunities become scarce and this primarily affects vulnerable people and families, including families of prisoners.

The economic system

The World Bank Organization mentions Romania as a country with one of the highest growth rates in the EU in 2016, a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 187 billion USD and a GDP per capita of 9,528 USD (The World Bank, 2017). According to the National Institute of Statistics, the value of Romania’s exports in December 2016 was 4,311 billion Euro and the value of imports was 5,497 billion Euro, which resulted in a negative balance of 1,185 billion Euro (National Institute of Statistics, 2017). Top exports of the country include vehicle parts, insulated wire, and cars. The main imported goods are vehicle parts, crude petroleum, and cars (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2017).

The country remains one of the poorest in the European Union (i.e. it has one of highest poverty rates). Over thirty-seven percent (37.4%) of the population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion. 29.6 percent of these individuals live in rural areas (Worley, 2017). During 2014-2020, Romania is scheduled to receive approximately 40 billion Euro in EU funds. However, in 2016 only 0.18 percent of this amount was absorbed by the Romanian government. According to the statement made by the Minister for European Funds in Romania at that time, this was partly due to the fact that management authorities need to be accredited (Lupu, 2016)

but also due to low co-funding capabilities of the state or to an incoherent long-term perspective of the government (Zaman & Georgescu, 2009).

Romania's unemployment rate was estimated in July 2017 at 5.20 percent (Eurostat). The statutory minimum wage in Romania as of May 2016 is 276 Euro per month (Eurofound, 2016). An important issue dominating Romanian society after the fall of the communist regime in December 1989 and especially after 2007 - the year when Romania joined the European Union - is labour migration to other parts of Europe. This positively affected Romanian society in that it increased the income of family members left behind because those who left to work abroad regularly send remittances to their families at home. For some families of prisoners, having another family member working abroad and willing to help them financially provides a source of support otherwise lost due to parental incarceration. Labour migration has also produced macro- and micro-level negative consequences, however. Macro-level negative consequences include the so-called "brain drain effect" (Goga & Ilie, 2017), an aging of society, and a rise in divorce rates (Roman & Voicu, 2010). Labour migration has also caused problems for children who are left behind with one parent, or in the care of neighbours, relatives, or the state. These children can experience feelings of parental abandonment with on-going negative effects that last into adult life (Roman & Voicu, 2010).

A journalistic investigation published at the beginning of 2016 estimated, based on data collected from 25 EU countries, that 11,511 Romanians were imprisoned in 2015 across the European Union (Bird, 2016). The families and children of these prisoners are likely to struggle to maintain contact with their parents through prison visitation. Furthermore, some of the parents imprisoned outside Romania choose not to tell their children about the imprisonment. Rather, they tell children they have to remain abroad for longer and that they cannot call them by phone as often as before due to lack of time and harder labour conditions. Where lone parents have gone to work abroad without appointing a tutor or legal representative for their children, parental imprisonment is particularly problematic because children cannot benefit from some of their rights such as the right to education (they cannot enrol in school) or the right to an identity card (they cannot apply for an identity card when they reach the age of 14). These children mostly

depend on the state welfare services to identify them and this is harder to achieve if other adults do not signal the children's situation to child protection services or to the local police.

The welfare system

The Romanian welfare system is framed by several laws regulating social assistance, social inclusion, gender equality, child protection, as well as different social benefits for people and families in difficult situations.

In Romania there are community, county and central level social services, as well as private providers all of whom need to be accredited by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice. Once the accreditation is obtained, meaning the social service provider complies with the quality standards, each social service (e.g. services for vulnerable children, families in difficult situations, or elderly) must be licensed. The accreditation certificate is indefinite, whilst the licence is valid only for five years after which it must be renewed following local social inspection.

Community social services are under the authority of the mayor and are funded mainly by local budgets. The tasks of these services concerning children are: to monitor that the rights of the children in the community are respected; to prevent the separation of the child from his/her family; to identify and evaluate the situation where the family of a child needs social benefits in order to prevent the removal of the child from the family, and to assist with completion of the necessary documents for the respective benefits; to counsel and inform families with children on the rights of the child and on the local services available for children; to make regular visits to families that benefit from social assistance and financial aid; to prevent consumption of alcohol or drugs, domestic violence, or child delinquency; to propose to the mayor special protection measures for children; and to collaborate with the county social services in the area of child protection [Article 118 paragraph 1, a) – k) of the Child Protection Law no. 272/2004]. The challenges faced by community social services are mainly with respect to the professional training of people hired by the mayor office to perform social work activities. A study conducted by the Romanian Government on child protection institutions revealed that: (a) community social

workers are more focused on social benefits than on identifying and supporting children at risk of separation from their parents; and (b) community social workers in rural areas are not specialized in social work and have diminished professional skills (Romanian Government, 2013).

The fact that community social workers do not focus their interventions on supporting children at risk and also their lack of professional specialization has adverse effects on vulnerable children in general and on children of prisoners in particular. This is because offering social benefits without guiding the families to reduce the causes of poverty (e.g. loss of the only family income due to imprisonment can be overcome by informing about and facilitating the access of the non-imprisoned parent to the labour market and/or to vocational trainings) contributes to maintaining these families in a state of vulnerability. This situation is deepened by the fact community social workers are not specialized in social work. Therefore, the difficulties faced by the children following the incarceration of a parent (e.g. emotional difficulties, problems related to school attainment and attendance, or poor peer relations) are not addressed and this can lead to further obstacles for children in coping with the separation ensuing parental imprisonment.

County social services are funded by the state budget, donations, and own contributions of beneficiaries (e.g. for children in residential care, their parents can contribute to the expenses made by the state). These services are applicable in situations where special protection measures are needed (i.e. placement, emergency placement, and specialised supervision). A child benefits from special protection measures in the following situations: his/her parents are deceased, unknown, or have been removed their parental rights; cannot be in the care of his/her parents for reasons that are not imputable to the latter; the child is victim of parental abuse or neglect; the child had been left or forgotten in hospitals; or the child has committed a felony for which is not liable according to the law (Article 60 of Law 272/2004). County social services also manage day centres and residential/placement centres and coordinate and support the activity of the community social services.

In 2015 there were 867 children of prisoners for whom special protection measures had

been decided by the Child Protection Commissions or by Tribunals throughout the country (Alternative Sociale, 2015). This means these children were living either in placement centres or in foster care. Maintaining contact with the imprisoned parent is more problematic for this category of children. If the imprisoned parent wishes for his/her child to visit, s/he has to send a letter requesting visitation to the County Social Service. After verifying if the imprisoned parent has not been removed his or her parental rights, the child over 10 years of age is asked if s/he wishes to visit and, in the case of children living in placement centres, a social worker is appointed to accompany the child to visit. For children living in foster care, the foster parent is informed about this request in order to schedule a meeting between the child and his/her imprisoned parent. On the other hand, if the child wishes to visit his/her parent in jail, s/he will ask the social worker in the placement centre or the foster parent about his or her wish to visit. The social worker/foster parent will then inform the County Social Service and, subsequently, the imprisoned parent. Although prison visitation is mediated by the county social service and this may seem easy to achieve, in practice there are several difficulties. For example, if the parent is jailed in a prison located in a different county, visitation is problematic due to insufficient staff and travel costs. Also, some children may be placed with foster parents who live at great distances from where the prison. Foster parents can also have difficulties in managing their time and responsibilities regarding all children in care and most often cannot afford to take the time to accompany the child to prison. Further, the costs related to transportation are not supported by the state, reason for which foster parents may be reluctant in helping the child to maintain contact with the imprisoned parent through prison visitation.

Central social services are: the National Authority for People with Disabilities; the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption; the National Agency for Gender Equality; the National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection; the Labour National Agency; the Public Pension National House; and Labour Inspection. These institutions function under the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice and coordinate the activity in the respective fields of their territorial agencies.

In the Romanian welfare system almost all social benefits are based on the Social

Baseline Index established by the Government at 500 lei (approx. 100 GBP) and according to the number of children or members of the family (National Bank of Romania, 2017). Most of the social benefits are monthly based. Families of prisoners and their children can benefit from the following financial aid:

- Family allowance support as temporary single families following the arrest of a parent according to Law no. 277/2010. This benefit varies from 82 lei (approx. 16 GBP) to 300 lei (approximately 60 GBP).
- The guaranteed minimum income according to Law no. 416/2001 that varies from 108 lei (approximately 20 GBP) to 402 lei (approx. 80 GBP)
- State allowance established for all children in Romania until they reach 18 years old (if a child reaches the age of 18 during the final high-school year, until s/he finishes high-school). In 2017 the state allowance was 200 lei (approx. 40 GBP) for children aged up to the age of 2 (or age 3 in the case of the child with a certain disability); 200 lei for children with disabilities aged three to 18; and 84 lei (approx. 16 GBP) for children aged 2 to 18 years.

Regarding the protection and promotion of the child's rights, Romania has adopted a national strategy for 2014-2020 which names various categories of vulnerable children for whom the state assumes interventions in order to diminish their vulnerability. Children of prisoners are not included as a vulnerable category. Thus, children of prisoners are not seen by the Romanian Government as a particular group needing specific state interventions.

With respect to private social service providers, these are mostly non-governmental organizations. Only two NGOs in Romania were offering services to children of prisoners during the period this thesis was written. But this was not an on-going service because of lack of funds. Non-governmental organizations mainly depend on external funding and when project applications are granted, usually these are short termed (one to two or three years). In addition, funds from the European Commission do not cover direct services for vulnerable people, leaving this task to the governments.

The educational system

The Romanian educational system is governed by the National Education Law no. 1/2011 which was last updated in January 2017. The law mentions that state education is free of charge. For certain activities, levels or programs of study however, certain fees may apply. The principle of funding pre-university education is “the financial resource follows the student” meaning that the budget allocation for each student or pre-schooler is transferred to the education unit where the child studies [Article 9(3)]. The main sources of funding are: state contribution which is regulated every year by Governmental Decision for each level or type of study and local contribution allocated by mayor offices for schools in the respective communities which are dependable of the community budget.

The pre-university education includes four levels, as follows: (1) early education (0-6 years) covering ante-pre-school education (0-3 years) and kindergarten (3 - 6 years) – early education is optional; (2) primary education (6-11 years) includes grade zero (at 6 years old) to fourth grade; (3) secondary education with two sub-levels: (a) inferior secondary education (grades five to eight) and (b) superior secondary education consisting of grades nine to twelve or thirteen (high-school) or professional education with a duration of three years minimum; and (d) non-university tertiary education that includes post-high-school.

Education in Romania is compulsory for grades zero to 10. In the 10th grade children are usually 16 years old. Parents who do not enrol their children to school for the duration of the compulsory education can be fined or sanctioned with community work under the Order of the Ministry of Education no. 5079/2016. Nevertheless, there is the situation of poor families living in rural areas whose children finish eight grades and have to be enrolled to high-school or to a professional education institution after passing the national evaluation. Such families, amongst which are families of prisoners, cannot afford to keep their children in school because high-schools or professional training institutions are mainly located in cities and the children have to either commute or to be accommodated in boarding schools, where available. This implies supplementary costs which families with parents in prison most often cannot afford.

The criminal justice system

The judicial power in Romania is made up of the following courts: the High Court of Cassation and Justice which functions as the Romanian Supreme Court, 15 courts of appeal, 42 tribunals organised at county level and Bucharest, four specialized tribunals (applicable to minors and family law – one court – and commercial tribunals – three courts), 176 district courts functioning under the jurisdiction of tribunals, and four military tribunals, the Territorial Military Tribunal and the Military Court of Appeal which have the status of a military unit. All courts have a prosecutor's office (European Justice, 2016).

Article 124 (3) of the Romanian Constitution states that “Judges are independent and obey only the Law”. In the Romanian criminal system there are no juries. The hearing and rendering of the verdict is made by one judge or by a panel of judges. The main punishments stipulated by the New Penal Code (NPC) are: life detention, detention between 15 days and 30 years, and criminal fine which can be replaced with detention in case of non-payment due to bad faith or with community service in case the person cannot afford to pay (Danileț, 2014).

Detention sentences vary according to the severity of the crimes committed and to the degree of injuriousness of the indicted person [Article 74(1)]. For example, ill treatment against a minor is punished with detention from three to seven years (Article 197), grand theft with detention from one year to 10 years (Article 229), crimes against a person's life with imprisonment between 10 and 20 years (Article 188), or sexual crimes are punishable with detention between three and 10 years [Article 218(1)]. Considering that the average custodial sentence length in 2016 was seven years whilst the European average custodial sentence length in 2015 was of nine months (Durnescu, 2017), it can be inferred that there is a tendency for the judges to give sentences that are towards the maximum specified by the law. For children of prisoners, being separated for long periods of time can lead to fewer contacts (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Booker Loper, & Shear, 2010) and to alienation from the imprisoned parent.

The NPC does not stipulate situations where prison punishments can be revised if the offender is parent of a minor. However, Article 71 paragraph 1(g) states as criterion for the

customization of the punishment the person's "level of education, age, health, family, and social situation". Therefore, it is a judge's option to consider whether the indicted person has children is a matter of customization of the jail sentence by invoking the "family and social situation" referred to in the above mentioned article. Also, Article 589 paragraph 1(b) of the New Code of Penal Procedure (NCP) foresees that jail punishments can be suspended in the case of women who are pregnant or have children aged up to one year. The suspension is valid until its cause has expired.

The phases and duration of the criminal trial

The criminal trial has four phases: prosecution, preliminary chamber, trial, and execution of the court decision. The duration of a criminal trial is not stipulated by the law. Article 488¹(1) of the NCP states that "If the prosecution or trial activity is not carried out in a reasonable time, this can be challenged by requesting the acceleration of the procedure". The challenge can be made after at least one year since the start of the prosecution phase, after at least one year since the start of the actual trial, or after at least six months since the appeal [Article 488¹(3)]. The timeframes mentioned by the law suggest that a criminal trial can take a long period of time which may augment the feelings of uncertainty and sadness of the children whose parents are indicted (Gill & Deegan, 2016).

A person can be held in custody before and during trial in situations mentioned by Article 223 of the NCP. During the prosecution phase, the indicted person can be on remand for a period of maximum 30 days based on a court order. The period a person is remanded in custody can be prolonged without exceeding 180 days for the total duration of the remand [Article 236(4) of the NCP]. After the person is arrested, s/he is brought to the court and listened to by a judge in the presence of his/her lawyer. If the indicted person is parent of a minor or is taking care of a minor child, the judge who ordered the remand must inform the proper authorities regarding the minor's situation (Article 229 of the NCP).

"In executing the court order, the police can enter the domicile or the residence of any person without his/her permission, as well as in the office of any legal entity without the

permission of its legal representative if there is strong indication showing reasonable suspicion that the person mentioned in the court order is in the respective domicile or residence” [Article 231(5) of the NCPP]. This article suggests that police can enter a person’s residence in order to execute an arrest warrant even though there are children living in the respective residence. Therefore, children can witness their parent’s arrest and this can be a traumatic event that can cause emotional problems such as shock, confusion, or anger against authorities (Codd, 2008; Phillips & Zaho, 2010; Roberts et al., 2013).

The prison system

The National Prison Administration is the Romanian authority functioning under the Ministry of Justice. In Romania there are 40 prisons, six hospital prisons, two detention centres and two education centres for juvenile and young offenders. There is only one prison for women and six other prisons have special building wings where women are imprisoned. In September 2017 there were 26,547 imprisoned people in Romania. There are no published statistics regarding the number of imprisoned women or the number of prisoners who are parents of minor children.

According to the annual report of the National Prison Administration for 2016, the most common crimes for which people have been sentenced to prison were those against a person (e.g. murder - 27.49%) and against the patrimony (e.g. theft, robbery - 40.25%). Approximately 20 percent of the total prison population is serving jail sentences of more than 10 years.

Prison conditions

Prison conditions in Romania have been subject to numerous complaints against the state made by prisoners to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Most ruling of the ECHR is in favour of the prisoners, the court condemning inhumane conditions: overcrowding (cells are collective and not individual), lack of hygiene, or presence of rats (Euractiv, 2017).

With respect to the overcrowding situation of Romanian prisons, the National Prison Administration has published statistics showing that at the end of August 2017 Romania had a prison occupation index of 138.74 percent reported to the occupational standard of 4m² of living space per prisoner in a multi-occupancy cell. Overcrowding of prisons has detrimental psychological effects for the prisoners and negative consequences for the correctional system in that it can lose control over the impending frustrations and tensions that rise between prisoners (Haney, 2006). Overcrowding of prisons can also affect families of prisoners because it can lead to relocation of prisoners in prisons that are not nearest to the place of residence (Criminal Justice Alliance, 2012), thus making visitation harder for families and children of prisoners.

Prison visitation and contacts

According to the Applying Regulations of Law no. 254/2013 on the execution of sentences, prisoners under open regime have the right to up to six visits per month, whilst prisoners on semi-open and closed regime can receive up to five visits each month, and the prisoners on maximum security are allowed up to three monthly visits. The visit duration is between 30 minutes and two hours. Children over the age of 14 can visit their imprisoned parent without being accompanied by an adult. Although every prison has a specially designated space for visitation, most of these are unfriendly for family members and children can even be traumatized or can fantasize over the grim conditions in which their parent live (Arditti, 2003; Kalkan & Smith, 2014). Families do not have the opportunity to spend time alone with the prisoner. Visitation areas are shared by all those who visit at a certain time.

Prisoners have the right to conjugal visits “if they have a definitive sentence or are on remand; they are married or are in a marriage-like partnership, have not had the permission to leave the prison in the last three months, have not had a disciplinary sanction in the last six months (or the last 30 days in the case of prisoners on remand), and are actively attending educational, psychological and social work programs, or are going to work” [Article 145 paragraph 1, a)-e) of the Applying Regulations of Law no. 254/2013]. The conjugal visits are

solely for heterosexual couples and have a maximum duration of three hours or of 48 hours if the couple is newlywed. The conjugal rooms are usually former cells refurbished with a bed, table, TV set, and a mini-fridge. The austere aspect of these rooms and the fact they are labelled “intimate room” on the outside door suggesting these visits are solely for sex can be perceived as degrading or it can impede partners on the outside who are more timid to apply for such visit (Comfort, 2005).

Regarding other types of contact, prisoners have the right to make phone calls on daily basis. However, the prisoners on maximum security regime are allowed to have only three phone calls per day with a total duration of 30 minutes, whilst prisoners on open, semi-open, and closed regime are allowed to have up to 10 phone calls per day with a total duration of 60 minutes. The phone calls are paid by the prisoners. The right to send or receive letters is not limited.

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce Romania by presenting various systems of the country. Where it was possible, the information given was linked to the situation of children and families of prisoners. For other systems, such as political, economic or criminal, the briefing aimed at understanding how these apply to Romanian citizens in general and, implicitly, at how they relate to the findings presented in this thesis. Along these lines there was also the goal to set the background of a middle income country whose systems function within and under the influence of the European Union.

Chapter 2. Context of the study

The prison population worldwide has increased by 20 percent since 2000, nowadays counting for 10.35 million people. The case of Europe seems, however, to be more “fortunate” since the number of incarcerated persons has decreased by 21 percent over the last 15 years, this being mainly the result of significant declines in Russia and in Central and Eastern European countries (Walmsley, 2015).

Although estimates on the number of prisoners throughout the world would be relatively easy to make through official state prison records, assessing the number of children affected by parental imprisonment is a much more difficult task due to inconsistencies in collecting this information from prisons, social services, schools, or NGOs (Cassidy, Poehlmann, & Shaver, 2010; Christian, 2009). Nevertheless, surveys suggest that more than half of the people held in prison or jail are parents (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). However, this information refers to parents in the United States prisons and jails which have been collected every five years since 1974 by the US Census Bureau (Johnson & Waldfogel, 2004). With respect to European statistics, data remain unclear, the only available figures of children affected by parental imprisonment on the continent being suggested by Children of Prisoners Europe that has estimated the number to be 800,000 at European Union level and 2.1 million from all countries that are part of the European Council (Children of Prisoners Europe, 2014). This evidence is, however, based on a rate of 1.3 children per male prisoner which does not have a clear statistical support. The bottom line is that, albeit inexact, the number of children affected by parental imprisonment is very high.

Romanian children of prisoners: facts and findings

Although parental imprisonment occurs throughout Europe, the Romanian context is of particular significance because of the country’s very long custodial sentences (Durnescu, 2017). The increased length of time parents spend in prison does not only add to the economic burdens of prisoners’ families but also leads to fewer contacts between the children and their imprisoned parents (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Booker Loper, & Shear, 2010), thus negatively affecting the parent-child relationship.

It is estimated that in Romania there are 16,764 children of prisoners (Alternative Sociale, 2015). This estimation was made based on information collected from all 32 prisons and from the 41 county child protection services during January – April 2014. The numbers do not include, however, children with parents incarcerated in other countries than Romania or children that have not been reported by their imprisoned parents upon incarceration.

Although there is knowledge of two studies that investigated Romanian children of prisoners, namely “Raising a Child through Prison Bars” and “COPING: Children of Prisoners. Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health”, available information is provided by publications only on the COPING study, a research project developed during 2010 – 2012 in UK, Sweden, Romania, and Germany aiming to “investigate the characteristics of children with imprisoned parents, their resilience, and their vulnerability to mental health problems” (www.coping-project.eu). The main finding suggests that Romanian children have significantly lower scores on overall wellbeing than children in the other participant countries, whilst they face significant poverty. (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013).

Effects of imprisonment on children and their families

An extensive body of research on children of prisoners has emerged especially since 2000, pointing to the detrimental effects of parental imprisonment (Robertson et al., 2016). Disruptions in parent-child relationships have been found to cause mental health problems in children, such as depression, anxiety, or tantrums (Murray & Murray, 2010). For some children, witnessing parental arrest has been shown to lead to experiencing intense emotions such as shock, confusion regarding what has happened and why and, later on, anger towards the imprisoned parent or towards authorities (Codd, 2008; Phillips & Zaho, 2010). From a behavioural point of view, adolescent children of prisoners were found to join gangs and engage in antisocial behaviour, alcohol and drug consumption or abuse (Murray, Farrington, & Sekol 2012). Children were also found to be stigmatized by their peers for having a parent in prison (Boswell, 2002; Murray, 2008; Murray & Farrington, 2006). Also, school problems, such as poor grades, unlikelihood of graduation from high school, or school dropout, have been associated in the literature with parental imprisonment (Huynh, Bussell, & Lee, 2015).

Imprisonment of a parent can also affect those remaining to care for the children and should be taken into consideration, since children's outcomes most often depend on the extent of caregivers' wellbeing (Arditti, 2012; Dennison, Foley, & Stewart, 2005; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2011). As with the children, their non-imprisoned mothers were found to experience mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety (Bocknek, Sanderson, & Britner IV, 2008; Cassidy, Poehlmann, & Shaver, 2010). Also, women who are partners of prisoners were found to be victims of social stigma, being blamed for having known of or even having contributed to their spouses' crimes (Codd, 2003; Fishman, 1990). However, the most prominent effect of parental imprisonment on caregivers in the literature is experiencing acute stress due to family financial strain and overburden (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013; Lowenstein, 1984; Philips et al., 2006). In families where the imprisoned parent is the mother, the children are most often cared for by their maternal grandparents (Arditti & Few, 2006; Baker, McHale, Strozier, & Cecil, 2010; Parke, 2003) who were found to be unprepared to handle the children's maladjustment to parental imprisonment (Poehlmann et al., 2008).

Family relationships have also been shown to be impaired by parental imprisonment. Parental stress was associated with poor supervision of children and, implicitly, with children being neglected with respect to school attainment or vulnerable to the development of delinquent behaviour (Aron & Dallaire, 2010; Murray & Farrington, 2006). As well, imprisonment of a partner may lead to relationship tensions due to the fact women feel pressured by their partners' demands for clothing, food, or money (Christian, Mellow, & Thomas, 2006; Codd, 2008; Fishman, 1990; Johnston, 2012) or to relationship rupture and divorce (Apel, Blokland, Nieuwebeerta, & Schellen, 2009; Codd, 2007; Turney & Wildeman, 2013).

There are a number of considerations as to why studying children of prisoners is important. First, considering the scarcity of research on Romanian children of prisoners, studies are needed to inform social policies and practices about the ways children cope with parental imprisonment and about their strengths and needs. Second, from a criminological perspective, studies found that children are at higher risk of developing antisocial behavior (Dallaire, 2007; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Novero, Loper, & Warren, 2011; Johnston, 2006; Phillips et

al., 2006), thus predicting further potential increases in the prison population. Therefore, understanding the situation of these children can help promoting policies aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency in this particular group. Third, from an economic perspective, parental imprisonment has been associated with family economic strain (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Murray, 2008; Wildeman & Western, 2010) and low school attainment (Boswell, 2002; Dallaire, Ciccone, & Wilson, 2010; Huynh, Bussell, & Lee, 2015; Murray & Farrington, 2006). These consequences have a negative spillover effect on children's chances of employment as adults. Unqualified jobs or unemployment can only further contribute to the social exclusion of prisoners' children and families (Murray, 2007). Consequently, efforts should be made in order to hinder such adverse life outcomes. One manner in which to do so can be represented by evidence based social programmes directed at labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups. From a developmental perspective, separation caused by imprisonment can lead to disruption of the child-parent bond with negative emotional and psychological consequences for the children (Foster & Hagan, 2013; Murray & Murray, 2010; Tasca, Turanovic, White, & Rodriguez, 2012). In other words, imprisonment of a parent has multilayer and long term effects not just for the children and their families, but also for communities and the society in general (Wildeman & Western, 2010).

Further, investigating children of prisoners implies that children are at the core of the research. Although parents or teachers are important informants about children's wellbeing, attempts to understand their vulnerabilities should also aim at seeking children's opinion about their experiences. Children's agency in matters that concern them has long been subject of debate in policy and in research (Randall, Childers-Buschle, Anderson, & Taylor, 2015; Spyrou, 2011). In 1989, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child has recognized children's right to "express [those] views freely in all matters affecting the child" (Article 12) and the "freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds" (Article 13). The Convention thus validated children's empowerment and acknowledged not only their right to be consulted but also the fact children are knowledgeable about their own lives and capable to speak for themselves (Einarsdóttir, 2007). In this support, child participant studies underlined

that children provide valuable information contributing to knowledge about their lives and experiences (Crump & Phipps, 2013; Kellett, 2005; Stamatoglou, 2004). Research about children with parents in prison can therefore be enriched by including their views and perspectives, hence fostering a unique “insider” perspective that is not accessible to their adult parents or carers.

Scope of the study

Although research about children of prisoners has been published in the last twenty years, there is clearly a need for more studies in order to capture the entire array of factors that impact the lives of prisoners’ children. So far, the literature has examined the influences of parental imprisonment on children (Dallaire, 2007; Murray & Murray, 2010; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Novero, Loper, & Warren, 2011; Johnston, 2006; Phillips et al., 2006), on carers (Arditti, 2012; Dennison, Foley, & Stewart, 2005; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2011), or on prisoners’ partners (Comfort et al., 2005; Fishman, 1990) and concluded that imprisonment can affect *all* members of a family (Arditti, 2012; Codd, 2008; Murray, 2005). However, considering that parental imprisonment brings about changes in individuals of the same family, a key issue to explore is whether or not the changes impact the relationships between family members, and if there are such impacts, the effect of these on children.

Understanding how family relationships function in the context of paternal imprisonment and its impact on children, can help advance knowledge on prisoners’ family dynamics and processes that mediate outcomes for children’s development. Evidence that a parent’s imprisonment prompts changes in relations between members of the family could guide interventions aiming to support prisoners’ children towards a more systemic approach.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis comprises ten chapters. The first chapter is a brief introduction in Romania’s political, economic, welfare, educational, and criminal systems.

The second chapter succinctly presents the main findings of the literature on the effects of parental imprisonment on children and their caregivers, and also on the relationship between

prisoners and their partners on the outside. These are reviewed in more detail in the third chapter.. Attachment and parenting theories have been added to support this study in chapter four.

The fifth chapter includes the epistemological and ontological approach for the investigation in this research, sampling and description of the instruments and procedures used, an account of ethical procedures and issues, and the proposed analysis.

Chapter six presents findings from interviews with children and their mothers regarding the mother-child relationship. Verbatim reports are used to illustrate the effects of fathers' imprisonment on children and on their mothers at emotional, behavioural, and economic levels, as well as to depict the extent of parental stress and parental practices in the context of paternal imprisonment.

Chapter seven is dedicated to findings from children's and mothers' interviews about the relationship between children's mother and father. Participants' perception of the mother-father/marital relationship is investigated taking into account the periods before and after imprisonment, and their views on family reunification.

The eighth chapter discusses how the findings align with the broader research and theory.

Chapter nine presents personal thoughts and reflections about the processes undertaken in the development of this research. Participants' recruitment and consent and positionality of power between the researcher and the researched are the main topics of the reflections included within.

This thesis concludes with a discussion about the significance of the research, this study's limitations, issues that emerged from the results and could be considered for future research, and implications for policy and practice.

In accordance with the format outlined above, the following presents the literature review.

Chapter 3: Literature review¹

This chapter presents an account of the literature on children and families of prisoners together with attachment and parenting theories. First, findings from previous studies on the negative effects of parental imprisonment on children are introduced. These are structured on three main topics that emerged from the literature: poor mental health, socio-economic aspects, and likelihood of child offending. This is followed by a review of the research that identified factors that may enable children to cope with their parents' detention.

Second, considering that incarceration of a parent causes temporary separation from his/her child, the theoretical framework of child attachment is presented in order to inform this study on how children form bonds with their parents and how children's perception of parental availability is reflected in their later development. Subsequently, literature on adult and romantic attachment is added with the purpose of understanding relationship dynamics in a parental context.

Further, this chapter reviews the research on the effects of imprisonment on the relationship between the prisoners and their partners on the outside during the incarceration period and after release from prison. The studies presented mainly focus on women's perception of the relationship with their incarcerated male partners and of their roles as wives or life partners and as mothers.

Theoretical perspectives on parenting practices are also introduced in order to have a better understanding of the role parents have in child care and education and how their

¹ Part of this Section have been published in Foca, L. (2015). The Romanian Wives of Prisoners, *Scientific Annals of the of the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iasi, New Series. SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK Section*, 8(1), 200-209

As well, parts of this Section have been included in Foca, L. (2014). Jailed on the Outside: The Romanian Wives of Prisoners. *Paper presented at the International Scientific Conference: Communication, Context, Interdisciplinarity, 3rd Edition, 23-24 October 2014, Tîrgu Mureş. Tîrgu Mureş, University of „Petru Maior”.*

behaviours affect children.

Caregivers, mostly mothers and grandmothers, are subject of this literature review showing the extent to which they are affected by parental imprisonment and how this, in turn, affects their relationship with the children.

Towards the end of this chapter, two studies on Romanian children of prisoners are also presented. However, considering the scarcity of literature on this subject for Romania, this study is mainly informed by international research.

Finally, a summary of the literature is provided, followed by a presentation of the aims of this study and the research questions that derived from the literature and which were addressed by the current investigation.

Effects of parental imprisonment on children

Poor mental health

Mental health problems are common amongst children of incarcerated parents. Depression, hyperactivity, sleep disorders, truancy, conduct disorders, withdrawal, and feelings of deceit, abandonment, or emotional separation were reported by numerous studies (Boswell & Wedge, 2002; Murray, 2005; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Parke & Clarke Stewart, 2001; Phillips et al., 2002; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011).

One under-researched aspect of children's mental health, in the context of parental imprisonment, is differences that occur in children as result of mothers being in prison as opposed to fathers. Tasca, Turanovic, White, and Rodriguez's (2012) study on this particular issue showed that, after controlling for children's age, ethnicity, and gender, children affected by maternal imprisonment are 2.3 times more likely to present mental health problems than children affected by paternal imprisonment. When controlling for demographic data and stressors experienced by children (i.e. drugs/alcohol in system at birth, exposure to violence and residential mobility) and stressors experienced by parents (i.e. mental illness, substance abuse, previous incarceration and unemployment for a month prior), the authors found that children of mothers who are in prison were 1.8 times more likely to experience mental health problems than

children of imprisoned fathers. Although other studies underlined the importance of parental gender differences in assessing child's mental health as effects brought about by parental imprisonment (Arditti, Burton, & Neeves-Botelho, 2010; Baker, McHale, Strozier, & Cecil, 2010), it should be taken into account that the study of Tasca, Turanovic, White, and Rodriguez (2012) was based on parents' reports (300 fathers and 300 mothers who were parents of a total of 1221 children under the age of 18) during in-depth semi-structured interviews and not on actual measurements of the children's mental health.

In another study, Foster and Hagan (2013) used four waves of data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health which began in 1995 when children had an average age of 15 years (first wave) and followed up when children's ages were 21 (second wave), then 26 (third wave), and 32 years (fourth wave). Out of a total sample of 9,421 respondents in the fourth wave, 14% were represented by people who experienced parental imprisonment during childhood. The findings point out the different effects maternal and paternal incarcerations have on the mental health of young adults: "maternal imprisonment increases depressive symptoms in young adulthood while paternal imprisonment increases substance role problems" (p. 663). The "substance role problems" include impairments in exercising social, professional, intimate and family roles due to substance abuse. Although Foster and Hagan used multiple parental variables (e.g. ages of the child at parental imprisonment, parental substance abuse, parental physical and sexual abuse, parental death, or household income), it did not count for variables including other stressful life events which may contribute to respondents' mental health, such as poor/difficult peer or adult romantic relationships.

Maternal imprisonment was found to affect the children also after women's release because mothers, most often primary caregivers, lack social support (family and friends) after their release from prison. This can lead to behaviours and adversities that contributed to their imprisonment in the first place such as substance and alcohol abuse and depression with repercussions on parenting practices and, implicitly, on the children (Arditti & Few, 2005; Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2007). Another difference that may impact a child's wellbeing, and one related to the gender of the imprisoned parent, is that when the imprisoned parent is the

father, the child is most likely to be taken care by his/her mother, whilst if the imprisoned parent is the mother, the child is in the care of the mother's family, most often the maternal grandparents (Poehlmann et. al., 2008; Bocknek, Sanderson, & Britner IV, 2008; Baker, McHale, Strozier, & Cecil, 2010).

When discussing children's mental health, an important factor to be taken into consideration is the child's age at the moment of parental separation due to imprisonment (Boswell, 2002; Dallaire, 2007). Infants and toddlers are most affected when the imprisoned parent is the mother due to the fact that, at these developmental stages, children are completely dependent on their primary caregiver – most often the mother - and repeated moves or shifts in the primary caregiver may lead to insecure attachments (Bowlby, 1998). Mothers' imprisonment when children are 0 to 3 years of age implies that the incarcerated mothers have not had the chance to bond with their children, and thus, a rupture of care and attachment disruption is produced (Meyers, Smarsh, Amlund-Hagen, & Kennon, 1999). Moreover, children aged up to three years tend to exhibit more externalizing behaviours such as tantrums and acting out (Wildeman & Western, 2010). Growing up, the pre-school children learn about social roles and how to take the initiative while enriching their vocabulary and expanding their imagination (Erikson, 1959). Being kept in the dark about their imprisoned parents' whereabouts increases their fearful fantasies and feelings of guilt may emerge (Poehlmann, 2005). At these ages, the children are also likely to witness the arrest of their mother because they are usually at home in the sole care of mothers (Johnston, 2006). School aged children and adolescents need parental care in preparation for the school environment and in framing their identity (Erikson, 1959). Being in the situation where they have to cope with one parent being in prison, the children may find themselves in the position to take care of their non-imprisoned parents who have difficulties in adjusting to the separation (i.e. experience depression) or to be taken care of by extended kin, especially grandparents (Codd, 2007; Poehlmann et. al., 2008). Thus, these children become more aware of their basic needs such as food and clothing, and they mature ahead of their time (Johnson, 2012). School aged children have also been found to experience withdrawal, depression and anxiety following parental incarceration (Wildeman & Western, 2010).

Adolescents of prisoners have been found to join gangs, and engage in antisocial behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse (Murray, Farrington, & Sekol 2012) or sexual promiscuity (Meyers, Smarsh, Amlund-Hagen, & Kennon, 1999). These externalizing behaviours tend to extend throughout the life course (Wildeman & Western, 2010).

In a study of 50 children of six to 12 years of incarcerated mothers, Lotze, Ravindran, and Myers (2010) reported that children's inability to manage their shame or guilt in relation to parental imprisonment significantly predicted negative behaviour, including adult disobedience and fighting with peers. After investigating callous/unemotional traits through adult observations of the children, the authors distinguished a group of children that, although they were able to control their emotions by hiding them, have been found to present callous/unemotional traits such as lack of empathy, manipulative behaviour, lack of remorse for their misdeeds or inability to keep the promises they made - all of which put them at higher risk for psychopathy. Another finding of this study was that children with difficulties in managing their emotions experienced negative feelings and behaviours. There are a few methodological points that deserve attention in relation to this study. First, the children had been recently separated by their mothers due to imprisonment. As cited in the literature mentioned above, parental separation can cause emotional problems ranging from depression to increased anxiety. Therefore, emotional control is understandably difficult to achieve in the condition in which children were at the time of assessments. Second, children's ability to manage their emotions was measured using the Early Adolescent Temperament Scale-Revised. Although this is a standardized self-report, this alone may be reductionist in concluding about children's poor emotional self-regulation. And third, the Early Adolescent Temperament Scale-Revised was designed for children 10-15 years old (Ellis & Rothbart, 2001). As this was an instrument applied to children as young as six, the results showed by these should be viewed with caution.

Psychopathology in children of prisoners was examined in a study by Murray and Murray (2010) from an attachment perspective. The separation from the parent following incarceration was found to correlate with insecure attachment in children in situations where caregivers were not honest with the children about the imprisoned parent's whereabouts or gave explanations that

were not developmentally sensitive. Children's attachment insecurity was also linked with caregiver's stresses due to prolongation of the trial or financial difficulties. The authors also emphasized that the imprisonment of the mother may have stronger negative impacts on the child's attachment security than of the father. However, if attachment security may be threatened by parental imprisonment, this "does not in itself fully explain why children of prisoners are at increase risk for psychopathology" (p. 296). Murray and Murray draw attention on the fact that, in order to establish a clear causal relation between parental imprisonment and children's psychological well-being, further research is necessary. The research should be based on measurements and psychological testing of children before and during parents' incarceration, and also on periodical interviews examining children's state of mind in different contexts and through their life span.

Children's poor mental health was associated by Murray and Farrington (2006) with four possible consequences of parental imprisonment, that is: parent – child separation, inadequate parenting due to distress experienced by carers following parental imprisonment, economic strain, and stigma and labelling. The authors caution though on making causal inferences, underlining that there is not sufficient evidence supporting the causal rapport between parental imprisonment and the consequences outlined above.

Among the traumatic experiences of children as a result of parental imprisonment, is witnessing parental arrest. Roberts et. al. (2013) found in a study on 326 children aged 0-11 that these children have more externalizing and internalizing behaviour problems than children who do not witness their parents' arrest. After investigating the children included in the sample through semi-structured interviews that used standardized measures for behavioural symptoms, trauma history, and mental health status, the authors measured for differences in coping mechanisms according to children's ages. Young children (0-3 years) were found to show more internalizing symptoms such as emotional distress and increased arousal, whilst older children (up to 11 years) exhibited more externalizing symptoms such as irritability and immature behaviour. However, the authors note that other potential life-events experienced by the children (i.e. family violence) should be taken into account when assessing children's well-being.

Witnessing parental arrest can also lead to children experiencing intense emotions, such as shock, confusion regarding what has happened and why, and later on, anger towards the imprisoned parent or towards authorities. (Codd, 2008; Phillips & Zaho, 2010)

Another aspect influencing children's mental health following parental imprisonment is children not knowing what has happened to their parent. Especially in the case of young children, they are often lied about their parents' whereabouts and told by family members that the parent is away, thus leaving them in a state of confusion (Dallaire, 2007; Poehlmann, 2005). There is also the situation where children are aware of their parents' imprisonment but are told to keep it a secret or the situation where the children themselves wish the parents' imprisonment to remain a secret (Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). This (self)imposed secrecy has repercussions on children's wellbeing as they may feel isolated from peers and friends and develop increased stress due to the pressure of not divulging the family secret (Codd, 2008).

Socio-economic aspects of parental imprisonment

Parental imprisonment was also found to correlate with social stigma leading to low school performance and behavioural problems. Dallaire, Ciccone, and Wilson (2010) reported teachers having lower expectations regarding school competences in female students (first level school) after they learn that their mothers are imprisoned. Two other findings include: (1) behavioural and emotional problems associated with parental arrest can influence children's school performance and (2) elementary school children seem to be more affected by mother's incarceration in comparison with older children affected by the incarceration of a parent. Although the report of Dallaire, Ciccone and Wilson was based on one qualitative study and one experimental design study with teachers, the authors did not actually assess teacher's behaviours or children's competence. The children themselves did not participate in any of the two studies and the conclusions were drawn from teachers' perception of the children's behaviours and from their expectations regarding child competences.

Children's low school performances in the context of parental imprisonment are also mentioned in other qualitative and quantitative studies (Boswell, 2002; Murray, 2007; Murray &

Farrington, 2006), which attribute this result to the fact children are being stigmatized by their peers for having a parent in prison.

Regarding other socio-economic aspects of imprisonment and its consequences for the family, Murray (2007) put forward a broader concept of social exclusion that includes pre-existing deprivation explained through a number of characteristics of a person prior to offending (i.e. unemployment, low social class, mental health issues, recidivism, marital conflicts and own experiences of abuse/neglect). Social exclusion was also defined by social and economic effects of imprisonment such as stigma and loss of material and social capital following imprisonment. Other types of exclusion include: linguistic exclusion due to the fact families have difficulties in understanding the language used by judges and lawyers during trial, political exclusion (i.e. prisoners have no right to vote, hence their children are not represented in the political process), dynamic exclusion (children with imprisoned parents have diminished future prospects due to risks associated with parental imprisonment such as delinquency, poor relationships with family and peers and unemployment), and administrative exclusion due to the invisibility of the children in the context of country reports or statistics underlining the social phenomenon.

Phillips et al. (2006) reported, based on data drawn from the Great Smoky Mountains Study which included a total of 1,420 children from which 47.4% had a parent or parent figure arrested, that children's exposure to family risks (i.e. poor family structure, economic strain, inadequate care and family instability) is not significantly associated with parental arrest but with parent risk factors (i.e. substance abuse, mental health problems, and low school attainment). The involvement of parents in the criminal justice system, however, had a significant association with children experiencing economic strain and family instability. This result is questioned by Johnston (2006) sustaining that parental incarceration cannot affect children's family stability or household economic situation by straining it since "many children of criminal offenders have never lived with those parents or have not lived with them for extended periods of time" (p. 710). However, the data collected in the Great Smoky Mountains Study does not suggest that all children investigated had never previously lived with their imprisoned parent or had been separated from them for a long period of time. Conversely, Shaw (1992a) emphasized in a study

on male prisoners in the Midlands aged 21 years and over that almost half of the men questioned have lived with their wives/cohabitee at the time of their imprisonment and approximately two thirds of them had children in their care.

Economic strain and family instability in families of incarcerated fathers as factors affecting children are also mentioned by the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study. This study has not focused solely on families of prisoners but on families formed outside marriages. The data was gathered between 1998 and 2000 from 4,898 fathers and mothers in 20 cities in the United States first interviewed in the hospital within 24 hours of the child's birth and followed up for five years. The sample included a large number of imprisoned fathers: "364 fathers are incarcerated for the first time between the first and fifth year follow-up survey" (Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011, p.30). The findings suggest that fathers with a history of imprisonment contribute to the family income over a year period with \$1,300 less than the fathers who have never been incarcerated. The main reason for this is the difficulty former prisoner fathers have in finding a job. Also, fathers' inability to keep good quality relationships with the family after imprisonment was found to be associated with lower financial contribution to child care and rearing. These results are also supported by qualitative studies showing that family relations with the imprisoned parent decrease significantly due to the costs incurred by family visits, supporting the imprisoned parent with clothing, food or money (Codd, 2008; Christian, Mellow, & Thomas, 2006; Fishman, 1990; Johnston, 2012).

Likelihood of child offending

The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (CSDD) is a longitudinal study of 411 White boys from inner London that began in 1961 when the children were 8-9 years old. This is a longitudinal study of juvenile delinquency which originally aimed:

“to describe the development of delinquent and criminal behaviour in inner-city males, to investigate how far it could be predicted in advance, and to explain why juvenile delinquency began, why it did or did not continue into adult

crime, and why adult crime usually ended as men reached their twenties” (Farrington & West, 1990, p. 115).

The collection of data was made when children were 8, 10, 14 and 16 years. Informants for the study were the children themselves and their parents (mostly mothers), the latter being interviewed every year until the boys finished compulsory education (around the age of 16 years). The children were tested with regards to their intelligence, but also to their personality and psychomotor skills (Farrington & West, 1990). Further interviews were conducted into adulthood with the men when they were 18, 21, 24, 32, 48 and 50 years old (Farrington, 1999; Farrington, 2006). The information collected in the CSDD study has led to categorizing the children in five different groups: (1) children with parents in prison before the children’s 10th birthday, (2) children that have never experienced parental imprisonment, (3) children separated from their parents because of illnesses or death of the latter, (4) children lacking parental care for other reasons such as divorce, and (5) children whose parents have been imprisoned before their birth. With respect to the children of prisoners, Murray and Farrington (2005) reported, after controlling for individual, parenting, and family risk factors, that parental separation is a strong predictor for antisocial behaviour in children with imprisoned parents. Although very valuable due to the amount of data collected over a long period of time, the results from this study are questioned with regards to the representativeness of the target group: only 23 children that experienced parental imprisonment were investigated and all of them were boys (Johnston, 2006; Wakefield & Wildeman, 2011).

In another study, Dallaire (2007) analysed the risks of parental incarceration on children by comparing maternal with paternal incarceration on the likelihood of children being incarcerated themselves as adults. The findings suggest that children of imprisoned mothers are two and a half times more likely to be incarcerated as adults than children of imprisoned fathers. The author also reported that risk factors associated with incarceration, such as parental drug abuse and high rates of familial imprisonment, increase the probability of adult children of imprisoned mothers being incarcerated as opposed to adult children of imprisoned fathers.

Another risk factor contributing to children of prisoners being imprisoned as adults is the placement of children after parental imprisonment outside the family environment, this being more likely to occur in the case of mothers' incarceration (Johnston, 2006).

Protective factors

Few studies have analysed resilience among children of imprisoned parents. Dallaire and Zeman (2013) studied the ways children of prisoners cope with the incarceration of a parent in research involving 210 elementary school children and their parents/guardians who were divided into six different groups: children who never experienced parental separation, children who have recently or in the past been separated by their parents for other reasons (i.e. divorce, military deployment), children experiencing current parental separation due to imprisonment or jail, children who experienced parental separation due to imprisonment in the past, and children who were separated in the past from a parent who was in prison but who are currently separated from their parent for other reasons. Using a variety of methods in investigating both children and their guardians (i.e. self-reports, interviews, observational assessments, and peer reports), the authors found that empathy was a protective factor against aggressive peer behaviour. On the other hand, findings from the same study showed that children experiencing current separation from a parent due to imprisonment are less empathic in comparison with children who have, in the past, experienced parental incarceration.

Dawson, Jackson, and Nyamathi (2012) found that focus on school and involvement in sports and recreational activities, such as going to the theatre or attending church, seem to have a positive impact in helping children dissociate from the negative thoughts related to parental imprisonment. Two individual features were found to help children cope: (1) using imagination that builds a positive picture of their life after the parent is released from prison and (2) emotional disconnection in relation to the imprisoned parent employed by the children in order to protect themselves. These findings are consistent with results from the COPING study in the United Kingdom, Romania, Germany, and Sweden showing that, in the case of Romanian children in particular, when the children's carers held a positive image of the imprisoned parent,

this image was transmitted to, and integrated by, the children (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) found in a qualitative study including 34 children of prisoners that family affectionate behaviours and a positive perspective on life represent coping mechanisms in children despite the stress and difficulties associated with parental imprisonment. Church attendance is explained by the authors as contributing to building confidence, while sports and theatre activities help children to diffuse their anger and frustration, and also to create new friendships.

Family and social support, and a clear understanding of the imprisoned parent's whereabouts, were found to be protective factors in a study by Bocknek and Sanderson (2008) where 35 school aged children took part in a semi-structured interview compiling standardized measurements for posttraumatic stress disorder, social support, internalizing/externalizing symptoms self-reports, and behavioural and emotional scales. Support from the family, especially grandparents, was also found to constitute protective factors in a mixed method study on 88 children aged 9 to 14 years with imprisoned mothers who had a history of drug dependence (Hanlon et. al., 2005). The condition for this factor to be a protective one (meaning the children had not adhered to a deviant lifestyle ranging from minor theft to life threatening violent behaviour and had avoided drugs) was for the grandparents to have lived with, and cared for, their grandchildren prior to mothers' incarceration. Although this study does not include caregivers' reports, the results from standardized personality/behavioural inventories applied to the children bear a strong indicator of grandmothers being protective of their grandchildren in cases of incarcerated addict mothers.

Stable households, stable emotional state of the carer and sensitive caregiving are also considered to be protective factors for the children as it provides the constancy any child needs in situations of parental separation (Dallaire, 2007; Lowenstein, 2006). Poehlmann's (2005) research on 54 young children aged 2.5 to 7.5 years who had a mother in prison found that emotional stability of the caregiver was the strongest predictor for a healthy representation of mother-child relationship: "Children who lived with the same caregiver since separation from the mother experienced 85 times the odds of having a secure relationship with the caregiver

compared with children who had changed placements one or more times” (p. 690).

Good co-parenting relationships between mothers in prison and grandmothers have been found to lead to fewer child behaviour problems in a study of 40 mother-grandmother dyads where mothers were confined in a central Florida county jail (Baker, McHale, Strozier, & Cecil, 2010). However, it is important to note that children’s fathers were not subject of the wider picture of co-parenting.

Loper, Philips, Nichols, and Dallaire (2013) found, after investigating 57 imprisoned parents and the corresponding number of caregivers, that collaboration between the imprisoned parent and the child’s caregiver has positive consequences on the child’s mood. The authors also concluded that imprisoned parents tend to idealize their role as parents by reporting higher levels of co-parenting than the caregivers. However, when assessing children’s reactions to a video message the imprisoned parents addressed to their children, Loper, Philips, Nichols, and Dallaire found that when the imprisoned parents have negative attitudes towards the caregiver (i.e. criticism), this negatively affects the children, whilst the positive attitude of the imprisoned parents towards the caregivers (i.e. praise) does not produce any changes in the children’s mood. Good co-parenting was associated with the child’s positive experience while watching the video message.

Another protective factor for children of prisoners is the actual imprisonment of the parent. Although most of the studies focused on the negative consequences associated with parental imprisonment, there are situations where the parent’s incarceration benefits the child, namely those where the imprisoned parent has had a history of substance abuse, poor quality of parenting, or the imprisonment was caused by family allegations of abuse (Codd, 2008; Johnston, 2006; Murray & Murray, 2010; Shaw, 1992a).

Effects of imprisonment on the relationship between prisoners and their outside partners

This subsection discusses studies that looked into how imprisonment of a partner affects couple and family dynamics.

Research examining the relationships between prisoners and their partners on the outside

during and post-imprisonment is scarce. However, the few studies that looked into this area have all agreed upon one finding: incarceration has a dissolutive effect on marriages. Apel, Blokland, Nieuwbeerta, & van Schellen (2010) have analysed data from the Criminal Career and Life-Course Study developed at The Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement using a sample of 2,790 men with at least one conviction between 18 and 38 years of age. Their findings point out that the men in the sample face a probability of 56.8% of divorce by the fifth year after release. At the same time the authors concluded, however, that children represent a factor promoting stability meaning that marriages remain intact five years after release, the likelihood for divorce in the case of convicted married men with children being smaller than in the case of married men without children or of married men convicted for serious crimes.

Looking at the issue from another angle, Theobald and Farrington (2009) studied the effect of marriage on offending using a sample of 162 convicted males from the 411 males that were included in the Cambridge Study of Delinquent Development (CSDD) concluding that marriage had a significant effect on reducing offending. After investigating the marriage status of the sample five years before and five years after the marriage, the authors reduced the original sample to 111 men who remained married for at least five years and divided them into three groups corresponding to the ages they got married: early age married men (18-21 years), mid-range (22-24 years), and late marriages (25 or later). Taking into consideration the offending history of the final sample five years before and five years after the marriage, it was found that offending had decreased after marriage only in the case of men with early and mid-range marriages. Using a propensity score regarding chances of getting married based on risk factors identified when the men were aged 8 to 10 in the CSDD study, the authors concluded: “(...) coming from a low-income family, having few friends, being unpopular and coming from a broken home at ages 8-10 predicted a low probability of getting married” (p. 511). Continuing their research on the same sample, Theobald and Farrington (2011) found, with regards to the influence of marriage on male offending, that later married men tend to marry older women, which proves not to have an effect on their criminal career, while marriage to younger women

correlates with a decrease in offending. On the same note, Theobald and Farrington (2012) report on the factors that contribute to marital disruption: “a wife with a conviction(s), being convicted, a poor relationship with parents, no examination passed, and having unprotected sex and a shotgun marriage” (p. 404). It should be noted, however, that the three studies of Theobald and Farrington mentioned above (2009, 2011, 2012) are based on statistical data which, although very valuable, reduces the contexts of marriages and of its influences, whereas in depth interviews exploring the nature of feelings and couple dynamics might help in getting a more comprehensive image on the influences of marriage on male offending.

Marital/romantic relationships constitute the topic of Laura Fishman’s (1990) book entitled “Women at the Wall. A Study of Prisoners’ Wives Doing Time on the Outside”. The book is a qualitative study comprising interviews with thirty working-class wives of prisoners, all White women from the Vermont area in the United States of America. The author introduces two types of lifestyles that couples adhere to: “fast living” (a lifestyle attributable mostly to the men, although not exclusively) explained by behaviours such as alcohol/drug abuse, violence (particularly “wife beating”), involvement in criminal activities, marital instability, and absences from home; and “conventional living” characterized by “(1) stable marriages; (2) generally steady employment among men, domestic orientation among women; (3) moderate drinking and drug use; (4) absence of domestic violence; and (4) a feeling of being “respectable” members of their communities” (p. 8). The author used the two lifestyles to explain the experiences of women in relation to their partners’ imprisonment, detailing their relationships before, during, and after imprisonment and outcomes of these relationships after release.

In relation to the period before imprisonment, Fishman narrates the stories of wives where the life of the couple had been affected by the “fast living” lifestyle that represents a strong predictor of imprisonment. This fast living was identified in Fishman’s book as a lifestyle that only men adhered to. Their wives, however, at some point, had given it up while caring for their children or had reduced some of the behaviours significantly (i.e. drinking, using drugs, or joining fast living friends).

One aspect arising from Fishman’s book is the quality of the intimate relationship

between the spouses during imprisonment. Due to prison policies and rules, most often couples are not allowed to have sexual relations or to exhibit affection through touching one another. Their sole resources of intimate contact thus remain verbal communication while visiting, letters, and phone calls. This has repercussions on the quality of the relationship, sexual deprivation being the most common reason for frustration not just for the prisoners, but also for their wives on the outside. Jealousy from the imprisoned men and also women's infidelity represent responses to this sexual deprivation that, in turn, leads to further deterioration in the couple's relationship. Prison visitation is a topic underlining traumatic and shameful experiences for the women due to body searches, to disrespectful behaviour of the prison staff towards the women, or to a lack of privacy. Prison visitation was also described in Fishman's book as having positive effects such as increased quality of communication and a period of renewed courtship where the couples begin making plans for the future, although the plans are not approached in a realistic manner (i.e. they speak of the men getting a job or being a united family, but do not get into detailed planning of these). The imprisonment period is also described by prisoners' wives as a very difficult time due to economic strains, sometimes lack of family support, stigma, difficulties in finding or maintaining a job as well as in childrearing and discipline, or taking care of the household. Enforced separation also has consequences on the women's mental health in that they experience depression, anxiety, insomnia, and high levels of stress. Fishman's book also underlines the changes that occur in women resulting from their partners' imprisonment: independence in handling the household and financial matters, dual feelings towards their spouses ranging from resentment to longing, or decision to take on a conventional lifestyle despite their husbands' fast-living.

Fishman's book places little emphasis on the children and their outcomes as result of parental imprisonment. Children are mentioned in mothers' reports as missing their fathers, having problems at school and with peers, or as difficult to manage as single mothers.

The period immediately after imprisonment is described as a "honeymoon period" where the couples find themselves together again. However, this period is also marked by the men's difficulties in adapting to their freedom: they missed their homes for a long period of time and

need to update on the changes that occurred; they were told when to wake up, when to eat or when to go for a walk and need to re-learn to take their own decisions on such simple matters. Women were also affected by their men's confusions but most often respond by supporting and nurturing their husbands.

The findings in Fishman's book suggest that working-class women tend to remain with their husbands not just during imprisonment, but also after their release and even during re-entry into the prison system, no matter their lifestyles. Although the wives acknowledge their husbands' bad temper, abuses, or incapability to change, they remain supportive while assuming their roles as wives and mothers. However, there is not a consensus in this regard, since research shows that imprisonment may cause marriage disruptions (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Wildeman, Schnittker, & Turney, 2012).

Adult romantic relations were also investigated in a qualitative study of 20 women that were visiting men at a California prison, out of which 14 had children (Comfort et. al., 2005). The findings of Comfort and colleagues were similar to those described in Fishman's book: couples make use of the imprisonment period to place their relationship in a romanticized and rather un-realistic fantasy where each leaves behind past mistakes and creates the picture of a future based on mutual love and support. Nonetheless, the women who participated in this study report the period of post-release as problematic. One particular aspect drawn from this study is sexually transmitted infections to which women are vulnerable. On one hand, this vulnerability is explained by that the women are not aware of the importance of using condoms during "family visits" in prison or after their partners' release, relying on the fact that the prison "space" is safe from "cheating", unaware that "consensual sex is common among inmates" (p. 10). On the other hand, women's vulnerability to sexual transmitted infections can be explained by women seeking sexual outlet in secondary partners or by women engaging in remunerated sex to earn money.

The above studies have not, however, examined the influences of children on the quality of marriages/romantic relations, although Fishman's (1990) study mentions mothers as having difficulties in taking care of and controlling their offspring.

Family relations: caregivers

In her book on the effects of incarceration on families, Arditti (2012) raises the issue of family members being perceived by the community as being responsible for, or an accomplice of the prisoners' crimes. Thus, family members are forced to withdraw from social interactions while having to face an ambiguous loss without being given the right to mourn. Ambiguous loss is explained by the author as being "differ[ent] from ordinary loss in that there is no certainty that the person will come back or return to the way they 'used to be'" (p. 102-103). Strong family relations, especially a good relationship between the caregiver and the child and support from family members represent protective factors for the children. Most common in African American families, kin support, as a cultural feature, has a positive impact on children's adaptation to parental imprisonment (Arditti, 2012).

The relationship between the child and the non-imprisoned mother was found to be related to mothers' coping mechanisms (Lowenstein, 1986). When mothers have difficulties in adjusting to having a partner or husband in prison, it affects children in that they face emotional and health problems and a decline in school performance. Mothers' coping difficulties also correlate with deterioration in the child's relations with the mother and his/her peers. This was concluded by Lowenstein (1986) after investigating 118 Jewish prisoners' wives who were also mothers. The study showed that children's resilience is due to the mothers' individual and familial resources that have helped them in better coping with the enforced separation as result of imprisonment of their life partner. In an earlier publication based on this study, Lowenstein (1984) explained these individual and familial resources: "The better educated wife had a more realistic perception of her situation and more marketable employment skills. The basic element of family systems resources affecting coping were role division and family cohesiveness." (p. 707). However, it should be noted that children's coping with parental imprisonment was assessed through mother's perception rather than through interviewing the children themselves.

Caregivers are the subject of Nesmith and Ruhland's (2011) qualitative study in which 21 mothers presented their views on facilitating contact between the children and their imprisoned

fathers. The distance from the children's residence to the prison, disinterest on behalf of the incarcerated parent with regards to the child who wishes to have contact, or child-unfriendly prison visiting rooms are difficulties encountered by the mothers in their attempts to maintain children's relations with their fathers. Caregivers were similarly affected, as were their children, by witnessing their partners' arrest, although a strong preoccupation was to protect their offspring from this traumatic event. The children and faith in God were found by Nesmith and Ruhland as mothers' main sources for support.

Caregivers face difficulties in supervising children no matter their kin relations with the children. From interviews with 100 mothers, fathers, grandparents and other relatives regarding their role as caregivers, Turnaovic, Rodriguez and Pratt (2012) found that, in addition to emotional stress and financial strain, monitoring of the children was problematic. However, the sample in Turnaovic, Rodriguez and Pratt's study also included caregivers for whom caring for the children after parental imprisonment was perceived to be more stable and consistent. One mother who had been physically abused by her partner prior to imprisonment described the after-imprisonment period as calmer and allowing time for the children to do their homework, to eat, wash and to sleep.

For other caregivers, being under stress was associated with child physical abuse. Drawing data from Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, a longitudinal study on young children, adolescents and their caregivers, Wakefield (2015) analysed the quality of caregiver-child relationship and found that child physical abuse is one of the negative parenting behaviors caregivers engage in following parental imprisonment. The explanation offered by the author relies mainly on parenting financial or other types of stresses. Wakefield also points out that "parents who are engaging in a variety of negative caregiving behaviors, whether belittling their children or hitting them regularly, may also be substantially attached to them and express engagement in their caregiving" (p. 925). However, physical abuse of a child is a matter of personal control, hence an intrinsic feature of a person. Overstressed caregivers may lose control on one or two occasions. Regular beating of a child on the other hand may be better explained by the history of the batterer or by substance abuse rather than by the stresses which

are brought about by parental incarceration.

Opposing to some extent the poor supervision and physical abuse of children is overprotective and intrusive parenting that was found in the study of Philips et al. (2006). Parents' overprotectiveness and intrusiveness as well as harsh discipline was however, unlike the study of Wakefield (2015), explained by "parental substance abuse and mental health problems" (p. 694).

Stigma and shame

Family relations are also affected by stigma and shame associated with imprisonment. Studies found that children's caregivers do not access social benefits or social support for fear of being labelled as a criminal family (Arditti, Burton, & Neeves-Botelho, 2010; Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2007). It is important to note that while stigma is something affecting the family through other people's behaviours of disrespect and hostility, shame is a subjective perception of the family member regarding the social impact of kin imprisonment (Codd, 2008). Nesmith and Ruhland (2011) introduced the term "associative stigma" understood as being shunned or afraid of the stigma because one's connection with the imprisoned person or anticipated stigma which occurs when "caregivers (...) fear they will be blamed for the incarceration, or for making a poor choice as caregiver" (p. 106).

Grandparents

Grandparents, especially in African American families where mothers are imprisoned, are expected to take the caregiving role for their grandchildren. This was found to create multiple difficulties since the grandparents have not been prepared to handle the children's maladjustment to parental imprisonment (e.g. behaviour problems, mental health difficulties or issues related to school) and were themselves in a difficult position: were poor and had health problems (Arditti, 2012). With respect to American White families, Fishman (1990) found that grandparents do not get involved, reasoning that they opposed the relationship of their daughters with the imprisoned men and tend to reject the parent who is in prison, especially if there has been a history of

domestic violence.

Grandparents of children of prisoners replacing mothers' roles have been studied from an attachment perspective in a study by Loper and Novero (2013). Arguing that in the case of children with imprisoned mothers (most of them left in the care of their maternal grandparents), the imprisonment causes disruption in mother-child attachment, Loper and Novero asked the following question: "If such disruption raises implicit memories of the incarcerated mother's own early attachment experiences, what happens if the source of those memories – her own mother – is now caring for her child?" (p. 44). To answer this question, the authors investigated 51 incarcerated women whose children were in the care of their own mothers and 87 imprisoned women who had children in the care of others than their own mothers using Adult Parental Acceptance Rejection Questionnaire (Rohner, 2005) and the Parenting Alliance Measure (Abidin & Konold, 1999). The study concluded that imprisoned mothers who had a sense of warmth and acceptance by children's grandmothers have more positive co-parenting alliance benefiting the mother-child contact. However, the study is based only on imprisoned mothers' reports and thus associations between attachment representations and frequency, and types of mother-child contact, are debatable if we think of the studies that have shown imprisoned parents tend to present the contact with their children more positively (Loper, Philips, Nichols, & Dallaire, 2013).

Mackintosh, Myers, and Kennon (2006) studied "the level of acceptance and warmth versus rejection the children felt from their caregivers and, in turn, the level of acceptance versus rejection the caregivers felt toward the children" (p. 583). 69 children aged 6 to 12 years who were in the care of their grandparents (71%), of other family members (15%), of their fathers (11%), and in foster care (3%) were investigated using a mixed method approach comprising interviews, questionnaires and self-reports in order to assess children's internalizing and externalizing behaviours, parental and child stress, and parental acceptance. Mackintosh, Myers, and Kennon showed that high levels of caregiver stress were associated with low levels of child acceptance. An increased number of child behaviour problems reported by caregivers was associated with caregivers' reports of warmth and acceptance towards the child. The authors

advocate caution in interpreting these results after having noted high discrepancies in children's and caregivers' reports, emphasizing that the measurements express subjective experiences in both groups. Similar findings were reported in a study on family relationship representations of children living with custodial grandparents where Poehlmann et. al. (2008) found that children living with grandparents as a result of maternal incarceration have the same representations of family relationships with children living with grandparents for reasons other than imprisonment. However, elevated grandparent depression was associated with violence in children's representations of relationships, while responsive grandparents and children with positive representations of their families represent variables which correlate to fewer externalizing behaviour problems in children.

Reunification

Imprisonment of a parent may lead to complete disruption of family relations. It is the case of children placed in foster care after maternal imprisonment. Johnston and Gable (1996) gave the example of United States of America (US) where women usually serve a mean sentence of 16 months. The US regulations stipulate a period between 12 to 24 months for the parent whose child has been removed to complete a service plan as it was ordered by the juvenile court when the child entered care. If the parent is able to solve the problems that caused the removal of the child within the timeframe, the parent and the child can be reunified. However, given the average sentence of women prisoners, this leaves "little or no time to complete reunification requirements after release" (p. 14) The authors also underline the fact that family placements are difficult due to the fact welfare agencies seem to prefer not to give custody to families with a criminal history.

Hayward and DePanfilis (2007) looked at the probability of family reunification using data from the Adoption and Foster Care Administrative Reporting System (US) on children that had been placed in foster care following parental imprisonment. After controlling for children's gender, age, race, behaviour problems and disability, and also for parental substance abuse and family structure, the authors found that children of incarcerated parents aged 3-5 years and 6-12

years are more likely to return with their families, whilst infants are more likely to be adopted and adolescents to “age out of the system” (p. 1323). At the same time, factors such as being African American, having a disability, having had prior removals from home and coming from a single-parent family or from a family with a history of substance abuse predicted lower likelihoods for reunification. The length of the prison sentence seems to also impact children’s chances for reunification since “for each year spent in care, the odds of reunification decreased by approximately 11%” (p.1331).

Studies regarding children of prisoners in Romania

As mentioned in the opening chapter of this thesis, available information or studies on Romanian children of prisoners are scarce, drawing only from COPING: Children of Prisoners. Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health. This was a research project developed during 2010 – 2012 in UK, Sweden, Romania, and Germany aiming to investigate children with imprisoned parents, their resilience, and their vulnerability to mental health problems. Findings from this study which were published in a report edited by Jones and Wainaina-Wozna (2013) are based on a four country sample of 737 children aged 7 to 18 years. In Romania, 251 children with imprisoned parents and their non-imprisoned parents have been investigated through a survey built for the purpose of the project including SDQ (Goodman 1997), Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg 1965), and the KIDSCREEN-27 (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2007) as well as through in-depth interviews with children, carers, and imprisoned parents. Romanian children had higher self-esteem compared to children in the UK and Sweden and significantly lower scores on overall well-being than children in the other participant countries. Findings from in-depth interviews suggest that Romanian children face significant poverty and this makes children to prioritize food and clothing over other needs. Another country-specific finding was that Romanian adolescents tend to take over the role of the imprisoned parent as carers for the household as well as income providers, becoming “adults in miniature” (p. 316).

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter showed that children of prisoners face a multitude of adverse experiences following parental imprisonment, but also that imprisonment of a parent may turn out to be beneficial to the child, especially in cases where there was previous family violence, substance abuse, or poor parenting (Johnston, 2006; Murray & Murray, 2010).

Children's mental health issues associated with parental include feelings of confusion, abandonment, anger or shame, and a variety of mental health problems ranging from sleep disorders, depression, or withdrawal to increased anxiety, hyperactivity, or substance abuse (Boswell & Wedge 2002; Murray 2005; Murray & Farrington 2008; Parke & Clarke Stewart 2001; Phillips et al. 2002; Wakefield & Wildeman 2011).

Families' poor economic and financial situation was found to correlate with social stigma in that the child's carer is denied the opportunity of employment due to the incarceration of a family member. Hence, children are forced to move away and change schools frequently and, as consequences of this, they lose friends and perform badly in school (Boswell, 2002; Farrington, 1995).

Child offending has been emphasized by the literature as the main effect of parental imprisonment (Farrington, 1995; Murray & Murray, 2010; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012). Moreover, children of mothers in prison were found to be at greater risk of being incarcerated as adults than children whose fathers are imprisoned (Dallaire, 2007), most often due to the fact that when a mother is sent to prison her children are placed outside the family environment (Johnston, 2006).

Caregivers, mainly mothers and grandmothers, were also found to be affected by parental imprisonment in that they experience emotional difficulties in coping with partner separation (Arditti, 2012; Lowenstein, 1986), stigma and shame associated with imprisonment (Codd, 2008; Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2007; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2011), and also - in the case of grandmothers - difficulties in caring for the children and in maintaining and facilitating the contact between the imprisoned mother and her child(ren) (Arditti, 2012; Fishman, 1990; Mackintosh, Myers, & Kennon; 2006).

Research on relations between prisoners and their outside romantic partners mainly underlined couple jealousy and demands from the imprisoned parent for food, clothing, cigarettes, or money (Christian, Mellow, & Thomas, 2006; Codd, 2008; Fishman, 1990; Johnston, 2012).

Chapter 4. Theoretical framework

In the following section, this thesis introduces theoretical content by presenting attachment and parenting theories.

Child attachment theory is appropriate for this thesis because it offers a framework for describing the reasons why children of prisoners may be an at risk group and because it can offer directions for prompting child resilience. Child attachment theory suggests that, in their first years of life, children form a secure base from which to explore the world around them and build internal working models which are representations of caregiver's availability and responsiveness (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985). Transposing this into the experiences of children with parents in prison, child attachment theory can explain children's reactions to parental separation caused by imprisonment. It can also help understand the processes of adjustment or, otherwise, maladjustment to this separation by examining the relationship children continue to build with the parent on the outside or with the caregiver.

Findings about children of prisoners point towards the importance of the caregiver's availability for support in helping children cope with parental imprisonment (Arditti, 2012; Murray, 2005; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). With this consideration and taking into account the fact that most children are likely to be in the care of their mothers since the highest numbers of prisoners are male (about 90 to 98 percent, according to Walmsley, 2015), this thesis suggests adult romantic theories to explain and understand the changes occurring in the relationship between children's parents and how these might affect them. These theories mainly state that an adult romantic relationship is characterized by close physical contact, provision of comfort, emotional support and a sense of security and is maintained by partners' trust that the other will be available to respond to his or her needs. Thus, adult romantic theories are considered appropriate for this thesis because they can help explain and understand if and how the relationship between the imprisoned parent and the parent on the outside changes during imprisonment and if and how these changes can affect the children.

Parenting theories are also appropriate because they help explain how possible behaviors

of children of prisoners, such as delinquency, passivity, dependence, emotional withdrawal and aggressive behavior, can be the result of patterns in parents exercising authority and control over their child (Baumrind, 1968, 1975). Parenting theories can also help explain why parenting practices, namely inadequate parenting due to “reduced capacity of the carer to support and supervise children” (Murray & Farrington, 2005, p. 1270) represent risk factors contributing to negative outcomes in children with imprisoned parents. Also, delineating the various influences on parenting, such as personal characteristics and resources of the parent and family relations (Belsky, 1984), marital conflict (Wilson & Gottman, 2002) or parental stress (Raikes & Thompson, 2005), can help to reflect about parenting programs and courses that could target parents in prison as well as parents and carers in the community in order to best meet the needs of the children.

Attachment theory

Child attachment

Attachment theory stems from the work of John Bowlby (1907-1990) and Mary Ainsworth (1913-1999). However, it is Bowlby’s work that set the foundations of attachment theory with his papers entitled “The Nature of the Child’s Tie to his Mother” (1958), “Separation Anxiety” (1959), and “Grief and Mourning in Infancy and Early Childhood” (1960) (Bretherton, 1992). His later works, “Attachment” (1969), “Separation” (1973), and “Loss” (1980), known as the “attachment trilogy”, contributed to theorizing the concept and also to understanding how attachment behaviour is formed, how it functions and how it is maintained. Besides the research on child development and its contribution to psychotherapy, Bowlby’s attachment theory brought major changes in hospital practice by allowing mothers to be admitted to the hospital with their children and by encouraging them to engage in caring practices such as feeding and toileting. As well, fathers were also allowed to assist at the birth of their child and relatives could visit the new born baby while still in the hospital (Feeney & Noller, 1996).

Drawing from observations of animal behaviour as well as of children separated from

their mothers while being hospitalized, Bowlby defines human attachment behaviour as the child seeking proximity to his/her primary caregiver, namely the mother, when under stress or when s/he feels threatened. The degree to which the mother responds to the child by offering comfort and a sense of security defines the attachment pattern that creates the basis of the mother/caregiver-child bond. Among the functions of early attachment, Bowlby includes: protection of the infant from danger, self-regulation, and maintaining the child within a relationship with his/her environment (Bretherton, 1992).

According to Bowlby (1973), the child's interactions with his/her attachment figures bear a major contribution to the development of his/her personality. A child who grew up in a home where parents showed affection, availability and support at times of stress, is most likely to become an adult confident that, in case of difficulty, there will always be people he/she can trust to offer their support, or he/she will have gained the ability to handle the situation in an effective manner or to seek adequate support. On the other hand, the child raised in a family where protection, assistance and comfort from his/her attachment figures have been uncertain or conditioned is likely to become an adult lacking confidence in the world and in himself/herself, and learns to respond to stressful situations with great anxiety. From these observations, Bowlby (1973) posits the intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns by introducing the concept of the internal working model of self and of others defined as follows:

Confidence that an attachment figure is, apart from being accessible, likely to be responsive can be seen to turn on at least two variables: (a) whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection; (b) whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way. Logically, these variables are independent. In practice they are apt to be confounded. As a result, the model of the attachment figure and the model of the self are likely to develop so as to be complementary and mutually confirming. Thus an unwanted child is likely not only to feel unwanted by his parents but to believe he is essentially unwanted, namely unwanted by anyone.

Conversely, a much-loved child may grow up to be not only confident of his parents' affection but confident that everyone else would find him lovable too. Though logically indefensible, these crude-overgeneralizations are none the less the rule. Once adopted, moreover, and woven into the fabric of the working models, they are apt henceforward never to be seriously questioned. (p. 238)

The stability of the internal working models is explained by the fact the person exercises the model throughout his/her entire childhood by self-regulation processes of family environment and of structural features of his/her personality until, by adulthood, it becomes automatic and grows into the unconscious (Bretherton, 1992). Internal working models, thus internalized, tend to be passed on to future generations. However, as Bowlby (1973) points out, the stability of the working models can be unbalanced over the course of a person's life due to

any life-event that is classifiable as a stress or crisis, especially when it strikes an immature individual or one already on a suboptimum pathway. (...) Included in that category also are events that in certain conditions may influence development for the better. (p. 419)

A major contribution to attachment theory was also brought by Ainsworth's Strange Situation experiment which included eight episodes of three minutes each where mother-infant interactions were observed in a room specially prepared for this experiment. The room was set up with three chairs (one for the child, one for the mother and one for the observer) and an open space in the middle of the chairs. In different episodes the mother would be asked to leave the room and return a short time later. The behaviors of the child and of the mother are observed. Following this experiment, Ainsworth was able to classify children's attachment into three different styles: (1) avoidant (group A): the infant's behaviour is predominantly detached and avoids contact with the mother upon her return to the observation room and during her staying together, while the mother is observed as avoiding contact with her child or as showing rigidity;

(2) secure (group B): the infant is happy to explore the room in the company of his mother, show signs of being upset when she leaves and signs of happiness when the mother returns; the mother's behaviour is noted as being sensitive and responsive to the child's reaction, and comforts the child with warmth; (3) anxious-ambivalent (group C): when the mother leaves the room, the child protests by crying, showing signs of anger and then clinging onto the mother when she returns, wanting to run towards the mother and then suddenly changing his/her mind and shifting interest; the mothers in this group are described as lacking consistency, being intrusive at one moment and then showing no signs of sensitivity towards the child (Feeney & Noller, 1996).

Ainsworth's classification of attachment brought methodological rigour to the theory (Bretherton, 1992) and led to numerous other which analysed the child's temperament (Sroufe, 1985), the child's age (Sroufe, Carlson, & Schulman, 1993), or the attention flexibility of the infants (Main, 2000). One other aspect that has been explored using the Strange Situation procedure is that of differences between infant-mother and infant-father attachments. Lamb (1978) assessed attachment styles in 32 children aged 12 and 13 months and found that infants securely attached to one parent are most likely to be securely attached to the other parent as well, whilst insecure attachment of children to one parent does not predict insecure attachment to the other parent.

Another study using the Strange Situation procedure is the Berkley Social Development Project which included 40 mothers and fathers and their infants. It was started by Mary Main and Donna Weston in 1977. The follow to of this research, 6 years later, led to difficulties in including some of the children in one of Ainsworth's major category. It was from this research that another style of attachment, namely "insecure-disorganized/disoriented" was included in the classification of attachment (Main & Solomon, 1986). In an earlier paper, Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) mentioned the behaviours that were to be included in the disorganized style:

"Dazed" behavior on reunion with the parent, stoppage of movement
in postures suggestive of depression, confusion, or apprehension, disordering of

expected temporal sequences (e.g., strong avoidance following strong proximity seeking), simultaneous display of contradictory behavior patterns (approaching with head averted, gazing strongly away while in contact), incompleting movements, and undirected expressions of effect appeared in these infants. (p. 79)

To this description, Solomon and George (2011) add: “approach, avoidance, or angry behaviors that are succeeded or interrupted by opposing displays or which are subsequently constricted. Indications of disorientation, confusion, or fear of the parent sometimes accompany these events and are also defined as indices of disorganization.” (p. 4)

Attachment theory also integrated the issue of parenting by analysing parent’s caregiving behavioural system in relation to the child. Solomon and George (2008) argue that parent’s caregiving system is activated when he or she perceives the child as endangered or stressed, and is terminated when physical and/or psychological proximity to the child is achieved and the parent perceives child’s signals of having been comforted. However, parent’s activation of the caregiving system should be associated with child’s activation of the attachment system. Otherwise, the caregiving could lead to parent-child conflict, such as the situation with teenage children who perceive their parents’ care as intrusive and controlling. At the same time, flexibility of the care is also an issue within the attachment framework, as parents’ caregiving system can also include care for other children of their own, the spouse, or other relevant attachment figures. The age of the child also influences the caregiving behavioural system since children grow up and transit from infants to adolescents, and later on parenthood and thus their needs for care change. Other variables impacting the parent’s care for the child include: mothers’ state of mind (Cassidy, Jones, & Shaver, 2013; Main, 2000), marital satisfaction and co-parenting alliance (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000), or mothers’ level of insightfulness with regards to the child’s needs (Koren-Karie et al., 2002).

Critiques and limits of child attachment theory

The classification of attachment styles in children as a measure of individual differences has increased knowledge regarding children's behaviour and informed treatment of maltreated children (Allen, 2011). The validity of attachment theory is, nevertheless, questioned due to methodological issues concerning small sample sizes and lack of causality in explaining attachment development. Most findings in attachment studies were based on correlations (Bolen, 2000).

Bowlby's theory has been subject to criticism also for relying on observations of infants and toddlers subject to some form of separation (mainly hospitalization) from their attachment figure whilst "a broader understanding of attachment requires observation of how the mother and infant interact and what they provide for each other during natural, non-stressful situations" (Field, 1996, p. 544).

Another limitation of attachment theory is that it views the mother as the primary attachment figure and it does not take into account other significant relationships the child builds in the family environment, such as with the father or other siblings (Field, 1996; Harris, 1995).

Feminist theorists have also criticised Bowlby's theory. For example, Birns (1999), after denouncing Bowlby's "assumption that only mothers can provide the necessary nurturance and love" (p. 12), discusses the author's failure to examine, that other significant persons in the life of a child may be adequate to provide the care s/he needs. Birns also criticised Bowlby's view that early damage on a child's life is irreversible. On the same note, Contratto (2002) argued that Bowlby's theory can be used against women because it promotes a "mother-blaming scenario" (p. 34) where mothers are responsible for children's psychological development. Thus, Contratto criticises the responsibility the theory of attachment places on mothers to transmit to their own daughters a good model of mothering.

Other critics suggest that "parental behaviors have no effect on the psychological characteristics their children will have as adults" (Harris, 1995, p. 458) pointing towards the more significant role of peers, whilst more current research on genetics offers evidence on the instability of attachment over the lifespan. For example, behavioural genetic studies (Fearon et

al., 2014; Plomin, 2011) have shown that adolescents' attachment security is influenced by genetic factors while parental care influences attachment during early development, suggesting that attachment reorganization occurs when it "shifts from a primarily behavioural and relational construct (...), to one that is more cognitive in nature and more like a generalised style or 'state of mind'" (p.1038). Therefore, from a behavioural genetic point of view, attachment security in adolescence is considered to be influenced by both the environment offered by caregivers and the child's genes.

Nevertheless, the attachment theory has the structure that could enable better understanding of child's relationship with the imprisoned and/or non-imprisoned parent. The structure referred to above involves Bowlby's concept of the internal working model which is shaped by the manner in which the caregiver responds to the child's needs. In other words, if the parent or caregiver is responsive, the child will learn that he or she is a wanted and a wantable person, whereas if the parent/caregiver is not sensitive to the child's needs the child will perceive himself or herself as unwanted by his/her parents or caregivers and unwanted by others. As Bowlby (1973) noted, although the internal working model tends to preserve throughout the life-course and to be transmitted to future generations, stressful events can affect its balance. Imprisonment of a parent can represent such a stressful event not just for the child, but also for the remaining caregiver. Thus, it is important to understand the processes by which parental incarceration can or cannot affect children and their caregivers.

Adult romantic relationship

As noted above, Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) attachment theory suggests that the type of attachment a child develops in his/her early years tends to characterize human experiences throughout a person's life. However, new questions arose among researchers towards the 1980s with respect to how attachment unfolds within adult relationships (Fraley, 2010). Hazan and Shaver (1987) were the first to use Bowlby's concept of an internal working model and Ainsworth's classification of attachment styles in a study investigating what was called adult "romantic love". They conducted two parallel studies. In one study, Hazan and Shaver

investigated the love experiences and the attachment style in the case of 620 people using a “love quiz” published in a local newspaper (one item was used to measure the three attachment styles adapted after Ainsworth et. al., 1978). Out of the 620 people who responded to the questionnaire, 205 were men and 415 were women, both men and women aged 14 to 82. A second study included 108 undergraduates (38 men and 70 women) who were investigated using a questionnaire with items related to their love experiences, attachment style (the same single item as used in Study 1), and self-descriptive items as well as questions about relationships with other people. Findings from both studies suggested that childhood attachment styles tend to be transferred to adult romantic relationships. At the same time, the participants’ working models of self and of their relationship corresponded to their attachment styles in that their “beliefs about self and others (...) in turn affect behavior and relationship outcomes” (Wachtel, 1977 *apud* Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 521). Considering these findings, Hazan and Shaver contended that adults who are in romantic relationships exhibit behaviours that belong to the attachment behavioural system and thus, adult romantic relationships should be considered attachments (Fraley, 2010). With the above mentioned two studies, Hazan and Shaver (1987) set the basis for conceptualizing romantic love, linking childhood to adult attachment while generating a wide range of research in the field. The concept of “romantic love” however, suffered a number of changes as new research developed.

In a longitudinal study on 144 couples, Simpson (1990) investigated the influence of attachment styles on romantic relationship and found that securely attached people are in relationships that can be described as including “high levels of interdependence, commitment, trust and satisfaction” (p. 977), whilst for insecurely attached persons the relationships have been found to be characterized by less trust (anxious attachment) or less interdependency and commitment (avoidant attachment). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the couples involved in this study have had a short history of relationship (mean duration of the relationship: 13.5 months). Also, as the author points out, the findings in this research which are based on correlations should not be interpreted as allowing for causal inferences.

In 1994, Hazen and Shaver introduced the concept of “close relationships”. After a

review of the child attachment theory, the authors attempted to answer five main questions. The answers to the questions helped framing the theory. Thus, three main criteria were found to explain what a person finds appealing in another person. These are: responsiveness, care, and sexual gratification. For an adult romantic relationship to be formed and developed there needs to be close physical contact, provision of comfort, emotional support and a sense of security, as well as partners' commitment regarding the relationship. On the other hand, for a relationship to be satisfactory and to last, the most important aspect is partner's responsiveness and trust that the other will be available to respond to his or her needs. However, when expectancies and needs from a partner are no longer met, dissolution of the relationship occurs. Hazan and Shaver included three stages of separation corresponding to Bowlby's description of child's reactions during mother-infant separation: intense separation-protest behaviour, deep sadness, and emotional detachment. Hazan and Shaver argue that, although selective in their review of the literature, the framework they offered is a start on which to build future research on close/romantic relationships.

Fraley and Shaver (2000) revised the initial theory of close relationship to answer further questions that were raised by research. First, the authors differentiated between attachment and non-attachment relationships. Attachment relationships are said to be characterized by three features: "tendency for an individual to remain in close contact with the attachment figure (....) the attachment figure is used as a safe haven during times of illness, danger or threat (....) an attachment figure is relied on as a secure base for exploration" (p. 138). Further, the authors invoked the adaptive function of the romantic relationship in that it solves the problem of paternity certainty, provides the environment for child rearing, and increases the chances for the offspring to grow and reach sexual maturity. One important aspect brought to discussion was the transferability of attachment from the child-parent domain to the romantic partner attachment situation. The authors underlined that the relationship between attachments in the two domains is "only moderate" and the "long-term stability of individual differences should be considered an empirical issue rather than an assumption of the theory" (p. 147). In conclusion, Fraley and Shaver (2000) emphasized the need for further research with respect to the care and sexual

components of the adult romantic relationship.

In a study of 362 couples that had been married for at least one year, Feeney and Hohaus (2001) looked into partners' experiences of caregiving using qualitative (semi-structured narratives of a specific situation where the participants had been in a caregiving role in the relationship) and quantitative (structured questionnaires related to willingness to care, own attachment and attachment to spouse, and anticipated burden) methods. With respect to attachment related care, it was shown that: (a) preoccupied wives are not satisfied with the care they have provided; (b) avoidant-fearful partners have more relationship problems when caregiving is required; and (c) dismissing-avoidant wives do not provide care or they do so in a limited way and are uncomfortable with the care-provider role.

Adult romantic relationships have also been analysed from partners' emotional response point of view. Based on attachment theory and classification, Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) used attachment-related strategies adopted by different attachment styles to explain partners' emotional reactions to positive and negative behaviours. Securely attached people were found to react to negative behaviours of their partners with functional anger expressed in a controlled manner and directed to problem-solving, whilst insecurely attached people were found to suppress their anger, manifest resentment, show hostility or detachment (avoidant attachment) or to display dysfunctional anger, despair and sadness (anxious attachment). Positive behaviours, on the other hand, were described to elicit from securely attached partners feelings of happiness, love and gratitude. In the case of people with avoidant attachment, the reactions include detachment and indifference. Also, in the case of anxious partners, their emotional responses consist of ambivalent feelings of love, anxiety, despair, and shame.

In the context of parental imprisonment, the adult romantic relationship theory could inform us of the dynamics that occur during incarceration of a partner whereby the relationship of the prisoner with his/her partner on the outside could be viewed as going through a temporary physical separation.

Parenting theories

Research on parenting more generally suggests that a child's negative outcomes, such as aggressive behaviour, passivity, dependence, emotional withdrawal, fearfulness, delinquency can be the result of patterns in parents exercising authority and control over their child (Baumrind, 1968, 1975). Thus it is important to discuss parenting perspectives in order to have a broader understanding of parental imprisonment effects on children by looking at how parenting types can mediate these effects.

In this respect, Baumrind's (1975, 1989, 1991) classification of parental styles offers a framework that helps understand the links between parenting characteristics and children's outcomes. Table 4.1. is a summary of the four types of parents according to patterns of parental control developed by Baumrind following the analysis of longitudinal data gathered over a period of 12 years in the Family Socialization and Developmental Competence Project. This research project investigated family practices, the attitudes parents have towards their children and developmental factors. In total, 164 children and their parents took part in the study. The initial sample, when children were 4 years old, was of 134 children and their parents. At the second phase of the study (i.e. child age was 9 years), 30 child-parent dyads were added. The third wave of data collection took part when children's age was 16 years. All participants were predominantly recruited from White middle-class European American families (Mandara, 2003).

Table 4.1. Parental styles and effects on the child

Parental type	Characteristics	Effects on the child
Authoritarian	The parent is imposing his/her will onto the child by restricting the child's autonomy, preserving order and traditional structure, and discouraging the child's response and expressions of independence and individuality.	The children of authoritarian parents tend to be dependent, depressed, and have low academic performance (Baumrind, 1991).
Authoritative	The parent offers explanations to the child and solicits objections from him or her when they	Social confidence, achievement orientation, cooperativeness, and

	disagree on a specific topic. At the same time, the authoritative parent is firm without imposing restrictions on the child. The parent values the autonomy of the child and his/her disciplined conformity (Baumrind, 1975).	autonomous behaviour in adolescent years, good self-esteem and self-reliance (Baumrind, 1975, 2005).
Permissive	The permissive parent is affirmative and accepting toward the child, but at the same time leaves himself/herself as a resource for the child to use as the child wishes, without constraints.	The child of a permissive parent tends to be passive, submissive and socially conforming, withdrawn, and dependent (Baumrind, 1989).
Neglecting	The parent expects the child to be involved in house chores and to have good school performance. However, the parent does not monitor the child and is emotionally unsupportive and cognitively non-stimulating toward the child..	Socially unassertive and irresponsible (Mandara 2010) and develop serious emotional problems (Steinberg, Eisengart, & Cauffman, 2006).

There are two main loci of research with regards to the implications of parenting styles on children's development. One refers to cross cultural equivalence of parenting styles (Baumrind, 1997; Mandara, 2010; Sorkhabi, 2005). (Mandara 2003). and the other to links and associations between children's positive and negative outcomes and parenting styles.

Positive associations between authoritative parenting and child's positive outcomes include: good academic results (Baumrind, 1991; Darling & Steinberg, 1993), positive social relationships (Chen & Kaplan 2001), and good mental health (Baumrind, 1968; Mandara 2010). Non-authoritative parenting has been associated mainly with delinquent development in children and poor mental health (Chipman et al., 2000; DeKlyen et al., 1998; Hovee et al., 2009; Steinberg, Eisengart, & Cauffman, 2006).

Mandara (2010) offered a qualitative description of each parenting style (authoritarian, authoritative, permissive/indulgent, and neglecting) using parenting practices, parent-child relationship, individual characteristics and socio-economic status as main points of reference. In

terms of socio-economic status (SES), Mandara suggested that authoritative and strict authoritative parents are well educated, with few children and economically successful/stable, while non-authoritative parents are poor, have many children, and have a low level of education. This is consistent with other studies showing that SES represents an indicator of parental abilities and behaviours (Gutman & Feinstein, 2008).

Determinants of parenting

Based on an analysis of dysfunctional parenting, Belsky (1984) proposed a process model of the determinants of parenting by taking into consideration three domains: (1) parent's personality, (2) child's characteristics, and (3) the social context in which the parent-child relationship develops (i.e. parents' relationship, social support and parents' occupation). Among parent's characteristics leading to positive outcomes in children, the author included: responsiveness, warmth, active coping style, internal locus of control and interpersonal trust. Child's characteristics mainly refer to temperament in that difficult temperament in children elicits less responsiveness from the mother, although the author underlined that it is not child's characteristics that influence parenting so much as the extent of the mother-child compatibility. With respect to marital relations, mother's supportive attitude to the child's father was found to determine high quality fathering, whilst spousal conflict was associated with frequent punishments of children and inconsistency in applying reasoning in disciplining the offspring. The other social factors impacting the quality of parenting include social support and mother's occupation. Close contact with significant others and positive psychological state of the parent has been considered to enhance parenting competence in that parents have better understanding of how to adjust their caregiving practices in accordance to the child's individual characteristics. Regarding parents' occupation, in situations where mothers were satisfied with their job, they have been found to exhibit more warmth towards their children. In the case of fathers, a work-related subordination (i.e. fathers have a subordinated position in their job) was associated with physical punishments of children and parental value of children's obedience. However, Belsky points out that, although associations between parents' occupation and child caregiving quality

have been found, job conditions that favour - or not - the ability to make decisions related to work should also be taken into consideration when evaluating the impact of work on parenting practices. Nevertheless, out of the three social contexts of parenting (marital relations, social support, and parents' occupation), marital relations were considered as most influential. because of their impact on the general individual emotional well-being.

Belsky's (1984) model of the determinants of parenting was however, subject to criticism for failing to take into consideration the social context in which families live, such as neighbourhood quality, the community, the family socio-economic status or, more broadly, cultural and ethnic differences (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002).

Departing from Belsky's (1984) contend that marital relationships are influential in the context of parenting, Grych (2002) examined the literature on the links between these two constructs. Thus, predictors of effective parenting were found to include parents who are sensitive and responsive to children's needs, have high levels of insightfulness, and are able to understand their children's capacities and discipline them accordingly. Good parenting was also found to be associated with marital intimacy and satisfaction, low-conflict parental relations in accepting and offering warmth to their offspring, and parental agreement on disciplinary strategies. Research suggests that one partner withdrawing from the other following marital distress does not imply withdrawal from the child. In common with Belsky's (1984) position, Grych underlined that whilst children's behaviour problems may lead to parenting difficulties, these difficulties are, in turn, more strongly influenced by adversities in marital relations. This indicates there may be a spillover effect by which the quality of the marriage spills over into the relationship between the parent and the child.

Marital conflict has been analysed by Wilson and Gottman (2002) who reviewed Gottman's (1979) three stages of marital conflict: the agenda-building phase, implying that couples discuss constructively - or not - the issues that have risen in the relationship; the disagreement phase where partners who wish to repair issues in the relationship make use of mind reading (i.e. assuming what the other may think about a specific issue) and communication about how the couple should communicate constructively; and the negotiation phase, where the

partners agree on solutions or offer counterproposals leading to further marital conflict. Based on these phases, the authors introduce a model for the regulation of negativity in families, which builds on two main systems within the relationship: irritability and affectional systems. The irritability system refers to negative processes such as hostility or criticism, which may originate within or outside the family and lead to an increase in family stress. The affectional system includes those factors that give rise to positive interactions between family members such as sharing of affection, positive engagement or reciprocal humour. The irritability system encompasses residual and cumulative stress (e.g. financial difficulties that may trigger parental depression or conflict with repercussions for children in that they may be rejected by peers or drop out from school); corrosive patterns in marital conflict, which include mutual partner hostility, and an angry and withdrawn husband (mutual partner hostility is associated with fathers' intrusiveness in father-child relationship, while the angry and withdrawn husband pattern is associated with mothers' criticism and intrusiveness in mother-child relationship); parents' expression of negative affect towards their children leading to children experiencing behaviour and social problems; and parental psychopathology, such as maternal depression, which may cause children to be more involved in or to take responsibility for the marital conflict. The affectional system refers to (1) face-to-face parent-child plays not involving physical contact, which teach children about the fact problems in different interactions can be repaired and to (2) parent-child physical play teaching children how to regulate their affects with others, whereas parent-child overstimulation and miscoordinations may lead children to withdraw instead of endeavouring repair of interactional problems.

With respect to the impact of financial strain on parenting, Bradley, Corwin, Pipes-McAdoo, and Garcia-Coll (2001) have used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in the United States (1986-1994), which included 3,464 European American, African American, Hispanic American, and Asian American women whose financial situation in 1994 had been assessed as either "poor" or "non-poor". The authors found that poor mothers were less efficient in verbal communication with their children, and had fewer displays of affection and warmth towards them compared to mothers with a better socioeconomic situation. Independent

of ethnicity, parental discipline strategies in poor families included more spanking and less monitoring of the children compared to non-poor households. The authors' conclusion on this issue is that

Poverty effects were prevalent in all six environmental domains examined: from parental responsiveness to parental teaching, from the quality of physical environment to the level of stimulation for learning present, and from the likelihood of being spanked to the likelihood of having significant contact with one's father. (Bradley, Corwin, Pipes-McAdoo, & Garcia-Coll, 2001, p. 1863).

Families affected by poverty have also been examined from a parenting point of view by Raikes and Thompson (2005) who proposed a model of parenting stress based on maternal self-efficacy and social support. After defining self-efficacy as a dynamic system where people perceive themselves as able to cope and control adverse life situations, the authors hypothesize that mothers' self-efficacy and social support has a positive influence in reducing parenting stress. Raikes and Thompson investigated parenting stress in 65 low income mothers using Abidin's (1995) Parenting Distress Subscale of the Parenting Stress Index, a self-efficacy scale (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978), and the Dunst Family Resource Scale (Dunst & Leet, 1987). Additionally, family risk was evaluated with respect to mothers' level of education, knowledge of the English language, health, marital status in the past year, emotional state, and child's health situation. Results showed that while mothers' self-efficacy is associated with reduced parenting stress, and moderates the relation between income and parenting stress, social support has no significant association with parenting stress. However, self-efficacy did not predict fewer family risks. The findings suggest that poverty alone does not lead to parenting stress; but rather the combination of mothers' low self-efficacy and high family risk. Thus, the findings of Raikes and Thompson (2005) do not sustain those of Bradley, Corwin, Pipes-McAdoo, and Garcia-Coll (2001) mentioned above.

Influences of single parent caregiving practices as opposed to two parent caregiving practices on adolescents' externalizing behaviour were examined in a study by Florsheim, Tolan, and Gorman-Smith (1998). The authors included 195 inner city families (African American and Latino) amongst whom 122 were single motherhood households and all families had a boy aged 10 to 15. Family functioning was assessed using: videotaped observations of family discussions in relation to a recent discipline concern; a self-report family relationship scale; a parenting practices survey; and a questionnaire aimed at evaluating the positive influence of a male in the family. The findings suggest that children's behaviour problems are not as much related to the status of a single-mother family but to the adaptive strategies enforced by the mothers in raising their children. Interestingly, single mothers' affective tone in disciplining their children has been found to count less than the manner in which their message was enforced. That is, children are less prone to behavioural problems if mothers are not very friendly when verbally addressing disciplinary issues. Other factors contributing to decreased likelihood of child behaviour problems in single-mother families included: consistency in offering support and guidance to the child, granting the adolescent relative autonomy, and facilitation of child's "supportive relationship with positive male family members" (p. 1445).

In another study of 242 poor African American single mother-child dyads from rural and urban southern United States, Sterrett, Jones, Forehand, and Garai (2010) proposed an ecological model of predictors of co-parenting relationship quality. In this regard, the participants were interviewed twice in relation to sociodemographic characteristics (i.e. neighborhood risk; area of residence; number of children and family income; age and gender of the child; age, education, and employment status of the mother) and psychosocial aspects of parenting (i.e. child reports of maternal lax parenting; child's aggression, delinquency, and depression symptoms; mothers' depression symptoms; and co-parenting relationship quality). Bearing in mind that the study participants were single mothers, the co-parenting relationship was assessed using mothers' reports in relation to an adult providing parenting assistance, such as the child's father, aunts/uncles, or grandparents. The model suggests that poorer co-parenting relationship quality is associated with neighborhoods at greater risk of poverty, lax maternal parenting and maternal

depressive symptoms.

Child age characteristics and parental role

Positive parenting practices refer to parents’ ability to offer care that is in accordance with children’s development (Baumrind, 1975; 2005). Erickson’s (1968) theory on psychosocial development offers the frame for understanding the needs of the children and the roles of their parents in each developmental stage with implications for parenting practices (Brooks, 1987).

It should be noted that Erikson’s theory has been criticized for having established developmental courses across the lifespan that are fixed within age frames (Buckingham, 2008); for placing developmental crisis on a “bipolar axis” (Sneed, Schwartz, & Cross, 2006, p. 62;), and for not having paid attention to cultural differences (Sneed, Schwartz, & Cross, 2006). Nevertheless, Erickson’s theory remains an important reference for parenting programs and interventions.

Table 4.2. presents a short description of child characteristics according to Erickson’s (1968) stages of child development and their corresponding required parental role:

Table 4.2. Child characteristics according to Erickson’s (1968) stages of development and their corresponding parental role

Developmental stage	Parental role
<p><i>Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust</i> (ages 0 to 1 year). This stage includes two different periods: one where the child is born and learns to experience life through senses and through the coordination with his mother in terms of satisfying his needs (for example cleaning, feeding and comforting), and the other when the child starts to develop motor functions (e.g. to roll over, to crawl, to chew, to hold on to things, and to let them go). In the first months,</p>	<p>“Parents must not only have certain ways of guiding by prohibition and permission; they must also be able to represent to the child a deep, an almost somatic conviction that there is a meaning to what they are doing” (p. 63)</p>

<p>when the mother is responsive to the child, he gains trust and also learns to be the giver. For the second period, the crisis the child has to face refers to three developments of the age: the child's impulse to actively know the world around him, the child becoming aware of himself, and the mother turning away from the child in terms of fully re-taking the roles she had before pregnancy (e.g. intimacy with the partner, professional pursuits).</p>	
<p><i>Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt</i> (ages 1 to 3 years). This stage is characterized by two main features that include the crisis the child has to face: (1) the child's development of muscles, from the ability to control his sphincters to his drive to manage objects, emotions, and behaviours in a contradictory way: hold on - throw away; withhold – expel; snuggle – push away; doing what he's supposed to do – ignoring what he's told; and (2) the child's need for autonomy that starts with him standing and framing his world as he begins to better realize he is a distinct person, and there are objects that belong to him and things that belong to others, and there are rules he needs to follow.</p>	<p>Parents should “(...) be firm and tolerant with the child at this stage, and he will be firm and tolerant with himself. He will feel pride in being an autonomous person; he will grant autonomy to others” (p. 70).</p> <p>The child needs maternal presence and consistency in his living environment. Absence of the mother can cause feelings of abandonment, anxiety, and withdrawal.</p>
<p><i>Initiative versus Guilt</i> (3 to 6 years). This is a stage where the child develops infantile sexual curiosity and begins his rivalry with the parent of the same sex, and at the same time gains a certain freedom of movement, enriches his vocabulary and expands his imagination. The child also begins to make comparisons in order to establish future roles he wishes to take (by using his imagination or by using others as models). It is the age where the child becomes</p>	<p>The parents should not be too strict with regards to the curiosity the child has regarding his genitals and should not make use of “over-morality” that can lead to developing a rigid personality.</p>

<p>intrusive in terms of attacking others of the same age or of consuming curiosity. He enjoys competition and learns about social roles, establishing his/her first feminine and masculine initiatives.</p>	
<p><i>Industry versus Inferiority</i> (6 to 12 years). For this stage the author does not introduce a crisis, but explains the social role teachers have in balancing play and duty, as in this stage what characterizes the child is his desire to <i>learn</i> and to <i>do</i>, thus developing industry. Inferiority – the feeling the child develops that he is not good and will never be good - represents the failure of integrating previous stages or the failure of the teaching system to alternate between playing and working.</p>	<p>Parents must prepare the child for school: what it means and making him trust his teachers.</p>
<p><i>Identity versus Identity Diffusion</i> (12 to 20 years). The adolescent has to face two main challenges during this stage: on one hand there are the rapid changes in the body and on the other the consolidation of the social role. The crisis in this stage is represented by identity diffusion explained by the social impact of labelling and belonging to a certain group with which the adolescent identifies.</p>	<p>Parents should show understanding towards the intolerance of the adolescent and offer guidance instead of stereotyping and prohibiting.</p>

In concluding this theoretical section it should be noted that other theories, namely ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1974), stigma theory (Goffman, 1963), cumulative disadvantage perspectives (Merton, 1968, 1988; Sampson & Laub, 1997) and general strain theory (Agnew, 1992, 2001), have been considered in support of this study. The ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1974) suggests a model for understanding human development with the help of five subsystems (i.e. microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and

chronosystem) that place the child at the centre of his development, suggesting a dynamic process whereas the child influences the systems as much as the systems can influence the child according to where the child is physically situated within the systems. Goffman's (1963) work on stigma helped to understand why people react in certain judgemental ways towards other people. His view of stigma is that it occurs when people label human differences and thus, at a cognitive level, humans are in fact categorized in "us" (i.e. the "normal" persons) and "them" (i.e. the stigmatized persons). Cumulative disadvantages are seen as dynamic (Sampson & Laub, 1997), meaning disadvantages accumulate over the lifecourse and are marked by different life events and contexts that become risk factors, such as getting ill or losing a job. The General Strain Theory (GST) states its focus "on negative relationships with others: relationships in which others are not treating the individual as he or she would like to be treated" (Agnew, 1992, p. 48) and thus, the individual may respond by engaging in criminal activity.

The theories mentioned above, along with attachment and parenting theories, have the strength to support research on children and families of prisoners. However, selection of theories that best fit, in terms of understanding and explaining the current study was guided by the research aims and questions that are presented in the following section. These focus on family relationship dynamics in the context of parental imprisonment. Thus, attachment and parenting theories are considered most appropriate for this study since they have the structure to explain how family relationships function under difficult situations and can help understand the processes behind children's and caregivers' adjustments to parental imprisonment.

Summary

The present chapter discussed attachment theories to inform this study. Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) theory of child attachment was presented to show that a child's development is dependant on his/her caregiver(s); children who are raised in families with affectionate and responsive parents tend to grow up as confident adults, whereas children who do not benefit from parental comfort and protection in times of stress and/or need become adults with low self-esteem and distrustful of the world around them.. Perspectives on adult romantic relationships

(Fraley & Shaver, 2000; Hazan & Shafer, 1987; 1994) were added as theoretical support showing that these are mainly characterized by partners' close contact, reliance on the other in time of stress, and a sense of security. (Fraley & Shaver, 2000).

Parenting perspectives as theoretical support in understanding the implications of parental imprisonment on the development of the child were also discussed. It was showed that predictors of effective parenting mainly include characteristics that pertain to the parents, such as responsiveness towards the child's needs, warmth, and high levels of insightfulness (Belsky, 1984; Grych, 2002; Raikes & Thompson, 2005) and characteristics of the marital relations such as shared affection, constructive communication, and mutual support (Belsky, 1984; Wilson & Gottman, 2002). Conversely, negative parenting was associated with family financial strain, marital conflict, parental low self-efficacy, and parental psychopathology (Belsky, 1984; Bradly, Corwin, Pipes-McAdoo, & Garcia-Coll, 2001; Raikes & Thompson, 2005; Sterrett, Jones, Forehand, & Garai, 2010; Wilson & Gottman, 2002).

Aim and objectives of the study

Previous literature focused on the main effects of parental imprisonment on either the children or the romantic partners of prisoners. However, little is known about how family relationships are affected by the incarceration of a parent. With respect to the relationship between the child and his/her non-imprisoned parent, the studies are scarce and the results mainly refer to mothers as poor supervisors of their children (Aron & Dallaire, 2010; Murray & Farrington, 2006) or as overly stressed in their parental role due to financial difficulties or increased household responsibilities (Arditti & Few, 2005; Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2007; Murray & Farrington, 2005). Regarding the quality of parents' relationships prior to incarceration, the literature mentions domestic violence and parental substance abuse (Fishman, 1990; Hayward & DePanfilis, 2007). The relationship during imprisonment is described, through narratives of the wives/partners of prisoners, as tense due to husbands'/partners' demands for clothing, food or money (Christian, Mellow, & Thomas, 2006; Codd, 2008; Fishman, 1990; Johnston, 2012). It was also found that these relationships tend to vary throughout the period of

imprisonment from ambivalent feelings such as resentment, acceptance and supportiveness, or increase in the romantic representations of the relationship (Comfort et. al., 2005; Fishman, 1990; Lowenstein, 1986) to dissolution of marriage (Apel, Blokland, Nieuwbeerta, & van Schellen, 2009). However, none of the studies reviewed looked at how children perceive the dynamics of their parents' relationship and how these perceptions affect them. The current study will address these aims.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore the effects of family relationships on children in the context of parental imprisonment.

This general aim breaks down into the following research objectives:

- (1) To examine the effects of the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the child on the child.

There is clearly a need for further research that extends the current evidence base by exploring how imprisonment of a parent affects the relationship between the child and the outside parent taking into account the changes that are brought about by parental incarceration on the child as well as on the child's caregiver. Such findings will potentially contribute to the design of psychological and social work interventions aiming to help children and their caregivers to cope with the separation and the negative consequences of parental imprisonment. As well, social services may take stock of the results of this study to create parenting programs specifically designed for families of prisoners.

- (2) To explore the effects of the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the imprisoned parent on the child.

The literature reviewed in this chapter with respect to adult romantic relationships has given little consideration to the children, although there are studies that showed that children in families of prisoners represent a factor that contributes to marital stability (Apel, Blokland, Nieuwbeerta, & van Schellen, 2009). Knowing the extent to which children are affected by the changes occurring in their parents' relationship during the imprisonment period and also how they view their family after release will contribute to further knowledge on the effects of parental imprisonment on children and, at the same time, will bring new areas of exploration for family

interventions.

Findings from the analysis of family dynamics and relationships may inform systemic interventions for prisoners' families that could start from the onset of the parent's imprisonment and continue after the family is reunited, thus the children and their parents would be helped to transit from a single to two-parent family. From a policy perspective, the results of this study could further contribute to raising awareness among prison and community social services about the importance of facilitating and maintaining family contact throughout the entire period of a parent's detention.

Research questions

Considering the aim and objectives mentioned above, this research sets out to respond to eight questions. The first four questions correspond to the first objective and the subsequent four questions to the second objective of this research:

1. What are the perceived changes brought about by parental imprisonment in the lives of the children and of their non-imprisoned parents?

Previous studies have shown children experience emotional and behavioural problems following their parent's incarceration. These results have been found in quantitative as well as qualitative studies, which mostly relied on non-imprisoned parents' reports of their children. This study wishes to give voice to the children by asking their point of view on the changes that occurred in their lives after parental imprisonment.

Emotional and behavioural problems in caregivers have also been documented by the literature. Most of the studies however, focused on specific issues in connection with the separation from their spouses, being the wife of a prisoner, or with respect to the difficulties in coping with the single-parent status or in facilitating the contact between the children and their imprisoned parent. This study is interested in how non-imprisoned parents perceive their overall situation following the incarceration of their spouses.

2. Have the non-imprisoned parents changed their practices in raising the children following the incarceration of the other parent?

Poor supervision of children, physical abuse, or overprotective parenting have been mentioned in the literature as negative practices employed by the non-imprisoned parents. This study uses parenting theoretical perspectives in order to gain evidence of the multitude of practices, both positive and negative, that may be brought about by the absence of the other parent due to incarceration.

3. Has parental stress increased after parental imprisonment or were the stress factors already present before the imprisonment took place?

Studies reviewed in this thesis underlined parental stress as an effect of parental imprisonment, although other research has mentioned parenting related stress factors such as economic deprivation or single parent family as existing prior the imprisonment of a parent. It is therefore necessary to have more information on this issue in order to delineate between parental stress brought about by the incarceration of a parent and pre-existing stress.

4. Do the changes perceived by the children and their caregivers have a spill over effect on the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the child?

The relationship between the children and their non-imprisoned parents has been little covered by the literature and has mainly counted on mothers' reports. On the other hand, studies mostly investigated the impact of parental imprisonment on women and children separately and not as a dyad where children and non-imprisoned parents may influence each other as result of the changes occurring in their lives.

5. How do children perceive the relationship between their parents before and during imprisonment?

Children's perception of their parents' relationship received very little attention in the literature. However, adult romantic relationship was emphasized by parenting practices theories as influencing how parents care for their children. In this respect, children's perception of the dynamics of their parents' marriage before and during imprisonment may contribute to further knowledge on whether and how this family relationship influences children following the incarceration of a parent.

6. What is the non-imprisoned parent's perception of the relationship with the imprisoned

parent before and during imprisonment?

Conjugal problems brought about by the incarceration of a spouse have been documented in the literature. However, it is important to know how the non-imprisoned parent perceives his/her relationship with the imprisoned parent before as well as during imprisonment in order to have a clearer image on the effects of detention on adult romantic relationship.

7. How do non-imprisoned parents and children perceive their family lives upon the return from prison of the other parent?

Family life after resettlement has been informed mainly by studies conducted with non-imprisoned women on their perception of the relationship with the imprisoned partner, many of whom have a romanticized picture. This study intends to explore the expectations of prisoners' partners in relation to family reunification and to see whether these expectations are transmitted to the children as part of the family plans after imprisonment.

8. Has the parental relationship changed following imprisonment? If so, to what extent has this affected the children?

The few studies found on this topic have shown that most marriages are affected by the imprisonment of a partner. How these changes influence children has not been a question for the studies reviewed and is considered by this study.

Chapter 5. Methodology

After reviewing the state of the research and theories that offer the context for this study and concluding on its aim, objectives, and questions to answer, the current chapter presents the methodology used in this research. Namely, this chapter is structured on ten main topics: (1) epistemology; (2) ontology; (3) overall methodological approach; (4) methods of data collection and research instruments; (5) access to the participants; (6) sampling; (7) the research procedure; (8) ethical procedures; (9) ethical issues; (10) data analysis.

Epistemology

The questions this research set out to address are grounded in the social constructionism paradigm, mainly as it is presented in “The Social Construction of Reality” paper by Berger and Luckmann (2008). This paper places an emphasis on the everyday reality where “Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by [wo]men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world” (p. 35). Knowledge, defined as “certainty that the phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics” (p. 9), is thus developed, maintained and transmitted through social interactions (p. 12). Berger and Luckmann state that they do not wish to engage in a philosophical debate on the meaning of reality, hence their approach is focused on “common sense” knowledge rather than on “ideas” (p. 27). Society is analysed as an objective as well as subjective reality and the individual is presented as participant in everyday reality.

In Berger and Luckmann’s view, society as an objective reality includes and is defined by two main notions: institutionalization and legitimation. The institutionalization grows from habitualization of people’s actions; repeated facts or processes become skills with a significance that is imprinted as a routine in the general store of knowledge, ensuring direction and stability of the individual’s actions. When people interact under the same patterns of action (for example, at work) their actions become predictable in the sense that a person’s action does not appear unusual to another person. This reciprocal recognition of standardized schemes of action is called typification. When typified actions are passed on to future generation as givens, institutionalization is created and confers objectivity to social interactions. Institutionalized

structures are being legitimated through symbolic universes that are commonly known beliefs explaining to the individual why an action *needs* to be made in a certain way and why things *are* the way they are. Thus, a symbolic universe exceeds everyday experiences and includes a variety of value systems such as religion, proverbs, mythology, or theological thoughts.

The subjective reality of society departs from the idea that although an individual is not born as a member of society, his/ her membership is ensured by the predisposition to become sociable and is “imposed” by his/ her significant others (parents or parent figures) during childhood and mediated by language. The biography of a person starts with primary socialization and with the internalization of the world around him or her that is filtered by those responsible with his/ her nurturing and care. This internalization includes both cognitive and emotional learning about who s/he is and about who others are, and what roles each fulfil. It is this knowledge that any person takes on in a process of “internalization of institutional or institution-based ‘sub worlds’” (p. 188) that defines secondary socialization. As s/he matures, the individual learns about social roles, mainly about the social division of labour. These are mediated by specific languages and are characterized by anonymity. However, the subjective reality can be changed or alternated through re-socialization with others to whom the person becomes strongly attached and who contribute to reassigning his/ her reality. Such processes can be met in religious conversion, political indoctrination or in psychotherapy where the knowledge acquired during primary socialization is set aside to make room to new meanings through the guidance of new significant others.

Criticism of social constructionism as discussed by Berger and Luckmann (2008) refers to two main aspects: anti-realism – social constructionism does not view knowledge as driven by a direct perception of reality but by multiple perspectives that is, multiple realities; and relativism – since there are multiple realities, there are multiple accounts, none of which has precedence over the other.

Supporters of social constructionism on the other hand claim that whilst this approach does not deal with notions of absolute “real” or “truth” (Andrews, 2012), it acknowledges the multiplicity of realities and truths that each person experiences in various historical and cultural

contexts (Gergen, 2001). From this perspective, a first standpoint can be made for this thesis. This is that children of prisoners and their carers experience the separation from the imprisoned parent differently and that this depends on their level of understanding, attachment to the parent in prison, or other factors that may interact at social level such as family members' support and perception of imprisonment, or peers' reactions towards them. Thus, knowledge with respect to children's experiences represents the analysis of children's and carers' perceptions regarding their experiences. Children are not to be viewed as simple subjects of an inquiry to whom the reality of parental imprisonment acts upon, but active agents in constructing their own worlds.

In addition, this thesis is based on some existing evidence about children of prisoners, which can be grouped into different categories (e.g. associations between parental imprisonment and children, protective factors, correlations between imprisonment and marital relations, or studies on children of prisoners in Romania), knowledge with regards to children of prisoners is constructed taking into account what was previously found on this topic and which, in turn, led to the questions and objectives this thesis set to answer within the particular setting of Romania.

A third standpoint of this constructionist approach refers to the fact the researcher is not just a simple observer of the children and of their carers. The researcher is herself part of the research situation and is aware of the fact she can influence the researched during interviews. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) state, "(...) researchers have learned that a state of complete objectivity is impossible and that in every piece of research - quantitative or qualitative - there is an element of subjectivity." (p. 43). This subjectivity can be the result of previous knowledge acquired by the researcher on a specific topic which contributed to framing his/ her inquires and/ or of other particular features pertaining to the researcher such as sensitivity and training, or ability to interpret non-verbal communication during research interviews. Thus, the data does not represent a unilateral outcome of the research process, but the product of a process of interaction between the researcher and the researched (Charmaz, 2008) that influences learning about the topic under investigation.

The scope of this study is to explore the effects of family relationships on children of prisoners. The research also focuses on the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and

the child and the relationship between the non-imprisoned and the imprisoned parent. The social constructionist approach as presented by Berger and Luckmann (2008) is appropriate for this research for a number of reasons. First, the study looks at the everyday family relationships in the context of parental imprisonment and how children's realities are affected by relationships and imprisonment. Second, it explores the subjective experiences of the non-imprisoned parents and of their children in the social context of parental imprisonment. Third, it investigates family dynamics from a family historical perspective. And fourth, it further explores the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the child in the context of family communication and interactions.

With premises that children of prisoners and their carers are active agents in constructing their reality and also that this reality is socially influenced, social constructionism offers the opportunity for further inquiry into the issue.

Ontology

It was noted above that much of the criticism of social constructionism refers to ontological issues, mainly to its anti-realism and relativism. The following quote illustrates this criticism: "Institutions exist because a significant portion of society knows them to exist, and acts accordingly. This doesn't make them any less real: we cannot 'wish them away' precisely because so many people knows them to exist." (Sismondo, 1993, p. 520).

Deriving from this understanding of Bergman and Luckmann's idea that institutions are human products, Sismondo (1993) contests the social construction of the objective reality by the fact "it is difficult to see the type of *action* that construction would seem to require" making it "more akin to an evolutionary process, a blind creation of new realities" (p. 520). On the same note, Boghossian (2001) discusses the social construction of things and kinds such as dinosaurs or quarks that pre-existed society and therefore cannot be claimed to be constructed by it and disagrees that scientific belief can be viewed solely as a social construct because it denies the evidence of the respective belief.

Burry (1986) criticizes the relativist nature of social constructionism and argues that this

position asserts that knowledge is sufficiently explained only by social interests and contexts while abandoning “any claim to rationality or reason as a means of evaluating alternative explanations” (p. 153). Burr (1995) also brings to discussion the relativism in social constructionism when speaking about the different versions of events and, therefore, different viewpoints that can be assessed only in relation to each other. Another issue related to relativism in social constructionism refers to the legitimacy of research findings whereas conclusions of studies using this approach are multiple and do not have precedence one over the other, thus the question of its usefulness and relevancy (Andrews, 2012).

Bergman and Luckmann’s (2008) view of social constructionism is not concerned with ontological issues, but with the social construction of knowledge. Thus, its focus is epistemological. This, however, does not imply that the criticism referred to above is less valid. In their response, this study is not taking the ontological muteness referred to by Gergen (2001) in his defence against the anti-realist critiques. Rather, this thesis considers, as Andrews (2012) noted, that “realism and relativism represent two polarised perspectives on a continuum between objective reality at one end and multiple realities on the other” (para. 13). Looking at the issue of parental imprisonment, this study asserts that children and their carers are separated by the imprisoned parent and this represents an objective reality. Consider the walls of a prison. It is supposed to function as a physical barrier between the people who have been found guilty of committing a crime and the rest of the society and of their families, implicitly. No matter the purpose of a prison, the bricks that construct the prison wall, or the concrete walls, or the metal doors of the prison constitute an objective reality because it is independent of our perception of it. The same analogy may be applied to the distance between the prison and the homes of the prisoners’ families. The prison walls and the physical distance separate the children and their carers from the imprisoned parent and this cannot be questioned. It is the term “separation” that names this reality and which is socially constructed. But if and how this separation influences children and their carers is a matter of subjectivity which is dependent of the personal experiences of prisoners’ families and/or of the cultural and social perception of the prison institution. In turn, these experiences are subject of reflection on behalf of the researcher. To

conclude, this Thesis will take on the following social constructionist statement: “Explanations [of social phenomena] are to be found neither in the individual psyche nor in social structures, but in the interactive processes that take place routinely between people” (Burr, 1995, p. 5).

Overall methodological approach

In order to meet the objectives set by this thesis and to answer the research questions outlined in the previous chapter, this study used a qualitative approach. The rationale for this is in Jones’ (1995) explanation of the scope of qualitative research:

Qualitative research begins by accepting that there is a range of different ways of making sense of the world and is concerned with discovering the meanings seen by those who are being researched and with understanding their view of the world rather than of the researchers. (p. 2).

As this study set out to explore family relationships by asking questions related to “how” and “what” - which are considered to be typical of qualitative studies, as opposed to quantitative research that seeks to answer “why” questions (Creswell, 1998) - the manner in which to answer them was by delving into the personal experiences of the children and of their non-imprisoned parents. This would have been difficult to achieve using quantitative methods, which can restrict the researcher to inquiring “about if and how a person knows something, and how that knowledge can be translated into a numeric value” (Tewksbury, 2009, p. 44). It is not to say that quantitative research does not produce information about the personal experiences of people. However, presenting a sequence of assertions (by use of scales) or questions (by use of questionnaires) with pre-determined answer options may seem insensitive giving the nature of the topic of this study, as well as the fact many of the children and their non-imprisoned parents would have been in the position to think of the issue(s) for the first time. Moreover, the scales/questionnaires that are constructed by researchers would have been based, in fact, on the researcher’s understanding of perceptions rather than the participants’.

This study sought to gain deeper understanding of how the particular context of parental imprisonment affects child rearing by the non-imprisoned parent and how children are affected by their parents' relationship. In this regard, qualitative research is valued for providing greater depth to understanding certain phenomena by focusing on social processes and human interactions in particular contexts (Griffin, 2004; Tewksbury, 2009).

Further, tackling sensitive topics has been shown to be better facilitated by qualitative methods (Creswell, 2007; Griffin, 2004). As outlined in the previous chapter, the incarceration of a parent brings about emotional difficulties experienced by the children and by their carers, thus the qualitative methodological approach has been considered the most appropriate by this study.

Nevertheless, qualitative research is not without limitations. Data analysis in qualitative research is considered to be time consuming. Also, it is often criticized for relying on small samples, thus the generalisability of the findings is contested (Creswell, 1998; Mays & Pope, 1995). However, in doing qualitative research and ensuring the validity of the findings, the researcher should take stock of the theoretical framework based on which research is conducted and of the literature regarding the phenomena under scrutiny (Broom, 2005; Mays & Pope, 1995; Roulston, 2010), whilst the selection of the appropriate data collection method "should always be dictated by the research question(s) under investigation" (Griffin, 2004, p. 3).

Method of data collection and research instruments

The method of data collection employed by this study is semi-structured interviewing.

The rationale for choosing this method was that it provided the opportunity for dialogue between the researcher and the children and their non-imprisoned parents which was needed in order to explore the topics raised by the questions in this research. Semi-structured interviewing implies that the researcher has an interview guide which includes questions to be asked or topics to be covered, "but there is flexibility in how and when the questions are put and how the interviewee can respond." (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 29). There are several advantages to this method that are valuable to this study. As stated by Kvale (2006), "The [semi-structured] interviews give voice to common people, allowing them to freely present their life situations in

their own words, and open for a close personal interaction between the researchers and their subjects.” (p. 481). The “close personal interaction” referred to in Kvale’s (2006) statement brings about the issue of building rapport with the participants in the research and gaining their trust which, for those in vulnerable life situations such as being the child or the spouse of a prisoner, is very important when describing sensitive experiences. Although this entails ethical issues, which are discussed later in this chapter, the possibility of building rapport between the researcher and the research participants is something that the semi-structured interviewing method facilitates in order to generate meaningful and rich data (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009; Ryan & Dundon, 2008). Also, the interview implies a synchronous communication in time and place, providing the advantage of observing the non-verbal communication of the interviewee which acts as cues for the interviewer to ask more questions or to adjust the questions accordingly (Opdenakker, 2006). This is most important when doing research with children. For example, Irwin and Johnson (2005) described how being active in observing the non-verbal cues of the children during the interview helped in building rapport and in asking the right type of question (open or closed question), in deciding to leave the children to report their experiences while they seemed to stray from the topic of discussion.

As with any other method of data collection, the semi-structured interview has limitations. Although in principle providing the framework for good rapport building, semi-structured interviewing may in practice present difficulties in establishing a good interviewer-interviewee rapport due to the fact the interview in itself interrupts the everyday life of the participant, making the setting artificial (Hart, 1984). Also, it is argued that recording of interviews alone may cause the interviewee to be too self-aware of the fact s/he is being interviewed and, thus, censor herself/himself or it may be blurred by the noises that occur while interviewing (Gideon, 2012). Also, Kvale (2006) brings to discussion the issue of power dynamics in the interviewer-interviewee relationship, where the researcher has the privileged position of power because s/he initiates, guides and closes the dialogue; sets the agenda for discussion; may be manipulative, by using “therapeutic techniques to get beyond the subjects’ defences” (p. 484); and holds the “monopoly of interpretations over the interviewee’s

statements” (p. 485). Power dynamics are not influenced just by the mere status as researcher. These are more complex, as Riley, Schouten, and Cahill (2003) have pointed out: “A researcher is not necessarily powerful, and other identities, such as gender and nationality should be attended to” (p. 57). Nevertheless, it is the task of the researcher to take the best of the advantages this method provides and to be aware of its limitations.

For the purpose of this study, two interview guides were developed to address the research questions when interviewing children of prisoners and their non-imprisoned parents.

In terms of the structure of the interview guides, this was informed by Price’s (2002) “laddered questions” technique, which involves three progressive levels of inquiry, from the least to the most invasive: questions about action directed to introduce the topic, questions about knowledge intended to find what the research participant knows and thinks, and questions about philosophy aiming to learn about the interviewee’s feelings and beliefs. It is therefore that the interview guides used in this research have a similar format:

- an introductory part informing the non-imprisoned parent/child about the main subjects to be approached during the interview, ensuring the participants that they can refuse to answer or withdraw from the interview when they wish, and the approximate duration of the interview;
- personal identification data including questions related to socio-economic information and/or personal description;
- questions addressing the main issues asked about by this study. The issues investigated were the child’s feelings when s/he found out that his/her father went to prison or the feelings in relation to prison visitation and after visiting the imprisoned father. Mothers on the other hand were asked about the changes perceived in their children since imprisonment of the father, but also about changes occurring in their relationship with the incarcerated partner, or about coping with household difficulties and absence of their partner;
- closing question for the children related to how the participant envisages his/her future.

It should be noted that, although this format includes an introductory part, this did not exclude the formal procedure where a detailed description of the research aim and objectives and of the interview questions was given to the child and the mother before the interviews started. Also, it did not exclude asking the participants if they needed further clarification regarding the study and the interview.

In the following, the interview guides are described in more detail together with their weaknesses and strengths.

Non-imprisoned parent interview guide

The interview guide was developed according to the objectives of the research and includes six main sections: (1) socio-demographic information, (2) questions about the family situation before and after imprisonment, (3) questions about the child, (4) questions about the past and current relationship with the imprisoned partner, (5) questions about mothers' perception of how their children view the relationship between the two parents, and (6) Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995). The topic of each section was usually announced (e.g. "I will be asking you a few questions about your father who is in prison, now").

The fourth section of the interview where the mothers speak about their husbands/partners includes a 5 point scale on the level of satisfaction with regards to their marital relationships: *strong dissatisfaction*, *moderate dissatisfaction*, *somewhat satisfied*, *mostly satisfied*, and *very satisfied*. After choosing their perceived level of satisfaction, the women were asked to detail. In the case of a few mothers, it was necessary to explain the meaning of "satisfaction"; the explanation given was "being content regarding your relationship". This rating was inspired from the "Manual for the Current Relationship Interview and Scoring System" (Crowell & Owens, 1998, p.8) which, in addition to the Adult Attachment Interview (Main, Goldwin, & Hesse, 2008), and the literature reviewed with respect to adult attachment and parenting practices, offered the author a framework for the exploration of the relationship in the context of partners' imprisonment.

Towards the end of the interview the mothers were asked to imagine their life after their

husbands' release from prison. The purpose of this was to set mothers' perception of the future of their relationship in the context of the previously mentioned history.

At the end of the interview, the mothers were read the items from the Parental Stress Scale (PSS, Berry & Jones, 1995). Although at the onset of this research, it was intended to use the PSS as a scale, the researcher noticed from the first interviews that were developed with the mothers that almost each assertion triggered statements and considerations about their feelings and thoughts with regards to the sentence. Due to this situation it was decided to administer the PSS as an interview. The rationale for including this self-report into the interview is grounded in the literature which emphasized the stress of the non-imprisoned parents following the separation from their life partners as result of imprisonment, such as economic strain, social marginalization, and lack of family support (Arditti, Burton, & Neeves-Botelho, 2010; Fishman, 1990; Mackintosh, Myers, & Kennon, 2006; Phillips et al., 2006; Poehlmann et. al., 2008). (). It was therefore decided to see how the mothers would elaborate on their experiences of motherhood on by using the assertions included in the PSS.

The PSS (Berry & Jones, 1995) is a self-report consisting of 18 sentences representing positive (emotions, personal development) and negative (claims related to personal and financial resources) topics of parenthood. The parent to whom the PSS is administered, has to agree or disagree with each sentence on a 5 point scale: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *undecided*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. This is a useful tool because it can be administered to parents of children under 18 years old and because it is claimed to assess the level of stress caused onto the mothers by their children's behaviour (Berry & Jones, 1995, p. 464). Such an assessment may also be made with the help of the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1995). However, the target for the Parenting Stress Index is parents of children under 12 years of age. This is the reason for which it was not considered appropriate for this research.

A Romanian version of the Parental Stress Scale was not available. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, it was translated into Romanian using the forward and backward procedure adapted after The KIDSCREEN Group (2004). The documentation of forward and backward procedure is presented in Annex 2. Three persons contributed to the translation of the PSS in

Romanian: two independent translators performed forward translation 1 and forward translation 2. The translators were Romanian: one is a PhD graduate from the University of Huddersfield and the other is a PhD graduate from the University of Seville, Spain. Both persons have experience in test development and research, have good knowledge of the English language and are graduates of Social Work and Psychology faculties in Romania. The two forward translations were reconciled by the author and the resulting version was back translated into English by a third person, a Romanian social worker residing and working in the UK since 2002. The back translated version was compared with the original English version of the PSS and a final translation into Romanian was generated by the author. This final translation was used in the pre-test of the Romanian version of the PSS.

Pre-test of Parental Stress Scale

For the purpose of pre-testing the Romanian version of the PSS, three methods of data collection were used: author’s Facebook page direct contact with parents approached on children’s playgrounds and school parent-teacher meetings. A total of 48 parents of children aged 2 months to 18 years completed the PSS.

In data analysis, items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17, and 18 were reversed scored. SPSS 17 was used to determine the reliability of the scale. As shown in the tables below, the Alpha Cronbach coefficient is .808 which, according to George and Mallery (2003), implies that the Romanian version of the PSS has a good internal consistency and can be used as an instrument to assess the level of parental stress.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	48	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	48	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.808	18

The length of the interview with the mothers varied from 30 minutes to one hour.

It was noticed that questions about early romantic relationship made some of the interviewees feel a little shy and tended to be rather brief. However, the women were encouraged by the researcher to detail using non-verbal cues, such as smiles, letting them know their timidity is understood. This made the mothers feel relaxed and encouraged to elaborate on their relationship with the imprisoned partner.

For some of the women it was difficult to distinguish between their relationship with the child and the child's life course after the imprisonment of the father. This varied according to women's level of understanding; in such cases additional explanations were provided.

One of the strengths of this interview guide was that the questions were grouped on: (a) overall family situation before and after imprisonment, (b) relationship with the child and (c) relationship with their partner. This allowed to focus the mothers on the specific topic and provided fluency to the interview.

Another strength of this interview was applying the Parental Stress Scale as an interview. The items were read to the mothers one by one, pausing while going from one item to another. This helped the interviewing process because usually mothers commented about their thoughts regarding the item in a spontaneous manner. It also provided great insight into mothers' perception of the stresses they have to face with their children in the context of parental imprisonment. This would not have been possible by just asking mothers to rate the items on 1 to 5 point Likert scale.

However, applying the Parental Stress Scale may also be regarded as a weakness of this interview in that the words used in the items of the self-report may have been adopted by the women in their semi-structure interviews in order to explore their experiences. In this sense, though it cannot be known, the women may have described their circumstances, relationships

and experiences using language that they would have not used had the PSS not been completed. Nevertheless, the analysis indicated women's language during the interviews proved to be congruent throughout. Also, the strains brought about by the PSS had been previously mentioned during the previous sections of the interview (i.e. questions about the child). Therefore, there is no indication that the women would have had a different message in relation to parental stress if PSS had not have been used.

Child interview guide

There are several methods that can be used to facilitate children's involvement in research. For example, children can be given photo-cameras and asked to take pictures from their every-day life. Afterwards, the researcher and the child can comment on the pictures. The children can also be shown pictures that are relevant for the research topic and that are made by other children and then asked to comment on it. Another method, commonly used in child research, is the interview. Children can be interviewed either in group or individually, although for youngest children it is recommended to use individual interviewing (Einarsdóttir, 2007). During interviews, children can be asked to draw something and then to narrate about their drawings, or caryons and paper can be left for the children to use if they wish. Storybooks with incomplete endings or vignettes may also be used with children during interviews (Peters & Kelly, 2011).

All these methods engage children in research. Nevertheless, the researcher needs to know that children can also use their imagination when speaking of past experiences. Therefore, it is important to delienate between what is fantasy and what is real and not offend the child's feelings by ignoring his or her story (Einarsdóttir, 2007).

Some researchers advocate for using more than one single method in data gathering because this would contribute to gaining a more robust message from the child (Green & Hill, 2005). However, this can be time consuming and there may be children who do not like certain activities. For example, drawing can give insight into children's feelings and thoughts but it may also not be liked by some children (Einarsdóttir, 2007). Children who may not like to do certain

activities during the interview, such as to draw, constitutes the reason for which, in this study, the researcher chose not to use this additional method. Also, considering that using relevant pictures on which children could comment or vignettes or storybooks with incomplete endings would be time consuming it was felt that an interview conceived as conversation wherein children would be able to use their language to convey their ideas and experiences would be more appropriate.

The guide for interviewing the children included five sections: (1) questions about personal information such as the child's age and relationships with the people living in the same family, child's school, and description of themselves; (2) questions about the child's perception of the imprisoned parent before and after imprisonment; (3) questions about the child's relationship with the mother before and after imprisonment; (4) questions about the child's relationships with other family members and about the past and current relationship between his/her mother and father; and (5) questions about how the child imagines his/her family life after father's return home. The interview schedule also included a closing question in relation to how s/he envisages life when s/he grows up.

In exploring children's perception of themselves (section 1 of the interview guide) and the relationships with their fathers and mothers (sections 2 and 3), this interview guide was informed by the child attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980) and was inspired from the Child Attachment Interview Protocol (Schmueli-Goetz, Target, Fonagy, & Datta, 2008).

The interviews with the children usually followed the sequence of the questions, with the exception of one teenage girl who started to speak about her father almost immediately after she signed the consent form for her participation in the study. Most of the children were puzzled when asked to describe themselves. This is one of the questions in the opening segment of the interview, after they had offered more concrete answers in relation to their ages, family members and school situation. They asked for clarifications ("What do you mean to describe myself?", "Do you mean I should say about how I look?"), although it was the impression of the researcher they knew what it meant, but did not think of this before. Usually, when children were asked to make a description of themselves, their eyes opened wide, smiled and had a confusing laughter. Younger children, of 9 to 11 years of age, unlike the teenage children in the sample, were much

more concrete in their answers and at ease to speak of their friends and how they play together. Mothers and fathers were usually referred to in terms of personal gain whatever they gave them, such as presents. Some of the children underlined that their favorite part in the relationship with the mother or father was that they played together.. The younger children presented the relationship with their parents in just few words (e.g. “He used to give me things (...) candy”, “We play hide and seek”).

The length of the interviews with the children varied from 20 to 45 minutes.

In all, the interviews generated rich data for the study. However, despite the early decision to focus on interviewing children, and to not using additional methods of data collection (e.g. drawing), a weakness of the interview guide was it did not “work” with all of the children. Although the intention was to have similar interviewing procedure and methods for all children, sometimes children found the questions challenging, and asking them to draw and comment on their family or to do something else might have benefited the study as it would have helped children to express their thoughts and feelings in more detail.

Furthermore, the interview guide included mainly open ended questions which seemed to create difficulties in answering for younger the children to answer. Like in Irwin and Johnson’s (2005) example of interviewing young children, this researcher first believed the children were not willing to elaborate. Their body position (sitting with their back rigidly straightened) and the fact they used to start their answers by reproducing part of the question (typical for when they are listen to by a teacher at school) made this researcher ask herself if the children feel as if they have to give the “right” answer. At the same time, it reminded her that some of the children find it easier to respond to closed questions. Thus, reminding the children that there are no right or wrong answers, and it is what they think and feel that counts, helped children relax and feel more at ease. Also, the notes included in the interview guide, on what aspects to follow within the answers to questions under each section, helped to direct the interview to more concrete and closed questions. For example, the section in the interview about the child’s relationship with the mother included the question “Has the relationship with your mother changed after your father went to prison?”. Instead of asking this question which may have seemed vague because of the

word “relationship”, the researcher asked the children questions such as: “When was the last time you had a cold?”, “Who took care of you?”, “What exactly did she do?”. These closed questions helped children to be concrete in that they were able to say the approximate time when they had a cold, they named the person taking care of them (usually the mother) and they were able to describe the kind of treatment they received.

Access to the participants

It was initially intended that preliminary access to participants be made through Iasi prison. A formal letter explaining the scope and objectives of the research, and asking for permission to present it to prisoners was sent to the prison director in spring 2014. Unfortunately, access to the prison was denied on account of internal regulations stating that research with prisoners and/or prison staff should be formally approved and the request for access must be based on an application detailing the study. When stated in a reply that this research does not directly involve prisoners nor prison staff, but rather the children of prisoners and their parents on the outside, no response was received despite numerous emails.

Schools and local social services were also approached at the same time. Neither of these institutions had a record of the prisoners’ children. The Iasi County Social Services Department, however, replied that they kept records of children with imprisoned parents who were in foster care. Nonetheless, this was not helpful since the study aimed to explore the effects of child-non-imprisoned parent relationship and of the relationship between the child’s parents on children, whilst foster care implies limited or no contact between the children and their parents.

The only remaining option to gain access to participants was through a local NGO which had just started to work with the children of prisoners and their families. It was also the workplace of the author. However, the author's involvement at work did not involve direct contact with families of prisoners. Moreover, in order to avoid bias due to participants having received support from the NGO, the interviews took place before participants’ entrance to the program. The social workers at the NGO were asked that when a parent called for a first visit s/he would ask about her/his children’s ages and if it was agreeable for her and her child to

Speak with a researcher first. Where verbal consent was given, a meeting was scheduled either at the NGO's office or at the participants' place of residence.

It should be noted that the NGO was approached only by mothers as non-imprisoned parents or by fathers who were already imprisoned. This is because, due to budget limitations, the NGO promoted its services in just two prisons located in Iasi and Vaslui, which are exclusively male prisons. In Romania there is only one prison for women and this is located 360 kilometres from Iasi, the residence of the researcher and the location of the NGO. In six other prisons there are specific building wings for women prisoners. These too are located throughout the country at a significant distance from Iasi. It was thus decided to investigate only children whose fathers were imprisoned in Iasi and Vaslui, considering it would have not been cost and time effective to travel large distances. It should also be noted that Iasi prison is the second largest prison in Romania, thus it may be representative of Romanian children affected by parental imprisonment.

Sampling

Taking into account its objectives, qualitative approach, but also the limited resources available, this study has chosen a hybrid sampling strategy, namely it involved both purposive (Palys, 2008) and convenience (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) sampling. Purposive sampling is used "for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited sources" (Palika et al., 2013), where the selection of the "cases" relies on the judgement of the researcher that they possess the particular characteristics sought in the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). There are several techniques for purposive sampling. This study has chosen criterion sampling as its key strategy, defined by Palys (2008) as involving "searching for cases of individuals who meet a certain criterion, for example, they have a certain disease or have had a particular life experience" (p. 697). On the other hand, convenience or opportunity sampling is defined as follows:

choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents

and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time. (...) Researchers simply choose the sample from those to whom they have easy access. (Palys, 2008, pp. 113-114).

A child's non-imprisoned parent can be a father or a mother. However, this study has chosen to investigate the effects of family relationships on children whose *fathers* are imprisoned. This was because, as noted above, the participants' recruitment was made through the NGO that was also the work place of this author and where only families of male prisoners called for services. Therefore, due to the "easy access" to these families, the convenience sampling strategy should also be acknowledged.

The criteria for inclusion of children in this research were for the children to be aged 9 to 18 years, and to be in the care of their non-imprisoned parent. The children's age range 9 and above was chosen for the current study given that it was difficult for children younger than 9 years to discuss subtle aspects of parental imprisonment and of relationships, either between the parent and the child or between the parent at home and the parent in prison. For the mothers to be included in the research, the criteria included to have a partner/former partner in prison and to have children in the above mentioned age group.

21 children of prisoners and 21 mothers have been interviewed for this study. Of the total, only the interviews with 15 children and 16 mothers have been included in this thesis. The exclusion of interviews with 6 children and 5 mothers was due to insufficient data or ethical reasons which are explained later in this chapter.

The final sample consists of 15 children of prisoners and 16 mothers from Iasi and Vaslui counties in Romania. Three of the children originated from the same family. Three interviews with mothers of children were included in the thesis without the participation of their children due to the fact they have either refused to be interviewed or, in the case of one child, it was considered there was not sufficient data. The children participants in the research comprise nine girls and seven boys aged 9 to 17 years. The mothers' ages are from 26 to 47 years. 12 of the

families lived in rural areas and four in Iasi and Vaslui cities. In two situations, the children lived in Iasi and, respectively, Vaslui cities where they were studying. Although during the school year the children lived in the city, they spent their vacation at home with their families living in rural areas.

The research procedure

The contact of the researcher with the participants involved in the study was facilitated by the social workers at a local NGO. Mothers or the imprisoned parent contacted the NGO, usually by phone, requesting support within a social assistance program. If the parents told the social workers they have children above nine years old, they were asked if they wish for themselves and their child to take part in a research which was independent of the service program. When they accepted, a face to face meeting between the mother and her child and the researcher was scheduled. The interviews were conducted either at the office of the local NGO or in the home of the participants. The first person to be interviewed was the mother. The reason for this was that the children would be in the company of their mothers after the interview and this would benefit them in case they would have been emotionally affected. Thus, they would not have been left to wait until the mother's interview would be finished.

The interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. There were no notes taken during interviews because the interviewer wanted to pay full attention during the interview and, also, so the interviewees would not feel examined. However, listening to the digital recordings enabled the researcher to make distinctions and to remember reactions of participants during interviews. This was possible by listening to participants' tone of voice, laughter, crying, or pauses. At the same time, the researcher observed the non-verbal communications of the interviewees (i.e. gestures or facial expressions). This was not done in a systematic manner, though. The purpose of observations was to be attentive at the congruence between non-verbal communication and the verbal message that was transmitted. This helped to expand the questions of the interview in order to elicit in-depth information about the message that was sent by the use of gestures. For example, a mother looking away with a sad face can indicated that the subject of

discussion was somewhat difficult. This triggered the researcher's comment "I saw you were looking away with a sad face when I asked about...".

Ethical procedures

The ethical procedures in this study included a first phase where the mother and the child were told about research and the main subjects of the interview (e.g. family situation before and after imprisonment, mother-child and mother father relationship before and after imprisonment). They were also told about the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview and then asked if they had questions regarding the research or the researcher and if they wish to participate in the research. If both the child and the mother agreed, then they were told that the mother would be interviewed first and the child was asked to wait in another room. When the interviews took place at the NGO office, the child was left in the company of the social worker. When the interviews were conducted at the home of the participants, usually children were with the social worker or were playing with their brothers and sisters. The second phase of the interview procedure included signing of consent forms by the mothers and by their children. The consent forms were signed before the start of the interviews. Some aspects of informed consent and anonymity are discussed below.

Informed consent refers to the fact participants in the research are aware of what the study involves and understand their role and implication. Citing Diener and Crandall (1978), Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) mention four elements of informed consent: competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension.

Although competence is viewed as implying that "responsible, mature individuals will make correct decisions if they are given the relevant information" (p. 52), this study contends that children are able to make the decision regarding their participation in research even though they are considered immature due to their ages. Prior to interviewing, the children together with their mothers were informed about the study's aims and were asked if they need further clarification. Also, the mothers and their children were told that their participation in the research would in no way affect the services of the NGO. As participants' interviewing sequence involved

a first dialogue with the mother, she was asked to formally consent to her participation and to the participation of her child. Before interviewing the child, the protocol involved a re-statement of what the research and the interview are about, ensuring the child is aware of what has been explained to him/her.

The “voluntarism” element of the informed consent implies that participants are willingly making the decision to participate in the research. Although the children agreed to participate, they were also asked to sign a consent form. This was done in order to make children more aware of their participation in the research. It was also a form of acknowledging their agency and ability to make decisions.

The “full information” aspect entails describing the study in as much detail as possible. Taking into consideration that the issue of parental imprisonment may trigger sensitive or even painful experiences, the children and their mothers were previously informed about this risk and the fact they can choose not to answer a question, to stop the interview, or even withdraw from the study at any time they wish, without any repercussions whatsoever.

The fourth element of informed consent – comprehension - underlines that participants “fully understand the nature of the research project” (p. 53), suggesting that this can be assisted by allowing sufficient time to pass between participants’ acceptance to take part in the study and the actual moment when they have made their decision. With this research, the mothers were first informed of the aim of this study and, after agreeing for their child and themselves to participate, a meeting for the interview was scheduled. Nevertheless, not all mothers asked their children whether they wished to participate or not. This resulted in poor collaboration on behalf of some children, which led to withdrawal from the interview and/or refusal to participate.

Anonymity. “The essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity.” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 64). For the purpose of this study, a system ensuring participants’ anonymity was established from the start of data collection. Mothers and their children were given family numbers and their names have been changed in order to protect their identity. The qualitative material (recordings and transcripts) together with socio-demographic characteristics of the participants have been in the

sole possession of this author and stored on her personal computer, which was password protected in order to ensure no one else had access to this information. All participants, children and their mothers alike, were informed that their names will not be disclosed and that the information they will provide will be shared only with the academic community. This information was included in the consent form in order to assure the participants of the “promise of confidentiality” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 65).

For the purpose of this study, ethical approval was sought and granted by the University of Huddersfield School of Human and Health Sciences - School Research Ethics Panel in October 2013. The study proposal that was sent to the university together with the additional documents are presented in Annex 2. The additional documents include: presentation of the research to the participants, child and carer consent forms, letters to Iasi prison, to schools and to proximity/sectorial police requesting support in facilitating access to families of prisoners, prisoner consent forms, child and non-imprisoned parent interview guides, and risk assessment.

Ethical issues

In doing research with children, their expertise regarding their own lives and experiences should not be seen as dismissing of the researcher’s responsibilities. First, national and international laws specifically state that children’s participation in research must be preceded by parental/tutor formal and informed consent. Second, children may not know what research or research methods are about. For this reason, it is the researcher’s obligation to explain it to the children in a language that is developmentally appropriate before seeking their assent. And third, the research methods should be applicable to children in that it should best fit their capacity, skills, knowledge and interests. The methods should also take into account the contexts in which children are involved. Such a context can be represented by the vulnerability of the child in relation to the topic under scrutiny. For example, research with children of prisoners can include investigating children’s perception of parental separation, prison visitation or stigma. These are sensitive topics warranting methods that are more child friendly such as drawings, sentence completion, or conversation-like interviews (Einarsdóttir, 2007). Above all however, in doing

research with the participation of children in general and in doing research with vulnerable children in particular, children's physical and emotional safety must prevail.

There are several ethical issues that have risen in this study. These include researcher-participant rapport building and positionality of power, researcher's gender influence and particular situations encountered in the field.

Rapport building. Guillemin and Heggen (2008) state that "the purpose of establishing rapport between researcher and participant is to both generate rich data while at the same time ensuring respect is maintained between researcher and participant." (p. 292). These authors see the issue of respect as part of the researcher-participant rapport, where the participant trusts the researcher and the researcher is aware and alert to the participant's boundaries or "inner zones" (p. 293). Both of them are, at the same time, involved in a process where they have to make the decision whether to discuss very personal life experiences or, in the case of the researcher, whether to push participant's boundaries by entering the "zone of the untouchable" (Løgstrup, 1997). The role of the researcher is, therefore, to be constantly mindful of the situations that may arise from interviews and to negotiate the relationship so that rich data is obtained while "maintaining sufficient distance in respect for the participant" (p. 293). The data collection in this study has not been without moments where this researcher felt uneasy, not sure whether to pursue with a subject or to "silence" it. For example, a young girl of 12 years old mentioned during the interview about being bullied at school. When asked what her colleagues had been saying she looked away while closing her eyes and, after a moment of silence, she answered "Bad things... I can't say the words". In this case it was preferred not to continue with the subject because it became obvious she was affected by this experience. In a similar example, a 15 years old boy started to talk about his colleagues at school and began looking at his palms while pausing between the words. It was also clear that the boy had been affected. However, in this case the storytelling was "encouraged" with silence on behalf of the researcher, giving the boy the time he needed to talk about his experience. Asking children and their mothers to discuss about their feelings with a person they met for the first time involved being constantly aware that the relationship was building throughout the entire interview, and the meaningfulness and

richness of the data was conditioned by this researcher's acceptance and respect for the individual experiences of participants.

Positionality of power refers to how the researcher and the researched negotiate their roles (Crump & Phipps, 2013). This author was introduced to the participants in the research by a social worker who was about to offer support to the family on behalf of an NGO. The role as colleague of the social worker was also acknowledged. This could have been interpreted by the women and by their children as a condition for their inclusion in the service program. However, in order to avoid this, first, the social worker informed the mothers during their initial phone conversation that the research is independent of the service provision. Second, this was re-stated during the face to face meeting between the researcher and the participants. Hence, there were mothers and children who refused to be interviewed.

The role as a researcher interviewing women who had not graduated high-school and children who were in the process of formal education should be reflected upon. There are times when a person's status can be manipulative of the others in that the status itself is indicative of who is "in charge". Although in this study the interview questions were asked by the interviewer, the interviewees were informed that the purpose of the interview was to gain knowledge of mothers' and children's experience because they were seen as the experts in this study. This was the way by which the power balance was reversed (Peters & Kelly, 2011).

Gender influence for this study refers to the fact this researcher is a woman and this had an influence on the mothers when interviewed about their relationship with the imprisoned partner. On many occasions, when women were asked how their relationship started, they blushed or looked away. However, the interview continued and personal thoughts about their current emotional needs and sexual desires emerged. On an opposite note, women who had been victimized by their husbands prior to imprisonment shared stories about infidelity, abortion and gynaecological problems, or their rejection of men in general. It is the impression of this researcher that such stories have been encouraged by the fact women in this study were talking with another woman, as one of the participant said: "I can't believe I talk about this, but you are a woman... you understand these things.". Similar responses have been noted in the literature.

For example, Finch (1984) underlined women's easiness to talk with other women researchers because women feel the need to share their personal experiences and, in doing so, they trust other women. Kosygina (2005) also mentioned her experiences as researcher in interviewing women and men and - unlike the case with men - about allowing women interviewees to ascribe to her different identities such as researcher, young-female, friend, or daughter. In this study, being aware of this gender influence also cautioned against the potential for exploiting women's need to talk while showing compassion and respect for their experiences (Berger, 2015).

Particular situations encountered in the field. In this study, two of the interviews with mothers were of a particular and sensitive nature because the cause for imprisonment was, in one case, sexual relations with a minor, where the minor was the father's stepdaughter and in the other, where it was incest. Although the protocol was respected and mothers were told the nature of the interview and of the questions, they consented for them and for their children to take part in the research. However, for ethical reasons it was decided to exclude the interviews with the mothers from the analysis and not to interview the children. The reason for excluding the interviews with the mothers was that the interviews resembled more of a confession of two women who never had the opportunity to speak of their remorse. Also, it was chosen not to interview the children because the researcher did not have enough information about the psychological support children received. Moreover, the two girls who were raped were living in the country side where psychological services are very scarce.

In another situation, a girl who had been told her father was working abroad had found out about the imprisonment from her friend who showed her a newspaper where her father's name was mentioned stating he had been arrested for burglary and kidnapping. She had confronted her mother who told her the truth only two days before the interview took place. Although the girl showed much courage in talking about her experience, this interview was not included in this thesis as she provided very little information.

There were also situations where children started to cry when they were asked about their imprisoned parent or situations where, when left alone with this researcher, they expressed their wish not to participate in the interview admitting they were there because their mother had told

them to be. In the latter situation the interviews were not included in this study and in the first situation where children started to cry, they were encouraged to speak with the social worker in the NGO.

For this study, being aware of all the situations described above contributed to gaining more in-depth information about the experiences of the children and of their mothers. It also implied missing out data about particular groups of children of prisoners, such as children who were victims of sexual abuse from their incarcerated parent or children that were not told about their father's imprisonment. However, the interview guide developed for the purpose of this study did not cover the extent of such experiences and would have needed a different approach.

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis should commence from the beginning of the research. Researchers immerse themselves in their fieldwork (be it an interview, participant observation, or published text) and then in reading, and rereading, the data, they make sense of the data they have generated. Through immersion in the data, researchers attempt to understand what they have obtained. (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 133)

In this study, the process of data collection has informed data analysis and the reverse. As interviews were developed and then transcribed, ideas of codes and categories emerged for further exploration in future interviews. A code is defined as “a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data” (Saldana, 2008, p. 3), whilst categories represent grouping of codes based on similar characteristics of the coded data.

Nevertheless, data analysis involves a structured approach (Gibbs, 2007) which, for this research, meant constantly taking into consideration the questions derived from the literature and the interview guides. Thus, following the structure of the interviews guides and the questions this research set to answer, two matrices of pre-determined codes were developed, one each for the child and mother interviews. The child pre-determined codes were: Life changes, Mother-child

relationship, Mother-father relationship, Family reunification. Another six pre-determined codes have been developed for mother's interviews: Life changes, Parental practices, Parental stress, Mother-child relationship, Marital relationship, and Family reunification.

However, after reading and re-reading interview transcripts, new codes and subsequent categories emerged. These included perceptions of life and of relationships "before" and "after" imprisonment as well as perceptions of father's/husband's arrest, or prison visitation. In total, 30 codes resulted from the two matrices. NVivo was used to assign texts to each of the identified code, meaning the software allowed for the transcripts of the interviews to be uploaded and for excerpts from these interviews to be coded. Yet, due to this author's limited knowledge of NVivo (mainly referring to tasks such as un-coding and/or moving or merging of nodes² which represented much of the work in data analysis), manual analysis was further employed. This involved drawing diagrams in order to make sense of the connections between the codes included in the same matrix and of the links between the codes in the two matrices. Nevertheless, assignment of interview excerpts under specific codes proved to be very helpful in writing up the results chapters presented in this thesis.

The study of the connections within and between matrices, guided by the objectives and questions of this research, resulted in two diagrams corresponding to mother-child and mother-father relationships. In each resulting diagram, the codes were grouped into categories.

The mother-child relationship diagram includes three major categories. These are: impact of parental imprisonment, parenting stress, and parenting practices. Codes that were identified as common in children's and mothers' interviews were included in the specific categories. For example, children's interview transcripts included codes, such as "feelings of sadness" or "staying strong", whilst some of mothers' interview codes were "feeling alone" or "emotional breakdown". The common aspect of the above mentioned codes is that they represent emotional responses associated with parental imprisonment. Thus, the codes were categorised under "emotional impact". Further in the analysis, other codes assigned to texts from children's and mothers' interviews were grouped under "behavioural impacts" category. The two categories

² In NVivo, the codes were treated as nodes

were then grouped under a larger category, which is “impacts of parental imprisonment”.

The mother-father relationship diagram is structured according to children’s and mothers’ perceptions of this relationship before and after imprisonment, and their views on family reunification. Mothers’ perception of the relationship with her imprisoned partner also includes a specific category related to marital satisfaction. The diagrams are presented below and were used as guidance in the presentation of the data.

Figure 5.1: Mother-child relationship diagram

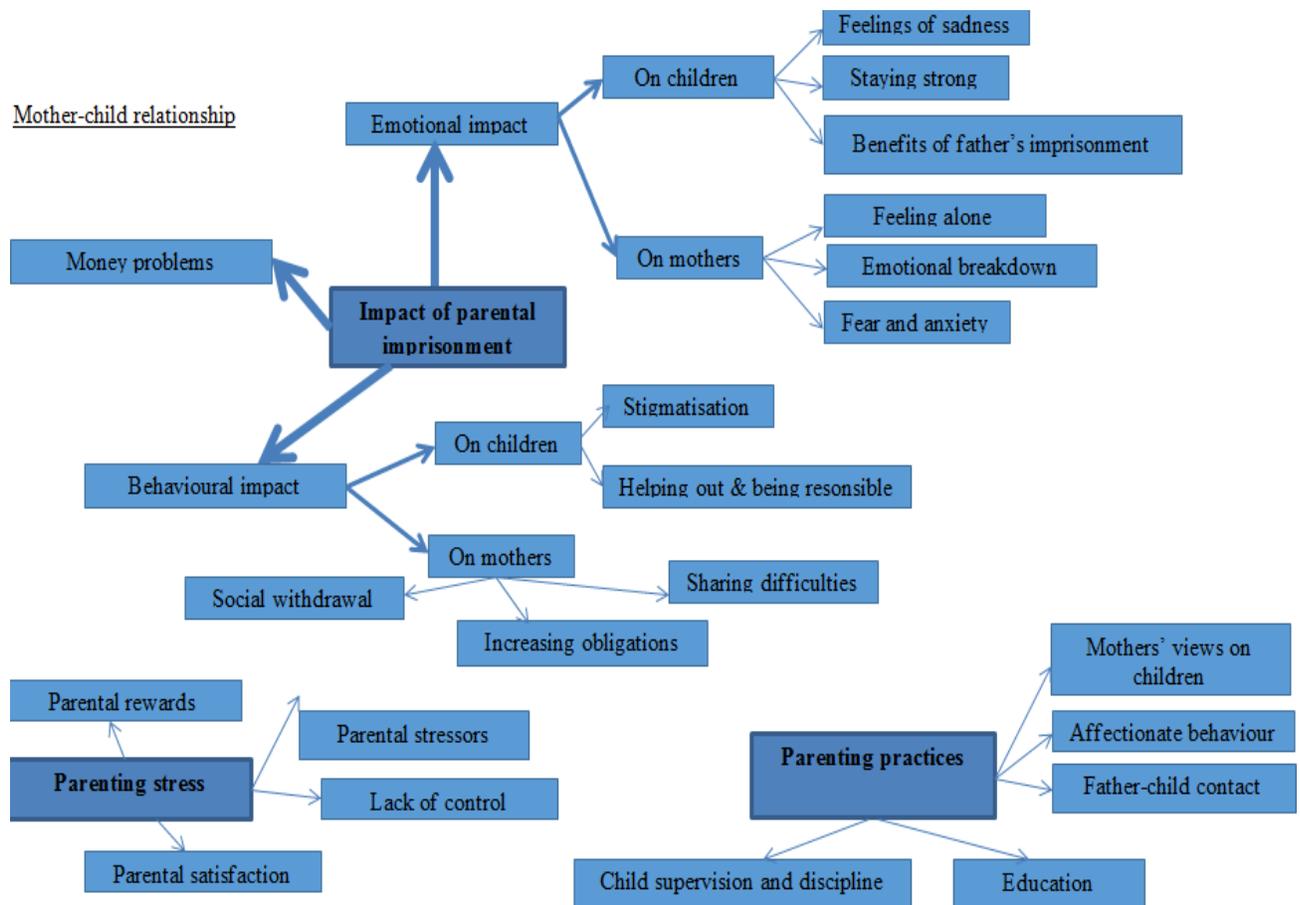
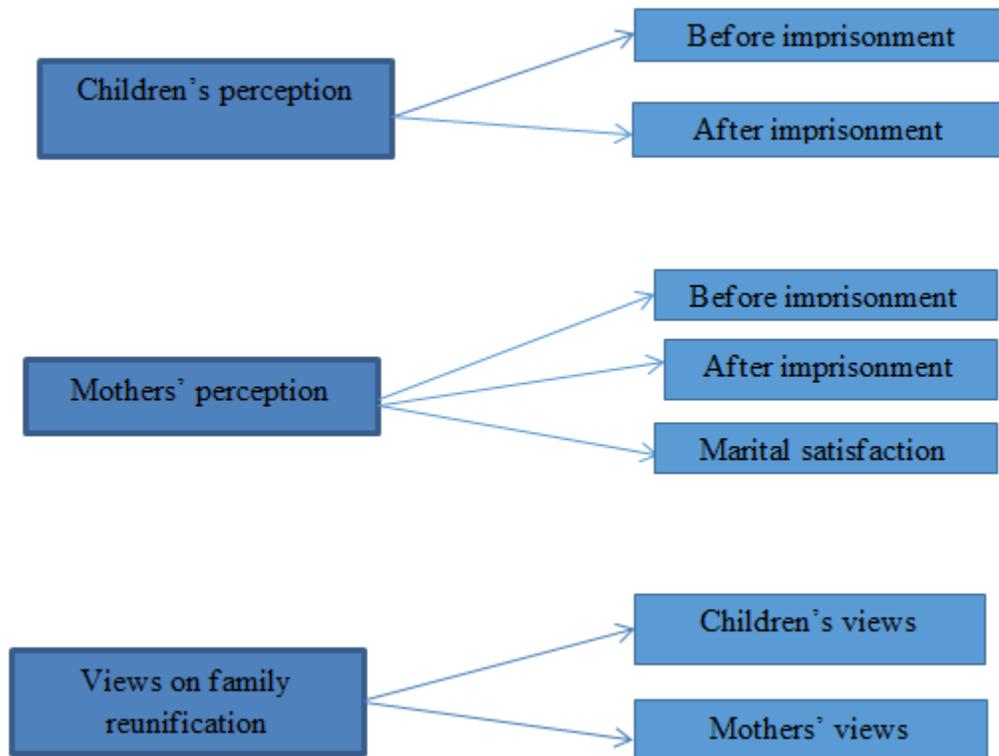


Figure 5.2: Mother- father relationship diagram

Mother-father relationship



Summary

In this chapter, Berger and Luckmann's (2008) social construction of reality was discussed as the epistemological approach for this research. It was argued that knowledge with respect to children of prisoners and their carers represents the analysis of their subjective experiences related to parental imprisonment. Children of prisoners and their carers are seen as actively contributing to the construction of their reality that is also influenced by the society in which they live. From an ontological point of view, the separation from the imprisoned parent is regarded as an objective reality. However, the manner in which children and carers are influenced by this separation is viewed as a matter of subjectivity.

For the purpose of this study, 21 children of prisoners (aged 9 to 18) and 21 mothers who

were in contact with a local NGO that had recently started to provide assistance to families of prisoners have been interviewed. However, only interviews with 15 children and 16 mothers were used in data analysis for this thesis. Six interviews with children and five interviews with mothers were excluded due to insufficient data or ethical reasons.

The interview guides - as instruments used in this research were described together with the interviewing procedure. The main sections of the interview guide used with the mothers included: socio-demographic information; questions about the family situation before and after imprisonment; questions about the child; questions about the past and current relationship with the imprisoned partner; questions about mothers' perception of how their children view the relationship between the two parents; and the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995) which was used as an interview. The child interview guide consisted in questions about personal information; questions about child's perception of the imprisoned parent before and after imprisonment; questions about the child's relationship with the mother before and after imprisonment; questions about the child's relationships with other family members and about the past and current relationship between his/her mother and father; and questions about how the child imagines his/her family life after father's return home.

Finally, this chapter discussed how the analysis of the interviews was conducted. Specifically, it involved developing two matrices of pre-determined codes, one each for the child and mother interviews which were based on the research questions and on the structure of the interview guides. Further, analysis of the links between the two matrices led to coding and categorizing the information that was specific to the two types of relations investigated in this research, namely mother-child and mother-father. .

The following two chapters are dedicated to the presentation of this study's results. These are structured according to the objectives set for this research. Thus, chapter six presents the results from children's and mothers' interviews regarding the relationship between the mother and the child and chapter seven illustrates participants' perceptions of the mother-father relationship.

Chapter 6. Fathers in prison: mother–child relationship³

In this chapter, first, socio-demographic information about the children and their mothers and family characteristics are presented. This is followed by the description of two family types included in the research. Children's and mothers' narratives are structured in accordance with the research questions derived from the literature on the effects of parental incarceration on children. Verbatim reports are used to illustrate changes that occurred in the lives of the children and of their mothers, and the effect of these at emotional, behavioural, and economic levels, as well as to depict the extent of parental stress and parenting practices in the context of paternal imprisonment.

Socio – demographic data, fathers' crime and sentences

Children's characteristics

15 interviews with children of prisoners were included in this study. Three of the children originated from the same family. Their characteristics include gender and age, as presented below:

- With respect to their gender, the children are relatively equally distributed: nine are girls and six are boys;

³ Part of this Section have been published in Foca, L. (2015). The Romanian Wives of Prisoners, *Scientific Annals of the of the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iasi, New Series. SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK Section, 8(1): 200-209*

As well, parts of this Section have been included in Foca, L. (2014). Jailed on the Outside: The Romanian Wives of Prisoners. *Paper presented at the International Scientific Conference: Communication, Context, Interdisciplinarity, 3rd Edition, 23-24 October 2014, Tîrgu Mureş. Tîrgu Mureş, University of „Petru Maior”.*

- Children's ages at the time of interviewing ranged from 9 to 17 years with a fairly even spread across each single year of age category. More specifically, three children were aged 9, two were 11 years old, two children were 12 years old, two were 13 years old, two children were 15 years old, three were 16, and one child was 17 years old.

Mothers' characteristics

16 interviews with mothers were included in this study. In the case of three of the mothers, the interviews conducted with their children were excluded from the study due to insufficient data. Their characteristics include age and level of study stated in number of years of formal education:

- Mothers' ages at the time of interviewing ranged from 26 to 48 years.
- One mother graduated elementary school (four years of study), three of the mothers participating in the study finished only six years of study, five mothers completed middle school (8 years of study), three mothers studied for 10 years, and four mothers graduated high-school (12 years of study).

Family characteristics

The information presented in this section was gathered from the interviews with the mothers. Family characteristics include: ethnicity, family income, number of children, residence area type, and accommodation quality.

Two of the mothers in the study declared they are of Roma ethnicity and 14 mothers stated that they are Romanian.

With respect to family income, two families depended on children's allowances alone (84 lei⁴/child per month), ten families had a monthly income consisting of social benefits

⁴ In 2015, the average exchange rate for 1 GBP was 6.1257 lei

(minimum social benefit per family varying from 136 lei to 505 lei, according to the number of people in the family) and children's allowances; two families had an income below minimum wage and two other families had a minimum wage monthly income (975 lei).

The number of children in the families included in the study varied from one to six, most common being the families with two, three, and five children. Two women participants were mothers of one child, four were mothers of two children, four mothers had three children, two mothers had four children, three had five children, and one mother had six children.

Regarding area of residence, families were overwhelmingly drawn from rural areas: twelve families lived in the rural area and four lived in the urban area. The rural Romanian accommodation usually involves houses without running water, and indoor toilet and central heating. Rural families live on farming and cropping the land. Over two thirds of the families lived in accommodation classified as "poor" meaning, as well as the above, no washing machine, and many children sharing a room. One family lived in "very poor" conditions and four families lived in good conditions.

Fathers' crime and sentences

Seven fathers referred to in this study had been convicted for theft, four for murder, one for attempting murder, one for rape and one for burglary. In two situations, the mothers did not know what their partner's crime was.

Fathers' sentences varied from one year to 19 years and eight months. Five mothers did not know the jail sentence their partners received.

At the time of the interviews, the period fathers had been imprisoned varied from two months to five years. Two of the mothers could not say for how long their partners had been in prison. This was because their partners refused to tell them.

A summary of child, mother and family characteristics together with information about fathers' crimes and sentences are presented in the table below:

Table 6.1. Child, mother, family and fathers' crime characteristics

Family no.	Child's gender	Child's age	Mother's age	Mother's level of education	Ethnicity	Family income	No. of children	Area type	Accommodation quality	Father's crime	Father's sentence	Time since imprisonment
1	male	11	29	8	ro	child allowances and social benefit	2	urban	poor	rape	3.6 yrs	3 yrs
2	female	9	30	high-school	ro	below min wage	1	urban	good	burglary	not known	not known
3	male	11	34	8	roma	child allowances and social benefit	3	rural	poor	theft	3.9 yrs	5 months
4	female	9	26	6	ro	child allowances and social benefit	2	urban	good	theft	3 yrs	2 yrs
5	male	16	41	4	roma	child allowances	6	rural	poor	theft	2 yrs	1 year
6	female	16	37	High-school	ro	below min. wage	3	urban	good	not known	not known	not known
7	male	15	37	6	ro	child allowances and social benefit	3	rural	poor	theft	3 yrs	2.6 yrs
8	female	12	44	6	ro	min. wage	5	rural	very poor	murder	19.8 yrs	5 yrs
8	female	15										
8	female	9										
9	female	16	47	10	ro	child allowances and social benefit	5	rural	poor	murder	17 yrs	4 yrs
10	female	17	48	high-school	ro	min. wage	4	rural	poor	murder	16 yrs	3 yrs
11	male	13	35	8	ro	child allowances	3	rural	poor	theft	not known	4.6 yrs
12	male	13	31	10	ro	child allowances and social benefit	2	rural	poor	theft	not known	1 year
13	female	12	41	10	ro	child allowances and social benefit	5	rural	poor	theft	1 year	7 months
14			33	8	ro	Child allowances and social benefit	4	rural	poor	attempting murder	7 yrs	2 yrs
15			37	high-school	ro	child allowance and social benefit	1	rural	poor	not known	1.5 yrs	1 year
16			38	8	ro	social benefit	2	rural	poor	murder	not known	2 months

Types of prisoners' families

In order to have a better understanding of the findings presented in this chapter, the following describes two “types” of prisoners' families included in this research. The typology is defined by the family history. More specifically, the descriptions underscore particular aspects of being the family of a domestic abuser. The stories presented within have certain similarities, such as mothers being romantically involved with the children's father from an early age and soon having children and becoming a family. Also, father's alcohol abuse and mother's stress about scarcity of money or about farm work are present in both family descriptions. Their purpose however, is to emphasize family differences with respect to domestic abuse and views of the family future, while presenting to the reader the context of living in rural Romania that was much referred to in participants' reports during the interviews.

For confidentiality reasons, the family names given are Ionescu and Stan, which are very common in Romania⁵.

Family without a history of physical violence

The Ionescu family lives in a village in the County of Vaslui, in Eastern Romania. Mrs. Ionescu is 44 years old. She takes care of five children. They all live of an income of 2300 lei (approx. 460 GBP) per month representing the salary Mrs. Ionescu receives as personal assistant of her mentally challenged adult son⁶, the social benefit and the allowances of the children. They have a farm where they raise cows, chicken, pigs but also crop the land they have around the house. Their home is made of two rooms and a kitchen. The house does not have centralized heating thus it depends on firewood for this purpose while the water supply is a fountain in the village. For cooking, the family also uses firewood. The toilet is located outside the house.

Alina (Mrs. Ionescu) spent only six years at school. She met her partner when she was a

⁵ Wikipedia 2017

⁶ According to Law 448/2006 regarding the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with serious disabilities, this person can benefit from a personal assistant who is paid on the basis of a labor contract by the state. The payment is based on the minimum wage and varies according to the severity of the disability.

little over 15 years old. He is seven years older. They loved each other, used to talk about their financial difficulties and support one another in raising the children who came very early in their relationship. So, much of their affair was dominated by ensuring they have food to put on the table and clothing for the children, although occasionally Mr. Ionescu used to drink heavily and then used to verbally abuse Alina. Five years ago Mr. Ionescu was convicted for murder and received a jail sentence of almost 20 years.

Since then, life became harder. Mrs. Ionescu has to take care of the children, the land, and the house almost by herself. As children have grown, they learned to lend a hand. For example, the boys help out with chopping wood for the fire, taking care and cleaning the animals, or working the land, while the older girl contributes with cooking and cleaning the house or doing laundry. Things are hard also because the family does not have the machinery that would make their lives easier, such as an automatic washing machine or a tractor to break the ground.

In this context of being overworked, one of Alina's biggest concerns is for her children to go to school and to graduate in order to have a job later on. Sometimes she's afraid that they will lose interest in school and start to join gangs or the older girl would find a boy and marry too young. She is a bit controlling of their school and leisure time. She cares very much about her children and nephew. She thinks they are the reason she survived her husband's imprisonment.

They keep contact with Mr. Ionescu mainly by phone. He calls almost daily. As Mrs. Ionescu said, he became ill in prison and now he has a pension of which he can afford to buy phone cards and to call the family. They talk about the day-to-day routine, about Mrs. Ionescu's worries and difficulties and he always encourages and advises her to look out for the children. Because of the family financial strain, Alina visits Mr. Ionescu only once a year when she takes with her one or two of the children.

Thinking about her children, Mrs. Ionescu smiles and says she hopes they will look after her when she will be grey and old. With respect to the future, as the children pray for their father to come out of the prison earlier, Alina speaks of this thought in whisper, fearing his health will worsen and he will grow old in there.

Family with a history of domestic violence

Ramona is 33 years old. She lives in a village in Eastern Romania, in an old house that belonged to her partner's parents. The house has three rooms and is made of clay bricks. She struggles to strengthen the walls from falling down. After so many rainy seasons, its structure began to collapse.

She met her imprisoned partner when she was 16. At 18 years old, he asked her to move in together. Soon after, their first child was born and the next year came the second child. From the first years of being together, her partner started to drink heavily. When drunk, he used to physically and verbally abuse Ramona. She says that when he was sober he was a completely different man, working around the house or looking to earn money.

However, sober or drunk, he started to steal and he was sent to prison when his oldest child was three years old. Two years later, after he was released, they had two more children. Ramona also had a miscarriage followed by complications that led to a hysterectomy. Her partner became distant and then started an affair. Drinking, stealing and borrowing money from everywhere became a lifestyle for Ramona's partner. The villagers would come to her or would approach her oldest son to tell them they need to return the money or the things Ramona's partner had taken from them. Sometimes, she would find these things in her home and return them, feeling ashamed. Ramona's partner would also forbid her to leave the house and visit her family. If she would leave the house, he would become jealous and he would beat her. One time, he hit her so hard she hid at her sister's place, afraid her children would see her black eyes. She never thought about filing a complaint to the police. It seemed to Ramona that he knew very well how to talk himself out of trouble. When she needed money and wanted to borrow from others, they would not give it to her, but they would give it to her partner even though they knew it is possible he would not repay the loan. Also, she had nowhere to go and her mother would not receive her with four children, as there are too many mouths to feed.

He did not bring money home and even started to sell the cow or other animals Ramona tried to raise for food, or things he would find in the house. With money in his hands, he used to leave home for weeks in a row and then returned as if nothing had happened. He would beat

Ramona out of the blue or throw things at her. Although he never physically hurt the children, he often screamed at them. They were used to going to sleep hearing him as he was looking for their mother in the house threatening to kill her.

About two years ago he was charged with attempting murder and sentenced to seven years in prison. Since then, the family life has changed for the better. They now live of 1000 lei (approx. 200 GBP) per month representing children's allowances and the social benefits. Before, they were not allowed to have a social benefit due to the fines Ramona's partner had to pay. The family can now afford to raise animals again and to live off cultivating the land. Ramona is the only one working the land but her oldest son, of 14 years old, also helps with taking care of the animals. Life is peaceful. They do not have enough money for children's school or for arranging and consolidating the house, but there is silence and the children can now sleep at night.

Since his second imprisonment, Ramona's partner used to call her every month to ask for money, not once asking about the wellbeing of the children. So she changed her phone number but he still asks for money in the letters he sends. She refuses to visit and children never ask about the father. Ramona took the decision never to speak of her children's father. She considers it is her duty to care for her offspring and to send them to school. She feels she can handle the difficulties. For Ramona, her own life is no longer important. What matters to her are the children without whom she says her life would be empty. In a few years her partner will be released from prison. She hopes God will perform a miracle and he will not return but, thinking things over, she cries at the thought she will go back to her tormented life.

Effects of parental imprisonment

The effects of parental imprisonment are presented on three levels: (1) emotional; (2) behavioural; and (3) economic. These are structured on specific themes.

Emotional effects on children

The emotional impacts on children refer to their reactions to fathers' arrest and

imprisonment, in particular about how they found out about the arrest and how they managed this information. Of the fifteen children included in the study, five witnessed their fathers' arrest, five were told about the arrest by their mothers, three children "overheard" their parents talk about the upcoming arrest, and two children found out from a letter sent to them by the father imprisoned outside Romania. The emotional impacts of these events can be grouped into three themes: experiencing feelings of sadness, feeling that they have to "stay strong", and benefits of father's imprisonment.

Experiencing feelings of sadness

Sadness is the feeling all children experienced when they found out about their fathers' arrest. They recalled in detail the moment, especially if they witnessed it, focusing on situational narratives such as "who was where" and "who said what" at that particular time. Their most common reaction to the feelings of sadness was crying.

"I didn't feel very well but ... I was on the road when they took him and he made me a sign to go home because my mother needs me and I went home (...) they were all crying when I arrived and I started to cry too. I asked why and she told me and after that she didn't say anything (...) I didn't say anything either." (Simona, 15 years old, Family 8)

"I felt very sad. A local police man came together with a guardsman and took him. My father was on the bed, watching television with my youngest sister and they told him 'Popescu Ion, pack your bags and get in the car!' and father went. (...) I cried, I stayed in with my sister and afterwards I went to school." (Matei, 11 years old, Family 3)

For some children, father's arrest had a profound effect on their emotional state and this caused them difficulties in maintaining their attention at school or doing their homework. In Liviu's case, finding out about his father during school examination period made him fail the exams.

"He sent us a letter about two weeks after his arrest (...) and that's when I found out. He was supposed to get home on the eighth. He began his travel on the sixth and was supposed to be home on the eighth. (...) He was arrested in a routine check and then two weeks I was very affected and couldn't pass my exams." (Liviu, 15 years old, Family 7)

“Sometimes I study better. Usually it’s not that good and I get small grades: 7.50, 8, 7.40, because in class I keep thinking about him and time passes by and I can’t write faster.” (Matei, 11 years old, Family 3)

“His absence is felt and in a way I feel worse and I can’t always study.” (Cristi, 13 years old, Family 11)

In the case of Marius (16 years old, Family 5), the arrest of his father caused him problems related to sleeping and eating:

“He went in because he’d stolen some cables. He left one evening and didn’t tell us where he was going and when he returned he told my mother about what he’d done and that he’d been caught by the police. I was around and overheard about what happened. (...) I felt weird... I mean... I was very sad. During that time, I had some problems sleeping because I couldn’t sleep, I couldn’t eat for a few days.”

Feeling they have to “stay strong”

Although all children reported feelings of sadness about fathers’ arrest some mentioned showing a form of personal strength by not crying, as illustrated by the quotations below:

“I found out because my mother was crying while packing my father’s things and also another boy next to us was taken and, in a way, I found out from him also and from my parents. I haven’t asked. I didn’t want to. She [*the mother*] was sitting in the kitchen and we came and asked where daddy is and she said they took him. (...) I got very sad. (...) I felt like crying but I held it inside.” (Cristi, 13 years old, Family 11)

“I came home from school... mum told us... She told me to keep calm because father left. That’s what she told me. (...) I felt sad. (...) I don’t know; it was like I couldn’t feel as I used to feel with him around (...) we need to be strong. I felt like crying, but I didn’t.” (Nicoleta, 12 years old, Family 13)

Benefits of father’s imprisonment

For two of the children, family violence was something that affected them very much and, despite the feelings of sadness, blamed their father for the situation he had caused to the family. The children also noticed the benefits of parental arrest, such as no more beatings, no more being forced by the father to work the land and being able to pay attention to school work. This is the case of Mihaela whose brother also went to prison with her father as accomplice to murder (16 years old, Family 9):

“We didn’t know because we were at school the day he got arrested. Mother told us. (...) I was crying, I

was all of a sudden fatherless, and without my brother ... my father could have thought of taking the blame himself and let my brother come home, but he didn't want to ... He knows I blame him because I don't speak with him (...) Now I feel much better. When he was at home he used to beat us (...) he used to beat mother also. (...) It started to go very well [*at school*] because when he was at home he used to make us work, so when he wasn't there, I had time to study and school was better for me... When he was at home he'd make us work and in the evening, the only time I had to study, I was sleepy, then I'd wake up in the morning to go to school... when was I to study?"

Father's past antisocial behaviour was invoked by Raluca who recalled the moment she found out about the arrest in terms of expecting for this to happen and being resigned, although the news made her concern and this interfered with her sleep:

"We found out, I think about a month ago, a month and a half; I'm not sure any more. It was a night I slept very little. He wrote two letters to us telling he went to jail, how he's doing and how things are like in there. He also asked us about school. (...) In a way I was expecting for this to happen. Yes, I know it's not good to judge your own parents, but he deserved it. He's done worse and I don't mean just about the accident or about that thing that happened in France. There were many things and not even I know all. (...) We got used to this. We were certain this is going to happen at some point." (Raluca, 16 years old, Family 6)

The above quotations depict contradictory feelings of children who experienced violence from the imprisoned father. After the initial sadness felt when they found out about the arrest, the children started to recall their past experiences and "adjusted" their feelings in terms of blaming the father, having a sense of righteousness about his imprisonment, and being resigned to the situation

The emotional changes the children went through after the imprisonment of their father were also reflected by the mothers who describe their children as mature and wanting to contribute to the financial situation of the family:

"He's a child who understands everything at his age. It was him who told me 'Mum, I won't go to school anymore, I need to go to work' and I told him no, he needs to go to school. (...) He's changed very much. He used to be childish, he's no more... At home, he asks me 'Mum, what should we cook today?'. I have to tell him 'Mum, we only have potatoes'. 'This is good, too'. He never said no. They are satisfied with what there is." (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

"She's more mature... (...) She has an adult's reasoning. (What do you mean?) Well, if I go to work by day... I went to work for a woman (...) In the evening, when I arrived home, I had put the pot with food by the stove so it would be warm for the children when they arrive from school and I found it washed and the rest of the food she put in another pot in the fridge, and some left aside for the boys when they arrive.

I found the beds made (...) the yard cleaned... she just doesn't have the strength of an adult, she's just a young lady, but she has the brains!" (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Some of the mothers were not sure if their children were emotionally affected by their fathers' arrest. However, they expressed concerns about their emotional, describing them as stubborn, obedient, or withdrawn:

"I wasn't the only one sentenced... the children were sentenced also to live without a father. My poor children! (...) The boy is a bit stubborn and these two younger ones don't speak much at school. (...) I think he's been very affected by this stupid thing with his father, he doesn't even want to see him." (Ramona, 33 years old)

"They listen to me. (...) I don't have problems with them, but anyway... they miss him. (...) I don't know if they're affected much about it. Maybe they are, in a certain way, because he's not around and it's hard..." (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

In the case of Diana, she felt very much distressed by the rejection of her boy with regards to sharing affection:

"He's a child born out of love (...) I don't know what to say... I am troubled because he's not close to me as he used to be. During the night, if I put my hand on him he throws it away. Before he didn't... he used to look for me at night, didn't sleep, used to look for me, now he can't stand me. (...) He no longer kisses me. If I kiss him he yells at me, he doesn't listen." (Diana, 37 years old)

Emotional effects on mothers

The mothers included in the study started their relationship with children's fathers at a very early age, some of them being as young as 15 years. Twelve of the mothers were married at the time of the interview, two of them were divorced but still in a romantic relationship with the children's father, and one woman had been divorced and separated prior to the incarceration of her children's father. One woman had been living in a consensual relationship with the father of her children since the age of 18.

This section presents the emotions experienced by the mothers following their partner's imprisonment. These are grouped as follows: (1) experiencing feeling alone; (2) experiencing emotional breakdown; and (3) experiencing fear and anxiety.

Experiencing feeling alone

Feeling alone or having no one to talk to about the difficulties they have was something the mothers needed to manage. For Catalina, talking about their problems or worries with people other than relatives, such as neighbours would mean to give them the opportunity to gossip:

“I have no one. I don’t have a mother, I don’t have a mother in law, I don’t have a father in law, I don’t... and I didn’t want to speak to neighbours, no... they listen to you and when you turn your back... so I kept it all inside of me.” (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

“I have no one to talk to, just God and my children... they’re the ones I talk to. There’s also my sister... but she lives far away and I can’t just talk to the people about the things I don’t have in the house... the fact I don’t have what to eat or I don’t have money to buy bread. (...) Now I’m alone and I pray to God to hold on until he comes back home (...) The loneliness affects me the most. The fact I cannot talk to anyone.” (Petronela, 41 years old, Family 5)

One way mothers reacted to the feeling of loneliness was by having a monologue about their own sadness and needing to be strong:

“When you’re alone, all things are on your shoulders. (...) I’m at a point where I say I have to be my own psychologist. One day, I walked by myself for a long time and wanted to cry. When you’re alone you feel melancholic and I said to myself: ‘If I cry now I won’t pay attention to the road. Why should I cry? I should keep walking to get home and not cry.’ ...and when I arrived I said ‘Why should I start crying now, since I got home?’ and I postponed even the crying.” (Lacramioara, 48years old, Family 10)

Experiencing emotional breakdown

A partner’s imprisonment caused difficulties for the mothers in managing their emotions, some of them reporting emotional breakdown:

“I feel I’m going crazy. I can’t understand myself. I’m just stressed, nervous, I don’t know any more. (...) It took some time to realize this about myself; but I’m not me anymore, I’m not that strong person anymore. (...) At work I’m stressed, at home I get stressed because I don’t like anything I do, no matter the way I do it. (...) Somehow I prepared myself he’ll come, but when the time came and I saw he didn’t come, I collapsed... emotionally and physically. I didn’t even want to go to work, I didn’t want to... I lost weight. And I don’t know why I am so sensitive; I really think I may have a problem in my head. I think I have a problem...” (Diana, 37 years old)

Some of the mothers attempted to manage their depression with self-encouragements, as

the case of Alexandra (41 years old, Family 13):

“I became very nervous. (Please describe.) So... if I can't do the things I set out to do in one day I become... I panic, I go into this depressive episode, I tell myself that life passed me by... I don't know. (How is this “depressive episode”?) I cry. I feel the whole world is like me... darksome... I give myself encouragements, but it's hard.”

Pretending to be emotionally well in front of the children and noticing it is not working prompted some mothers to take treatment:

“Even if times were hard, in front of the children I pretended it's all good, it's going to be good. The older one saw me over and over again that all the time I was... now I'm better, but there were... I took treatment ... (...) to calm myself because I was stressed. Even now I take pills to calm down. (...) I couldn't even sleep. It affected me so much that my hair began to fall...” (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

The difficulties in managing emotions were expressed by some mothers through their children's words:

“The boy always tells me ‘Don't cry mum, stop crying.’. When I set the table to eat with the children I feel like crying. He tells me ‘Mum don't cry, mum, you'll die living...’” (Luiza, 38 years old)

Experiencing fear and anxiety

This topic is concerned with mothers' feelings of anxiety or fear for what might happen to their children, for the safety of their household or, in the case of women who have been beaten, fear of their partner's return home.

For the mothers, single parenting implied experiencing feelings of anxiety with regards to the fact their children will befriend children with unwanted behaviours such as smoking or drinking:

“It's important that the children are well and not start fooling around, not to smoke, not to drink, because many children their ages... and those children are with their parents and they already... I'm afraid; I talk with him all the time when he comes home from school and tell him he should come straight home and not hang around, not to liaise with anyone.” (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

“They also have this habit to go in the village during the day... they have internet on the telephone, at the Mayor's office. I feel afraid and I go after them... I chase them so they wouldn't start smoking or drinking. (Are you afraid they might start?) I don't know... what if they befriend those boys?” (Alexandra,

41 years old, Family 13)

In the case of Alina (44 years old, Family 8), her fears were not just for the children, but also for the safety of her household:

“I can’t leave the yard. They all know I’m alone and there are all kinds of drunken people and I’m afraid to go out. (...) In my yard I have a cane... who comes to pick on me, it’s done. They have no business looking in my yard!”

For the women who experienced violence from their imprisoned partners, anticipating the moment of their return made them live in fear:

“Well, Ramona, I’m coming home!, he says, ‘Ha, ha’. (...) Of course I’m afraid; especially I haven’t been to visit him in jail. I never went to visit. Of course he’ll pull my eyes out. (...) I’m afraid of the moment when he’ll come back. (...) She [*the sister*] says ‘You’re so stupid to be afraid... Why are you afraid of him?’. ‘You don’t know him... he’s a monster... when he gets drunk, he no longer has reason.’ ” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“... since he kept threatening me.... one night I dreamt that he came home and threw himself against the door and it was like I opened the window and was screaming at my neighbours ‘Ana! Ion!’ and I woke up screaming (...) Well, I didn’t sleep that night... I could no longer...” (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

Following a partner’s imprisonment, the most common emotional changes mothers reported were feelings of loneliness and depression. Anxiety was also something some women experienced, mostly in relation to children’s outcomes and safety. For the women who had been abused by their partners, their anxiety was reported in relation to their partner’s possible violent behaviour toward them after release from prison. The emotional changes in mothers were also noticed by their children who reacted with feelings of sadness about the mothers or by rationalizing the perceived changes:

“She’s changed because almost every day she cries and she feels sad and I can’t do anything. (...) I feel bad also.” (Mihai, 11 years old, Family 1)

“I think she’s changed inside. With respect to the way she acts with us, I can’t say there’s a big difference, no... I can’t say she was a good mother and now she’s mean... she remained the same. She just seems to think differently.... she’s grown more mature... she always teaches us to do good things. (...) Since dad is in prison she’s sadder, more thoughtful...” (Marius, 16 years old, Family 5)

The above quotations referring to the emotional changes brought about by parental imprisonment showed that both mothers and children are affected. However, whilst mothers

reported having experienced mental disorders such as depression or high levels of stress (changes that were also noticed by their children), when asked to describe the changes in their children the mothers seemed less focused on how they were feeling in relation to their fathers' imprisonment. They mostly referred to their children as being mature and able to understand the family situation. In relation to the emotions of their children, the mothers only assumed the children may have been affected by father's imprisonment, although they also acknowledge they do not know how they felt about it. The mothers not being aware of the children's emotional changes was supported by what the participants in the research said when asked if they talk about the imprisoned father. On this topic, the children reported they did not know for how long their father will be imprisoned and this was their main question for the mothers who avoided answering them:

"I ask her when will he come home and she says she doesn't know either. I ask if he called her, if he asked whether I ate and it makes me glad when I hear he asked. (...) Then I ask her how long will my father stay there and she says a little while and tells me to wait a little longer. When we arrived home from visiting him I told her it made me feel sad. (...) She said to wait for a little while and he'll come home. Every time I speak with her I ask when my father is coming home..." (Ioana, 9 years old, Family 4)

In the above quotation, Ioana's mother seems to also avoid speaking with her child about the child's sadness. As with the case of Liviu or Manuela, Ioana's mother advised her to wait.

"I ask her about my father and she says 'Stop worrying so much because dad's going to come home!'. (...) Sometimes I ask 'When is father coming home?' and she replies 'Leave it; he'll come, in a short while!'" (Liviu, 15 years old, Family 7)

"She tells me there's no time to talk about these things... that I'm too young. Maybe in the third or fourth grade... maybe I will be able to talk about this.... She says many years need to pass until he'll come home." (Manuela, 9 years old, Family 8)

In other families, conversations about the father were scarce or avoided in order not to cause more pain or, in families where there was domestic violence, this was simply a choice made by the mother:

"I don't ask her. I think if I'd ask her, she'd talk. (...) I don't want to. If I ask her she'll feel worse and I would feel the same. Once, I asked when is he supposed to come home, why... and I felt very sad."

(Cristi, 13 years old, Family 11)

“No, we don’t really speak about him. (...) I don’t want to... I don’t speak.... when my mother speaks with my father on the phone, I go outside. (...) Sometimes, in the evening, she opens up the subject but usually she doesn’t...” (Simona, 15 years old, Family 8)

“We don’t speak. (...) I don’t know... she doesn’t say anything. We don’t mention his name ...” (Mihaela, 16 years old, Family 9)

Mothers’ narratives on conversations with their children about the imprisoned father mentioned that their children ask them frequently about the time of father’s return. However, they seemed to avoid any direct answer by reassuring the children that their father will come home, asking for their patience or simply relying on the children to figure it out for themselves:

“She asks when her father comes back, I tell her ‘In a short while; by December he’ll be home.’ and she always asks ‘How long is it until dad comes?’, ‘There’s little time until then and we’ll be four; now we’re three and we’ll be four’; ‘And when is that?’, ‘We need to be patient; if we’re not patient, how will we manage?’ ” (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

“Yes, they know, but they don’t know for what and how. (...) I told them he’ll not stay long, but they got used to it in time. I tell them he’ll stay for a few months and then he’ll come home. They kind of know because I keep speaking with my mother and they kind of hear how long he’ll stay in there. But I tell them he’s still on trial and will get out sooner because they don’t know what is it about.” (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

Although mothers did not speak with their children about the imprisoned father, they did admit that they do not know whether the child wanted to speak or not. The reasons for which mothers did not speak with their children were different. In the case of Ramona, she acknowledged she was not open to her children and the decision not to talk about the father was taken for the children’s wellbeing, after a marriage dominated by her husband’s physical abuse:

“He’s also very... they don’t care about him at all. Do I know what’s going on in their souls? I’m never opened to them, to ask them ‘Mum, do you miss your father? Do you want him to come back?’ because I don’t want him to come back home, I took this decision for them because it’s better this way. (Do the children ask you about their father?) No. If they asked... may be, I don’t remember... but no...” (Ramona, 33 years old)

Domestic violence is also something Corina experienced in her marriage. Her talks with the children about their father were mainly related to her openness to accompany them to prison if they wished to visit, although she informed them of her rejection of the father:

“I told my children: ‘Mother⁷... if you want to go to see your father, I’ll go to the prison with you because they don’t let you in without me. But I don’t go in!’ ...and I told them: ‘Go, he’s your father, but I won’t go, I don’t even want to hear of him... he did wrong with your brother who’s in jail.’ He’s done a lot of bad things since they’re there.” (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

Other mothers preferred not to speak with their children thinking the subject would disturb them and this would interfere with school or with their play with friends:

“I don’t really talk about it... if they don’t ask, I don’t start this subject so they do their homework, come inside when it gets dark, play around... I say... what good would it do to start this subject and make them cry?” (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

“I told myself that I should be the one carrying this burden. I haven’t tried. I told myself he’ll come home. (...) This is why I don’t want to disturb them... to make them remember. (What would happen?) I don’t know... I think... if I were them... ‘Now mum comes and asks us all these questions’ or ... I just leave them as they are. They don’t cry, but probably when they see other children have their parents, a mum and a dad...” (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Despite children’s active interest in their father, the mothers tended to avoid the subject, most often rationalizing that it would have caused further pain and this was something the children should not experience. Although the mothers assumed their children may experience emotional difficulties following their father’s imprisonment, they responded by avoiding to acknowledge this, whilst the children tended to feedback by being understanding of the situation and supportive of the mother.

Behavioural effects on children

Two themes emerged from children’s interviews with respect to the changes they experienced at behavioural level: (1) impacts of stigmatisation and (2) helping out and being responsible.

Effects of stigmatisation

Having a father in prison affected children in that they had to cope with being bullied by other children. Their main reaction was to avoid responding:

⁷ In spoken Romanian, some mothers replace their children’s names with words, such as “mother” or “mum”.

“At times, one or another said something but not all the time. (What did they say?) That he’s in jail because he killed his own brother... (...) I didn’t respond.” (Simona, 15 years old, Family 8)

“There are my colleagues in the next village, they don’t realize what they say and I don’t mind them. (What do they say?) Bad things... I can’t say the words.” (Nicoleta, 12 years old, Family 13)

For Liviu, being bullied made him stop going to school and miss one year:

“I am one year behind [*at school*] because my father was arrested. (...) If I went to school my schoolmates would... that he’s arrested, he’s a jail man and ‘You’ll go to jail as he did!’ (...) Even on the street they told me my father is in jail, ‘What are you going to do?... You walk like a homeless!’ ” (Liviu, 15 years old, Family 7)

Helping out and being responsible

Following fathers’ imprisonment, children assumed part of the responsibilities in the family, from taking care of the little brothers to helping with the household. The following quotations illustrate how children got involved. Since most children in the study were from rural areas and lived in houses without water or heating, while their food was ensured from cultivating the land and raising animals, much of their verbatim reports on helping out refer to chopping wood, gardening, farming, or cleaning the house:

“Since my father went away I work more around the house... I chop firewood, take care of the animals and the house, I take care of my younger brothers... like we do at the countryside... take care of them not to go on the road, not to get into fights with other children...” (Marius, 16 years old, Family 5)

“I take the firewood and chop it. (Did you used to do that before?) I used to, but not so often.” (Mihai, 11 years old, Family 1)

“I also swab around the house, do the dishes, or when she [*mother*] goes to the city she tells me to clean the house... things like that.” (Simona, 15 years old, Family 8)

For some children, helping out was something that had negative consequences in that it interfered with school, as Nicoleta explained:

“(What has changed?) With school, at home... (What happened?) I didn’t have the grades as I used to... (Why is that?) I was helping mother (...) with the house, in the yard, the animals, the kitchen, all sorts of things.” (Nicoleta, 12 years old, Family 13)

Being responsible was children's response to coping with father's absence. This involved attending to what mothers told them to do or encouraging other members of the family:

"Mum leaves me a note and I listen to what Mom says. If she says I should go to sleep, I go to sleep. Usually she says to go and take a shower, to eat, and then I go to sleep for a little while, and then I do my homework." (Sabina, 9 years old, Family 2)

"Mum tells us to stay with her (*toddler sister*) (...) if we go outside for just a minute she cries, if somebody calls us she... she doesn't leave us, we have to stay by her side (...) I see grandmother crying because father is in jail and I go and tell her 'Grandmother, don't cry because all things will turn out as before!'" (Matei, 11 years old, Family 3)

Part of feeling responsible was, in the case of Madalina (17 years old, Family 10), attempting to save her parents' marriage by going to prison and talking with her jealous father:

"I went to prison on my own because I wanted to talk with him about something. This fear started to increase when I realized how many people are around my mother and I saw all sorts of films and there's the idea... it's easy for someone who's not married, but when you're married, you're handcuffed. When your husband gets annoyed very easy, the handcuffs are easily broken and I'm afraid my father will have a big fight with my mother and she will look for support somewhere else. So if he sees I tell everything upfront..."

The above quotations showed that children's behaviours changed following their father's imprisonment. Avoidance of direct confrontations with bullying peers or helping out with the household chores can be interpreted as mature behaviours, thus confirming their mothers' perception of them.

Behavioural effects on mothers

Partners' imprisonment also brought about changes in mothers' behaviours. Three main themes emerged from the interviews: (1) social withdrawal; (2) increasing obligations; and (3) sharing difficulties.

Social withdrawal

After partners' imprisonment, one of the mothers' reactions was to avoid contact with people. Some women's social withdrawal was justified by what they think people may talk in

relation to the crime of their spouses, their possible sexual availability, or the family being labelled as criminal. The feeling of being “sentenced” by the members of the community as well as their struggle to overcome this propelled them into isolation:

“Nothing has changed except I don’t go out in the village any more (...) I don’t go out because people stop you and ask you questions; they tell you all sorts of words. (...) Well, what to say? ...this is what they’re waiting for! If my husband is away, I’ll start doing bad things and live with one thousand and one hundred men and I don’t want to let people talk because I promised my husband and to myself that I will only belong to my husband and I will only be mother to my children. (...) People would say ‘Look! Her husband did what he did...’ (...) In my mind I think the people would say that if my husband did this, then my son would do, too. It is the way I feel when I go out... as if people would convict me. It’s not good to think like this, but I rather stay in and don’t go out.” (Florina, 31 years old, Family 12)

For other mothers, self-isolation was just a phase they went through in the first months after husband’s arrest, feeling depressed or ashamed of what people might say:

“I don’t listen what people say. (What do they say?) All kinds of things, but I don’t mind them. At the beginning, a month or two I’ve stayed in the house most of the time, crying. But afterwards I said to myself ‘What am I doing here? Do I really care about what people say!?’ ” (Elisabeta, 29 years old, Family 1)

“They [the people] gaze as if I’ve done something. I was embarrassed but throughout time I minded my own way and my home and stopped paying attention to them. This too has affected me. Well, it affected me at the beginning because it seemed to me too insistent...People looking at us on the street... they felt that we were too... I mean I was affected by these situations. (Has anyone told you anything?) No, they didn’t say anything. They were gazing and watching us from behind to see... many times I used to walk with my head down, without looking to the left or right, just taking the little girl to the school and that’s it.” (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

As with their children, mothers also experienced stigma and, as a result, withdrew socially. Similar to their children, mothers’ reaction was to avoid confrontations with other members of the community by staying inside the house or restricting their outings to what was necessary, such as taking the children to school. However, the stigma mothers perceived was not confirmed by actual acts of bullying from neighbours, the women’s assumptions being based on the assumption that “people may talk”.

Increasing obligations

Mothers’ narratives about their life after their partners’ imprisonment indicated they had

to cope with a burden of chores and responsibilities. These do not include just taking care of the children, but also taking over the tasks their partners used to fulfil and working to earn money for the family. As the living conditions of families involved in the study are very poor and typical for rural Romania (they depend on fountains for water supply, there is no centralized heating, and farming is not industrialized), mothers' verbatim reports include references to chores such as fetching water or chopping wood:

"I've learned... I was used to say 'Marian, go to the forest and bring me water, go to the animals! I stay in the house, clean, do the laundry, cook.' This way, I have to schedule a day for the laundry and cooking, tomorrow I have to go on the field to plant, to harvest... (...) I have taken fifty percent the life of a man. I didn't want to... (...) I have to take care of five souls. All the time: it's one whose socks need to be washed, another has fever, I have to.... There are five souls I have to...." (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

"I do everything: chop firewood, do this, do that. Chop firewood, fetch the water, do the laundry, cook, clean, prepare the children for school, help them with homework, go to the village and work for whom wants my help. What should I do? What to give the children to eat? From where to take money? Anything else I have to do..." (Elisabeta, 29 years old, Family 1)

"I wash the children, take them to school, cook... (...) In my life... it's difficult. To me, it is very difficult... (...) As I wake up in the morning, I clean and cook. When they arrive, the fire is burning; they sit over there, watch television. (...) When they come home, they need to start their homework and don't have time so I wash, I dry the clothes and in the morning they wear it. I also iron... that's it. I have to. They can't go to school with the clothes tousled." (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

The children and the responsibility of being a mother were the main reasons the women used when explaining their burden:

"I would do anything for my children; it's my duty to take care of my children. The things I do for them and care for them... it's enough for me. I take care of them daily. It's not that I feel overwhelmed... I *can* do it." (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

"That's how I see it: it is my duty as a mother to raise them, I gave birth to them and I need to raise them, to educate them, to send them to school." (Ramona, 33 years old)

Sharing difficulties

Mothers' overwhelming responsibilities were also shared with the children who were involved in doing house chores or farming:

“We’re together, we help each other, what’s to be done is being done. We work as a team, I mean we work on the field, we work the land. Ioana stays home with the youngest and the boy comes with me. I don’t make him come and work side by side with me, but he brings me a bottle of water from time to time...” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“Now, with everything that happened with my husband I cried a lot and I don’t feel well, I get dizzy and my body feels weakened. (...) But I can handle the house chores and the children also help: they bring me water, put the laundry to dry, chop firewood, and feed the horse. (...) They didn’t used to do as many things as they do now, but because I’m left alone and they know I don’t feel very well, they help me.” (Petronela, 41 years old, Family 5)

“The boys come from high-school, change their clothes, eat, rest a bit (...) and afterwards I start ‘You go bring some water!’, ‘You come with me to feed and clean the animals!’, ‘You chop the firewood!’. Afterwards they do their homework, they wash themselves, and for a half an hour or an hour they watch television.” (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

The main changes in mothers’ behaviours are similar to the changes depicted in their children, including dealing with stigma and taking on more responsibilities related to the household. If children’s response to stigma was avoidance of people bullying behaviours, in the case of mothers, self-isolation and avoidance of neighbours was a response to a perceived - but unconfirmed - stigmatization from community members. While recounting the amount of work they had to do in the house and in raising their children, mothers’ discourses included self-assumed responsibility of being mothers and doing the things they did as part of their parental role. However, they did admit they needed children’s help in coping with the chores and they have involved them in what needed to be done. Children also reported having more house duties than before the imprisonment, although they had noticed this had repercussions on their school performances.

Money problems

For the children, father’s absence caused them being aware of the things that they wish for or need but the family can no longer afford because the father, in most cases, was the only breadwinner.

“He used to send us money before, especially when my sister was away in judo training or had judo matches... he used to send us money but now... (...) Because we missed our father, we miss the money

and my mother was... things are missing now too..." (Raluca, 16 years old, Family 6)

"All children come to school with all kinds of things I would like and there's no money for my family... (...) My father was the one bringing the money in the family; my mother used to do this rarely." (Mihai, 11 years old, Family 1)

In Liviu's case, absence of money was felt in relation to more basic things such as food, noticing that his family can no longer afford to buy meat or sweets:

"We don't have the things we used to have... now we eat beans and potatoes, before we used to eat meat, fruits, and sweets." (Liviu, 15 years old, Family 7)

The need for school supplies was also mentioned in the context of money problems:

"We need many things for school because we're so many and we need to understand when we don't have what we want." (Martina, 12 years old, Family 8)

"Since my daddy left we no longer have money for school and for studying. (...) It's about the money we don't have to buy notebooks, pens, or to go to school contests. (...) My father used to buy us things." (Cristi, 13 years old, Family 11)

Living with just social benefits (i.e. state benefit as temporary single family, he guaranteed minimum income, and/or state child allowance) was very hard for the mothers. The money was scarce and insufficient for the basic needs of the family, such as food, clothing for the children, school supplies, and firewood for the winter or electricity. Adding to the stress of finding resources, mothers also had to deal with children's natural requests to have things they saw other children their ages had.

"It's changed because I don't have the possibility to.... there are the children, they ask for one or another, I don't have what to give them; if I don't work, I have to wait to get the allowances and afterwards the social benefit. (...) This month I didn't go to visit because I don't have money. (...) I also bought the children shoes. Now they have to go to school..." (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

"The moment they took him was the moment we started needing a lot, especially the children. (...) Income, school things the children needed, at home... They were growing older and... it affected us very much... the children and me. (...) It's very difficult. Now I also have the social benefit, but a few months ago I only had children's allowances. It took a lot of time to make the papers⁸; about five or six months." (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

⁸ In order to benefit from the guaranteed minimum income, a family must apply for this at the Mayor's social services and to provide certain documentation (e.g. copies after the birth certificates of all members of the family, fiscal certificate, income certificate, certificate stating the family does not own land)

In order to provide food for their children, mothers grow vegetables and take care of the livestock:

“I also plant potatoes, beans; I harvest and put away, but that’s not enough and we still have to buy things. We also plant green goods, but how long can it last? The summer and towards fall we manage, but in the winter is hard. We need firewood. We don’t have a forest and I need to buy it and you can tell it’s hard. (...) I would like to offer them at least half of what they desire, at least a piece because right now I can’t on my own.” (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

For some of the mothers, the way to cope with absence of money and every day necessities was to borrow money which they returned when their social benefits were due:

“I borrowed one million from a neighbour, from another fifty lei... more than 3 million I have to pay there and when my benefits came I returned the money and paid the transport and I didn’t have the money to pay the electricity. The owner said he will not take my children and if my children miss a school day I will no longer get the social benefits... what am I to do? (...) The boys... they commute, money for high-school, pocket money. (...) let’s think we have to pay the electricity bill. We have a TV, we have to pay for the cow to be taken with the herd, we have to buy food for the pigs, and so many and out of 8 million per month... What should I do?” (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

“The money I have is the money I give my children. What they need: books for school... ‘Mum, I don’t have a pen!’, ‘Go buy a pen!’; ‘Mum, I need this!’, ‘Go and buy!’... When I have the money; if I don’t I borrow from neighbours until I get my salary or borrow from the store account... sometimes I’m left without money... There are many children and they have needs... this is it.” (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

Another financial stress is represented by the imprisoned husband’s need for money. Ramona, however, has chosen to save it for her children:

“We live off children’s allowances, social benefits and support allowance... because of him we didn’t have the latter. (Why because of him?) Fines, judiciary expenses he didn’t pay and all went to the state. The support allowance I didn’t get because of him... and after he went away they approved my file and the social benefit file, and with the children’s allowances... we’re better. (...) A week ago he wrote to ask for money. To take from the children and send him money?! The school is starting; I need firewood for the winter...” (Ramona, 33 years old)

A lack of money due to father’s imprisonment also caused children to stop going to school, as it was the case for Petronela’s son and Corina’s daughter:

“His father was arrested when he (*the child*) finished secondary school and I didn’t enrol him in high-school because I knew I would not have the money for this. In the city things are different from the village... one needs money, a better coat... If his father would have been home, he would have continued

to go to school” (Petronela, 41 years old, Family 5)

“She wanted to continue with her education. I told her ‘Mihaela, I have no possibilities to take you to school, mum... A bus pass is one million and eight hundred thousand. Where should I take this money from? But you don’t need money just for the bus pass, mummy...’ and I didn’t have any money to keep her in school... and I felt so sorry for her...” (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

Parenting stress

Taking into account the changes families of prisoners go through following paternal imprisonment in general and the emotional and behavioural changes suffered by the mothers included in the research in particular, this study looked at how these may have caused impairments in mothers exercising their parental role using Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995).

Mothers’ narratives in relation to PPS assertions

The PSS was administered as an interview, the researcher reading the items included in the scale to the mothers. Almost each assertion triggered statements and considerations about their feelings and thoughts. Not all women, however, rated their answer. It was considered appropriate not to insist on women’s score for the assertions bearing in mind the scope was to explore mothers’ perception with regards to the sentences included in the scale.

Therefore, this section includes mothers’ narratives structured on the four factors that resulted from the psychometric analysis of the PSS (Berry & Jones, 1995). These are: parental rewards, parental stressors, lack of control, and parental satisfaction.

Parental rewards

The PSS assertions included under this factor and to which mothers reacted are:

6. I enjoy spending time with my child(ren).
5. I feel close to my child(ren).
7. My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me.
18. I find my child(ren) enjoyable.
1. I am happy in my role as a parent.

8. Having child(ren) gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future.

In their role as parents, mothers underlined the importance of knowing how to raise, love, and spend time with a child. They felt proud of their children and loved by them. At the same time, mothers felt their children were the most important companion on whom they could rely and, in the case of Ramona, the ones who never hurt them:

“Being a parent is a miracle from God. One needs to know how to raise them, not just to give birth to them and throw them into life... to study, this is the most important. (...) When I see them coming back from school... I think a mother knows how it feels to look at her child. Everything. It’s beautiful to have children, to raise them. (...) They’re the only ones I have. I have them. I don’t have anybody else. The children with me and I with the children. (...) How would I not enjoy?! (...) They’re the ones I have. They never let me down. They didn’t hit me, didn’t offend me as he did. They’re the ones. (...) They’re the only ones in my life.” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“My accomplishment is my children, the rest comes and goes. The problems never stop. (...) Yes, I feel very close. We give advice to each other for certain things (...) Yes, I enjoy it but sometimes I don’t spend my time with them. (...) Sometimes we do things together and sometimes no, but it’s not to be mean... (...) I enjoy very much to be with them.” (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

“Yes. (...) they’re my children and they understand me. (...) They love me and I love them. I feel loved by them. (...) I spend a lot of time with them: in the park, we play together hide and seek, whatever they want... (...) I strongly agree!” (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

Mothers perceived their children also as a source of strength, helping them to go through the hard time of husband’s imprisonment:

“I don’t think I could resist without them. (...) That is true! I keep thinking it will be all right. Sometimes, when I feel I can’t anymore, I just think of them and it’s better. (...) If it wasn’t for my children, I don’t think I would resist.” (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

“Yes, of course... if it wasn’t for him, I don’t know what stupid things I would have done. May be I wouldn’t have been here today, but thinking of him that I have to raise him, to see him a big boy...” (Diana, 37 years old)

“Strongly agree. Yes, I am close. (...) Strongly agree... it’s due to them I keep going (...) Yes. That’s the way I think. I help them as much as I can because maybe when I’m old they’ll look at me... this is why I’m so careful, for them to remember me.” (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Parental stressors

The PSS assertions included under “parental stressors” factor are:

- 10. Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life.
- 12. It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren).
- 3. Caring for my child(ren) sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give.
- 9. The major source of stress in my life is my child(ren).
- 11. Having child(ren) has been a financial burden.
- 16. Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life.

The children were not perceived as a burden or as being guilty for the worries and hardship the family went through following their father's imprisonment. As Mariana said:

"They have no blame for our trouble. It's our blame, they have none of it. (...) Because of the children, no... I don't know... I don't know how to say. The children do not... I don't know how to say... they don't take up of my time, no." (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

Mothers acknowledged their emotional problems and efforts to hide it from their children in order to protect them, as well as the difficulties and stress due to insufficient money to cover children's necessities, or the amount of work they needed to do. However, children were not considered as part of their endeavours.

"It's my duty to take care of my children. (...) I keep thinking any child wants a family... when they see... Nah... so to say, in front of her I can't cry because she'll ask me why am I crying. I always say I have a tooth ache so she wouldn't be upset..." (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

"My energy is shared in different parts: house chores, the field, day work. I don't give all my energy to the children... (...) Strongly disagree. Why should I be stressed? (...) If I would have enough for clothing and food, I wouldn't need the money, it's just the electricity bill I'm afraid." (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Being a parent was, for mothers like Ramona, a duty where difficulties were manageable to the extent of one's strength and help from God:

"I do as much as I can. I also leave things for the next day if today is not enough, but I do it... (...) Not true! We do as much as we can no matter if there's more or less time... it is for them that I work and do things. (...) No, not true... the same: as long as we can do it, we do it. We always manage. (...) No, that's how I see it: it is my duty as a mother to raise them, I gave birth to them and I need to raise them, to educate them, to send them to school." (Ramona, 33 years old)

The items under "parental stressors" triggered mothers' comments about their frustrations related to children's behaviour. Nonetheless, these were not perceived as stressful, but as

upsetting or annoying:

“No. I am never stressed by my children. It’s just when I think of my older daughter I feel upset to know a child was good and now she suffers or you see him smoking or drinking.... this is being upset, not a stress. Of course, you want to help your child, to speak with your child, but you cannot be a psychologist nonstop. There are moments when I cannot listen what they say... I talk about my older children...” (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

“No. He doesn’t stress me. Sometimes he annoys me and it’s normal, but he doesn’t stress me, no. What is more beautiful than having a child?! (...) No, he’s not a burden. No. It’s just the way life is; I feel that I can’t provide enough for him. I wish I could offer him more, but he’s not a burden. (...) No, the child has no blame in it, no...” (Diana, 37 years old)

Lack of control

The items included in the “lack of control” factor are:

- 14. If I had it to do over again, I might decide not to have child(ren).
- 16. Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life.
- 15. I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent.

Mothers were mostly happy to have children, feeling they could cope with the difficulties.

“No. I’m happy to have my children. (...) No, we’ve always wanted to have children. (...) I do not agree with this. It’s not that I feel overwhelmed... I *can* do it.” (...) (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

“Not true. I always loved children. (...) No, not true. I feel good, even if there are so many chores and worries, but I don’t... I can handle it, I am a calm person. I get by. (...) No, my life doesn’t matter anymore. Now, it is for them, to study and have a future.” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“No. None of my problems is caused by my children. A childless person is a person of nothing. The greatest love in the world is when you have children.” (Petronela, 41 years old, Family 5)

Alina, on the other hand, was a mother who dedicated her life to her children for whom she would do everything she can, but admitted that if she were to do it again, she would decide to have just for one child:

“I’d give my life for my children... I wouldn’t marry though... the things I went through.... I’d have a child, yes.... but it’s difficult... (...) It’s a big responsibility because there are many of them... when you have one it’s different, but with 6.... Oh, my!...” (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

Parental satisfaction

The “Parental satisfaction” factor includes the following assertions:

- 18. I find my child(ren) enjoyable.
- 17. I am satisfied as a parent.
- 13. The behaviour of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me.

Mothers felt satisfied with their children. For Ramona, the main focus was on her children to study:

“Totally, but I hope they’ll study better because I don’t like it very much how they study. (...) They need to do their homework, they need to be smarter!” (Ramona, 33 years old)

The items on parental satisfaction prompted mothers to assert their pride for the children’s good behaviour:

“They bring me only happiness, have good results wherever they go and people give them credit and I’m really satisfied with their behaviour.” (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

“No, why? When they go out they’re clean, well dressed... I have no worry... they behave, don’t talk back... nobody in the village came to tell me anything... there are other children hurting their mother... my children are not like that! (...) Of course I am satisfied. I do as much as I can, what else is there?!” (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

For Diana, her understanding of parental satisfaction was related to her inability to provide her child with the things he needed, including her time which was mostly spent on her job:

“No. It is my pain... his behaviour towards me, but no... it’s not stressful, it’s not embarrassing. (...) I can’t say I’m satisfied. No matter how much I do for him, being here, having the job that I have, I am not. I wish... to work less, I wish I had a good job, to earn more money, to give him more, to have more time to spend with him. I don’t know how to explain to make myself understood.” (Diana, 37 years old)

Parental satisfaction was also seen as mother’s attempt to treat all her children equally, even in what concerns punishments:

“I speak nice to them. They have their flaws, they fight on who took the pen, but I solve it: ‘Give the pen back!’ or.... ‘Give it to me: take the money and buy – you, one pen, you one pen... so you don’t need to

argue!'. I make no difference between them, to care more for one... if one makes a foolish thing and they protect each other, all five of them get spanked." (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Mothers' narratives prompted by the Parental Stress Scale items have shown they were proud of their children and their role as mothers was assumed in terms of parental duty. Mothers differentiated between the stresses caused by lack of money or housework overload and what might be stress caused by the children in whom they saw no reason for it.

However, mothers' discourses included references to the importance of children in their lives, helping them to survive the difficult times and giving them reason to keep on going (i.e. "They're the ones I have. They never let me down. They didn't hit me, didn't offend me as he did." - Ramona, 33 years old; "They understand me. (...) They love me and I love them. I feel loved by them." - Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4; "I don't think I could resist without them." - Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11; "If it wasn't for him, I don't know what stupid things I would have done." - Diana, 37 years old). These are indications that mothers also relied on their children to cope with life after their partners' imprisonment, the children being given the role of emotional support. As shown in the section on *Emotional impacts on mothers following husband's imprisonment*, mothers went through severe emotional difficulties, such as depression and anxiety. As result, the children were not only supportive of the mothers with the household work, but they were also counted for their emotional support.

Parenting practices

This section presents narratives from mothers and children related to practices of mothers in rearing for their children in the context of parental imprisonment structured on five main themes: (1) mothers' perception of their children; (2) affectionate behaviour; (3) father – child contact; (4) education; and (5) child supervision and discipline.

Mothers' perception of their children

Mothers' perception of their children was generally positive. They were described as good children in relation to understanding the family situation, and being collaborative and

respectful. Children's obedience and understanding of the family situation, as behaviours that are expected from and valued, were the first to be mentioned by the mothers. Children's sensitivity in relation to their father and school performances were features present in mothers' descriptions:

"She's a good child. She listens to me. She's big and she knows. She listens to me, she understands, she doesn't talk back. Even if I say something to her, she doesn't talk back I am satisfied that she understands me." (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

"I am very satisfied with them (*the children*) ... they are very good... They listen to me... at least Mihaela, no... she doesn't go to discotheques... (...) I always got along with her... if she wishes for something and I tell her 'Mihaela, we don't have money now, but when we'll have money, mum will buy you what you want', no... She never told me I don't want to buy her things; she knows it's difficult." (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

Maturity of the child or involvement in strengthening parents' relationship was underlined by the mothers when describing their child in relation to the life after father's imprisonment. The children were perceived as normal or, as in the case of Lacramioara's daughter, as struggling to bring her father to "a floating line", meaning she made her father aware of how important it is to have a good relationship with her mother:

"Raluca is a child who is much more mature for her age. She's also a child as children normally are. There were difficult moments at the beginning when we separated, but now it is better." (Claudia, 37 years old, Family 6)

"She suffered; even tomorrow she'll go [to visit the father] because she said 'Mum, I want to be the one talking with father'. So, if she sees there's a problem between me and him and things are getting worse, she says she wants to speak with her father right away. ...and she has this discussion and immediately she brings him on a floating line." (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

Mothers also described children as obedient and acknowledged their intelligence and hobbies:

"He's a smart boy. He also has his things: when he wants to go somewhere, he goes even if I don't let him, but when I tell him to bring a bucket of water or some firewood, he brings it. But usually I tell him to stay home and do his homework. At least with mathematics, he's very good." (Elisabeta, 29 years old, Family 1)

"He's a child very attached to his mother, he listens, he's a good boy, he understands and he's very smart. (...) He said he wants to be a footballer. He plays all the time: during holidays, between classes, anywhere children play... he loves football very much." (Elena, 34 years old, Family 3)

Affectionate behaviour

This theme includes children's narratives about the things children and mothers do together that make the children feel connected. It is about spending time, playing, or about just being there, close to one another.

“The best part is that I like her because I love her and she plays with me. (...) We do beautiful things together. We play hide and seek. It's a game...” (Sabina, 9 years old, Family 2)

“I mean, I like the way we communicate, she does not hurt me, she loves me, we don't argue. (...) She holds me. For example, before going into the car, she tickled me. We play in the evening.” (Matei, 11 years old, Family 3)

“I remember I was sleeping with my mother and.... It felt safe. (...) I mean, we're more connected now. I didn't used to stay so close to her. Before, when I was younger, I was with my father all the time. Wherever he went, I went with him and now I spend my time with my mother.” (Martina, 12 years old, Family 8)

Children's accounts about their relationship with the mother reflected a relationship based on affection and connectedness.

Father-child contact

For the children participating in this study, father-child contact was usually mediated by their mothers. The contact included writing letters as a form of expressing feelings as well as inquiring about the welfare of their fathers and about the length of their sentences, questions to which mothers avoided answering, as previously shown.

“(Do you write to your father?) I don't. My mother writes and then I write at the end. ‘Hello, father! How are you?, How is life?, Can you handle?, How long will you be in there? I miss you. Love,’ and we all write down our names.” (Liviu, 15 years old, Family 7)

Martina, for example, did not live at home, so she learned most news about her father from her mother who kept contact mainly by phone. However, when she could speak with her father on the phone, the conversation was mostly focused on school and advices the father gave to his daughter:

“When I come home, I speak with my father. For the rest of the time I can't because he doesn't have my

phone number since I keep changing my phone card. I used to have a different phone, now it broke and I have a new phone card and he doesn't have my new phone number so he cannot call. I call my mother and when she's home, I speak with her. (...) He asks me how I am, how is my studying, my practice, if I'm all right. I say it's fine. He tells me to keep practicing athletics and to study to.... Things like these ...” (Martina, 12 years old, Family 8)

From the 15 children participant in the study, only one had not been to visit the imprisoned father due to her family's lack of money. If she would have had this opportunity, she would have chosen to share about her life and also to inquire about father's wellbeing, a topic of the child's concern:

“I would have told him about my school, how I get along with my friends, I would have asked him how he feels... all sorts of things. (Why would you want to ask him about how he feels?) I need to find out. (How do you think he feels?) Bad. (Why is that?) Well, it's not good to be in there. (...) She (*the younger sister*) told me how my father looked like, how was in there, how was the road and that's about it. When it was my turn to go... my mum got some bills... and I couldn't go...” (Nicoleta, 12 years old, Family 13)

Some of the children chose not to have contact with their fathers for reasons that may be related to being a teenager. Simona, for example, did not like to be asked by her father if she obeyed her mother. She also avoided speaking with him because she felt he constantly criticized her for her teenage “nose up high” attitude:

“I don't really speak with him... on the phone, nor do I go to visit him. I was only once, but for the rest, I don't go. I just don't want to go to him... I'm not drawn to him. I have spoken with him, but rarely. (...) He asks if I listen to my mother, if I did this or that, if I go to school, things like these and I don't really go because I don't like it. (...) I don't really speak with him... only if he asks for me or if I want to... but generally I don't speak with him. (Why is that?) I don't know... I don't want to talk with him... he keeps telling me I speak with my nose up high... things like that.” (Simona, 15 years old, Family 8)

Previous family violence and also awareness of father's selfishness caused some children to stop visiting:

“I went to visit the first two years since he'd been in there, but after that I stopped. It's been more than two years since I went to see him. (What made you stop going to visit?) He was speaking nonsense... (...) He said that I should bring him the money people gave me when I went carolling⁹. He didn't say that I should buy something for myself... and of course I stopped going, this is why... he started to speak nonsense that I didn't go... but I had to buy shoes for myself and cloths... he didn't think, he... wanted to

⁹ During Christmas Eve, children accustom to sing carols at their neighbours' and relatives' doors. The people usually give them money and sweets for their efforts.

give it all to him.” (Mihaela, 16 years old, Family 9)

Education

With respect to children’s education, mothers showed great concern and willingness to work more so their children would not skip homework or miss classes:

“To study, this is the most important. I get very upset if one of my children doesn’t go to school... they must study. I can’t help them because the school disciplines are very different nowadays. They tell me, I look in the book, but I don’t understand much. I told them to go to other colleagues of theirs... they need to do their homework; they need to be smarter...” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“I have to buy them things, otherwise they abandon school. If I don’t pay for things, I would find out the children don’t go to school anymore... At least they should go to school, not stay behind with their study.” (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

“I am very happy with him even with school because he studies and brings grades... I told him ‘I don’t ask too much. If today you take a four, don’t worry, I won’t argue with you. Come home, you tell me ‘Mother, I didn’t know. This is it, I haven’t studied.’ Tomorrow you’ll study and get a seven or an eight, you pass and fix that four’ ”. (...) He promised he’ll study.” (Florina, 31 years old, Family 12)

“They need to study... They also need to focus on this until they grow up, they need to study hard to have a job...” (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Education was something mothers acknowledged as very important for the children’s future and found ways to support them by understanding the situations where they did not perform as expected or by encouraging them to study with school colleagues. This seems, however, slightly contradictory with mothers’ demands for children’s involvement in house chores, farming, or family issues that, as shown in previous sections of this chapter, could result in children’s low school attainments.

Child supervision, control, and discipline

Part of parental practices involves child supervision, control, and discipline. Children’s accounts on this subject revealed two main forms in which mothers disciplined them: by invoking the father as a figure of authority as it was the case of Sabina (9 years old, Family 2) or by restricting the playground space which, for Cristi (13 years old, Family 11) meant being allowed to play only around the house.

“(...) that she calls Dad right now... She says so when I misbehave. But he never answers because he doesn't have a phone.” (Sabina, 9 years old, Family 2)

“When Daddy was home she'd let us go further away from home, but now she doesn't anymore.” (Cristi, 13 years old, Family 11)

However, when it comes to controlling their children, mothers seemed to want to know what they do in their leisure hours and impose curfews on their time spent with friends. This was perceived by adolescent girls as something that is understandable in the context of mother being a temporary single parent, as in the case of Nicoleta (12 years old, Family 13):

“I have to tell her about school, where I go, who do I play with, and what am I doing. (...) My father used to ask me for how long will I stay with a friend and my mom was confident with my father. Now she's alone and she needs to know how much time I spend with my friends and if I don't keep my promise, the next day I'm grounded.”

For other children, their mother's supervision and control was something perceived as stressful:

“When I was little I didn't have a curfew as I do now... telling me the time I have to be home. Now she calls to see where I am, what am I doing, things like this. (...) She stresses me to come home; I'm not allowed to do this or that... I'm not a baby so I wouldn't know when to come home. If she tells me to come home at a certain hour, I come home at that hour. I may be five or ten minutes late until I get there but she keeps calling me on the phone asking 'When will you get home? When will you get home?!' ” (Simona, 15 years old, Family 8)

For adolescent girls, the issue of mothers' trust and restrictions came out when talking about boyfriends.

“Mom said to go to the gynaecologist but I refused, not because I would have had something to hide, but at my age I have no place going to a gynaecologist. As long as I know I'm clean, I'm not interested in what others think.” (Madalina, 17 years old, Family 10)

“She doesn't trust me if I tell her I'm somewhere... she says I'm doing stupid things. She doesn't trust me when I tell her I'm with Tino [her brother] ... she says I'm telling lies. Nowadays I don't say much to her anymore because she tells me to watch for the boys, to look out... and I don't like it. (..) I had one [a boyfriend], but not anymore. I no longer wanted to be with him because I was afraid my mother would find out... things like that.” (Simona, 15 years old, Family 8)

On the other hand, mothers' perspectives on child supervision, discipline, and control were justified by their fear the children might get hurt:

"I'm more drastic. (...) For example, if she wants to go with her friends to eat a cake, I tell her she needs to be accompanied by me. May be I'm a little afraid (...) I panic really quickly if she hurts herself." (Maria, 30 years old, Family 2)

"It is a very good relationship. There are moments, as in any other family, sometimes it is tense but we communicate; that is she does nothing without telling me first, she goes nowhere without telling me and I offered this freedom to her. I offered this freedom. She has a telephone and she calls me, she says 'Mum, I need to do this, I'm there or there' and she respects the curfews she proposes." (Claudia, 37 years old, Family 6)

Some of the mothers mistrusted their children and for this reason they checked their school schedule very carefully:

"They say now they behave, but if they go to high-school to Vaslui, I don't know what they'll do. (...) I know the other arrives around 2 or 3. After the bus comes, they're at the door. Nobody stays behind. If they need to stay at school an extra hour, they call me 'Mum, I have an extra hour' and I ask for the tutoring teacher: 'Pass me your teacher on the phone'... I don't just take their words... and they come with the 4 o'clock bus... I wait for my girl at 4." (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

Her husband's imprisonment has meant a period of emotional difficulties for Mariana who felt that she has lost control over her children:

"It's very hard... You know? I kind of got them out of my hand because... even with school: if I haven't checked them, they stopped studying as before. I no longer had time to help them." (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

An issue that arose with Alexandra was of a particular form of control, the mother feeling afraid her children might start unapproved habits, such as smoking or drinking. She also wanted to show her husband and the community she could take good care of her children. In this respect, she disguised herself in order to check what her children were doing in their leisure time and she attempted to take the place of her children's playmates:

"They also have this habit to go in the village during the day... they have internet on the telephone, at the Mayor's office. I feel afraid and I go after them... I chase them so they wouldn't start smoking or drinking. (Are you afraid they might start?) I don't know... what if they befriend those boys... they have good friends who don't smoke, are good people... I know because I looked out for them... I dressed up as

a man and went behind the fences to see what they were doing. (What made you do this?) So he'll [] see and the people in the village would see I was ambitious and I knew how to control my children. (...) When Marian [her husband] will come and would choose to let them ... I don't want drinking, I don't want girls, I don't want boys. Some boys came to the fare... it was a fare on Saints Michael's, they stayed for a while, they took their coat on and they went in the village... I don't want them missing home; I don't want them to sleep over to colleagues... I want... if I have only one bread, I share it with all of them... to know they ate from my own hand. When Marian will come and he'll let them go as boys... (....) Sometimes I get pissed off that they're going to play football and I tell them 'Let's play football!' and I take the boys and I make them run: 'Isn't it better like this, with mum?' ” (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Children's narratives showed that mothers appreciate them for understanding the family situation and for being mature. Mothers were knowledgeable about their children's hobbies and made sure their children maintained contact with the imprisoned father and, at the same time, developed a relationship with their child based on affection. With respect to education, this is an area mothers insisted very much, as they considered it is very important for the future of their children.

Mothers' and children's accounts about supervision, discipline, and control showed that there are important differences in mothers after father's imprisonment in that they were more controlling of the children for fear of joining unwanted groups of friends or of being hurt. The forms of control varied from phone call check-ups to verifying information with teachers, or disguising to see what the children were doing in their leisure time. For some of the children, mothers' control was explicable taking into account their temporary single parent status, whilst for adolescents this was perceived as stressful and intrusive, making them feel mistrusted or to refuse romantic relationships that are normal at their age. Over-control of children's friends and leisure time may affect children's social skills in the long term. Regarding disciplining the children, mothers also included in their narratives reference to spanking the children for misbehaviour, or children - especially teenagers - commented on being grounded in situations where they did not respect curfews.

Summary

The present chapter aimed at examining the extent to which parental (father)

imprisonment affected the relationship between the children and their mothers and how this relationship, in turn, affected the children.

It has been shown children are emotionally affected by their fathers' incarceration, reporting feelings of sadness that have caused them eating and sleeping problems, as well as withholding emotions as an expression of acting strong.

Also, imprisonment of the husband or life partner caused profound emotional difficulties in mothers, their narratives including terms such as "depression" or "anxiety", or reference to being alone and afraid either for the safety of their children or, in the case of the women who had been victimized by their imprisoned partners, of husband's/partner's return home.

Whilst mothers showed a capacity to express their emotions in relation to coping with partner's imprisonment, they seemed less aware of their children's emotions in relation to coping and, rather only speculated that the children may have been affected (i.e. "I don't know if they're affected much about it. May be they are, in a certain way" - Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11). Mothers' unawareness of children's emotions was further explored by analysing mothers' and children's narratives with regards to mother-child conversations about the imprisoned father, revealing that, despite children's interest in their fathers' wellbeing and return home, mothers avoided discussions on this topic for fear of not re-traumatizing their offspring or rationalizing that this is beyond their level of understanding (i.e. "they don't know what is it about" - Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11).

Paternal imprisonment also impacted children's and mothers' behaviours. Children were found to react to stigmatizing behaviours from peers by avoiding confrontations. In addition, following father's imprisonment, children were more engaged in helping mothers with household chores or tended to get involved in family matters such as parental disputes or to be supportive of other family members, these actions sometimes having negative consequences on school attainment.

Mothers, on the other hand, were found to withdraw from social interactions as result of a perceived community stigma, and to be overburdened with responsibilities related to the household and farming which they shared with their children.

Family' poverty was strongly perceived by the children as well as by the mothers. The children were very aware of the poor economic situation as shown when they spoke of their need for diversified food (i.e. to eat meat and fruits), school supplies, or other things they saw in their peers and wished for. Mothers, on the other hand, invoked lack of money for children's needs, to pay for their transportation to school or for house utilities such as electricity, or to support their imprisoned husbands. This situation had a deeper impact on two child participants in the study who could no longer continue with their education.

Regarding parenting stress, the results showed that mothers do not feel stressed in their role as parents, and they can differentiate between the stresses caused by lack of money or overburdening with responsibilities related to the household and what might be stress caused by the children. However, mothers' discourses indicated that, aside from household and farming responsibilities, they also rely on their children for emotional support. This adds to the burden for children with parents in prison, which may impact their lives in terms of having to live and think as adults.

The results on parenting practices showed that mothers: value their children's obedience and understanding of the family situation; they have a relationship with their children based on affection; and encourage or mediate father-child contact. Also, keeping children in school was strongly valued by mothers, although this contradicted their practice of involving the children in household responsibilities, which has been shown to lead to lower school attainment. With respect to child supervision and control, this study showed that, following partner's imprisonment, mothers were more controlling of the children for fear of them joining unwanted groups of friends or of being hurt.

In short, the results showed that, although attachment is present, the mother-child relationship changed after paternal imprisonment, in that:

- mothers rely on their children to cope with their emotional difficulties caused by husband's imprisonment;
- mothers feel overwhelmed by the household responsibilities and seem not to observe the emotional problems faced also by their children;

- children and mothers are taking shares of the household related responsibilities;
- mothers are controlling of their children, causing the latter to feel stressed and mistrusted.

The following chapter will present information about the consequences of imprisonment on the relationship between the children's mother and father and how these affect the children.

Chapter 7. Fathers in prison: mother-father relationship¹⁰

This chapter aims to explore the effects of the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the imprisoned parent on the child. In this regard, views the mother-father relationship are investigated through children's and mothers' narratives taking into account the period before and after imprisonment, as well as participants' views on family reunification.

The interviews conducted with mothers and children showed that the parental relationship is perceived relatively similarly by children and their mothers. The relationship after imprisonment is focused mainly on the children and their wellbeing, contributing to children being assured of the family functionality. However, the results also revealed that children expect their fathers to change their behaviours when the family is reunited, whilst the mothers set preconditions such as fathers being more involved with household responsibilities and with raising children.

Children's perceptions

Children's perception of the mother-father relationship is presented taking into account their memory of the relationship before the imprisonment of the father and their perception of the current relationship.

¹⁰ Part of this Section have been published in Foca, L. (2015). The Romanian Wives of Prisoners, *Scientific Annals of the of the „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iasi, New Series. SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK Section*, 8(1): 200-209

As well, parts of this Section have been included in Foca, L. (2014). Jailed on the Outside: The Romanian Wives of Prisoners. *Paper presented at the International Scientific Conference: Communication, Context, Interdisciplinarity, 3rd Edition, 23-24 October 2014, Tîrgu Mureş. Tîrgu Mureş, University of „Petru Maior”.*

Perception of the mother-father relationship before imprisonment

Children perceived their parents' relationship as one where communication, mutual understanding, and agreement on children's discipline were present. The absence of fighting and arguments was cited as evidence to indicate a good relationship between their mother and father:

"Well, they used to communicate, they didn't fight. I saw places where parents fought, but not mine." (Nicoleta, 12 years old, Family 13)

"They used to get along well. I never saw them arguing... they used to understand each other. If we were naughty, they both agreed about the punishments." (Marius, 16 years old, Family 5)

Some of the children described the relationship between their parents in terms of going together to different places:

"They got along very well. (Please, describe.) Well, if dad went to some place, he'd take mum with him." (Gabriel, 13 years old, Family 12)

"They got along very well. (How could you tell?) Because everywhere they went, they took me along. Dad used to buy me a lot of things and mum would tell me 'Look what you would have lost if you wouldn't have come with us!'" (Sabina, 9 years old, Family 2)

Arguments or offences were mentioned by some of the children as something that occurred in their parents' relationship. However, these were described as something that happened and ended in "making up":

"They were fine together. Sometimes they picked fights.... I mean, they didn't hurt each other.... They argued about who's not doing what.... But afterwards they made up ..." (Martina, 12 years old, Family 8)

"I remember once they had reached a point when they said what was on their minds and started to offend each other and at that moment there was nothing else to say... They looked at each other, said one or two words and started to laugh and made up." (Madalina, 17 years old, Family 10)

Other children's memories of their parents' relationship included moments of parental disputes where mothers sanctioned their husbands/partners for having abused alcohol and where the children acted as mediators, as in the case of Cristi (13 years old, Family 11):

"They got along well. They never argued. (Please, describe "well".) Sometimes when my father drank too much my mother would make him stay outside and we would go to him and he'd tell us 'Go, tell your mother to let me in!' and we'd go 'Come on, mum, let him in...'. (...) She'd let him in anyway, but that's

the way she reacted.”

In the above quotations children described their parental relationship prior to imprisonment as a good relationship. Four other families included in this research, however, were strongly affected by fathers’ abuses and this was something children witnessed while growing up. Alcohol abuse, bad temper, jealousy, and violence against the mother were reasons Raluca attributed to the end of her parents’ relationship, which she remembered as traumatizing. She expressed her acceptance of mother no longer loving him and the inability to understand her father’s behaviour:

“He’d have these fights with my mother. My mother never really said anything because she couldn’t and when he used to hit her we were in danger. He never did anything to us, but we were very scared, especially nobody would dare to go to him and make him stop doing something bad. (...) Usually he doesn’t drink but when he starts... (...) I remember one time my mother was looking at him with such fear in her eyes and had bad thoughts about him... but she didn’t tell us everything and I know some things that are horrible. (...) They’ve been divorced since longer than that, but my mother forgave him for many things and she thought he will change and they lived together. (...) When he drinks, the alcohol changes him completely; he’s not the same man. He thinks my mother did I don’t know what, I just... I never understood, I could never understand. ...and the fact he used to hit her in front of us... it traumatized me. It was difficult.” (Raluca, 16 years old, Family 6)

For Mihaela, her parents’ relationship was perceived as a difficult one where mother and children were physically abused by the father. She also described her father as not taking part in the family responsibilities, thus leaving it all to the mother:

“When he was at home he used to beat us. (...) He used to beat mother also... he’d pretend to be ill and then mother went to the woods with my brother, they were working hard and he stayed home all day long, ate only steaks (...) Mum was yelling at him because she got upset... she used to go and work and he stayed home and ate steaks... he wouldn’t eat potatoes because he said he’s ill...” (Mihaela, 16 years old, Family 9)

In general, children’s perception of their parents’ relationship prior to imprisonment was positive, although they were aware of parental disputes that were recounted as part of a normal family life. The situation is different for the children whose mothers were abused by the fathers, the parental relationship having been perceived in terms of mother being afraid of the father or mothers taking up all the house responsibilities due to father’s unsupportiveness.

Perception of mother-father relationship during imprisonment

During father's imprisonment, the contact available between the two parents was through phone calls or prison visits. This is why children's perception of the mother-father relationship after imprisonment relates to their parents' conversations to which they assist or of which they know.

The children's views were that their parents' conversations during phone calls or prison visits are about their behaviour and schooling, followed by the everyday life of the family:

"They talk about my schooling, what happens around the house, the fact that money isn't enough. (...) They speak in the evening; my father calls. (...) They don't speak much, just about two minutes... he asks if we listen to her, if we behave..." (Mihai, 11 years old, Family 1)

"Yes, they speak, I don't know what. I'm away and my father calls my mother every morning, evening or at noon, it depends, but I'm not at home. (What do you think they talk about?) About the house, the things that happen, how work is, how we manage school..." (Martina, 12 years old, Family 8)

For other children, mother-father conversation started with parents inquiring of each other's wellbeing and then turned to the children.

"When we go and speak through the window they ask each other if they're all right, if they're healthy, he asks mother if she takes care of us and mother tells him that she does and he loves us very much and mother loves us." (Matei, 11 years old, Family 3)

Father asking for things was something Manuela mentioned as part of their parents' talks:

"He calls her and she tells him when we'll come to visit, he tells her to bring him this or that and then he says to her to pass the phone to me and he asks me about school, my grades, if I listen to mother, if I did something bad..." (Manuela, 9 years old, Family 8)

In the case of Madalina (17 years old, Family 10), her father's demands and his lack of interest about mother's wellbeing was perceived as endangering her parents' relationship, which she attempted to mediate:

"I've noticed that my mother and father don't talk to each other anymore (...) She talks with father more out of feeling afraid of not saying something wrong because my father is very sharp and if you say something without giving too much thought he remembers and the second time he starts developing ideas.... (...) I told him that he and my mother should be able to speak normally, not 'Have you sent that envelope?' 'Have you...' Lately things were like this. He became frustrated and I told him 'When you call

mum ask her ‘How are you?’ and if she doesn’t have an answer, ask her what she’d dreamt of!’(...) I think that if he’ll continue to behave like this, my mum will distance herself from him.”

Although Raluca’s parents separated before the imprisonment as a result of father being violent to her mother, her perception about it was that her mother has a forgiving attitude towards her father in order for the children to continue their relationship with him:

“(...) for sure I wouldn’t want them to be together if my father does this again; and I also understand that my mother doesn’t love him at all. I can really understand and I don’t blame her at all. (...) My mother, she doesn’t... my mother doesn’t hate him, on a contrary, she wants us to have a good relationship with him so we wouldn’t miss a father but...” (Raluca, 16 years old, Family 6)

Mihaela’s parents, who also had a history of violence, stopped all forms of contact and her father was no longer subject of family talks:

“They don’t speak with each other. We don’t speak about him.” (Mihaela, 16 years old, Family 9)

The parental relationship during was perceived by the children mainly as one where parents shared their concerns about children’s wellbeing and about house responsibilities. Fathers’ demands were also acknowledged by the children as part of mother-father communication or as cause for possible disruption of the marriage, prompting the children to get involved in order to solve problems that emerged between the parents.

Children’s narratives about their parents’ relationship before the imprisonment are different from those relating to the time during imprisonment. Their accounts of the period prior to incarceration included more references to mother-father interactions, such as disputes and “making up”, going out, or agreeing on disciplining the children. The time during imprisonment on the other hand was about parents’ conversations, through phone calls or during prison visits, which revolved around the children and the household. It can be said that this view of the children where parents’ relationship was dominated by parental preoccupation for children’s wellbeing and the household represents a form of confirmation for the children that, despite the physical separation due to imprisonment, their parents’ relationship continues.. During imprisonment, there was also the situation where the relationship was perceived as endangered by father’s constant demands of the mother for things or actions related to his imprisonment.

This, in turn, had a negative effect on the children who become mediators as well as educators of their parents, teaching the imprisoned father to notice mother's needs for attention.

In the case of mothers who suffered from fathers' abuse however, the parental relationship before the imprisonment was perceived as one with numerous disputes and abuse, which had a traumatizing effect on the children. As a consequence, parents' relationship during imprisonment was recognized to have ended or to continue with a minimum form of contact in order to ensure father-child connection.

Mothers' perceptions

Mothers' perception of the relationship with children's father is structured on three themes: (1) the relationship before the imprisonment; (2) the relationship during imprisonment; and (3) mothers' satisfaction with the relationship.

Relationship before the imprisonment

All 16 mothers included in the study started their relationship with children's fathers (or father-figure, as in the case of Elisabeta's son) at a very early age: seven of them were minors at that time, six were 20 years old or below, and in the case of the other three women participant in the study their ages were 22, 23, and 25. Twelve of the mothers were married at the time of the interview; two of them were divorced but still in a romantic relationship with children's father; and one woman had been divorced and separated prior to the incarceration of her children's father. One woman was in a relationship with the father of her children since the age of 18.

Table 7.1.: Mothers' age when married/started the relationship and status of the relationship

Family no.	Mother's name	Age of marriage/start of the relationship	Status of the relationship
1	Elisabeta, 29 years old	23	Married
2	Maria, 30 years old	15	Married
3	Elena, 34 years old	22	Married
4	Gabriela, 26 years old	15	Married
5	Petronela, 41 years old	17	Married
6	Claudia, 37 years old	20	Divorced and separated
7	Catalina, 37 years old	16	Married
8	Alina, 44 years old	15	Married
9	Corina, 47 years old	18	Married
10	Lacramioara, 48 years old	19	Married
11	Mariana, 35 years old	20	Married
12	Florina, 31 years old	16	Married
13	Alexandra, 41 years old	18	Married
14	Ramona, 33 years old	18	Not married
15	Diana, 37 years old	25	Divorced and in relationship
16	Luiza, 38 years old	16	Divorced and in relationship

The women remember their time with the imprisoned husband in terms of a good relationship that started out of love and affection, and evolved as a family where arguments and discussions were solved amongst each other and not in the presence of children:

“It was good, we got along well. We were like anyone else; we used to yell at each other, but we never had a discussion in front of the children, to frighten the children or... we were a family as it is supposed to be. We respected each other.(...) the money was with me. The money wasn't with him so I would go to him and say 'Give me some because I need to buy something or...' (...) It was very good, we got along until they took him to jail... we got along well. (...) He never offended me; he never stepped out of my word. If he said 'I go out with the guys' and I said 'No because I have work to do' he'd never say 'I let you with your work and go'... no. (...) We had... how to say it... we had arguments, but not for him to yell at me or I at him. We communicated using words, not yelling. The children may be looking and what would they say? What do they learn from me?” (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

“We've always known each other because my husband was my neighbour; his house is next to my mother's. He's 10 years older than I am and he was away for a while, didn't stay home much... and when he came home we got closer. (...) It was beautiful. (...) He's a very good man. He did everything I wanted, he never cursed me or... my husband has a very good heart. (...) I mean I never fought with him, all the time he helped with the children also. I can't say I had a bad living. We don't argue for the sake of arguing... sometimes, if he was pissed off with something I didn't do, I'd start laughing and he'd laugh

also or the other way around. We never had arguments, we got along very well, and even with the children he supported me; he always supported me.” (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

“We were a perfect family, like any other family. (...) It was good, he was good and now I have nothing to call down on him for being a bad man. He wasn’t a violent man, no. (...) We never had arguments in front of the children or in front of the in-laws, never. When we had something to talk about, we walked, talked about what was in my heart and about what was in his, we gave advices to one another.” (Elena, 34 years old, Family 3)

Interestingly, mothers stated that a strength of their relationship was not having been beaten or cursed by their partners, as well as the fact their spouses entrusted them with the money or obeyed them. Contradictory to children’s reports, mothers’ accounts of the relationship mentioned not having had arguments with their partners in front of the children.

In mothers’ description of the relationship, affection and supportiveness was also accompanied by the partner’s attribute of being the breadwinner for the family. The quotations chosen to illustrate this include reference to Romanian rural activities such as working the land with a grubbing hoe, bringing firewood for the winter and raising animals:

“If he had his hands on a hammer, he’d make money out of it; if he had his hands on a grubbing hoe, he’d make money out of it. Anything he had his hands on, he’d make money out of it. He knows and he knew all kinds of jobs.” (Florina, 31 years old, Family 12)

“I married him when I was 17 years old and got pregnant later. (...) The situation was different because he was home and going to work. We had two horses (...) and he used to go into the woods, he was good friends with the forester, brought firewood which later on he sold in the villages or directly from our home. He worked for the forester and instead of money he used to pay him with firewood. (...) We already had two children but Catalin [the husband] did everything possible to save money and built two rooms and a stable. We lived there and we got along very well. He was a good man, not violent, brought money home. (Petronela, 41 years old, Family 5)

In some cases, the relationship before imprisonment was described as one where the couple got along despite husband’s drinking or cheating. However, mothers mentioned some couple disputes during the trial period:

“It was good, we did what we did... but we weren’t people to gather fortunes. We weren’t scared about the fact we had four children. (...) Yes, we got along. We also had moments when we didn’t, but we didn’t hold grudges. (...) He used to drink too much and he also liked the ladies. He enjoyed life; he was a man built from one piece. (...) There were trials, they had to bring the lie detector and many things have happened. (...) There used to be cars coming to our gate. This had a nervous effect on him, too. He became very nervous, he picked on me.” (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

For Alina, her marriage started out of love but continued with difficulties related to her husband's drinking problem, his foul language towards her, as well as her being physically violent to him in response to her husband's behaviour. However, they remained as a couple in order to raise their children:

"We loved each other... it was fine... we didn't have problems... I was young, 15 and a half; he was 23, an old dog, not like me. But he was alright. (...) We used to speak with each other but we didn't have money to do what we had planned. (...) I told myself we'll do great things together and I made a wagon of children and now this is how I live... what should I do? (...) It was... like when men drink. He was good only when he was sober, but when he drank.... (...) No, he didn't hurt me... it was rather I who hit him. (...) He used to call me slut... but for the rest, he was ok... that's the way he was... he also called me stupid and then, the second day: 'Don't you know when I'm drunk I'm stupid?'. What should I do? Leave and let the children behind? I never left. I raised all my children with him." (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

The violent behaviour was the reason for Claudia and Corina to break up from their partners several times.. However, they got back together with them reasoning it was for the children or for feeling pity for him. Interestingly, their partner's drinking and interference from the extended family was also mentioned by the women when explaining the causes for the abuse:

"Everything was ok until I had Raluca. Problems started after this. I, in my opinion, I'm not a professional, but I think it was jealousy because a child intervened and then the attention I had offered until then to him went to the girl and I say that in a way I neglected him. (...) Legally, we married after I had Raluca. (...) We had many attempts, for example I was pregnant with my second child, Raluca was around 1 year and 8-9 months when I left. I took the girl and I left because I couldn't stand it anymore. (...) Of course, until then, I left several times, I took the girl and I left to live at my mother's, but now... because my mother was alone, he came there and I couldn't... (...) At first he used to come to ask me to get back together; if he saw that I don't respond accordingly, he used to start threatening and things like this. I felt afraid, but it was mixed. (...) We're divorced since 2002. (...) After that I have stayed for about six months and we got back together because the children were in between. They longed for him... normally, he didn't really wanted, but the only thing he did was that he used to hit me in front of the children; it didn't matter to him, especially if he was drunk. I mean it didn't matter to him if the children were around or not, he even hit me when I was holding the girl in my arms." (Claudia, 37 years old, Family 6)

"I took the children and I left to my parents. My parents received me with the children and I got divorced. Only eight months we've been separated and he came after me 'Come on, come home, I built the house, come home!' and I felt pity for him and came back. (...) Why do you think I left and divorced? For it was too good for me? I had been beaten so many times I lost count. (...) As long as he didn't speak to his mother, we got along well... But when he went to her place... upon his return he used to always tell me all kinds of stupid things, just stupid things. (...) That my family is stupid, they are handicapped... this and that... of course, it hurt me and I used to pick on him and... of course... he'd

start to hit me... once, he came on me with the knife... (...) He was always aggressive like that.” (Luiza, 38 years old)

For Corina, her marriage was remembered as one where she had to work while raising the children and tolerating her husband’s nervous temper and his first prison sentence:

“He is the father of my children. I have five children with him. It’s been 29 years since I’m with him, but he never liked to work. What I have worked, I’ve worked with my children (...) he stayed home. Said he was ill... looking for his own soul all the time... and this is how I came through. (...) In ’85 I married him. We got married because we loved each other. I thought he’d get some job... no... And then the children came. (...) I think he had this state of mind... nervousness.... many times I used to tell him ‘You’d better go to a doctor to check your head, may be there’s something with your head... your mind doesn’t travel too much ...’ (...) He’d been to jail in 2000... no... in ’93 he was arrested and in ’95 he came home. Without a week, he spent two years there and even then I had two children (...) and then too: horses and the land... working all by myself... (...) It was attempting murder then, too.” (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

As in the latter description, Ramona was a woman who had suffered much from her husband’s physical abuse, cheating, and recidivism while struggling to have food for her children:

“He used to steal, drink, make a lot of scandal; he left traces all over...even this door he broke down. (...) I never said anything, but he’d find something. May be because I was too quiet and may be to make himself heard... that he’d arrived home... he used to kick the door with his foot, didn’t care about the children that they hear too, that he wakes them up from their sleep. He never cared. (...) When I saw him coming home drunk I felt like dying; and he did this on purpose, every day, weeks in a row, just to put me in a grave. I have also been operated, 3 years ago I had a miscarriage. I didn’t know the child was dead inside of me and when I got to the hospital it was already too late, I almost died, too. I had a severe haemorrhage and they had to take all out of me. He got colder. He got distant... he had a woman here, in the village. (...) Theft, theft, and theft. He has this disease to take what it doesn’t belong to him. (...) He came home looking for me with the knife in his hand. The youngest told me ‘Mum, he was looking for you with the knife in his hand and slammed the door and broke the window here’ and he didn’t find me... he looked for me in the garden and in the maize and eventually he fell asleep outside.” (Ramona, 33 years old)

Except for the four women who have been abused by their husbands, the discourses of the women in the study about their relationship prior to imprisonment included reference to affection, communication, and pride of a husband who provides for his family. Although couple disputes were mentioned as part of a normal relationship, mothers underlined these did not take place in the presence of the children, which somehow contradicts children’s narration of the

mother-father relationship before the imprisonment. However, children's observance of parental arguments was not been perceived by the children as destructive of their parents' relationship.

Relationship during imprisonment

As with the children, mothers' accounts of their relationship with the imprisoned father during imprisonment were usually dominated by talks around the children and the house. There were situations where their need for attention or arguments caused by men's jealousy created stress in the couple, as well as situation where there was no contact between the mothers and children's fathers due to the history of domestic abuse from their partner. Among the 16 mothers included in the study, four of them had stopped communication with the imprisoned parent by the time of the interview. Five women were visiting their partners at least once a month, whilst the others visited when they had the financial resources.

Women maintained contact with their partners mainly by phone. As children reported, the discussions between couples were focused on children's wellbeing and matters related to the household:

"We talk about the children, what have I been doing, if there's food to put on the table, one or another ... (...) At the beginning I didn't feel well, but afterwards ... because he said he didn't do it because when the crime was committed he was with me and not in the place where it happened. (...) I feel he loves me very much and at least the children... no day passes by without him calling to ask how are the children, have they eaten, have they been to school, have they come back from school, have they done their homework... Every time he asks me these questions... (...) This month I visited four times. This Saturday will be the fourth time. On Saturday it's his birthday and I want to go." (Elisabeta, 29 years old, Family 1)

Mothers also mentioned their regret for the crime and the fact they encourage their partners in prison to be patient and not to worry about the family difficulties, as in the case of Petronela who has hidden from her husband the problems faced by the family:

"We don't speak that often. So it happened the last we spoke was a week ago because he didn't have money to call me. (...) I visit once a month because it is very expensive. The trip costs me one million when I go alone; this is why I don't get to take the children or to visit more often. (...) He asks what's going on at home, if we have what we need, about the children and how I get along with them. He always asks about the boy, Marius. (...) He says he can't justify what he's done and he feels guilty (...) In my turn, I encourage him and tell him not to think about us because we manage and have everything we need.

I don't want to tell him it's hard for us... I do this so he wouldn't get ill." (Petronela, 41 years old, Family 5)

Alina is one of the mothers who rarely visited her husband in prison due to lack of money, but kept contact through telephone calls and speaking about the children. Her case is of particular interest as she recalled about her husband checking up with the Mayor's social services about the welfare of the children, underlining his lack of trust in her:

"Once a year. What should I take him? Can I go there? I don't have anything; only the ticket to Iasi is 120 from here to Munteni and to take three children, the older boy, so it's 360. And again 6 lei and, from there where the bus leaves me, I have to take a car [taxi] because I don't know the way. I need a million and a half just to go and come back. To take something to eat... I don't eat because I don't have money. At least the children would get to see him because they haven't seen him. (...) He calls. (...) He asks about the children, how we manage, about the animals... do you have food for the animals? Do you have firewood? Do you have food for the children? Do the children have clothes? He sent people from the Mayor's office here and the Mayor told him not to worry because the children are clean, well dressed, washed, they go to school. He asked people to come and check me out; he wasn't convinced of what I was telling him. He called the Mayor's office, he calls, he speaks, he has phone numbers, he knows everything. I don't know how he knows. (...) He cares about the children... he needs to know if anything happens to the children. (...) And then he calls all the time: 'What did you do?' He cares very much about the children. 'Look out for the children!' that's how he always tells me." (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

The partner's imprisonment seems to have strengthened some relationships in that both the mother and the father focus on keeping the family together, give encouragements to each other, and father shows concern of the mother's wellbeing. From prison, some fathers also advise their women partners to keep remembering that their children depend on them:

"We got closer and closer. (What brought you closer?) The distance and this trouble... it was too much for us. It made us understand each other more; to stand by each other. (Do you visit him?) Yes. (...) Three times a month. He's allowed to three visits per month. Once I bring him things he needs and twice just to see each other. (What do you talk about?) More about the children; he's concerned about the children, not to liaise with one or another because many things are happening... to listen. There's little time until he comes home and it'll all be fine. (...) I tell him to count on me that I'll take care of myself and the house; we need to keep the family close, not to make a fool of ourselves, not to break up, not to distance from each other. (...) He told me 'Mind the children because if anything will happen to you, they won't let me go. You'll be more affected and by the time I'm out of here you'll get sick or something will happen to you and it will be very difficult for us. You need to get used to the idea that's how much I need to spend here.' " (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

"It didn't change between us. When he calls and I'm upset, I have lots of problems, all the time he encourages me. (...) We talk more about the children. He thinks of the children a lot. About us, how are we with the house, that the things are hard for us... about us in general. He tells me all the time when I go

to him 'Leave it... it'll be OK when I come out, don't think it over, don't be so absorbed with it, be calm because we have three children!'; we talk." (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

Father's regret for the crime and mother's feeling he had shamed his family was narrated by Elena and Florina in terms of the couple being able to survive, based on the long relationship they had had and their belief that marriage is for life:

"We write to each other every week or every two weeks. He calls me once or twice a week. (...) He cares for me and the children. And even today he's changed a lot... he calls me and tells me he's sorry. (How often do you visit your husband in prison?) I can go twice, three times per month, but it depends on the possibilities I have. (...) We speak about the children, about health, what happens with his brothers, his nephews... He asks me what the children are doing, if they're good in school, if they behaved, I have no problems. (...) He told me if I want to wait for him, if not... I said 'No, it's not going to happen. It can be 10 years and 20 years and a hundred years, I'll wait for you, we have children together and I cannot do such a thing.' I'm not the kind of woman who, after 12 years of marriage I'll give up on him and let the children on their own and I'd go looking for my life. I told him I rather live in poverty than do such a thing." (Elena, 34 years old, Family 3)

"Now it is the same. Yesterday I spoke with him and he started to cry 'Leave it, we'll survive this too!' I tell him 'daddy' and 'Leave this daddy, it'll be all right, we'll get over this too.' (...) It's enough with the shame we have today. And this is why I say 'leave it' that the shame you brought... the children will study well in school and I will stay at home and wait for you. (...) He's my husband, he's the father of my children, I am married to him for 15 years and say 'God forbid! How could we give up each other in times of difficulty? We've been through so much, we'll survive this, too!' (...) To be strong. I tell him to be strong." (Florina, 31 years old, Family 12)

The mothers who experienced domestic violence do not maintain contact with their children's father. It is the case of Claudia who recounted her unsuccessful attempts to befriend her former husband, or the case of Ramona who changed her phone number so her partner would no longer call to ask for money, and of Corina who was feeling content with the peace she experiences since the imprisonment:

"(Do you speak with him now?) Less, because even when we talked the last time he wanted us to get back together again. I couldn't have any kind of connection with him, not even be friends. The moment I would have asked about him, if he's alright or not, he thought I'm especially interested in his person and this is what he did every time. Immediately as he saw that... this is how he manipulated me, that's how I felt. (...) I don't know if he really cares for me. It is more that... even Raluca says that nobody would accept as much as I accepted and nobody would stay with him; and you can tell that men always come back where it has always been good to them. (You say now that you prefer not to speak too much with him. Have I understood correctly that is because he will start to think you want to get back with him again?) Yes. This is why I've chosen this. I mean I haven't given him any chance, I never asked him what he does, where he is, if he works or not, not a thing. Exactly because every time I started to speak as if I

would speak to a friend, he took it on the other side as if I would still have feelings for him and started to insist to get back together.” (Claudia, 37 years old, Family 6)

“Fines, judiciary expenses he didn’t pay and all went to the state. The support allowance I didn’t get because of him... and after he went away they approved my file and the social benefit file, and with the children’s allowances... we’re better. (...) It’s different. I’m much better. I can go over to my sister without him asking me where I have been. It was very hard. I’m glad I got rid of him. We’re much better. (...) (Do you speak on the phone with him?) No, because I have bought a new Orange number and he doesn’t know this one, but he writes. He wrote to me now to ask for money. To take from the children and send him money... (Have you written him back?) About three letters. Two years ago. We don’t have much to speak to each other. (...) His letters are getting shorter, a small piece of paper. I have it here, on the stove, a few lines: ‘Rosi how are you? May be you send me some money.’ So, this is his life, he got used to it, he likes it in there. (...) He hasn’t written in a long time. He used to call, but if he doesn’t have my number any more... (...)...it’s quiet. (...) He didn’t used to open the door using his hands, but his feet.” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“I’m no longer mocked, I go to work in peace, I come from work in peace, I take care of the children, and it’s quiet in the house... (...) He used to threaten he’d kill me when he gets home...” (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

For Diana, however, contact has been stopped from her husband’s side, causing her to be stressed and at the same time jealous of her sister in law who became the intermediary between the two members of the couple:

“He used to call me more often, now not really. It’s been more than a week or two and it stresses me... (...) I’m jealous because he calls his sister and not me. (How do you know that?) I know and it bothers me because his sister calls me and tells me ‘Costel called and told me to tell you...’. I am jealous, I admit, and I’m pissed and this is why I am stressed and nervous.” (Diana, 37 years old)

The day to day stresses and her husband’s demands and need for attention made Lacramioara feel angry and reconsider the status of her marital relationship. Although she was compassionate about her husband having to spend 16 years in prison, his unresponsiveness towards her feelings and his lack of acknowledgement of her efforts to comply with his requests caused her to feel tired. The long period of imprisonment was also subject of discussion with her husband in the context of sexual deprivation:

“It’s no longer a relationship for a long period. We had many problems. (...) I understand him and I feel pity for him knowing he stays in a room with all the criminals who really killed people and I’ve understood him all the time. But the problem is that I no longer have the patience to listen. There are days when I speak with him on the phone even for three hours. By chance he calls and sometimes you can no longer take it to be asked for something all the time. You’d like it if they offer something or at least to ask

you 'Can you hold it? Are money enough for you?' (...) When I answered his call, the first thing he told me was 'Did you send that letter?' and I was a bit nervous and I replied to leave these things and towards the end of our discussion he said 'I see you're nervous, you don't have time to talk with me, you have other things to do', 'The other things are the family!'... and from this discussion he says 'However, you left me on a secondary plan', 'But how have I done this? Have I missed any visit, have I not brought you packages, Have I not come to you? But I can't stand you asking me for things all the time!' (...) There's one thing to meet a person and another to know he has a conviction for 16 years. May be he won't do 16, he'll do 10... but what kind of declarations should one make? In the first two years I have written him letters... no matter the bad things he wrote to me, I wrote him nice. Now it seems I can no longer do those things. Something... Even when I go to the intimate visit, he tells me about the trial. (...) He wants to go to the European Court for Human Rights. (...) All the time he says 'You had to do this, you never listen to me, you...' and I told him: 'You know what? You're not bound to my reality. You are where you are. It's harder for me because I see couples, I see men, I see all kinds of things. But you're in there (...) you've made your status, but I'm here.' (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

Women needed to share feelings and to be assured of their husband's affection. For Alexandra, the physical absence of her husband was something she dealt with by waiting for daylight in order to recommence her day to day duties:

"Once in a while I ask him 'Could you replace me or, God forbid, leave me?' he said 'No, no...' He said 'Why should our children eat bitter bread?' (...) Especially now... I ask him 'Do you love me?' 'Of course I love you! How could I not?' (...) I ask myself if this separation got him colder. (...) It's been two months since I went to visit, since the children started school. I send him 50-60 lei... if I wouldn't send, he'd call. (...) You know that when you open your eyes during the night there are two, but as it is now, all alone... just stare for 4-5 hours wandering if the morning ever comes to start all over again..." (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

On the other hand, intimate talk and visits were, for some women, something they let had refused themselves due to their feelings of shame or lack of privacy during visits:

"(Have you been to the intimate visit?) No, I haven't because... I don't know. He wouldn't want it either. (...) He wouldn't want it because I told him I wouldn't want to go there. He didn't insist on it either, as other man do. I told him 'I'm not coming here'. I'm ashamed to go there for an intimate visit. I wouldn't go. (...) I think he trusts me. We talk about the children all the time. (Do you talk about feelings?) We don't speak these things because every time I go I'm with the children and sometimes I'm with my mother. We can't really talk much. (...) We don't write letters, we just talk on the phone, and for the rest... we don't really have intimate talks. (...) We talk." (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

Men's imprisonment can also cause stress for the couple due to husbands' fear of being abandoned by their wives. Florina and Catalina, however, reassured the husbands of their loyalty:

“He told me to be careful about what I’m doing in the house. ‘But what do you think I’m doing in the house? I don’t go out; I don’t open the gate to go out. What do you think I’m doing in the house?’ ‘Be careful because there are men in here whose wives left them.’ I told him ‘Leave those men with their troubles because you know what you have in your house.’ and then he understood. (...) He’s not jealous and he never was, but he’s afraid. He’s afraid I will leave him, I don’t know why this fear in him. Maybe the men in there tell him ‘My wife left me’ and he starts to think ‘If his wife left him, why my wife wouldn’t leave me, too?’ This is what I think he thinks. But I don’t want to leave him and I can’t. He’s my husband and I care for him. God forbid! It was never the issue between us to say ‘Ok, that’s it: a child with you, a child with me, we split the bread and that’s it’, never.” (Florina, 31 years old, Family 12)

“At the beginning, when he was arrested, thinking of the years ahead, he was a bit jealous. But he knew what kind of woman I am; he never seriously questioned me. (...) When you go in front of the priest and say for better or for worse... this worse brought us closer.” (Catalina, 37 years old, Family 7)

Women’s relationship with their partners during imprisonment was perceived as a common struggle to continue to be a family, focusing on the children. However, women have mentioned communicating with their partners about the need for attention and support. In cases where the prison sentence was longer, it was noticeable that women’s perception of the relationship changed over time, reducing the frequency of their conversations and losing patience in listening to the same demands.

Satisfaction with the relationship

Women’s satisfaction about their overall relationship with the imprisoned partner was assessed on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = strong dissatisfaction; 2 = moderate dissatisfaction; 3 = somewhat satisfied; 4 = mostly satisfied; and 5 = very satisfied.

Table 7.2. Mothers’ ratings on the level of satisfaction about the relationship with the imprisoned father

Rating	Frequency	Valid percentage
Strong dissatisfaction	3	18.8
Moderate dissatisfaction	0	.0
Somewhat satisfied	4	25.0
Mostly satisfied	3	18.8
Very satisfied	6	37.5
Total	16	100.0

For three of the women in the study, their relationship was rated “strong dissatisfaction”, four of the mothers were “somewhat satisfied” with their relationship”, three were “mostly satisfied”, and six women were “very satisfied” of their relationship with the imprisoned partner since its beginning until the time of the interview. No woman considered the relationship as “moderate dissatisfaction”.

After rating their level of satisfaction, the mothers were invited to say more about their ratings. As expected, the strongly dissatisfied mothers were the ones who had experienced abuse from their children’s father:

“Satisfied?! If I would be able to turn back time, I would rather die than live. Noooo...” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“If he hadn’t promised so many times that things would change.... he always came back. The fact he manipulated me coming to me and speaking to me so nice so I could open up and after that he came and chalked it up against, throwing things in my face and not only physically, but also emotionally... he demoralized me. He always told me that I will never succeed without him, I will never achieve anything without him.” (Claudia, 37 years old, Family 6)

“Oh, no!... I had... my youth was so... I didn’t have a happy youth... to live as thousands of people live... I only knew that I have to work and to come home to cook pots of food, to take care of the children... He wasn’t a father to the children, to take care of them, to have a job and to make a future for the children... (...) It was so unsatisfying! I haven’t been to him for 2 years. 2 years and 4 months I haven’t been to see him.” (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

The rating of their relationship as “somewhat satisfied” was mainly justified by the women by the fact the husbands are the fathers of their children for whom they struggle. However, the feeling of shame caused by the imprisonment of their partner and mothers’ fatigue for having to deal with the responsibilities on their own were reasons for the women to feel only somewhat satisfied:

“I feel fulfilled with my children. I am satisfied with my children... I could have said 4 or 5 but I say it’s not good how he ended up and that’s a shame. He shamed my boys... I take so much care of them and have my heart on these children... He shouldn’t have gone there. He should have been a model for the children.” (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

“I mean he’s there and this no longer has to do with the life here. About three years ago it was still hard with the money, but now it’s even harder and, I don’t know, it seems our life is made only of bills and obligations. I can’t do anything else. Many times, he reads a lot, I don’t have time to read much, I don’t have time to watch television, if I do, I fall asleep. So I cannot get informed. He learns more, he gives me

advice, but the advice he gives me... I can't share myself between the beehives, parent-child meetings, and visits to him, I don't have Easter, I don't have Christmas, I don't have anything. Honestly, there are moments when I wish for the electric bulb to be off, for the phone not to ring and just sit like this in the dark." (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

Women who were "mostly satisfied" were either resigned with their situation or content they were in a close relationship:

"Mostly satisfied. I'm satisfied because we're healthy, us and the children... we don't have problems. I think this was our cross from God that we have to carry." (Petronela, 41 years old, Family 5)

"It is pretty ok, mostly satisfying. I mean we don't have arguments, we're always close to one another, he calls in the evening when he can..." (Maria, 30 years old, Family 2)

For Diana, the "mostly satisfied" rating was based on the contradiction between the memory of the loving relationship and the current absence of communication:

"Now... what can I say... I haven't seen him for a year, we just spoke, what can I say... he tells me he loves me, he asks if I wait for him. I can't say anything. So you would no – maybe I shouldn't say – but I am used with him being very attentive with me. I mean, even if he was locked up, as long as he called and I complained if I had a problem and if I had something to be joyful about, I told him. It was something 'together'. It was good, but the moment he started not to call me too often it's not good, it brings something ...'the eyes who don't meet, forget each other'. (...) He calls his family and I feel pushed away." (Diana, 37 years old)

Absence of strong disputes within the relationship and mothers' feeling that their husband gives them strength were invoked by the women in explaining their perception of the relationship as "very satisfying":

"To tell you the truth, 5: because I love him very much and he loves me and he always listened to me. (...) The way he is, his nature, his talk, his looks, even the way he walks. (...) Even when I had an argument with him, I used to start it, he never told me anything, I was the one with a bad mouth then. To tell you the truth, he used to go out with the men and have a few drinks and when he came home I used to tell him 'You're going and forget to come home?'... I was the one with the bad mouth... 'Shush... don't be mean', he used to tell me." (Florina, 31 years old, Family 12)

"I am very satisfied. I can't say I'm not or that I have ever been dissatisfied, no. I'm satisfied with the relationship I have with my husband. We never had problems so to speak... small arguments because I forgot to do something or things like these, but not fights, big arguments, to start or to pick on each other or that I have spoken with someone... we didn't have these." (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

"I'm very satisfied; even if he's locked up in there. I'm satisfied because he speaks and speaks with me

very... how to say? He understands me, he gives me strength, not to say I no longer have patience until he comes back home. He gives me a lot of strength.” (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

Despite the history of domestic violence reported during her interview, remembering that they were a couple since a very young age led Luiza to consider her relationship as “very satisfying”:

“Well, we’re together since we were children... if it were not to care for him, I wouldn’t have returned or... there hasn’t been a night since he left that I wouldn’t cry. (...) I’ll look for him all the years where he’ll be. I think 5 or even 10. (You told me he had beaten you and that you divorced?) This doesn’t matter, it’s to be forgotten...” (Luiza, 38 years old)

Statistically, mothers participating in the study were mainly “somewhat satisfied” (25%) and “very satisfied” (37.5%) with their relationship with the children’s imprisoned father. Most of the women’s reports revealed that the main reasons for an unsatisfactory relationship was the shame the husband brought to the family and that they were left to manage the children and the household by themselves. The reasons invoked by the mothers for being satisfied with the relationship involved their long term relationship, love for each other, the husband’s support and the absence of disputes.

Views on family reunification

Children’s views on family reunification

For some children, life after father’s return was imagined in terms of a strength and being a united family. They used words such as “better” in comparison to the life at present or “he’ll change”, in recognition of father having done wrong:

“Maybe it will be better. (...) Well, more strength with school, around the house...” (Nicoleta, 12 years old, Family 13)

“It will all be as before and we’ll get along very well, he’ll change and he won’t be doing stupid things. (...) I will have a united family, never apart, all together.” (Matei, 11 years old, Family 3)

Besides thinking of the life as being “better” after father’s return from prison, other children mentioned more concrete aspects, such as having made plans to go abroad and work:

“He’s left almost a year and he’ll come home. We talk about the life we’re going to have when he returns... I think it’ll be better because he’ll be by our side. (...) We want to go to work abroad, in England. (...) We want to go there to work whatever we’ll find, to make a future for ourselves. My sister... she’s there, working as a sales person... she can speak English.” (Marius, 16 years old, Family 5)

In the case of Madalina, who was involved in parental disputes and whose father had to serve a long sentence, the family reunification was considered with anxiety regarding possible conflicts between her parents. However, after sharing the fear with her father, he seemed to have reassured her of having changed and wanting the family to be united:

“I’m afraid and this is why I told him ‘Look, I’m afraid... the moment you’ll come back home you’ll hear a lot of things because people don’t know anything else but to talk and as I know you, you’ll be very bad tempered’ and he said no, he’s changed, he’s no longer as he used to be. He also said that’s not going to happen, he just wants us to be united as a family.” (Madalina, 17 years old, Family 10)

The long sentence her father had to serve made Manuela to think how old will she be when he returns home and to hope the conviction will be reduced so she will have both her parents with her:

“I’ll be 20 years old. Yes... or no.... if my sister is in the sixth grade.... 22 years old and she’ll be 25 years old. (...) At night I think that he’s done only 6 years and still has a lot to spend in prison. (...) I pray to God to give him fewer years in prison. (...) ...to have my father and mother with me.” (Manuela, 9 years old, Family 8)

For Raluca, the history of her father’s abuse of the mother made her lose hope that he might change, which is why she did not picture a family reunification, but agreed with keeping a distant contact with him after release from prison:

“We’ll keep in touch with him and surely he’ll try to get close to my mother and surely my mother won’t want him back, I’m sure of this. (Will you want him back?) To go and live with my father? No. To be closed. Not too much because... for many years he should have... I mean we used to speak often on Facebook and on the phone and in all the words he didn’t say... I could tell he hasn’t changed, that he is the same and it would be difficult.” (Raluca, 16 years old, Family 6)

In general, children imagined their lives after father’s return home as something desirable and looked for. Using terms such as “united family” and “all together” was an indication of their strong perception of the family separation. At the same time, thinking of a united family where life will be “better” underlines children’s awareness of the hardships brought about by the

imprisonment of their father. Children's hope that their fathers will have changed their behaviour was also mentioned, illustrating their expectations from fathers with respect to life after family reunification. However, in the case of fathers' long prison sentences, children's views of the future were expressed in hopes for shorter sentences.

Mothers' views on reunification

When asked about how they envisage their life when their husbands will return home, the mothers mentioned that it will be the same as before or even better. The "better" aspect related to changes in the way neighbours treat the family or to father's involvement in raising the children:

"He says he loves me very much, he wants to do a lot when he comes back... (...) I think it will be as before, still very good." (Elisabeta, 29 years old, Family 1)

"I hope it will be much nicer than so far. (...) To manage better, in a different way so the people in the village would see us better because they see us as the black sheep of the village." (Florina, 31 years old, Family 12)

"The same, nothing will change: he'll make his father part, I will make my mother part. We'll get by... fine... I will ask for more, to be good for our children, but I don't think we'll take our eyes out. (What do you mean by asking for more?) To be more involved: 'Marian, the boys are big now, let's teach them how to run a house, to...' (How do you imagine the first week after his release?) Full of life. (What do you mean?) You can tell... after a year... I don't think we'll be bored of each other. It will be like this: a lot to talk about... I had 80 kilograms when he left, now I weight 50 kilos." (Alexandra, 41 years old, Family 13)

Starting all over again, forgetting the past and having faith in God was what mothers talked about with their imprisoned husbands when referring to the time of family reunification:

"(Have you ever talked with your husband about the future?) Yes, even in letters... last week he opened up the subject about the future. (What did he say?) He said we'll start all over again, we'll forget about what happened. (...) He said we'll forget what it was and be a family, we'll do what we've always wanted to do... bring our past wishes into the present. (...) I hope it will be good, we'll have a good life and we'll get through it all. (...) It will be good, we'll have our own home, may be we'll have another child, I don't know. I can't think about the future, but I hope that our love for God and the children will make things good." (Elena, 34 years old, Family 3)

In other cases, family reunification was described in more concrete terms, the couple knowing exactly what they would do and with what resources:

“He said if he’ll come, we’ll go to Italy. He has a sister in Italy who’s going to help us. Now she can’t, she has children. She has a family. (What will you do in Italy?) We’ll go to work. (...) On the field, tomatoes, vegetables... (Will you take the children with you?) I thought of leaving them with my parents because I don’t have anyone else to leave them with and I’m afraid to leave them on their own. I’m afraid... many things have happened. (...) He said to leave them with my parents because I left them before and they take care of them. We’ll send them money for food, for school...” (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4)

Some of the women mentioned being worried about the future as they overheard about men’s changed behaviour after they are released from prison. Mariana, however, trusted her husband and hoped life to be as before:

“At this point, I think it over... I keep hearing that when they come out they change or... I hope it will be as it was before. Actually I think it will be fine because if it wouldn’t, he’d tell me.” (Mariana, 35 years old, Family 11)

For the women who had been abused by their partners, family reunification was imagined with resignation or hope the return would not happen:

“Oh, my God!... I can now feel I’m alive, as if I was released from prison. I can feel joy inside of me in the morning when I get out of the house, it’s different. I don’t ever want him to come back. I no longer want to live with him. (What is going to happen after your husband is released from prison?) I don’t know. I think we’ll go back to our tormented lives. (...) I don’t know, I say as the father does... leave it all to God because God knows what he has to do. I was hoping he’ll do things the way... he won’t return home, who knows? He makes a miracle as he did back then, in that autumn and I got rid of him. (...) Of course I’m afraid; especially I haven’t been to visit him in jail. I never went to visit. Of course he’ll pull my eyes out. He’s already written to me: in order for him to be calm, I should go to the cathedral and swear I have been faithful. I told him I agree to go. This... I am glad I got rid of him. This is what I need? ...Another man? I don’t need that... Never!” (Ramona, 33 years old)

“Even the father at church tells me ‘Corina, why stay when you are a young woman, you’re so active and housewifely, why not remarry?’ I said I don’t want this anymore! If God gave me a cross to bear, I’ll bear it to the end. And the father says: ‘But it is too much what he gave to you!’ ‘Well, I’ll survive this also, father!’ I said.” (Corina, 47 years old, Family 9)

“I’m sure he’ll come to look for... the main pretext will be the children. But I don’t think he’ll aim for me”. (Claudia, 37 years old, Family 6)

Partner’s long prison sentence made some of the mothers to lose hope they would be reunited:

“I no longer hope to be the family that we used to be.” (Lacramioara, 48 years old, Family 10)

“I keep thinking... Oh, my God!... the years go by and I don't know if he'll come home.... he's 52 years old and still has 14 years and 9 months to stay in there. I don't think he'll come out of there... It's been only 5 years but 14 years and 9 months... May be he won't stay in there the whole time, but still he has to stay about 14 years.” (Alina, 44 years old, Family 8)

As with the children, the mothers' views of the life after their partner's return from prison included hope for things to be as before and fathers taking over a significant part of family responsibilities. However, there are slight differences between mothers' and children's reports with some mothers being cautious about possible negative changes in their partners as a result of the time spent in prison or about their starting over after a period of separation. Another difference between the children and their mothers was with respect to the long period until family reunification, as fathers' sentences tended to be very long: if children seemed to keep faith in their fathers' return, the mothers lost hope for the family to be united or feared that the husband would grow old in prison.

Summary

This chapter aimed to explore the effects of the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the imprisoned parent on the child

It was showed that children perceive their parents' relationship as being different during the time before the incarceration from the time during father's imprisonment. Parental relationship during imprisonment was reported in terms of children becoming the focus of their parents' interactions. This appears to have a positive effect on the children, ensuring them of the continuation of their mother-father relationship. However, a new subject, such as father's demands for goods was observed by the children in parents' talks as causing tensions between parents. The effect of such tension was that some children took the role of mediators in order to remediate the parental relation.

Mothers' views about the relationship with their imprisoned partners also reflected changes mentioned by the children. As such, the time before imprisonment included beautiful moments in the relationship, whilst the period during incarceration was about continuing a relationship based on the mutual interest in the wellbeing of their children. Nonetheless,

mothers' reports about the relationship during imprisonment underlined their hardships in taking care of the house, a lack of money and being a family that bears shame as result of father's imprisonment. These are reasons that mothers referred to when they explained why they think the relationship with their partners was not that satisfactory. Nevertheless, most women stated that they were satisfied with the relationship because of the love shared with their partners for such a long time, the partner's support and encouragements while in prison and an absence of arguments.

In relation to the aim of this chapter, the study also explored children's and mothers' views with regards to family reunification. Children's views were mainly about the family being united again, having a "better" life and hope that fathers would have changed their behaviour, whilst mothers' narratives included hope that life would be as before the imprisonment. Differences between mothers' and children's reports refer to the fact mothers were experiencing anxiety about husbands' return, being afraid they might have undergone negative changes as result of the time spent in prison or, in the case where fathers were serving long sentences, whether children seemed to keep faith in their fathers' return, the mothers had lost hope for the family to be united or feared that the husband will grow old in prison.

In the families where mothers who suffered abuse from their husbands, children's and mothers' views were also similar with regards not just the overall relationship, before and during imprisonment, but also in regard to their views about family reunification. Children and their mothers recounted the life before the imprisonment as a difficult one, filled with moments of violence. Hence, the mother-father relationship during incarceration was interrupted and this caused children to interrupt their own relationship with their father or to minimize it.

The next chapter will discuss the main findings from the analysis of mothers' and children's interviews in terms of previous research and theory.

Chapter 8. Discussion

This study set out to examine the effects of family relationships on children of prisoners. First, it investigated the mother-child relationship by exploring the changes parental imprisonment has, directly or indirectly, in their lives, and then looked into how these affected the mother-child bond. Second, this study considered the mother-father relationship from children's as well as mothers' points of view in order to analyse how possible changes attributable to father's imprisonment can impact children's perceptions and behaviour. Third, and for a more complete image of family perception with regards to parental imprisonment, the current study examined participants' perspectives on family reunification.

This chapter discusses the main findings from the analysis of mothers' and children's interviews in terms of previous research and theory.

Mother-child relationship

In order to explore the mother-child relationship, the study first investigated the changes that occurred, following the imprisonment of a parent, in the lives of children and of their mothers, respectively. The results show the lives of the children and of their mothers undergo significant changes that are structured on three dimensions: emotional, behavioural, and economic. Secondly, the study has explored, in some depth, implications of the mother-child relationship and how mothers' parenting stress and practices had impacts on the children.

Emotional changes

In the case of the children, the emotional difficulties associated with paternal imprisonment include feelings of sadness and withholding of emotions as a way of showing strength and resilience. The feelings are usually experienced by the children within the first days or weeks after father's imprisonment and can lead to eating and sleeping problems as well as difficulties related to attention and focus that can impact on the long term school performance in that children fail to pass their exams or their grades decrease significantly. Emotional problems faced by the children following fathers' imprisonment are also reported by Lowenstein (1986)

who found that children experience recurring nightmares and sudden fear of darkness. However, Lowenstein's (1986) findings are based on parents' (imprisoned parents and parents on the outside) reports and not on information gathered directly from the children. Boswell (2002) and Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) on the other hand found, from interviewing children, that children experience sadness and stress following the separation from their incarcerated fathers. However, as Shlafer and Pohlmann (2010) argued, the negative feelings the children have about parental incarceration mainly depend on the quality of the relationship they had with the parents prior to imprisonment. For this study, children's reports of a good relationship with their fathers before incarceration are consistent with their feeling of being sad. Nevertheless, the two child participants in this study who were victims of their fathers' abuse also reported feeling sad about being "all of a sudden fatherless" and losing a night's sleep after they found out about their fathers' incarceration. Even though in the days that followed the children readjusted their attitude and viewed the imprisonment as beneficial for them and as something the father "deserved", it can be said that the poor quality of parent-child relationship does not necessarily exclude the possibility for the children to experience sadness in relation to parental imprisonment.

The poor school performance is explained by the children as being caused by their inability to concentrate during classes because they were too emotionally affected by what had happened to their fathers. Poor grades are associated in the literature mainly with the stigma experienced by the children at school (Boswell, 2002; Murray, 2008; Murray & Farrington, 2006) and less with children's emotional difficulties following parental incarceration. Nonetheless, this study shows that children are being stigmatized at school and this too, impacts school attainment although their main reaction is to avoid confrontations as this is what their mothers encourage them to do.

Mothers' emotional wellbeing is shown by this study to have been strongly affected by their partners' imprisonment in that it includes emotional breakdown, depression, and anxiety. These findings are consistent with previous research addressing the impact of parental imprisonment on children as well as the impact of imprisonment on caregivers. For example, Murray and Farrington (2005) mention neuroticism in parents of children in the CSDD as a risk

factor contributing to a child's antisocial behaviour and Wildeman, Schnittker and Turney (2012) found mothers who are also partners of prisoners to experience major depressive episodes and low level of life satisfaction.

Unexpectedly, the analysis of mothers' narratives in this illustrates their inability to recognize emotions in their children in relation to father's incarceration. When they were asked about how their children coped with father's imprisonment, they simply answered that they do not know or that they just think they might have been affected. This study shows that children are, in contrast, attentive to their mothers, noticing their sadness which, in turn, augments children's feelings of sorrow. Moreover, analysis of mothers' and children's narratives shows that, despite children's interest in their fathers' wellbeing and return home, some mothers avoid discussions on this topic for fear of not re-traumatizing their offspring or by rationalizing this is a topic beyond their children's understanding. This further impacts the children in that father's imprisonment is being experienced as ambiguous loss in that that physical separation is also accompanied by the absence of knowledge in relation to children's interests about their fathers (Arditti, 2012) and is consistent with other studies underscoring carers' difficulties in providing their children with information about their parents in prison (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013; Manby et al., 2014).

Behavioural changes

As stated above, this study shows some children are victims of bullying for having a parent in prison. Although children react by avoiding confrontations as advised by their mothers, for some of them this led to abandoning school for one year, a finding that lends support to other studies. For instance, the COPING study found references to Romanian teachers bullying children for having a parent in prison and to Swedish children dropping out of school for a period after parent's arrest (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013).

Children are also found to be more involved in helping mothers after fathers' incarceration. This has a cumulative effect in that it leads to less time to study and, as a consequence, to poor school results. Supporting mothers by taking over part of the

responsibilities related to the household was found in earlier studies (Johnston, 2012; Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013; Western, 2006), although for the children investigated in this study, most of them residing in rural Romania, this involves chores such as farming and taking care of the animals, or chopping fire wood in the cold seasons.

Unexpectedly, some children are found to step into parental disputes in order to mediate the mother-father relationship. This is the case of children that are old enough (over 14 years old, according to the Romanian prison regulations) to be allowed to visit the imprisoned parent by themselves. Taking the role as mediators in the mother-father relationship during imprisonment is evidence of children's involvement in maintaining family bonds throughout the father's period of incarceration. Children who visit their imprisoned parent unaccompanied was not found in the literature, although Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010) do mention children contacting their incarcerated parent without knowledge of the primary caregiver. Moreover, evidence about children mediating conflicts between their mother and father relationship during parental imprisonment is also not found in previous research.

Notably, although much of the literature reviewed for the purpose of this thesis concerning children's behavioural changes brought about by parental imprisonment refers to antisocial conduct (Aaron & Dallaire, 2009; Dallaire, 2007; Johnston, 2012; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Novero, Loper, & Warren, 2011), the analysis of children's and mothers' interviews in this study produced no such finding. A possible explanation for this outcome may be related to parenting practices and will be discussed further in this chapter.

Mothers also changed their behaviour following their partner's imprisonment. In the first months after partner's arrest, this study shows mothers tend to keep their social interactions to a minimum. They don't leave the house unless it is necessary to buy groceries or to accompany their children to and from school. This self-isolation is reported by the mothers to be the result of the stigmatizing behaviour of neighbours and is in line with previous research findings. Chui (2009) mentioned mothers having reported feelings of isolation following partners' imprisonment and Codd (2003) argued, in the context of women's struggle for identity, that they need to negotiate between gendered expectations of women as child-carers and carers of their

imprisoned partners and the social attitudes that create problems for the women to meet these expectations. However, in this study, when asked to provide details, the women referred to their own thoughts of what neighbours may think of them and of their family in relation to their partner's incarceration leading to the conclusion that community stigma is potentially something women perceive, rather than a specific conduct exhibited by the neighbours. Nesmith and Ruhland's (2011) study on caregivers also noted women's feeling of being judged, but the judgemental attitudes were those of women's friends and family members and referred to their poor choice for a romantic partner.

With respect to stigma, although the women tend to isolate themselves and advise their children to avoid confrontations, this study shows that some of the mothers anticipate that their children may be hurt by peers for having a father in prison and react by going to school and asserting their position of temporary single parent, responsible for knowing about children's actions. This shows mothers' involvement in protecting their children from possible harm from peers as result of their fathers' imprisonmen. Other women in this study advised their children to avoid responding to bullying behaviours from their peers. Mothers' involvement with children's school was noted by Jones and Wainaina-Wozna (2013) who, contrary to the finding in this study, found that Romanian mothers advise their children not to tell their peers at school about the father's imprisonment.

In common with the findings for children, this study shows that mothers are overwhelmed by household responsibilities and ask for children's support. This is consistent with previous research (Aaron & Dallaire, 2009; Johnston & Sullivan, 2016; Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Philips et al., 2006). It should be mentioned that in the literature, mainly Western literature, references on household responsibilities mostly refer to the energy single mothers put in raising the children and fulfilling their responsibilities (Arditii et al., 2003), to child supervision (Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012) and preparing food for the children (Arditti, Burton, & Neeves-Botelho, 2010). This study adds to previous findings the hardships mothers, mostly in rural Romania, need to cope with. These include fetching water, chopping wood, or farming and cropping vegetables, suggesting that for this group, being

overburdened in the home is particularly intense.

Economic changes

Financial difficulties of the families affect the lives of the children, some of them dropping out of school for lack of finances. While the literature on children of prisoners identified family economic strain as effect of parental imprisonment (Christian, Mellow, & Thomas, 2006; Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Murray, 2008; Phillips et al., 2006), analysis of the interviews conducted with the children shows that they are very much aware of their family is poor, underlining the need for basic things, such as meat and fruits to eat, and school supplies. This also draws attention to children's ability to interpret consequences of their parent's imprisonment and lends support to previous research. The COPING study, for example, showed that Romanian children, by comparison with children from Sweden, Germany and the UK, have to face deepened financial difficulties that can cause dropping out from school because the family could not afford to pay for the child's school trips (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). Nesmith and Ruhland (2011) also mentioned children's need for clothing and family households that were left without electricity and gas because the family could not afford to pay the bills out from the unemployment benefit.

This study also shows that most families live on social benefits. Out of the 16 mothers included in this study, only four have a history of employment, showing that the imprisoned parent was, in most cases, the sole income provider for the family. Therefore, it is more accurate to assert that imprisonment has not caused, but rather has deepened families' financial problems. Chui's (2010) study of ten women partners of prisoners from Mainland China and Hong Kong also found that women had no previous work experience, whilst Murray (2007) mentioned families that do not know how to access various benefits to receive social assistance and thus depend on charities which are underfunded and have few resources.

Parenting stress

This study uses the Parental Stress Scale (PSS; Berry & Jones, 1995; $\alpha=.80$ following

the Romanian normalization exercise) that was administered as an interview in order to explore the stresses experienced by the mothers in relation to their children. It should be noted that, in considering parenting stress, there are several domains that should be accounted for, that is: parents' personal resources, child's characteristics, and other contextual sources of stress or support (Belsky, 1985). Analysis of verbatim reports shows that mothers generally do not feel stressed in their role as parents, as they can differentiate between the stresses caused by lack of money or household chores and what might be stress caused by the impact of children's behaviours on them (Berry & Jones, 1995, p. 464). In addition to this, the day to day work is perceived by the mothers as their responsibility and is not attributed to the children themselves, but rather to the absence of support from the imprisoned parent. Moreover, analysis of mothers' narratives shows that, although some mothers feel the stresses of household tasks and those derived from an absence of money, they contend that this is manageable, suggesting they perceive themselves as being able to cope with these, which may be interpreted as a personal resource.

By using the PSS, this study was able to show that the children themselves do not influence mothers' parenting stress. This helps in understanding that, in the context of parental imprisonment, parenting stress is multifaceted.. For example, Arditti, Burton, & Neeves-Botelho (2010) found mothers combining different and contrasting types of parenting, such as care and harsh discipline and Philips et al. (2006) found caregivers of children using harsh and over-protective or intrusive parenting. Thus, when discussing the negative impact of parenting on children studies should delineate between the separate factors or predictors of parenting stress.

Analysis of mothers' prompts on PSS items also shows that they do rely on the children for emotional support in coping with life during their husband's imprisonment, the children being perceived as an important source of strength. This finding is supported in this study also by mothers' reports about their children asking them to stop crying over their fathers' imprisonment and by children's narratives underlining that they no longer open up the subject for fear of making their mothers sad. This finding is little emphasized in the literature. Christian, Martinez, and Martinez (2015) mentioned about a mother who considered her children were understanding

of her financial struggles as it was the case when she had bought something only for one child because the payment she had received did not suffice for all of her children, so each child would take turns from one pay check to another in receiving something. Boswel (2002) also referenced an adolescent girl who did not want her mother to know she was crying over missing her imprisoned father because this would upset her. Or another boy in Nesmith and Ruhland's (2008) study spoke about seeing his mother cry but not talking with her about it because this would hurt her.

It should be noted that emotional coping with paternal imprisonment in this study affects the mother-child relationship in that it produces a role shift, namely the children are the ones who are attentive to the mothers' feelings and who offer their support instead of the reverse.

Parenting practices

The results show that mothers value their children's obedience and understanding of the family situation, whilst the analysis of children's reports in relation to their carer reveals that mothers' affection is experienced by the children who acknowledge their feelings of being loved, connected, and secured by a caring maternal presence. Examples of behaviours such as mother holding or playing with the child, or spending time together are used by the children to describe their perception of the mother. This is consistent with the finding in this study related to mothers' perception of children as having insignificant impact on their every day stresses. It is noteworthy that, whilst most studies investigating the impact of non-imprisoned parents/carers on children focused on various stresses or poor parenting,, very few studies were found about children's account of affectionate behaviour as part of the relationship with their non-imprisoned carer. On a contrary note, Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) mentioned an eight year old child saying that even though he still loves his mother very much and would protect her against possible robbers, he doesn't like to "snuggle (...) any more" (p. 1124). In other studies, Dennison, Foley, and Stewart (2005) for example, examined the "positive" or "warm" aspects of the relationship solely on mothers' ratings on a Likert scale, or Wakefield (2015) found that paternal incarceration does not increase warmth between the child and the carer based on observations of child-carer interactions

during the research interviews. This indicates that, when evaluating the impact of parental imprisonment on children, it is important to explore emotional resources children have from their own experiences, since this may point to factors contributing to children's positive coping with adversities that emerge following the incarceration of their parent.

In this study, mothers are also found to be gatekeepers of father-child contact by giving the children space to write on their own letters to the imprisoned father, mediating phone calls, or accompanying children to prison visits. Boswell (2002) mentioned other ways children use to maintain contact with their imprisoned parents, such as photographs of the entire family that children take with them wherever they go, presents some children were allowed to receive from their fathers in prison or watching old videos of the father where they could hear and see him, although he was no longer physically present. However, some of the children in this study refuse contact with their fathers for reasons that may be related to the fact imprisoned fathers are critical of their children, as the case of a teenage girl. For other children, paternal family violence prior to incarceration is the reason behind their choice to interrupt the relationship with their fathers. In the latter situation, this study shows that, despite previous domestic violence from the imprisoned parent, mothers show their support regarding father-child contact, although they do not hide their negative thoughts regarding the father, thoughts that have been taken by the children into their own discourses. Visiting the imprisoned father is, in the situation of most families in this study, conditioned by the family economic situation. Christian, Mellow and Thomas (2006) also found family of prisoners limiting or even ending the relationship with the prisoner due to lack of financial and time resources.

In this study, mothers' encouragements of father-child contact are, to some extent, in contradiction with their avoidance attitude regarding talks with the children about their imprisoned father. This could, however, be interpreted as mothers' attempts to ensure their children are knowledgeable of their fathers by shifting the responsibility of answering children's questions onto the fathers themselves, as this study shows the children use their contact with fathers to ask them about their return home and about their wellbeing.

Keeping children in school is strongly considered by the mothers, although this

contradicts their practice of involving the children in household responsibilities, which is shown to lead to low school attainment. It should be noted that most mothers' focus on children's schooling is directed to attendance rather than school performance, as mothers' expressed interest was for their children to pass the exams and finish school in order to have a job and not for children's academic achievement. Whilst the consequences of parental imprisonment on children's school performance was showed to be negative (Boswell, 2002; Chui, 2010; Murray, 2008; Murray & Farrington, 2006) or limited (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005), few studies underlined parental interest and encouragements regarding their children's education (Hairston, 2002; Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). In Christian, Martinez, and Martinez's (2015) study, one mother was very decided on this matter saying to her child "and just because Daddy's not here, you don't stop learning" (p. 67).

Regarding child supervision and control, as part of parenting practices, this study shows that, following paternal imprisonment, some mothers choose to be more controlling of their children for fear they might join unwanted groups of friends or that they might be hurt. The forms of control vary from checking their school schedule and whether they have done their homework, to phone calls to confirm their whereabouts, to verifying children's statements related to school with their teachers, spying on the children to see what they are doing in their leisure time, or limiting their contacts with peers. These actions affect some children who tend to perceive this as stressful and intrusive, causing them to feel mistrusted, or to go as far as to interrupt romantic relationships for fear of their mother finding out. This finding is unexpected since the literature mainly showed that non-imprisoned carers are poor supervisors due to mental health issues or task overload (Murray & Farrington, 2006; Aron & Dallaire, 2010). However, findings that are similar to those in this study were found in the literature. Philips et al. (2006) showed overprotective or intrusive parenting as practices in families of prisoners, although the authors consider this practice "to be better explained by parental substance abuse and mental health problems than by involvement with the criminal justice system" (p. 694). Arditti, Burton, and Neeves-Botelho's (2010) study on parenting and cumulative disadvantage also investigated control as a parenting feature. Control was defined as "setting and enforcing boundaries for the

child” (p. 145). Thus, much of their findings relate to keeping the children in the house, protected from the gunshots that are frequent in the neighbourhood or from joining gangs that use drugs. An additional finding in this study, which is similar to Arditti, Burton, and Neeves-Botelho’s (2010), was that mothers use harsh discipline such as spanking the children for misbehaviour or grounding their teenage offspring for missing curfews.

In this study, albeit mothers are profoundly affected by partners’ incarceration (emotional, behavioural, and financial), caring for their children seems to include over controlling practices rationalized by protective intents. This attitude of mothers towards their children, together with children’s involvement in taking care of the household and mothers’ focus on children’s school attendance can explain why, for this particular group of children, this study has not found children to exhibit antisocial behaviour.

Mother-father relationship

The second aim of this thesis was to explore the effects of the relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the imprisoned parent on the child. In this regard, the study has investigated children’s and mothers’ perception of the marital relationship before and during paternal imprisonment. Further, participants’ views on family reunification have been explored as to have a broader understanding of the family dynamics that occur during incarceration of a parent.

Children’s perception of their parents’ relationship

The study shows that children perceive their parents’ relationship differently before and during paternal imprisonment in terms of contact and the focus of communication.

Children perceive their parents’ relationship prior to fathers’ incarceration in positive terms, albeit they may have noticed marital disputes or arguments caused by alcohol abuse or day to day chores but interpreted it as normal interactions that always ended in parents “making up”. It is not the case, however, for the children who were physically abused and/or witnessed

their father being violent to the mother. In this situation, this study shows that parents' relationships are remembered by the children as being difficult and traumatizing for both, the mothers and themselves. There are very few studies investigating children's perception of the relationship between their mother and father before imprisonment. Some studies only include children's comments about how imprisonment benefited the family because, prior to imprisonment, their family life was tense due to the fact the father was "emotionally up and down" (Boswell, 2002, p. 18). In another study, Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) captured children's negative image of their parents' relationship before the imprisonment, but in the context of children not being allowed by their mothers to have contact with their imprisoned fathers because, as one boy said, "my mom don't like my dad" (p. 1125).

This study shows that, in children's views, their parents' relationship is about conversations either by phone calls or during prison visits. This is not unexpected since, in the case of imprisonment, these are the main forms of contact available (Hairston, 2002). The content of the parents' talks are shown to be perceived by the children as focused on their schooling and wellbeing as well as the household. In Chui's (2009) study, a child commented about wanting to tell his father about what was happening in the family, but let his mother talk "because I could feel that she needed someone to talk to" (p. 202). This perception of children suggests that, despite the physical separation caused by imprisonment, the parents adjusted their relationship to the new situation of enforced separation. Considering children and the house as the main subjects of conversation may be interpreted in that the children perceive their parents as assuming co-parenting responsibilities, reassuring them the family has remained functional. This is consistent with Turney and Wildeman (2013) who found, based on data from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, that imprisoned fathers who had a good relationship with their partners prior to imprisonment and maintain contact during incarceration are more involved in co-operating with children's mothers on parenting issues. This study also shows that children are aware of tensions that arise among their parents, most often caused by fathers' jealousy, ignorance towards mothers' needs, or fathers' constant demands for goods or actions to be undertaken by the mothers. This is perceived as endangering the parental relationship, causing

children to take actions to defend the marriage (i.e. visits to prison to speak with the father about the consequences of his behaviour and discussions with the mother about the difficulties she has to face in coping with her husband's attitudes).

The two temporal perceptions (before and after imprisonment) show children have adjusted their representations of the parental relationship to the new situation of imprisonment; namely, they have developed constructive mental representations of parenthood by considering parents' relationship as revolving around the children and the household.

Mothers' perception of the relationship with the imprisoned father

This study shows that mothers, in common with their children, have a positive memory of their relationship with their children's father prior to imprisonment, which they described in terms of affection, good communication and a sense of pride for their husbands being the breadwinners in the family. This is consistent with previous research investigating imprisoned parents who lived with their children before the incarceration (Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012). Nevertheless, analysis of narratives shows that disputes or arguments caused by partners' alcohol abuse or cheating were part of the relationship, as found also in Fishman's (1990) study. However, the women in this research underscored that these had not taken place in front of their offspring, which is in contrast with what children reported. In addition, this study shows that disputes within couples were perceived by the mothers not as destructive of the relationship, but as normal events in a couple's life. It should be noted that the mothers included in this study started their relationship with the imprisoned fathers at a very young age (the youngest being 15 and the oldest, 25; mothers' ages during the interview varied from 26 to 48 years) and, at the time of interviewing, out of the 16 mothers, 12 were married to their incarcerated husbands; two were divorced but still in a romantic relationship with the children's imprisoned father; one was living in a consensual relationship prior to incarceration; and one had been divorced and separated prior to incarceration. It is noteworthy that, unlike women's relationship characteristics in this study, prisoners' long lasting relationships is uncommon in the literature. Johnston (2006) mentioned that 40% of children whose fathers were incarcerated had never lived with them prior

to imprisonment. Hariston (2008) noted in relation to imprisoned men's marital status that in two of her previous studies, "less than one-third were married at the time of the studies" (p. 116)

This study also shows that out of the four women who have been physically and/or verbally abused by their partners during marriage, three remained in the relationship arguing it was either for the children, for the long-lasting relationship, or out of sympathy for their partner. More so, their explanations for staying in the relationship also included self-blame or partner's justification for the abuse.

The women in this study consider that their relationship with the imprisoned partner has strengthened. The women invoked the long-time relationship and love for each other and the fact that children were a common concern of the couple. The relationship is mainly portrayed as one where parents encourage each other - through telephone calls or prison visits - and husbands show their concerns for the wellbeing of their wives, while drawing attention to the fact that the children depend on them and that it is important for the women to be healthy. Adding to children's narratives regarding the focus of the relationship, the analysis of mothers' interviews shows that other subjects of couple communication include sharing of feelings or women assuring the husbands of their fidelity and the decision to 'wait for their man' while taking care of the children and the house. This finding lends support to earlier research (Codd, 2003; Comfort et al., 2005; Fishman, 1990) and suggests women's commitment to the marital relationship. Further, intimate visits are found by this study to be rare or discarded by the women due to their feelings of shame or lack of privacy during visits, which is consistent with findings in the Travis, McBride, and Solomon's (2005) study.

But not all contacts are perceived by the women as reinforcing the relationship. Husband's jealousy, constant demands, and unresponsiveness had a deterioration effect on some relationships. In this study, women mentioned they lost their patience and confidence in the relationship. This is consistent with previous research regarding the impact of imprisonment on marriage, showing that incarceration increases the risk of separation (Aaron & Dallaire, 2009; Apel, Blokland, Nieuwebeerta, & van Schellen, 2009; Turney & Wildeman, 2013; Western, Lopoo, & McLanahan, 2002). Furthermore, in the case of women who experienced partner abuse

prior to incarceration, this study shows that during the incarceration of the husband women interrupted all forms of contact meaning they do not write, speak, or visit their imprisoned life partner.

With respect to mothers' overall satisfaction with the relationship with the imprisoned parent, this study shows that most women are satisfied. Their arguments for this satisfaction include absence of disputes, long lasting relationship, shared love, and having shared personal feelings and worries during the imprisonment period, which gave them a sense of strength. However, with the exception of the women who have been abused (one of the four women included in the study stated that she is willing to forget the past and declared she was "very satisfied" with her relationship based on its long history) and for whom dissatisfaction with regards to the relationship was evident, their discourses revealed as main reasons for a less satisfactory relationship the shame the partners brought to the family and having been left to manage the children and the household by themselves. Investigations on women's satisfaction with their relationship with the imprisoned partner before and during imprisonment were not found in the literature. However, women's feeling that imprisonment has strengthened the relationship was noted. Comfort et al. (2005) mentioned a woman who acknowledged that, unlike her previous relationships, communication with her imprisoned partner through letters and visits has brought them closer. Another woman in Chui's (2010) study stated: "I must admit that I am still madly in love with him" (p. 201). Also, women's commitment to their relationship was mentioned by other studies (Fishman, 1990; Hairston, 1991). These examples may indicate that some women are satisfied with their relationships. On the other hand, it may be interpreted as women fulfilling their socially ascribed role as 'good wives' (Codd, 2003).

The length of the prison sentence is not found to influence marital relationships. In this study, eight of the fathers/husbands had a prison sentence above four years; nine of the women had been separated from their husbands for more than two years. The women were still in a relationship with their partners at the time of the interviews, except for three of them who had been abused prior to incarceration and have interrupted all forms of contact. Thus, marriage decline or disruption may be better explained by partners' unsupportive behaviour towards the

women during incarceration and by previous abusive experiences rather than by the length of the men's prison sentence. This is in accordance to findings in Kotova's (2015) study who found that women who are partners of prisoners sentenced for life do not end their relationships. In contrast, longitudinal studies showed that imprisonment can lead to marriage break up (It should be noted though that in Kotova's study, only two of the five women included in the research had been separated from their imprisoned partners for more than ten years.

Analysis of women's discourses prior to versus after incarceration shows that, in general, their representation of the relationship with the imprisoned father is one of a strengthened marital bond, notwithstanding the separation brought about by the imprisonment of their husband.

Views on family reunification

The descriptive evidence from children's views of family reunification shows their desire for the family to be united again and for life to improve, lending support to previous research (Boswell, 2002; Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). At the same time, analysis of children's narratives shows they are not passive with respect to their relationship with the fathers, considering they expect fathers to have changed their behaviour in that they will not repeat criminal offences and will take over their household responsibilities, whilst older male children have been found to make plans with fathers to work abroad in order to provide for the family.

The case of children whose fathers have to serve long sentences is, however, different in that family reunification is so far away that their only hope is for the sentence to be shortened. Also, for children affected by current disputes between their parents, the image of the reunited family is viewed with anxiety at the thought that further arguments will continue, albeit fathers have reassured the children they have changed. One teenage boy in Boswell's (2002) study very well expressed this expectation of children: "There'll need to be some adjustments when he comes out" (p. 20).

This study also shows that children who were affected by fathers' abusive behaviour before the incarceration do not picture a reunited family, although a relationship with their father after release is not ruled out on condition that the two would not live together. This finding is

consistent with narratives from Nesmith and Ruhland's (2008) study.

Mothers, on the other hand, set preconditions on reunification that include, aside from husbands' changed criminal behaviour, taking over significant part of household responsibilities and stronger involvement in raising the children. Analysis of mothers' reports also suggests women are attentive to what others say about life after release and are fearful that their husbands' behaviour may have been changed by the prison environment. When referring to life after reunification, women's discourses tend to include vague terms (i.e. "as before", "nicer than so far", "forget about what happened", or "start all over again"), which is in accordance with other qualitative research investigating women's coping with their partners' imprisonment (Comfort et al., 2005; Fishman, 1990). This study also shows that some women speak about the reunification with their partners in more concrete terms and plan for the couple to go to work abroad upon partner's prison release. However, women's views of a "better life" seem to be in contrast with findings from quantitative studies showing the dissolutive effect of marriages after men's return from prison (Apel, Blokland, Nieuwebeerta, & van Schellen, 2010; Theobald & Farrington, 2012).

In the case of women whose husbands have to serve a long prison sentence, their discourses related to reunification indicate they have lost hope in the family to be together again, whilst the women who have been victimized by their spouses describe the moment of their partner's release in terms of resignation that they will go back to their "tormented lives", hope this moment will never come, or the men will not look for them, finding that is also consistent with the study of Stahl, Kan, and McKay (2008).

Understanding the findings using theory

The studies reviewed for the purpose of this research project showed that parental imprisonment has a profound impact on children and that most of the adversities faced by the children are brought about not as much by the imprisonment itself, but rather by mediating and moderating factors of this *status quo* (e.g. family economic strain, mothers' emotional coping

difficulties, over-protective parenting and overburdens with household responsibilities). Two types of family relationship were found in the literature to moderate negative effects of a parent's incarceration on children; namely, the relationship between the imprisoned parent and the child and the relationship between the child and his/her caregiver. However, studies also found that incarceration affects prisoners' romantic relationships (Comfort et al., 2005; Fishman, 1990), while partners of the incarcerated face difficulties in relation to coping with spousal separation (Foster & Hagan, 2013; Turanovic, Rodriguez, & Pratt, 2012; Wildeman, Schnittker, & Turney, 2012), as well as with their role as temporary single parents (Aron & Dallaire, 2010; Murray & Farrington, 2006; Philips et al., 2006). Conclusion from the evidence discussed in the literature review of this thesis was that paternal imprisonment affects children as well as their caregivers and the matrimonial relationship. Based upon this, this study has taken on a family approach by questioning the extent to which paternal incarceration impacts the mother-child and the mother-father relationships and how these affect children. Analysis of children's and mothers' interviews has been guided by attachment and parenting theories.

Attachment theory posits that, in early infancy, children should form a secure emotional base on which they learn to explore the world and build internal working models that tend to persist throughout the life course (Bretherton, 1992). In other words, depending on the primary caregiver's responsiveness to the infant's needs, the child learns that when he or she is in danger or need, the parent will be there to offer – or, otherwise, not offer - protection and comfort. At the same time, according to the manner in which the child's caregiver responds to the child, the child learns to think of himself/herself as accepted or unaccepted by others (Bowlby, 1973). Nevertheless, the stability of the internal working model can be modified by crisis or stressful events experienced in life (Bowlby, 1973; Main, 2000).

Imprisonment of a parent can be viewed from a double perspective: (1) a family crisis (Hairston, 2002; Lowenstein, 1986; Murray, 2005) and (2) a temporary loss (Arditti, 2005). In this study, the family crisis triggered by paternal imprisonment leads children to be more involved in taking care of the household and younger siblings. Attachment theory also helps to explain this behaviour in children when referring to experiences of loss whereas, in disordered

mourning¹¹, a bereaved person may respond to his or her loss by taking the role of the missing attachment figure (Bretherton, 1992). However, it is noteworthy that children's involvement with household responsibilities may also be explained by their supportive attitude towards the mothers. With respect to this issue, the literature on children of prisoners draws attention to the risks of 'parentification' of children (Johnston & Sullivan, 2016; van Nijnatten, 1998) which can have long-term effects in that, as adults, children may develop patterns of parentified behaviour that can be transmitted to future generations (Hooper, 2008).

Mother-child attachment

The unbalanced nature of the stability of internal working models under crisis situations further helps us to understand children's reactions in relation to their mothers. Since this study investigated children whose fathers have been imprisoned while remaining in the care of their mothers, logically, it would have been expected for the mother-child attachment relationship to remain stable because there has been no separation between the two. Nevertheless, this study shows that, in the first months after husbands' imprisonment, mothers experience depression and emotional breakdown following the incarceration of their partners and, as such, they are not able to see their children's own experiences of sadness. Research on parental emotional availability showed that in the case of mothers experiencing depression the effects on their children are much more harmful than the effects of mothers' physical absence (Cummings & Davies, 1999; Field, 1994). Furthermore, as Johnson and Waldfogel (2004) pointed out, in families of prisoners, the adequacy of affectional parental care provided by the caregiver is the main factor contributing to the risks in children rather than the parental separation itself. Although Johnson and Waldfogel, citing Rutter (1990), refer to children separated by their incarcerated mothers, this remains an issue even in situations where mothers continue to be the main provider of care. For the children in this study, the mothers' emotional unavailability is found to have a reverse effect considering the children have become emotionally supportive of their mothers instead of receiving comfort

¹¹ According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders - 5, disordered mourning is called persistent complex bereavement disorder and describes people who are significantly and functionally impaired by prolonged grief symptoms for at least one month after six months of bereavement

for their own feelings of sorrow.

Attachment theory also argues that maternal cognitions and emotions mediate mother-child attachments (Cassidy, Jones, & Shaver, 2013) in that, for example, an adequate attribution of a child's behaviour and emotions can help mothers to accurately identify the need of their offspring (Leerkes & Siepak, 2006). In this study, mothers avoid providing their children with information about the time of their fathers return home and wellbeing of the imprisoned father. They rationalize that they do not wish to re-traumatize the children. In this, mothers attribute to their children traumatic emotions triggered by the separation. However, since mothers have stated during interviews that they do not know how their children have felt following father's incarceration, it can be inferred that the emotions attributed to the children may be those experienced by the mothers themselves. This is supported by the text analysis of children's and mothers' interviews that shows children have experienced sadness and withheld their emotions, whilst mothers have been through much stronger emotions, such as depression and emotional breakdown. It is not to say that sadness or withholding emotions are not powerful feelings. However, these are not as intense as to be considered traumatic. Therefore, by misattributing children's perception of fathers' imprisonment, the mothers strayed away their children's interest in the father, thus leaving them with an unmet need, which is to have knowledge of their fathers' wellbeing and return home. From an attachment point of view, absence of knowledge about the attachment figure augments children's separation from their father, beyond the physical distance that can lead to disruption of children's attachment with their imprisoned father (Main & Solomon, 1986).

Koren-Karie et al. (2002) discuss mothers' sensitivity, insightfulness, and child's attachment. The authors assert that the child-mother secure relationship is associated with increased maternal insightfulness, which is the ability to understand the child's feelings and thoughts. , The authors group parents' level of insightfulness into four categories: positive insightful, one-sided, disengaged, and mixed parents. From the four groups of parents, the mothers' responses in this current study are better described by the disengaged insightful parental characteristics which include "lack of emotional involvement, short and limited

answers, and focus on the child's behaviour (rather than motives)" (p. 536). Indeed, analysis of mothers' verbatim reports in relation to their children shows that mothers seem less focused on children's emotional state. Rather, they mostly refer to children's maturity and ability to understand the family situation. When directly asked about children's feelings in relation to their fathers' imprisonment, their responses refer to a mere assumption that the children may have been affected. The long term effect of insightful disengaged parents on children can be, according to the authors, the development of an avoidant attachment in children which can be translated into children learning to contain distress and, as adult parents, into their inability to offer adequate comfort and emotional support to their own offspring (George & Solomon, 2008).

Despite the above discussed issues of mother-child attachment, the relationship between the mothers and their children in this study also includes mutual affection: children described having been held by the mothers and playing together, whilst mothers mentioned they love their children and feel loved by them. Except for the finding that mothers experience profound emotional difficulties and, as such, are emotionally unavailable for their children in the first months after partners' imprisonment, the other findings related to their inability to see through children's emotions or to inform the children about their fathers' wellbeing do not necessarily exclude affectionate behaviour.

Most of the literature on children of prisoners from an attachment perspective focused on the relationship between the children and their incarcerated parents (Dallaire, 2007; Murray & Murray, 2010; Phillips et al., 2006). This study brings insight into the relationship between the children and their non-imprisoned mothers by showing that imprisonment *does* impact this attachment relationship even though, so far, it has been considered to remain stable because of mothers' continued care (Dallaire, 2007; Foster & Hagan, 2013; Johnson & Waldfogel, 2004; Poehlmann, 2005; Tasca, Turanovic, White, & Rodriguez's, 2012).

Nevertheless, it must be reminded that critics suggest that, with respect to children's outcomes, attachment is less relevant when compared to peer influences (Harris, 1995) or to genetic factors (Fearon et al., 2014).

Mother-father attachment

The mother-father attachment has been informed in this study by the theoretical framework of adult romantic relationships, which stemmed from Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980, 1988) theory of attachment. The romantic attachment theory states that a person is attracted by another person if the other meets three main criteria; namely responsiveness, care, and sexual gratification, and that development and maintenance of a relationship depends on building confidence and trust on the other's availability and responsivity (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Adult attachment relationships are characterized by three features:

tendency for an individual to remain in close contact with the attachment figure (....) the attachment figure is used as a safe haven during times of illness, danger or threat (....) an attachment figure is relied on as a secure base for exploration. (Fraley & Shaver, 2000, p. 138).

In this study, women's depression and emotional breakdown in the first months after partners' imprisonment is explained by the theory of romantic attachment with reference to the dissolution of the relationship. Although, in this research, imprisonment of a partner does not entail dissolution of the relationship, it does cause physical separation which deprives the attachment relationship of two of its characteristics, namely close contact and possibility to turn to the partner when feeling distressed (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). As such, imprisonment can be viewed as causing a temporary loss of a partner; as Hazan and Shaver (1994) have explained, realization of relationship loss brings about deep sadness, despair, and social isolation - reactions that have been found in the women participants in this study.

The fact that the women eventually coped with this temporary loss can also be understood with the help of the romantic attachment theory. The women in this study were in long-lasting relationships with their imprisoned partners and their accounts of the relationship before the incarceration suggest that the romantic attachment has been fully formed. Thus, the remaining feature of the attachment relationship, which consists of the fact a partner relies on the other for a secure base on which to explore, helps the mothers in this study to view their husbands as still attainable by activating the attachment system (i.e. return to the secure base by

activating cognitive representations of their partners when distressed) (Shafer & Mikulincer, 2002).

The theory of adult romantic attachment states that there is variety of factors contributing to marital satisfaction, from those related to psychological health of partners to factors entailing parenting capabilities or social support (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). From a more individual perspective, positive emotions in relation to partners (Feeney, 1999), trust in partner's availability (Hazan & Shaver, 1994), and sensitive and responsive care (Feeney & Hohaus, 2001; Kotler, 1985) were found to be predictors of relationship satisfaction. This helps in understanding why, in this study, most women rate their relationship with their imprisoned partners as "mostly" and "very" satisfying. When asked to explain their choice, the prisoners' partners invoked absence of serious arguments, long lasting relationship, shared love, and a sense of strength. Also, their discourses relative to the relationship with the husbands during imprisonment reveals not just women's commitment to the relationship ensuring the spouses of their fidelity and availability to wait, but also partners' concern of the women's wellbeing and constant communication about the children, suggesting that imprisonment does not impede couples' mutual care and responsiveness.

However, it is intriguing to find in this study that three out of four women that were abused by their partners decided to remain in the relationship, even before their partners' imprisonment. They argued that the reasons for their staying in the abusive relationship were: having children, being part of a long-lasting relationship and out of a sense of mercy for the abusive husband. Their discourses also indicate self-blame or justification for the abuse. In a study comparing women who were abused by their partners and left the relationship with women who were still in the abusive relationship, Herbert, Silver, and Ellard (1991) found that what makes most women remain in the relationship is their cognitive structuring of the relationship in more positive terms or, otherwise said, it "was not as bad as it could be" (p. 321). Other studies suggest that emotional attachment, commitment to the relationship, family history, role expectations, economic dependency of the abusive partner, or peers' praise of women for returning to their spouse could stand for their decision to remain together with the perpetrator

(Bell & Naugle, 2005; Dutton & Painter, 1981; Hayes, 2015; Rusbult & Martz, 1995).

To explain the emotional attachment in abusive relationships, Dutton and Painter (1981; 1993) proposed the traumatic bond theory based on two main features of the abusive relationship: power imbalance and intermittency of the abuse. The power imbalance is explained by the authors in that that attachment between two people can create feelings of personal power which may lead to subordinations within the couple, which could take pathological forms. As one gains more power over the other, the dominated person increases her image of negative self to the point she becomes incapable to function and the need for the abuser magnifies. Thus, a dependent relationship is created. However, the abuse is not constant, but takes place with intermittency, while the relationship also includes abusers' manifestations of positive attachment. This is when "the phenomenon of traumatic bonding seems most powerful" (Dutton & Painter, 1993, p. 108). Nonetheless, for the women in this study who interrupted their relationship with the imprisoned partner during imprisonment in that they do not write, speak on the phone, or visit, it would seem that the dependency has not yet formed within the couple despite the long-lasting relationship and repetition of the abuse or, perhaps, the condition of intermittency being removed by partners' impossibility to directly approach his wife/partner has helped women out of the relationship. However, when asked to state their views about partners' return home, the women expressed their resignation and hope that the partner will not come out of the jail, which is an indication of their feelings of helplessness and a subtle form of partners' continuing power over them, this finding thus lending support to Dutton and Painter's (1981; 1993) traumatic bond theory.

In this study, the investigation of the mother-father relationship includes the views of the children. Existing research emphasizing the influence of marital relationship on children of prisoners (Hairston, 1998; Turney & Wildeman, 2013; Wakefield, 2015; Western, Lopoo, & McLanahan, 2002) mainly counted for data drawn from the parents. Children's perception of this relationship is found to be relatively similar to that of their mothers. By considering parents' relationship as revolving around themselves and the household the children develop constructive mental representations of parenthood. This is in accordance with the attachment

perspective on parental involvement that set foundations for future positive interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1973; Crowell et al., 2002; Howe, 2011).

The parallel analysis of two types of family attachment relationships, namely mother-child and mother-father shows that, in the context of *the same* family crisis that is paternal imprisonment, intra-family attachment representations take different forms of adjustment. Whilst the mother-father attachment representations indicate a strengthening of the relationship, in the case of the mother-child dyad the attachment representations are more dynamic. These include: emotional unavailability of the mother in the first period after fathers' incarceration, which made children take on the affectional supportive role, mother's unresponsiveness in relation to child's interest of the father, but also, on a positive note, mother-child mutual displays of affection.

Parenting and children

This study is also informed by parenting practices theories that stemmed mainly from Baumrind's (1968, 1975, 1991) parental styles theory, but also from Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) theory of attachment, and Erickson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development. Parenting is viewed within this literature as a dyadic process taking place within the family unit (Baumrind, 1991; Chen & Kaplan 2001; Chipman et al., 2000; Darling & Steinberg 1993; Steinberg, Eisengart, & Cauffman, 2006) or as influenced by contextual factors, such as marital relations, family economic situation, residential area quality or ethnicity and cultural belonging (Belsky, 1984; Bradley, Corwin, Pipes-McAdoo, & Garcia-Coll, 2001; Furstenberg et al., 1993; Kotchick & Forehand, 2002).

The model of competent parental functioning proposed by Belsky (1984) helps understand the processes involved in parenting children of prisoners in this study. This model states that parental functioning is based on the influence of three main determinants: parent's psychological resources, child's characteristics and contextual factors of stress and support. Belsky contends that when the functionality of parenting is threatened, "optimal functioning (defined in terms of producing competent offspring) will occur when personal psychological resources of parents are the only determinants that remain intact." (p. 91). In the following

discussion, each main determinant will be examined with reference to this study results.

Parenting theorists agree that predictors of effective parenting pertaining to parental personal resources include: parents' sensitivity and responsiveness regarding children's needs, adequate appraisal of those needs, displays of affectional behaviour, good psychological state and internal locus of control, self-efficacy, active monitoring and consistent – but not harsh – disciplinary strategies (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002; Raikes & Thompson, 2005). Florsheim, Tolan and Gorman-Smith (1998) found that disciplinary strategies that allowed for certain autonomy in adolescent boys compensated the risks of single-mother families, such as delinquency. Also Grych (2002) underlined that competent parents are sensible and responsive to their children's needs. Such qualities in parents have been associated with children's high self-esteem and self-reliance, social confidence, achievement orientation, cooperativeness, and fewer behavioural problems (Baumrind, 1975, 2005). No parenting theoretical framework has, however, suggested that effective parenting is achieved by the simultaneous presence of all these characteristics in one parent, or that one characteristic has precedence over another. Instead, for example, parental psychopathology (i.e. depression symptoms in mothers) has been related to child delinquency, drop out from school, and rejection by peers (Wilson & Gottman, 2002); intrusive parenting has been linked to child's dependent behaviour, depression, and low school performance (Baumrind 1991); or parental inconsistent monitoring has been associated with emotional problems in children (Steinberg, Eisengart, & Cauffman, 2006) and social unassertiveness and irresponsibility (Mandara 2010).

Mothers' related issues in this study may be summarized as follows: emotional unavailability in the first period after husband's imprisonment, focus on children's behaviour rather than their emotions, inadequate appraisal of children's need for knowing about their father, special interest on children's school attendance and basic needs for food and clothing, active monitoring and control, and also displays of affectionate behaviour, involvement and cooperation with children regarding household activities, facilitation of father-child contact, and confidence in complying with mothering duties. It is difficult to state that these characteristics make mothers' parenting more or less effective. However, as some of the above mother

characteristics are positive and others are negative, these may counterbalance one another so as to achieve competent parenting which, is influenced not just by parental resources, but also by child characteristics and other contextual factors (Belsky, 1984) that will be discussed below. Part of competent parenting is ensuring children's education by becoming involved with children's schooling, either through helping with their homework (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989) or by taking part in programs that were developed at school (Chao, 2000). The manner in which mothers in this study act towards ensuring children's education is by providing children with school supplies and transport to school, but also by emphasizing, during mother-child conversations, the importance of education in adult achievement and by keeping constant contact with children's teachers in order to be informed of their school attendance and progress. Active monitoring is also considered an important aspect of childrearing. For some of the mothers in this research, monitoring of their children is found to be taken to extreme making children - especially adolescent children - feel mistrusted or to go as far as to interrupt their romantic relationships for fear of mothers finding out. Most mothers, however, state their interest in knowing of their children's whereabouts and friendships, which is in accordance with parenting preoccupation regarding school age children (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Conger, 1991).

Another parenting practice refers to disciplining children. This study shows examples of mothers who grounded their teenagers for missing curfews or spanked them for misbehaviours – responses that were found in previous research on low-income families (Bradley, Corwin, Pipes-McAdoo, & Garcia-Coll, 2001; Mandara, 2010). In the context of enforced parental separation as is the case of parental imprisonment, an important aspect of child rearing can be ensuring children maintain contact with their father (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998), which mothers take interest in and facilitate by mediating phone calls, taking children to prison visits or by asking them to add their thoughts on the letters they were writing to their husbands. Also, displays of affectionate behaviour have been found in this study to be present in mother-child interactions, which is considered as positive practice of parenting (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998). Another aspect related to personal resources of parents is mothers' self-efficacy which was found to be associated with reduced parenting stress. Self-efficacy is understood as

“beliefs concerning one’s ability to perform competently and effectively in a particular task or setting” (Raikes & Thompson, 2005 *apud* Teti & Gelfand, 1991, p. 180). Indeed, as one woman has eloquently stated: “I take care of them daily. It’s not that I feel overwhelmed... I *can* do it.” (Gabriela, 26 years old, Family 4). The mothers in this study often underline that it is their responsibility to raise the children and that they are able to do so.

The examples mentioned above show that mothers activate their personal resources in caring for their children and most of these resources have the academic support to be considered as positive parenting practices.

Regarding children’s characteristics that influence parental functioning, the majority of research focused on infants and pre-schoolers and, more specifically, on infants’ temperament underlining their more or less problematic features such as emotional intensity or activity levels (Belsky, 1984; McBride, Schoppe, & Rane, 2002). However, and as Belsky (1984) asserted, “neither temperament, nor other child characteristics per se shape parenting, but rather that the “goodness-of-fit” between parent and child determines the development of parent-child relations” (p. 86). There are three characteristics of the children included in this study that deserve special attention in that they may contribute to mother-child “goodness-of-fit”: (1) children’s ages; (2) gender; and (3) children’s conformity with mothers’ parenting actions. Overall impact of children on parental stress will also be discussed here.

The ages of children included in this study range from 9 to 17 years. According to Erickson (1968), children aged 6 to 12 develop industry, therefore what characterizes a child during these ages is his/her desire to *learn* and to *do*, whilst the parental role in this stage mainly includes preparing the child for school, teaching him/her what is the purpose of school and making the child trust his/her teachers. Other research suggests that children in preadolescent years have a more dynamic emotional development in that they exhibit sudden changes of mood, which may lead to parent-child conflict, although positive affect and closeness to the parents remain constant (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). The children in this study, however, are found to exhibit such changes of mood. With respect to mothers’ role of focusing the children on schooling, this is found in both children’s and mothers’ discourses, indicating an age-appropriate

parenting practice. Adolescents (12 to 20 years, cf. Erickson, 1968) have to face two main challenges during this stage: on one hand, there are the rapid changes in the body and, on the other, the consolidation of the social role. The adolescent is confronted with a complex set of drivers (the body changes its proportions, the genital maturity settles, intimacy becomes a special concern) and also with an increasing consciousness of who s/he is. Adolescence is also a period when children tend to separate emotionally from their parents and focus towards their peers (Stang & Story, 2005), and when dating and first sexual experiences occur (APA, 2002). The advice given by Erickson (1968) to parents is to show understanding towards the intolerance of the adolescent and to offer guidance instead of stereotyping and prohibiting. In the case of the mothers in this study, their parenting attitudes towards their adolescent children mainly include controlling their whereabouts with insistent phone calls and limiting children's time spent with friends, whereas research on adolescent parenting suggests that positive parental actions should combine consistency in offering support with guidance and granting the adolescent relative autonomy (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998). For the adolescents included in this study, the mothers have an inadequate parenting approach in that they do not account for children's age-appropriate need for autonomy.

Research on child temperament influences on parenting showed that mothers are usually more attentive to their boys, no matter the boys' temperament, whereas only the girls who have a more active temperament seem to solicit mothers' attention (McBride, Schoppe, & Rane, 2002). Of the 15 children included in this study, nine are girls and six are boys. This research does not show specific practices directed by the mothers to their preadolescent children relative to their gender. However, in the case of teenagers, girls are found to be controlled with regards to their male friends (i.e. one girl refused to be taken to a gynaecologist by her mother and another girl ended a romantic affair for fear of her mother finding out), whilst the teenage boys are supervised regarding the quality of their friendships, which mothers feared might lead to smoking or drinking alcohol when their boys befriend others that smoke or drink. This suggests that not only do mothers restrict their adolescents' autonomy, but also they have a strong sense of risks associated with gender (i.e. girls that might become sexually active and get pregnant;

boys might start to use substances, which can be associated with child delinquency).

Another finding in this study related to child characteristics is children's conformity with mothers' parenting actions. Mothers are found to value their children's obedience and understanding of the family situation. Child's conformity and obedience to authority was also found by other studies focused on parenting, underlining this is an expectation of parents as figures of authority, thus easing their caregiving actions (Baumrind, 1975; Thompson-Gershoff, 2002) or that children's compliance is a cultural value (Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Garcia-Coll & Pachter, 2002). However, children's obedience is favoured by the mothers in this study and may contribute to the mother-child "goodness-of-fit" (Belsky, 1984, p. 86). Although it can be argued that obedience is not a child's characteristic *per se* but the result of previous parenting practices, it is this author's opinion that, for the children in this study aged nine and above, this is something they have internalized and, thus, obedience has become a characteristic pertaining to the child.

Children's overall impact on their mothers has been investigated in this study by using Berry and Jones' (1995) Parental Stress Scale items as interview prompts. The results show that mothers do not see their children as a burden or as being responsible for the worries and hardships brought about by their father's imprisonment; although they admit children's behaviours are sometimes upsetting or annoying, but at the same time they see them as normal and contend that these are not felt as stressful.

The contextual sources of stress and/or support included by Belsky (1984) in his model of competent parental functioning are: marital relations, social network and work. Due to the fact most of the mothers in this study did not have an employment history, financial strain is discussed here as contextual factor for parenting stress instead of work.

Marital relations are envisaged by the literature as having a major contribution to parenting quality. Mothers' supportive attitude towards the children's father and also marital satisfaction and low-conflict parental relations found to be associated with parental acceptance of children and displays of affection and warmth towards them (Belsky, 1984; Grych, 2002). Conversely, mutual partner hostility is associated with parents' criticism and intrusiveness in

parent-child relationship; poorer co-parenting relationship quality is linked with lax maternal parenting; and mothers' depression in conflict marriages has been found to cause children to be more involved in or to take responsibility for the marital conflict (Sterrett, Jones, Forehand, & Garai, 2010; Wilson & Gottman, 2002). The latter finding helps to understand the situation found in this study related to the child who intervened in her parental relationship disputes (caused by the imprisoned father's jealousy and demands) in order to mediate the mother-father relationship. The literature on positive spousal relations and co-parenting also helps to understand the results in this study with regards to mothers' perceived satisfaction about their marital relationship, as well as children's and mothers' accounts of mother-father conversations revolving around the children and the household. For most of the mother-father relationships described in this research, marital relations represent a positive parenting influence supported also by their long term relationships (Belsky, 1984).

The positive influence of social support for parenting is not so clearly stated in the literature. For example, there are studies confirming this hypothesis for African American and Hispanic families in the US (Garcia-Coll & Pachter, 2002; Sterrett, Jones, Forehand, & Garai, 2010) and there are other studies concluding that social support has no significant association with parenting stress in that it does not reduce, nor enhance (Raikes & Thompson, 2005), even though the studies referenced here included the same participants' characteristics (European American, African American, and Hispanic low income mothers). However, the parents' psychological wellbeing mediates the possible benefits of social network on parenting (Belsky, 1984), inferring that parental emotional difficulties could not be associated with positive influences of social support on parenting. This helps to understand the situation of families in the current study: most of the mothers mention that they feel alone and have no one to talk to, although comments on sisters' or parents' presence in their lives were made. The reasons women invoke in their statements referring to feelings of loneliness are mainly related to the fact their emotional problems concerning the enforced separation from their partners and the hardships they face regarding lack of money or scarcity of food are of a sensitive and more intimate nature to be discussed with others. Moreover, and as some of the women stated during the interviews, it

was a goal they set for themselves to show to the imprisoned partner and to the community that they can cope with their temporary single mother situation, as Alexandra has so well-articulated: “So he’ll [the husband] see and the people in the village would see I was ambitious and I knew how to control my children.” (41 years old, Family 13).

Much of the literature on parenting underlined the association between low family income and poor parenting practices (Bradley, Corwin, Pipes-McAdoo, & Garcia-Coll, 2001; Gutman & Feinstein, 2008; Mandara, 2010). However, there is also evidence that does not support the negative influence of family financial strain on parenting, especially when accounting for moderating factors such as maternal self-efficacy (Raikes & Thompson, 2005). This shows the complexity and dynamics of processes involved in parenting. In this study, the families had a poor financial background, that has been deepened by the imprisonment of the father. Mothers’ and children’s narratives often underscore the family’s financial stress in relation to children’s basic needs for food and clothing, as well as other necessities, such as house utilities or children’s school supplies. However, and as described in this section, mothers’ ability to care for their children seems to remain positive despite the economic hardships.

In relation to the contextual factors for parenting stress or support, this study shows, in accordance with Belsky (1984) and Grych (2002), that marital relations are the most influential factor in maternal parenting practices, whereas social support or family poverty was not found to impact upon parental functionality of mothers.

Overall, it can be considered that, in this study, maternal parenting practices are not affected by paternal imprisonment in terms of mothers’ being overburden with household responsibilities and deepened family poverty brought about by the husband’s incarceration. The factors contributing to mothers’ positive parenting adjustments include: mothers’ self-efficacy, mother-child displays of affectionate behaviour, active monitoring of children, children’s obedience towards their mothers, and mothers’ facilitation of father-child contact as well as mothers’ perceived satisfaction regarding their marital relationship. Belsky’s (1984) model of competent parental functioning helps to understand, in the context of parental imprisonment, the various aspects pertaining to the three determinants of parenting: parents’ personal resources,

child's characteristics and the contextual sources of stress or support. This study also extends Belsky's (1984) model by adding to the discussion new features within the determinants of parenting, namely children's characteristics such as age, gender and internalized obedience (beyond the child's temperament proposed in the model and family economic situation as part of contextual factors influencing parental functionality).

Chapter 9. Thoughts and reflections on interviewing children and families of prisoners

The purpose of this section is to present the challenges faced during field research. In this regard, three main issues are detailed: participants' recruitment for this study, the issue of consent and the positionality of power during the research interviews. Because of the personal experiences and opinions expressed within, the first-person narrative is used.

Participants' recruitment

Identifying children and families of prisoners for conducting qualitative research was not as easy as it appeared when I was reading the literature on this topic. Little is written about the struggle researchers meet in recruiting participants for their studies. Most of the literature just mentioned the procedure that was followed in order to reach children's caregivers. This included either approach through the prison system and – implicitly – through imprisoned parents (Boswell, 2002; Dallaire & Wilson, 2009; Hanlon et al., 2004; Poehlmann, 2005; Tuerk & Loper, 2006) and/or reaching out to community organizations working with children and families of prisoners (Chui, 2010; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008; Poehlmann et al., 2008).

In the case of Romanian children of prisoners, the COPING study showed this group is invisible for social services in that services directed to provide support are not developed (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013). This finding was something I've learned of before the study report was published since I was involved in the COPING research while working for a local NGO that was member in the consortium of this study project. Thinking about my previous experience in working with prisoners and collaborating with prisons in Romania made me feel somewhat confident that it would be easy to gain access to the children and their carers by approaching the imprisoned parents. However, this plan proved not to be achievable despite the verbal consent of the Iasi prison director to present my study to the imprisoned parents in order to obtain contact details of their children's caregivers. After sending the official letter, I was asked to submit a research application and, after research completion, a study report. This is because internal regulations state that research with prisoners and/or prison staff should follow this procedure.

When replied that my purpose was not to conduct research with prisoners or prison staff but to present the research to imprisoned parents, I received no answer. It should be noted that access to prisoners' families in the COPING study was gained due to official institutional agreements fostered by this project. Although I had access to the COPING participants' database, it felt that re-interviewing children and their caregivers for a new study would be unethical and prone to research bias. After attempting to approach schools and sectorial police (an attempt that confirmed the COPING finding that children of prisoners were an invisible group) it became clear that I had to use my privileged position of working in a non-governmental institution. But the "privileged position" refers to the fact one of my tasks was to write grant applications. Thus, using findings from the COPING study as well as those I learned of from working on this thesis, I was able to justify the need for support for children of prisoners and the NGO was granted funds for this purpose. I was also named project manager. Official agreements were closed between two prisons and the NGO in order to promote the social services offered by the NGO amongst prisoners.

Of course, there are other methods for recruiting participants. For example, I could have printed flyers with a brief presentation of the research that I could have handed out to visitors at the prison gate. However, this would have meant spending many hours waiting by the prison gate and asking people who wanted to go in if they were visiting a prisoner. But the visiting hours were during the day and this meant missing from work, which I could not afford. If this approach would have been effective, I do not know. I should note that Iasi prison is located on a very narrow street neighbouring army premises and that there is no visitors' centre outside the prison. My experience in meeting visitors at the prison gate was that they usually do not interact and are very much focused on the procedures they need to follow once they enter the prison (e.g. presenting their identification documents, telling to the prison guard what they brought to the prisoner in their luggage and move on towards the visiting building). Also, prison visitation is scheduled by e-mail or by phone, so there are fixed hour appointments and, as such, visitors do not spend much time waiting outside the prison gate.

It can be said that working for an NGO was one of the benefits for being an "insider" in

gaining access to participants, although this meant spending almost one year in writing various grant applications. However, after the NGO project logistics were in place, the question was one of an ethical nature: should I use my newly project manager position in the NGO to access participants in my research? The answer was no. Therefore, the recruitment approach was to ask my colleagues who were social workers that in case they are contacted by carers from whom they learn they have children above the age of nine, they would ask them if they wish for themselves and their child to speak with a researcher. There were carers who refused to take part in the research from the start. Most of them however, accepted and a meeting was scheduled (usually after a few days) at the NGO office or at their home.

However, the actual recruitment of participants was a process that lasted almost a year and a half. This is because most carers who called the NGO had children younger than nine. Also, most of them resided in rural areas, reason for which the families in this study were overwhelmingly drawn from rural areas.

The issue of consent

For those carers who gave their verbal consent during the first contact with the social worker, there were four distinct situations. One where carers, after having had time to reflect, had changed their mind with respect to their participation or with the participation of their child, another situation where the mothers accepted to be interviewed together with their child but had not told the child about the research, a third situation where both the mother and the child agreed to take part in the research but the child's agreement was due to the fact his/ her mother told him/ her to speak with me, and the fourth situation where the mother and child were open to taking part in this study.

In the first case, where I met the mothers who had changed their mind with respect to their participation in the research, I thanked them and the social worker took on. But there was also the case where a mother said she accepts to take part in the study but not her child, reasoning she does not wish the child to remember. In this situation, because the mother was alone, I presented the research and the consent form and asked again if she wishes to be

interviewed. She said yes and the interview was conducted.

There were also several situations where mothers accepted for them and their children to be interviewed but while I presented my research to the mother-child couple it was obvious that the child was not informed (constantly looking at his/ her mother while appearing confused). As my responsibility was to make sure that the child agrees to participate after being fully informed, when left alone with the child, I presented my research again and asked the child if s/he has any questions and if s/he wishes to take part in the research. The child was also told that in case s/he does not wish, this is perfectly OK. All these children assented. However, there were specific situations. For example, a girl of nine years old who found out her father was in jail and not working abroad (as her mother had told her) only two days before the interview. She found out from a friend who showed her the picture of her father in an old newspaper detailing a robbery. She had confronted her mother who acknowledged what she had found out. The little girl was overt and willing to tell her story, but most of this story was constructed around her father who had left to work in England and with whom she spoke every month. From time to time during the interview she stated that she knows now her father is in jail, but her past was related to a father who was in England. This interview was excluded from the study due to insufficient data. Nevertheless, some of this little girl's words remained in my memory. I asked her how she felt when she found out the truth about her father. "I felt offended", she replied. When I asked what "offended" means to her she said "It's like someone trying to keep things away from you, they don't trust you".

It was also the situation when, after the interview started, the very short and somehow blunt answers of a boy and his avoidance of visual contact were indicators that he was not in a position of his choice. In this case, the child was reassured that his own will to participate in this research was the most important and if he does not wish to speak, this is all right and there are no repercussions what so ever. Although knowing that I would be one interview short for this study, it was wonderful to see this child's face lighting up and clearly saying he would like to stop the interview. This was another of many proofs that children are able to make decisions that concern them.

Under the issue of consent, two research interviews with mothers merit attention because of their particular nature and because of their interpretations in consenting for their children's participation in the study. The women called the NGO office and, after verbally consenting to participate in the study together with their daughter, one woman was scheduled for the interview at the NGO office and the other at her place of residence. At the NGO office the woman came unaccompanied by her daughter because she was at school at that time. After I explained what the study is about and she signed the consent form the interview started. As her story unfolded she talked about her second husband being imprisoned for having sexually abused her daughter from a first marriage. Although it became obvious that her daughter's history was actually one of sexual abuse, I could not interrupt the mother. It was like having pushed a button of remorse and pain that was never expressed and this was the only opportunity the woman had to speak of this event. And this was true, as the mother told me after two hours. Her daughter had received psychological counselling from child protection services, but her mother had not because there were no services for adult family members. The same thing happened at the place of residence of the second woman. She met us (the social worker and I) at the gate and she said she would like to talk to me first. The house had only two rooms. There were about seven children in one room and an 18 years old young woman who was rocking an infant to sleep. The mother and I went in the second room where I presented my research. However, she was so eager to speak that she signed the consent form while talking about how she met her husband. For about three hours the woman spoke about her family difficulties and how she had to leave home from time to time to work or to care for her own mother who was ill. Everything was told in chronological order. The story of the incest peaked when she told me that the infant I saw was the child her daughter gave birth to after being sexually abused by her own father. These mothers' stories were very powerful. The first woman spoke that she wanted to burn the house when she found out, but was stopped by her neighbours. The second talked about sleepless nights while screaming in her head and blaming herself for not having noticed what was going on. After listening to these mothers, I told them I cannot use these interviews for the research. I wanted to tell them about services they could go to for emotional support, but there was none I knew of. One of the women embraced

and thanked me for staying and listening. What was very surprising for me when I announced I will not interview their daughter because of ethical reasons was to hear the mothers saying that their daughter is fine to speak because she had been to a psychologist. To me, the mothers' pain and remorse contrasted very much with the perception of their daughters of having overcome the sexual abuse experience. I felt that the women used the opportunity of speaking with somebody about their experience as a form of emotional release. This may also be the reason behind consenting for their daughters' participation that is they may have thought it would further benefit their children. Or maybe they truly believed their daughters can cope with the recollection of their father's crime, but of this I could only find out after asking the girls themselves which I made sure I will not.

From the experiences regarding recruitment and gaining consent from participants I've learned that one cannot foresee all possibilities that may occur during field research. There are lessons learned, though. For example, children's unawareness of their participation in the research can be avoided by taking advantage of the time between mother's verbal consent and the actual meeting by sending a letter to the mother. The letter should include a detailed description of the research and an explicit request for the mother to inform her child about it. The written document would also serve for the mother to turn to in order to better explain the research to her child. It would also include my contact details in case the mother would have questions. As well, the situation of encountering participants who fit the topic of the study (i.e. children of prisoners) but whose particular experiences require a different approach can be ward off with a more rigorous operationalization of their characteristics, beyond those including age and being cared for by the non-imprisoned parent. As such, "the reason for parental imprisonment was NOT child abuse" can be added as category for sampling for this study.

Positionality of power

Before I started scheduling the interviews for this research I was aware of a possible ethical dilemma: I was working for the NGO where partners of prisoners called in order to receive support for their children. Instead, I knew that if they said they have children above the

age of nine they will be asked if they accept for a researcher to interview them and their child(ren). Mindful that they would feel coerced, I asked from the start my colleagues to inform the persons who would call that accepting to speak with me would not condition the service provision. My perception of the children's carers was they were adults able to make the decision whether to accept or not. Nevertheless, when one calls for support, he or she is in a vulnerable situation. The strategy I used in order to mitigate this power imbalance was to reiterate during our face to face meeting that their participation in the research is voluntary and is not dependant of the NGO offering support to their children. There were several times when I felt my words were not quite understood and I said "If you do not wish, this is perfectly fine". There were situations where I have been refused. This was indeed fine, although I must admit it felt a bit frustrating knowing I, too, am pressured because I have a deadline and a minimum number of participants to include in my research. Nevertheless, I had to constantly remind myself that this research is about its participants and not so much about me, although it would be presented with my name on it. I think my experience in working with vulnerable people has helped me remain true to my commitment. However, there is another thing that should be noted in connection to this. From the time I was reading the literature on children of prisoners I decided that I would interview children and caregivers that were not biased by having benefited from some form of support as families of prisoners. This may have not been the best option. Perhaps my power dilemma would have been diminished if the participants in this research were already receiving support at the time of my approach. This might have, in part, prevented the feeling of being coerced to take part in the study.

The issue of status is another aspect of the power dilemma. I presented myself as a researcher, hence an educated person. Most of the women I met had not graduated high-school. Although formal education was something that appeared to represent a gap in my relationship with the mothers, my attitude of respect for the women's experiences as mothers and wives and, especially, as women that have the strength to speak of their personal history has levelled this difference. During the first interviews I was very careful to select and use my language so I would not confuse the participants with words that are not frequently used in spoken language.

However, I discovered that women's vocabulary was quite rich. This does not mean there were no situations where the mothers did not understand a word or expression I used. The fact they asked directly or non-verbally what I meant was in fact a proof of a good researcher – researched rapport.

Regarding interviewing children, as stated above when speaking of the issue of consent, this was in most occasions the explicit decision of the mothers. Although I believed the mothers would tell the children about meeting a researcher, there were situations where this was not even mentioned or mentioned in passing, without giving much explanation. I reached to this conclusion not because the children clearly stated this (one young boy did say it, though), but because during my presentation of the study their surprise was evident. Asking the mother in front of the child if she had informed her child was something I did not find appropriate. This is in part because, after asking both the mother and the child if they have any misunderstandings or need more information, the mothers took on and consented for them and their child to participate. Asking the child after the mother had made her decision was a form of undermining her authority. However, the fact the mother did not ask for the child's opinion did not wave my responsibility to do so. The interviews with the children were not developed in the presence of their mothers. As such, when left alone with the child I most often restarted the protocol by presenting my research again, briefly presenting what the interview is about, asking the child if he or she understands, re-iterate that this is voluntary and there is no consequence if s/he wishes to withdraw or not be involved in the research. Surprisingly, all children accepted to be interviewed after this re-statement. May be because they were still under the influence of their mothers' decision, I do not know. Nevertheless, although most children seemed at ease to talk with me, there were also children for whom it was evident they were not. It is the case of the young boy who said he was there because his mother had told him to be.

Interviewing children about sensitive topics such as parental arrest and imprisonment is also about power imbalance. This is because the topic itself is very sensitive and because it can brings about other related issues, such as family violence. It was my responsibility to make sure the child was not harmed by my questions. For example, I encountered the situation of a young

girl who was eager to speak with me. She was nine to ten years old, the smallest of a family of five children. She responded the questions about herself and her friends in a vivid manner but when I announced that I will ask a few questions about her father, she started to cry heavily. I asked if she wished to stop the interview and she said “no” while continuing to cry. After a small pause, I asked her again and she nodded her assent. Then I asked if she ever spoke with anyone about her father. She replied that no one in her family spoke of him because he had been violent to her mother. It was obvious that my mention of her father had disturbed her, so I asked if she wished to speak with a social worker about her thoughts and, after she assented, I asked if I could tell my colleague and her mother about her wish. This girl needed to talk about missing her imprisoned father but had no one to do so because her mother, brothers and sisters were contented her father was in jail. Knowing about this, it was my responsibility to make sure she would have the support she needs, but also that she assented to me telling her mother and the social worker about her need to be listened to. Because I had learned of this during the interview I had to inform her about breaking the confidentiality of our discussion.

In the above, I presented some of the experiences and challenges I met during field research while reflecting about the ethical issues that arose and the lessons I learned.

As a final remark, it would be unfair not to acknowledge that some of the stories told by the children or by their mothers have touched me. Although I did my best in trying to be objective while analysing their discourses, comparing it, choosing commonalities as well as particularities, the selection of excerpts from interviews was also influenced by what I felt and took from the experience of interviewing, but also by my formation as psychologist and by my experience as practitioner.

Chapter 10. Conclusions

In order to understand the effects of family relationships on children of prisoners, this study investigated the effects of fathers' imprisonment on children and on children's mothers, respectively. Having had an image of how a parent's incarceration is perceived at individual level, this thesis analysed, from children's and mothers' perspectives, two sets of family relationship; namely, mother-child and mother-father, while identifying the impact of these on the children. This chapter presents implications of this study together with its limitations and recommendations for research, policy and practice.

Significance of the research

This study was able to add new knowledge on children of prisoners. Namely, it showed that children are more than mere observers of their parents' relationship during the incarceration period. For example, in situations of parental disputes, older children attempt to prevent the rupture of their parents' relationship by having discussions with the imprisoned father about mother's detachment from the father and drawing attention to father's lack of responsiveness towards the mother. Also, this study demonstrated that children's experience of ambiguous loss brought about by the physical separation from their fathers (Arditti, 2012) may be deepened at psychological level by mothers' reluctance to speak with them about fathers' wellbeing. At the same time, by looking at how parental imprisonment affects mothers as carers, this thesis pointed out that children do not cause their mothers to be stressed. Rather this is the result of mothers being overburdened, situation that is brought about by partners' imprisonment. Children were also found to have a supportive role in the mother-child relationship in that mothers rely on them to cope with the family situation after partners' imprisonment, thus feeling strengthened by the presence of children in their lives. Children's supportive role was also found to be the result of their obedience towards their mothers and their understanding of the family situation. Contrary to most literature on carers' parenting stress showing poor supervision of children (Arditti, 2012; Aron & Dallaire, 2010; Codd, 2008; Murray & Farrington, 2006; Turanovic, Rordiguez, & Pratt, 2012), this study lent support to findings of Arditti, Burton, and Neeves-Botelho (2010) and

Phillips et. al. (2006) that parental imprisonment may bring about mothers' over-protective behaviour by controlling their children's whereabouts and limiting their peer relationships causing adolescent children of prisoners to feel mistrusted and stressed. This study was also able to show that children are not passive in their relationship with the imprisoned fathers in that they expect, upon resettlement, for the fathers to have changed their behaviour in terms of law-breaking and to recommence their household duties.

This research contributed to the developmental relationships framework by analysing, from an attachment perspective, two family dyads, namely mother-child and mother-father. So far, studies on children of prisoners mainly focused on either the relationship between the children and their imprisoned parents (Dallaire, 2007; Murray & Murray, 2010; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Novero, Loper, & Warren, 2011; Johnston, 2006; Phillips et al., 2006), the children and their carers (Arditti, 2012; Dennison, Foley, & Stewart, 2005; Nesmith & Ruhland, 2011), or prisoners' marital relationship (Comfort et al., 2005; Fishman, 1990). By investigating the two types of relationships, this study was able to show that the same family situation, namely paternal imprisonment, brings about various adjustments of different family relationships and that these are interlinked. Children's developmental outcomes do not depend solely on the attachments they build with their parents separately (Bowlby, 1973; Crowell et al., 2002), but also on how representations of their parents' relationship are integrated (Main, Goldwin, & Hesse, 2008; Howe, 2011).

First, the mother-child attachment, that was considered by the literature to remain stable following father's incarceration due to continuation of care (Dallaire, 2007; Foster & Hagan, 2013; Johnson & Waldfogel, 2004; Poehlmann, 2005; Tasca, Turanovic, White, & Rodriguez's, 2012), was showed to go through significant changes. Mothers' emotional unavailability caused by depressive symptoms brought about by the enforced separation from their husbands was found to have a reverse effect, considering the children became emotionally supportive of their mothers rather than receiving comfort for their own feelings of sorrow. The roots of such changes were discussed using Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980, 1988) theory of attachment which asserts that the stability of the internal representation of the attachment figure can be modified by

crisis or stressful events experienced in life. Also, findings from attachment theorists related to mothers' cognitive attributions of children's behaviour (Cassidy, Jones, & Shaver, 2013; Leerkes & Siepak, 2006) helped to understand why, in this study, mothers avoided to speak with their children about the wellbeing of fathers or about their return home. Reasoning that they protected their children from being re-traumatized, mothers misattributed their own traumatic experiences onto the children. Also, mothers' emotional unsupportive attitude towards the children was understood with the theoretical support related to maternal insightfulness stating that maternal achievement of children's needs depends on mothers' ability to understand their children's feelings and thoughts (Koren-Karie et al., 2002).

Nevertheless, behavioural genetics showed that adolescence is a period in a child's life when attachment is being re-organized in that it is no longer considered as being influenced solely by the environment offered by caregivers, but also by the child's genes (Fearon et al., 2014). This perspective could enhance knowledge on attachment readjustments in mother-child relationship in the context of parental imprisonment. It could offer an explanation of the extent to which attachment readjustments are brought about by the incarceration of a parent relative to the unique characteristics of children.

Second, the mother-father relationship, which was found to have strengthened following the incarceration of the father, was explained through adult romantic theories stating that marital satisfaction is the result of positive emotions in relation to partners (Feeney, 1999), trust in partner's availability (Hazan & Shaver, 1994), and sensitive and responsive care (Feeney & Hohaus, 2001; Kotler, 1985), all of these having been confirmed by mothers' narratives in this study. In addition, the choices some of the mothers made to remain in the relationship with their abusive partners prior to incarceration, but also their resignation with respect to continuation of abuses after husbands' return home was understood with the support of Dutton and Painter's (1981, 1993) theory of traumatic bond. This theory states that a dependent relationship is created through repeated abuses which contribute to husbands' confirmation of power over their wives and intermittency of these abuses accompanied by displays of affection. Also, by including children's views on their parents' relationship, which was mainly portrayed as revolving around

themselves and the household, this study contends that children developed constructive mental representations of parenthood that may contribute to their future positive interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1973; Crowell et al., 2002; Howe, 2011). The focus in this study on marital relationships added new understanding to how family attachment relations advance during periods of stress and separation, showing children are aware of their parents' interactions and that the parents' romantic attachment itself undertakes a process of readjustment.

A further theoretical contribution of this study was to analyse the effects of parental imprisonment on children from a parenting perspective. By contextualizing Belsky's (1984) model of competent parental functioning to parenting in families of prisoners, this study was able to demonstrate that mothers in this research are functional in their role as parents, counting on the three determinants of parenting on which this model is based: mothers' personal resources, their children's characteristics, and other contextual factors, such as marital relationship, social network and family poverty. Mothers contributed to positive parenting by showing interest in children's schooling (Chao, 2000; Steinberg, Elmen & Mounts, 1989). They also actively monitored their children (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Conger, 1991), facilitated father-child contact (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998), and showed confidence in coping with the stresses that are brought about by husband's imprisonment (Raikes & Thompson, 2005). Children's characteristics included in the contextualization of Belsky's (1984) model are: their age, gender and conformity with mothers' actions. This study showed that for preadolescent children, mothers comply with normative age-appropriate parenting practices in that they attend to children's schooling (Erickson, 1968), whilst for adolescent children, mothers' restrictions with respect to time spent with peers and over-controlling behaviour was not found as positive bearing in mind that, for this age group, positive parenting practices suggest granting children relative autonomy (Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1998). Children's gender was found to influence parenting practices especially for adolescents in that mothers over-control their teenage girls with respect to male friends and their adolescent boys in relation to smoking or drinking alcohol, suggesting that mothers are aware of risks associated with age, such as girls' unwanted pregnancies or boys' adherence to delinquent groups of friends. Children's conformity, as an

internalized feature that is valued by parents (Baumrind, 1975; Thompson-Gershoff, 2002) or as a characteristic which is culturally promoted (Arcia & Johnson, 1998; Garcia-Coll & Pachter, 2002), was found to contribute to easing mothers' parenting. With respect to contextual factors contributing to functional parenting, this study showed that mothers' satisfaction with regards to marital relations contributes to parental acceptance of children and displays of affection and warmth towards them (Belsky, 1984; Grych, 2002). Also, absence of social support and family poverty, which characterize the mothers and families in this study was shown not to have a significant effect on mothers' parenting (Raikes & Thompson, 2005). The two factors were found to be mediated by mothers' statements in relation to their responsibility and capacity to handle these difficulties.

Parenting theories, however, have been criticized for omitting cultural and ethnic influences and values (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002). When exploring parenting functionality in families of prisoners, the perspective on the community culture and family values and beliefs with regards to, for example, education of children could bring further knowledge on the acceptance of physical punishment (i.e. spanking) as a parental coercive measure for unwanted behaviours.

Further theoretical contribution of this study consists in its clarification of the issue of parenting stress in the context of parental imprisonment. Most studies investigating children of prisoners underlined their carers go through significant parenting stress and this has a negative effect on children (Arditti & Few, 2005; Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2007; Murray & Farrington, 2005). By investigating parenting stress from a theoretical perspective, this study was able to delineate between the different factors contributing to increased stress in parents caring for children of prisoners and to show that children do not influence motherhood stress, whilst mothers' overburdens and family poverty are mediated by their self-efficacy.

Last but not least, considering the little literature available, this research brought knowledge on Romanian children of prisoners and on their family relationship histories. As pointed out in this thesis, information about Romanian children has been provided, so far, only by the COPING study. Therefore, this study is significant not just for the Romanian research

community, but also in what concerns Romania's policies and practices.

Limitations

There is a number of limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. First, only 15 interviews with children and 16 interviews with mothers were included. Although the information provided by the children and their mothers, respectively was considered to portray relatively similar experiences, suggesting that data saturation was reached (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), there are still debates supporting a larger sample (Charmaz, 2012).

Second, in the Methodology chapter of this thesis it was mentioned that children's interviews varied in length from 20 to 45 minutes. There are two main reasons that may explain why, in the case of some of the children, the interview length was a little over 20 minutes: on one hand, children's interviews did not include clinical assessments, drawings or additional questionnaires. On the other hand, some of the children had difficulties in speaking about their fathers' imprisonment. However, this is now understandable taking into account that, as this study revealed, children's knowledge of their fathers was somehow limited because their mothers avoided talking with them on this subject. Therefore, although it may seem that 20 minutes research interview with children is too little, their accounts of the relationships and experiences brought about by parental imprisonment was considered valuable for this study and were included in analysis.

Third, the data was structured taking into account children and mothers as part of the same family. However, only 13 families were involved in the study using this algorithm. In the case of three mothers, their children refused to be interviewed or the interviews were excluded owing to insufficient data. Similarly, three children from the same family were interviewed. While these data provide rich information on children's accounts of family relationship, in order to have a broader and more representative view of families' patterns of interaction, more research is needed involving all relevant children.

Fourth, the participants in this study were mostly residing in rural areas which, as noted in Chapter 1, involves particularities such as predominance of agricultural activities and scarce

infrastructure such as accessible roads and utilities which have a larger impact on families' household responsibilities and/or access to services. Although this study did not find significant differences in participants' perceptions of relationships in regards to their residential environment, the significantly larger number of participants from rural areas should be noted as a limitation of this study. Not including more families from urban areas was due to a participants' selection bias: as this author was refused entrance to prison with the purpose of explaining the research to prisoners and asking their families' contacts, the only resource available to access these families was through the local NGO that offered social services to children of prisoners. Thus, accessing participants was dependent on the NGO's database which proved to have included more families from rural as opposed to urban areas.

This study did not include fathers' views with respect to mother-father relationship. Admitting that children are core to the research that attempts to capture the impact of fathers' imprisonment upon them,; interviewing also the imprisoned fathers may contribute to a more complete picture of the attachment relationship between children's parents.

Finally, this study used the Parental Stress Scale (PSS, Berry & Jones, 1995) administered as an interview in order to explore parenting stress in mothers as non-imprisoned parents. It should be noted that, although it was very helpful in eliciting rich data, the PSS is a quantitative instrument requiring scoring of items. For this reason, some of the women chose to score the items, others omitted while only commenting on their perception of certain assertions included in the scale, and other women did both: scored the items and commented on it. Nevertheless, the protocol and assertions included in the scale may be rephrased as to be more appropriate for semi-structured interviewing.

Directions for future research

Additional research is needed to advance our knowledge of how families, and particularly children, are affected by parental imprisonment. Future studies aiming to disentangle the different aspects of family attachments and processes following incarceration of a parent should include a research design that involves *all* family members, that is not just the children or

separate dyads, but also the imprisoned parent and other siblings residing with or supporting the family after parental imprisonment. Also, in order to have a complete picture of family attachments and how these are affected by imprisonment of a parent, future research needs to explore attachment readjustments also *after* parents have been released from prison.

So far, research on the consequences of parental imprisonment on children and the family mainly focused on the changes that occur in their lives as a result of the separation itself (Boswell & Wedge 2002; Murray and Farrington, 2005; Novero, Loper, & Warren, 2011; Parke & Clarke Stewart 2001; Phillips et al. 2002; Wakefield & Wildeman 2011) and the association with being the family of a prisoner (Arditti, Burton, & Neeves-Botelho, 2010; Dallaire, 2007; Johnston, 2006; Tasca, Turanovic, White, & Rodriguez, 2012). However, imprisonment brings about changes also for the imprisoned parent. Existing research does mention imprisoned parents who react unexpectedly during prison visitation (Nesmith & Ruhland, 2008), become jealous while in prison (Comfort et al., 2005; Fishman, 1990), or become violent with their partners during transition from prison to the community (Hairston & Oliver, 2006). The extent to which prison environment affects prisoners' relationships with family members needs to be further explored.

As this study showed, children's relationship with their carer goes through significant changes. However, and despite carers' stresses and emotional breakdown, they were found to be able to exhibit affection towards their children. This may be considered an important resource for children to cope with adversities caused by their parents' imprisonment that needs to be further looked into in order to have a better understanding of children's resilience.

This study also showed that, in the context of parental imprisonment, children appear not to influence parenting stress. Rather, it is the stresses that are associated with financial difficulties and household responsibilities that affect the carers and their relationship with the children. More research is needed though to clearly delineate between influences of a parent's incarceration on carers' parenting stress and other stresses.

Although previous research mentioned that families of abusive imprisoned parents consider imprisonment as beneficial to the children and the family (Codd, 2008; Johnston, 2006;

Murray & Murray, 2010; Shaw, 1992a), there is a need to further explore this specific issue especially in the context of family reunification, since this study was showed that the prospect of fathers' re-entry into the family may include repetition of abuse (Hairston & Oliver, 2006).

Last, but surely not least, the new trend in responsible research and innovation set out by the Directorate General for Research and Innovation of the European Commission draws attention on the involvement in the research, from its onset design to the final outcome, of a variety of actors that include those affected by certain phenomena or issues to those capable to making decisions to mediate negative consequences (Rodriguez, 2014). One way to start is to present to the children of prisoners and to their families the major findings of what has been done so far and to ask their opinion on what has not been explored and needs further investigation.

Implication for policy and practice

Given this study was developed in Romania, a country where services for children of prisoners are almost non-existent (Jones & Wainaina-Wozna, 2013), this research has a wide range of implications for policy and practice.

First, as this research showed, children and families of prisoners are significantly affected by the imprisonment of a parent. The findings in this study can be used by children's rights organizations in order to advocate for the inclusion of children of prisoners as a distinct group of children in the national strategy aiming for social inclusion and reducing poverty. For the case of Romania, programmes directed to support these families and to raise awareness on the negative consequences of stigma should be put in place. So far, there are only two NGOs in the country targeting this disadvantaged group: SVASTA Foundation who is offering scholarships to the children of imprisoned parents, and Alternative Sociale which is advocating for children's rights while also providing social work support for the families. These programmes should be informed by the research that has been carried out so far and should be designed to allow for the impact of interventions on families of prisoners and on the community at large to be evaluated. The responsibility of the implementation of such programs should not be attributed only to NGOs but integrated into governmental social services.

Second, and following from the results of this current study, which showed non-imprisoned parents avoid talking with their children about the imprisoned parents' wellbeing and time of return, programs directed to support families of prisoners may include questionnaires upon intake that would help verify this aspect and amend the interventions accordingly. If carers report having difficulties in speaking with their children about the imprisoned parent, they could be provided with information on children's experience of ambiguous loss and its consequences, on how excluding the imprisoned parent from their communication with the children impacts the carer-child relationship, and be counselled as to how they could approach their children on this subject according to children's ages and level of understanding.

Another implication for policy raised by the findings of this study refers to women's emotional difficulties and breakdowns in the first months after husbands' arrest. This mainly applies to situations where the imprisoned parents were resident, as separation is felt more acutely. In this respect, crisis interventions for mothers after partners' arrest would help them cope better with the situation and, at the same time, be attentive of their children's experiences.

Descriptive findings in the current study also showed that whilst children and mothers fantasise about a "better" life after reunification they do have expectations of their imprisoned parent/partner. These expectations should be taken into consideration by prison correctional programs. Also, families of prisoners should be supported in keeping in contact with the imprisoned parent to enable children and their non-imprisoned parent to make readjustments to their relationships that take into consideration practical arguments and available resources, thus helping the family through an easier process upon resettlement.

Finally, promoting children's rights and campaigning against stigmatizing children of prisoners and their families is still needed worldwide.

Annexes

Annex 1 Documentation of Forward and Backward Procedure for the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995)

Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones, 1995)
 Documentation of Forward and Backward Procedure
 Country: Romania
 Language: Romanian

English original	FW 1	FW2	Reconciled FW	Back translation	Reviewed/Pre-tested version
The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a parent. Think of each of the items in terms of how your relationship with your child or	Următoarele afirmații descriu sentimente și percepții despre experiența de a fi părinte. Gândiți-vă la fiecare din afirmațiile următoare în termeni de cum este în mod obișnuit relația dvs. cu copilul. Vă rugăm indicați cât de mult sunteți de acord sau	Următoarele enunțuri descriu sentimente și percepții relate cu experiența de a fi părinte. Pentru a răspunde la fiecare dintre itemi, va invităm să vă raportați la relația pe care o aveți cu copilul/copii	Următoarele afirmații descriu sentimente și percepții despre experiența de a fi părinte. Gândiți-vă pentru fiecare din afirmațiile de mai jos la relația pe care o aveți în mod obișnuit cu copilul dumneavoastră. Precizați cât de mult	The following statements describe feelings and perceptions related to the experience of being a parent. In order to answer to each of the items we invite you to think of your relationship with	Următoarele afirmații descriu sentimente și percepții despre experiența de a fi părinte. Pentru a răspunde la fiecare dintre afirmații, va invităm să vă gândiți la relația pe care o aveți cu copilul/copii

<p>children typically is. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following items by placing the appropriate number in the space provided.</p> <p>1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Undecided 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree</p>	<p>nu cu următoarele afirmații bifând cu un „x” în căsuța corespunzătoare.</p> <p>1= Total dezacord 2= Dezacord 3= Indecis/ă 4= De acord 5 =Total de acord</p>	<p>dumneavoastra si la modul cum este aceasta. Va rugam sa indicati masura in care sunteti in acord sau in dezacord cu urmatoarele afirmatii marcand cu x in spatiul cu numere corespondente, in care:</p> <p>1= Total dezacord 2= Dezacord 3= Indecis 4= De acord 5= Total de acord</p>	<p>sunteți de acord cu următoarele afirmații bifând cu un „x” în căsuța corespunzătoare.</p> <p>1= Total dezacord 2= Dezacord 3= Indecis/ă 4= De acord 5 =Total de acord</p>	<p>your chil(ren). Please indicate the level of agreement or disagreement by placing the appropriate number in the corresponding space.</p> <p>1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Undecided 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree</p>	<p>dumneavoastra si la modul cum este aceasta. Vă rugăm să indicați cât de mult sunteți de acord sau nu cu următoarele afirmații bifând cu un „x” în căsuța corespunzătoare.</p> <p>1= Dezacord total 2= Dezacord 3= Indecis/ă 4= De acord 5 =Total de acord</p>
I am happy in my role as a parent.	Sunt fericit/ă în rolul meu de părinte.	Rolul de parinte ma face fericit	Rolul de părinte mă face fericit.	My role as a parent makes me happy.	Rolul de părinte mă face fericit
There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my child(ren) if it was necessary.	Dacă ar fi necesar, aş face orice pentru copilul/copiii mei.	As face totul sau aproape totul pentru copilul (copiii) mei.	Dacă ar fi necesar, aş face totul sau aproape totul pentru copilul (copiii) mei.	If it was necessary, I would do everything for my child(ren).	Aş face totul sau aproape totul pentru copilul/copiii mei.
Caring for my child(ren)	Să am grijă de copilul/copiii mei îmi	Cateodata ingrijirea copilul meu (copiii	Îngrijirea copilului meu (copiilor mei)	Caring for my child sometimes	Câteodată îngrijirea copilului/copiilor

sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give.	ia uneori mai mult timp și energie decât am.	mei) presupune mai mult timp si energie decat dispun.	presupune câteodată mai mult timp si energie decât am.	takes more time and energy than I have.	mei presupune mai mult timp și energie decât dispun.
I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren).	Uneori mă întreb dacă fac sufficient pentru copilul/copiii mei.	Cateodata îmi fac griji daca fac suficient pentru copilul meu (copii mei)	Uneori mă întreb dacă fac suficient pentru copilul meu (copiii mei)	Sometimes I wonder if I do enough for my child(ren).	Câteodată mă întreb dacă fac suficient pentru copilul meu/copiii mei.
I feel close to my child(ren).	Mă simt apropiat/ă de copilul/copiii mei.	Ma simt opropiat/a copilului meu (copiilor mei).	Mă simt opropiat/ă de copilul meu (copiii mei).	I feel close to my child(ren).	Mă simt apropiat/ă de copilul meu/copiii mei.
I enjoy spending time with my child(ren).	Îmi face plăcere să petrec timp cu copilul/copiii mei.	Imi place sa-mi petrec timpul cu copilul meu (copiii mei).	Imi face plăcere să-mi petrec timpul cu copilul meu (copiii mei).	I enjoy spending time with my child(ren).	Îmi face plăcere să-mi petrec timpul cu copilul meu/copiii mei.
My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me.	Copilul/copiii mei sunt o sursă importantă de afecțiune pentru mine.	Copilul meu (copii mei) sunt o importanta sursa de afectiune pentru mine.	Copilul meu (copii mei) sunt o sursă importantă de afectiune pentru mine.	My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me.	Copilul meu/copiii mei sunt o sursă importantă de afecțiune pentru mine.
Having child(ren) gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future.	Faptul că am copil/copii îmi dă o perspectivă mai sigură și mai optimist cu privire la viitor.	Faptul ca am copil (copii) imi ofera o imagine despre viitor mai sigura si mai optimista.	Faptul că am copil (copii) imi ofera o imagine despre viitor mai sigură și mai optimistă.	Having children gives me a more certain and optimistic image of the future.	Faptul că am copil/copii îmi oferă o imagine despre viitor mai sigură și mai optimist.
The major source of stress in my life	Sursa majoră de stres în viața mea este	Copilul meu (copiii mei) sunt principala	Copilul meu (copiii mei) sunt principala	My child(ren) is the main source of	Copilul meu/copiii mei sunt principala

is my child(ren).	copilul/copiii mei.	sursa de stress din viata mea.	sursă de stres din viața mea.	stress in my life.	sursă de stres din viața mea.
Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life.	Faptul că am copil/copii înseamnă mai puțin timp și flexibilitate în viața mea.	Datorita faptului ca am copil (copii), dispun de mai puțin timp si flexibilitate in viata mea.	Faptul că am copil (copii), înseamnă mai puțin timp si flexibilitate in viata mea.	Having child(ren) leaves less time and flexibility in my life.	Faptul că am copil/copii înseamnă mai puțin timp și flexibilitate în viața mea.
Having child(ren) has been a financial burden.	Faptul că am copil/copii înseamnă o povară financiară.	Copilul (copiii) sunt o povară financiară.	Faptul că am copil/copii înseamnă o povară financiară.	Having child(ren) has been a financial burden.	Faptul că am copil/copii înseamnă o povară financiară.
It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren).	Îmi este dificil să țin un echilibru între diferite responsabilități din cauza copilului/copiilor.	Avand un copil (copii) este dificil sa faci fata diferitelor alte responsabilitati.	Îmi este dificil să țin un echilibru între diferite responsabilități din cauza copilului/copiilor.	It is difficult to maintain a balance between different responsibilities because of my child(ren)	Îmi este dificil să țin un echilibru între diferite responsabilități din cauza copilului/copiilor
The behavior of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me.	Comportamentul copilului/copiilor mei este deseori jenant sau stresant pentru mine.	De multe ori (adesea), comportamentul copilului meu (copiilor mei) este incomod (stanjenitor) si stresant pentru mine ca parinte.	De cele mai multe ori comportamentul copilului meu (copiilor mei) este stânjenitor sau stresant pentru mine.	Most of the times my child(ren)'s behavior is embarrassing or stressful to me.	Comportamentul copilului meu/copiilor mei este deseori jenant sau stresant pentru mine.
If I had it to do over again, I might decide not to have	Dacă aş putea s-o iau de la început aş decide să nu am	Daca ar fi sa ma intorc in timp, m-as gandi mai bine	Daca ar fi sa o iau de la început, m-as gandi mai bine	If I could do it again, I'd think better before	Dacă aş putea s-o iau de la început m-aş gândi mai bine

child(ren).	copii.	înainte sa decid sa am (copil) copii	înainte sa decid să am (copil) copii.	deciding to have child(ren).	înainte să decid să am copil/copii.
I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent.	Mă simt copleșit/ă de responsabilitatea de a fi părinte.	Ma simt copleșit/a de responsabilitatea de a fi parinte.	Mă simt copleșit/ă de responsabilitatea de a fi părinte.	I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent.	Mă simt copleșit/ă de responsabilitatea de a fi părinte.
Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life.	Faptul că am copil/copii a însemnat pentru mine să am mai puține șanse de a alege și mai puțin control asupra vieții mele.	Decizand sa am copil (copii) am demonstrat prea puțin control asupra vietii si nu am facut cea mai buna alegere.	Faptul că am copil/copii a însemnat pentru mine să am mai puține șanse de a alege și mai puțin control asupra vieții mele.	Having child(ren) has meant less opportunities to choose and less control over my life.	Faptul că am copil/copii a însemnat pentru mine să am mai puține șanse de a alege și mai puțin control asupra vieții mele.
I am satisfied as a parent.	Sunt mulțumit/ă ca sunt părinte.	Ca parinte ma simt satisfacut/a.	Mă simt satisfăcut/ă în calitatea de părinte.	I feel satisfied as a parent.	Mă simt satisfăcut/ă în calitatea mea de părinte.
I find my child(ren) enjoyable.	Sunt mulțumit/ă de copiii mei.	Consider ca am un copil (copii) simpatic (agreabil, placut).	Îmi place să fiu cu copilul/copiii mei.	I enjoy being with my child(ren).	Îmi face plăcere să fiu cu copilul meu/copiii mei.

Annex 2. School Research Ethics Pannel Proposal

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
School of Human and Health Sciences – School Research Ethics Panel

Outline of proposal

Please complete and return via email to:

Kirsty Thomson SREP Administrator: hhs_srep@hud.ac.uk

Name of applicant: Liliana Foca

Title of study: Exploring the effects of family relationships in children with imprisoned parents

Department: Centre for Applied Childhood Studies

Date sent: 26.08.2013

Issue	Please provide sufficient detail for SREP to assess strategies used to address ethical issues in the research proposal
Researcher(s) details	<p>My experience in research projects includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - COPING study coordinated by University of Huddersfield (2010 – 2012); - study on Romanian children who experienced failed migration: <i>Study on Romanian Re-migrant Children</i>, (Luca, C., Foca, L., Gulei, A.-S., Brebulet S.-D., 2012). <p>I am co-author of non-academic papers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Working Methodology: social, psychological and juridical assistance for elders</i> (Luca et. al., 2011) - <i>Manual for professionals working with home alone children</i> (Luca et. al., 2009) - <i>Human trafficking: practices and resources for collaboration and combat</i> (Luca et. al., 2008) <p>I am certified trainer with experience on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - „Psychological assistance of the child left behind by parents gone to work abroad”, (2008 – 2010) - 5 trainings for psychologists in public social services in Iași, Vaslui and Botoșani counties; - “Psychological assistance of prisoners” (2009) – 4 series of trainings addressed to prison psychologists and probation officers in Romania; - “Methods and techniques in juvenile delinquency prevention”, (2004 – 2008) – 20 trainings

	<p>developed in Iași, Vaslui, Botosani and Neamț counties for police workers, social workers, school counsellors, and teachers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - „Human trafficking victim assistance” (2005) - 6 trainings for social workers, psychologists and staff of governmental transit centres for trafficking victims. <p>My work experience includes over 11 years in Alternative Sociale Association (Romanian NGO) where I have worked with prisoners, victims of human trafficking, children neglected by their parents and elders.</p>
Supervisor details	<p>Professor Alex Hirschfield BA (Hons), PhD, FFPH, Professor of Criminology and Director of Applied Criminology Centre; email: a.hirschfield@hud.ac.uk ; Dr. Grainne McMahon; email: g.mcmahon@hud.ac.uk</p>
Aim / objectives	<p>“Exploring the effects of family relationships in children with imprisoned parents” is research spinning off from the project “Children of Prisoners. Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health” (COPING) funded by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme and coordinated by the Centre for Applied Childhood Studies in the University of Huddersfield.</p> <p>The research is being carried out in Romania, looking at Romanian children of prisoners and their outcomes as result of parental imprisonment. A notification of the Authority for Data Protection in Romania has been sent in order to include my research in the institution’s National Registry. The notification included information on the target group of my research, duration, and modalities of protecting the identity of the research participants. The fact my research is registered at the Authority for Data Protection implies that research participants or any other person/agency having doubts regarding the manner in which I have managed identification issues can complain and I could be subject to investigation by the Authority.</p> <p>The purpose of my research is to have a bilateral focus on the relationships not explored by the COPING study, namely those between the non-imprisoned parent and the child and the relationship between the non-imprisoned and the imprisoned parent.</p> <p>The objectives of my research are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine the ways the non-imprisoned parent exerts his/her own influence on the child rearing process in the absence of the imprisoned parent • To examine the extent to which child rearing by the non-imprisoned parent affects the child

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore the effects of the attachment relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the imprisoned parent on the child's mental health • To examine child's perspective with regards to the dynamics of the child-non-imprisoned parent relationship before and during parental imprisonment
<p>Brief overview of research methodology</p>	<p>The research will comprise interviews that will be conducted in October 2013 – April 2014. The <i>sample</i> includes 15 children aged 9 to 18 years and their non-imprisoned parents. Recruitment of the sample will be made through Iasi Prison. The prison Governor (Mr. Marius Vulpe, email: marius.vulpe@anp.gov.ro , phone: +4 0740 114 275) has verbally agreed to allow me to present my PhD project to prisoners that are parents of children in the above mentioned age range.</p> <p>In case I will not reach my full sample through Iasi prison, a presentation of my research will be given through formal letter to Iasi Proximity Police and schools addressed to managers of these institutions.</p> <p>The methodology of the research incorporates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with the non-imprisoned parents to explore: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Their perception of the relationship with their children before and after imprisonment b. Their perception of the relationship with the imprisoned partner in order to look at the way the non-imprisoned parent mentally represents his/her romantic relationship and how this might influence the child's outcomes. <p>In addition to the questions included in the interview the non-imprisoned parent will be asked to complete Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones 1995) with the purpose of assessing the everyday life stress and its possible impact on the child's well-being. The Parental Stress Scale is a self-report including 18 assertions about positive and negative perceptions of parenthood. This instrument is used to assess parental stress for mothers and fathers of children with or without clinical problems.</p> <p>The interview comprising core questions and the Parental Stress Scale is attached.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interviews with the child in order to explore his/her perspective with regard to the family relationship dynamics, namely the relationship with each parent and child's perspective on the parental relationship. The core questions of the interview are attached. • All interviews subject to participants' consent will be transcribed and coded in NVivo. Nobody other than myself will have access to the recordings and transcripts. The computer will be password protected. Analysis and report of data will then be drafted. After editing the findings of the research, 3 carers will

	<p>be invited – according to their level of literacy - to read the findings of the draft report and offer feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A final research report will comprise literature review, field work analysis, and discussions of results.
Permissions for study	<p>National Authority for Data Protection</p> <p>Although the National Authority for Data Protection does not require permission for the study, it is mandatory for any person or institution dealing with personal data to register in the institution’s National Registry. A notification including information about my research (mainly who are the participants and how will I ensure the protection of personal data) has been sent and was registered in the General Registry with no. 0026606. Therefore I could be, at any time throughout my research, subject to verification in order to see if I’m respecting what I have stated regarding protection of participants’ identity and personal data.</p> <p>Iasi Prison</p> <p>The sample of my research will be recruited through Iasi Prison. Although the Governor has verbally given me the approval to present my study to prisoners with children after SREP approval, a formal letter will be written in this respect in order to receive the help of the Intervention and Psycho-Social Service within the prison to select the target audience of my PhD call for participants.</p> <p>Prisoners</p> <p>One or several meetings in the prison will be scheduled together with the Intervention and Psycho-Social Service. I will introduce my study to the prisoners and will ask for their consent to offer contact data of the children and their partners. Written consent forms including the contact details will be handed out together with the research presentation.</p> <p>Non-imprisoned parents</p> <p>After obtaining the contact data, non-imprisoned parents will be contacted by phone or directly at their residence with the help of the local social worker or of a member of the local police. The research will be explained and consent for their participation and for their child’s participation in the study will be the basis of</p>

	<p>the research.</p> <p>Children</p> <p>Only after parental consent has been granted, the child will be approached in order to introduce the research and ask for participation in the study. Formal consent for his/her participation is considered mandatory.</p>
Access to participants	<p>The carers and their children will be accessed through three main sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iasi Prison through the Intervention and Psycho-Social Service. I will introduce my research in the presence of a prison representative. • Schools – school counsellors or teachers will put me in contact with non-imprisoned parents so that I can inform them about my research and ask for their participation and for the participation of their children. • Iasi Proximity/Local Police – visits to Proximity/local/neighbourhood Police will be scheduled and developed in order to present my research. In case the police workers identify in their area of action such families, they will introduce me to the carers to present my research and ask for their participation and for the participation of their children.
Confidentiality	<p>All participants in the research will be informed that all information they provide – except two conditions – will be strictly confidential.</p> <p>The two exceptions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The possibility of the child saying something that indicates another child or himself/herself is at risk, case in which the Child Protection Service and/or the Police will be informed. b. Where the child divulges information that indicates there is a risk to the security of the prison, such information will be passed to the relevant authority.
Anonymity	<p>All participants in the research will be attributed codes that will ensure their anonymity. However, the two exceptions mentioned above will lead to disclosure of their identity.</p>
Psychological support for participants	<p>Children and their carers will be given, in the presentation of the research, a list of institutions from where they could request emotional support (family doctor for referral to mental health institutions and school</p>

	counsellors).
Researcher safety / support (attach complete University Risk Analysis and Management form)	I am not expecting this research to endanger my safety or to need support. However, where places of residence of participants will be in areas of risk, local police or the local social worker will be asked to accompany me. Further details are provided in the Risk Analysis and Management Form.
Identify any potential conflicts of interest	None to my knowledge.
Please supply copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy	
Information sheet	A research information sheet for the participants in the research is attached.
Consent form	A draft of the child consent form is attached. A draft of the carer consent form is attached. A draft of the imprisoned parent consent form is attached
Letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iasi Prison Governor - attached • Schools' directors in Iasi - attached • Proximity/Local/neighbourhood Police - attached
Questionnaire	My research is based on interviews with mainly open ended and core questions addressed to children of prisoners and their non-imprisoned parents. The non-imprisoned interview includes the Parental Stress Scale (Berry & Jones 1995) which will be cross translated after SREP approval.
Interview schedule	With regards to scheduling the interviews, after SREP approval I will begin approaching the institutions mentioned under "Access to participants". As the interviews' content will also be approved by SREP, I will immediately proceed to interviewing non-

	<p>imprisoned parents and their children after their consent which I am expecting to take between 2 to 4 months, according to participants' availability and willingness to take part in the research.</p> <p>Interview guides for the child and for the non-imprisoned parent are attached.</p>
Dissemination of results	At the beginning of my third year I intend to write scientific articles based on the findings of my research and to submit to different journals in Romania (Iasi, Bucharest, Cluj, and Timisoara universities) as well as international journals: British Journal of Criminology, British Journal of Psychology, and other family and child focused scientific journals.
Other issues	N/A
Where application is to be made to NHS Research Ethics Committee	Data will not be collected from the health sector.
All documentation has been read by supervisor (where applicable)	Please confirm. This proposal will not be considered unless the supervisor has submitted a report confirming that (s)he has read all documents and supports their submission to SREP

All documentation must be submitted to the SREP administrator. All proposals will be reviewed by two members of SREP. If it is considered necessary to discuss the proposal with the full SREP, the applicant (and their supervisor if the applicant is a student) will be invited to attend the next SREP meeting.

Presentation of research

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH AND OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS

This research is part of the PhD thesis entitled “Exploring the effects of family relationships in children with imprisoned parents” developed within the University of Huddersfield, UK.

The purpose of this research is to have a bilateral focus on the relationships between the non-imprisoned parent and the child and the relationship between the non-imprisoned and the imprisoned parent.

The objectives of my research are:

- To examine the ways the non-imprisoned parent exerts his/her own influence on the child rearing process in the absence of the imprisoned parent
- To examine the extent to which child rearing by the non-imprisoned parent affects the child
- To explore the effects of the attachment relationship between the non-imprisoned parent and the imprisoned parent on the child’s mental health
- To examine child’s perspective with regards to the dynamics of the child-non-imprisoned parent relationship before and during parental imprisonment

This research involves interviews with you and your child. The information you will provide during the interview will be confidential and the data will be coded so you and your child will not be identifiable in any way (names, address etc.).

The interview with You (the Carer)

This interview will take approximately 1hr – 1hr and 30 minutes. You will be asked questions regarding:

- The way you perceive your situation and the situation of your family has been affected by the incarceration of the child’s parent;
- The way you perceive the relationship with your child after parental imprisonment compared to your relationship prior to parental imprisonment

- The way the relationship with your life partner has changed over time and how you perceive it at present, in the condition of separation due to imprisonment.

Interview with the Child

This interview will also take approximately 1hr – 1hr and 30 minutes and will include questions regarding:

- How the child perceives the separation from the parent in detention;
- How the child perceives his/her relationship with you before parental imprisonment and the present relationship;
- How the child perceives the relationships within the family.

Process and access to information

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. No one other than Liliana Foca will have access to recordings and transcripts. This process will take between 2 to 4 months after interviewing all non-imprisoned parents and their children (estimated date: March 2014). After finalizing the first complete draft of the research report, you will have the right to ask for the research findings.

Contact:

Liliana Foca

E-mail: u1078590@hud.ac.uk

Telephone: 0733 955 119

Institutions you can ask for support concerning the situation of your child and of your family as result of parental imprisonment:

1. Local Social Assistance Service from the Mayor's Office of the place of your residence in order to obtain benefits for your child as single family (attached there is an information sheet on how to access these benefits)
2. County Social Services and Child Protection in order to obtain other social benefits according to your family situation and also in order to request emotional support from the institution's psychologists
3. Family doctor – to address medical issues and referral to mental health professionals
4. The Intervention and Psycho-Social Services within Iasi Prison in order to facilitate the contact between your child and his/her imprisoned parent
5. The school counselor who can offer emotional support to the child

6. Nongovernmental organizations from your place of residence offering direct support to children in difficult situations

Annex 1.

Single family's benefits

Families with a single parent and children under the age of 18 that are in the care of the single parent and live with him/her benefit from monthly income **only if the monthly net income per family member does not exceed the minimum net wage in Romania.**

Establishment of rights

- In 15 days, the Mayor requires a social assessment of the family in order to verify the state of the facts;
- In 5 days from the social assessment, the Mayor issues the approval/rejection of the benefits that will be communicated to the family.

If the eligibility criterion is met, the right to benefits supporting the single family is established through written notification of the Mayor. The right to the benefits will enter into force in the next month from the official registration of the notification.

Obligations of beneficiaries

In the case where there are modifications in the number of family members and/or income, the titular of the benefits has the obligation that, in a term of 5 days, to make a written communication to the Mayor notifying the changes. The titular solicits the modification of the income through a new written request accompanied by papers proving the changes occurred.

The modification of the income enters into force starting with the next month following the changes occurred in the family.

For school age children, the single family needs to present to the Mayor every 3 months the proof a children's attendance to school.

Quantum

The quantum of the income benefits, established through Emergency Governmental Ordinance no. 105/2003, modified by Law 236/2008 is:

- a. **70 lei** for the family with one child;
- b. **80 lei** for the family with two children;

- c. **85 lei** for the family with three children;
- d. **90 lei** for the family with four or more children.

Ways to access the income benefits

The Executive Director of the Labor Agency, based on documents submitted by Mayors, issues the payment decision.

The payment of benefits is made through postal mandate or in a personal account.

Necessary documents

- **Request form**, written by the family representative, registered at the Mayor's Office in the place of residence.
 - In the case of family with no residence or domicile, the request is registered at the Mayor's Offices where the family lives.

The request form is found in Annex 1 to Decision no. 1539/2003 for the approval of Methodological Norms of the Emergency Governmental Ordinance no. 105/2003

- **Proving documents** regarding the family members and family income:
 - Documents proving the family income
 - Updated family card, and in the case the family does not possess such a card, the civil service has the obligation to issue it in 30 days from the date of requesting the benefits;
 - Court decision showing the husband/wife is declared missing (if it is the case);
 - **Court decision showing the husband/wife is on remand for a period longer than 30 days or is on detention and doesn't support the family (if it is the case);**
 - Mayor's disposition regarding the guardianship;
 - The handicap certificate presented by families with school age children with special needs not attending school.

Child consent form

CONSENT FORM

Before taking part in the research, please check the information I have given you and tick the boxes by the sentences below if you agree with what it says. Please sign this form if you are willing to take part in this research



I was clearly informed about this research and what it involves and I have had an opportunity to ask questions.

I give my consent for everything that I say to be used in the study by Liliana Foca and in any reports that may follow the research but only on the condition that my name is not mentioned and that I am not identified in any way.

I have been informed that all information I provide will be confidential. This means it will not be shared with anyone with one single exception (*see the line below*)

I understand that if I say something about a child or any other person who has been or may be abused or if I say something that may endanger the security of the prison, this information will have to be passed to the appropriate authorities.

I understand that I can refuse to take part in this research, not answer any questions I don't want to or drop out of the study at any time I wish.

Your name:

Your signature:

Date:

Non-imprisoned parent consent form

CONSENT FORM

Before taking part in the research, please check the information I have given you and tick the boxes by the sentences below if you agree with what it says. Please sign this form if you are willing to take part in this research



I was clearly informed about this research and what it involves and I have had an opportunity to ask questions.

I give my consent for everything that I say to be used in the study by Liliana Foca and in any reports that may follow the research but only on the condition that my name is not mentioned and that I am not identified in any way.

I give my consent for my child to take part in the study and to be interviewed for the purpose of this research.

I have been informed that all information I provide will be confidential. This means it will not be shared with anyone with one single exception (*see the line below*)

I understand that if I say something about a child or any other person that has been or may be abused or if I say something that may endanger the safety of the prison, this information will have to be passed to the appropriate authorities.

I understand that I can refuse to take part in this research, not answer any questions I don't want to or drop out of the study at any time I wish.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Letter to Iasi prison

Date:

To the attention of,

**Mr. Marius Vulpe, *chief commissary,*
Director of Iasi Prison**

Dear Sir,

I, the undersigned, Liliana Foca, resident in Iasi, str. Parcului no. 12, ID series MZ no. 053701 would like to ask for your support in undertaking my PhD research project entitled 'Exploring the effects of family relationships in children with imprisoned parents' by facilitating access to prisoners who are parents of children aged 9 to 18 years who I can then for contact data concerning their family members (child and wife/partner/carer of the child).

The information provided by the prisoners will be treated in the strictest confidence.

In supporting my request, I attach a summary of my research and the consent form for the prisoners who agree to provide the contact details for their family.

I will be glad to meet with you if you have any questions.

Kind regards,

Liliana Foca, *PhD Candidate*
Email: u1078590@hud.ac.uk; liliana_foca@yahoo.com
Telephone: 0733 955 119

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research is part of my PhD thesis entitled “Children with imprisoned parents: exploring the role of carers in influencing outcomes for children” developed within the University of Huddersfield¹², UK.

The purpose of my research is to look in more detail at the consequences of parental imprisonment on children all over the world and on Romanian children in particular. The objectives of my research are:

- To examine the ways carers exert their own influence on the childhood rearing process in the absence of the imprisoned parent
- To examine the extent to which the influence of carers affects the child
- To examine the attachment relationship between the carer and the imprisoned partner
- To examine children’s perspective with regards to the dynamics of child-carer relationship before and during parental imprisonment

This research involves interviews with children of imprisoned parents aged 9 to 18 years and interviews with their non-imprisoned parents/carers. The information provided by the persons that will be investigated will remain confidential. For the protection of their identity, referral codes will be used.

¹² <http://www.hud.ac.uk/>

CONSENT FORM

Before taking part in the research, please verify the information I have given you and check the boxes corresponding to the sentences bellow if you agree with what it says. Please sign this form.

✓

I was clearly explained the purpose of this research and working procedures and I had the opportunity to ask questions.

I give my consent to provide the contact details of my family members with the purpose of their participation in the PhD research of Miss Liliana Foca only under the condition that my name or the name of my family members will not be mentioned and we would not be identifiable in any way.

I was informed that all information I will provide will be confidential, this meaning it will not be shared with anyone with two exceptions (*see the line bellow*)

I understand that if I say something about a child or any other person that is or may be abused or if I say something that may endanger the safety of the prison, this information will have to be passed to the correspondend authorities.

I consent to provide contact details of my child and of my wife/partner/carer of my child. The contact details are:

Name of the child.....**Age** of the child:.....

Name of the wife/partner/carer of my child.....

Address:.....

Telephone (please state who will be the person answering):.....

Name:

Signature:.....**Date**:.....

Letter to schools

Date:.....

To the attention of,

Mr. /Mrs.

Director of Iasi “.....” High School/Medium level school

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, the undersigned, Liliana Foca, resident in Iasi, str. Parcului no. 12, ID series MZ no. 053701 would like to ask for your support in my PhD research process for the paper entitled “Exploring the effects of family relationships in children with imprisoned parents” by facilitating access to parents/carers of pupils aged 9 to 18 in your school who have a parent in prison.

In supporting my request, I attach a summary of my research.

In case there will be questions you would like to ask, I will be glad to meet with you.

Kind regards,

Liliana Foca, *PhD Candidate*

Email: u1078590@hud.ac.uk; liliana_foca@yahoo.com

Telephone: 0733 955 119

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research is part of my PhD thesis entitled “Children with imprisoned parents: exploring the role of carers in influencing outcomes for children” developed within the University of Huddersfield¹³, UK.

The purpose of my research is to look in more detail at the consequences of parental imprisonment on children all over the world and on Romanian children in particular. The objectives of my research are:

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- To examine the attachment relationship between the carer and the imprisoned partner
- To examine children’s perspective with regards to the dynamics of child-carer relationship before and during parental imprisonment

This research involves interviews with children with imprisoned parents aged 9 to 18 years and interviews with their non-imprisoned parents/carers. The information provided by the persons that will be investigated will remain confidential. For the protection of their identity, referral codes will be used.

Contact details:

Liliana Foca
Email: u1078590@hud.ac.uk
Telephone: 0733 955 119

¹³ <http://www.hud.ac.uk/>

Letter to Iasi Proximity Police

Date:.....

To the attention of,

**Mr. / Mrs....., *chief commissary,*
Iasi Proximity Police Section I - VI**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, the undersigned, Liliana Foca, resident in Iasi, str. Parcului no. 12, ID series MZ no. 053701 would like to ask for your support in my PhD research process for the paper entitled “Exploring the effects of family relationships in children with imprisoned parents” by facilitating access to children aged 9 to 18 years with a parent in prison.

In supporting my request, I attach a summary of my research.

In case there will be questions you would like to ask, I will be glad to meet with you.

Kind regards,

Liliana Foca, *PhD Candidate*
Email: u1078590@hud.ac.uk; liliana_foca@yahoo.com
Telephone: 0733 955 119

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

This research is part of my PhD thesis entitled “Children with imprisoned parents: exploring the role of carers in influencing outcomes for children” developed within the University of Huddersfield¹⁴, UK.

The purpose of my research is to look in more detail at the consequences of parental imprisonment on children all over the world and on Romanian children in particular. The objectives of my research are:

- To examine the ways carers exert their own influence on the childhood rearing process in the absence of the imprisoned parent
- To examine the extent to which the influence of carers affects the child
- To examine the attachment relationship between the carer and the imprisoned partner
- To examine children’s perspective with regards to the dynamics of child-carer relationship before and during parental imprisonment

This research involves interviews with children with imprisoned parents aged 9 to 18 years and interviews with their non-imprisoned parents/carers. The information provided by the persons that will be investigated will remain confidential. For the protection of their identity, referral codes will be used.

Contact details:

Liliana Foca

Email: u1078590@hud.ac.uk

Telephone: 0733 955 119

¹⁴ <http://www.hud.ac.uk/>

Non-imprisoned parent interview guide

Introduction

I will be interviewing you about your life in relation to the imprisonment of your husband/wife/partner. Mainly, I will be asking you questions about your situation, about your relationship with your child and about how you perceive the past, present and future relationship with your husband/wife/partner. Should you consider some of my questions are too sensitive, we can stop at any time. Afterwards we can either continue or stop our discussion. This interview should take about an hour, but it could be anywhere between 30 minutes and an hour and a half. After the interview I will be asking you to complete a questionnaire comprising 18 assertions that describe feelings and perceptions about your experience as a parent.

Date of the interview:

Start time:

Finish time:

Personal identification data

1. Socio-economic data:

Gender	male	female		
Ethnicity	Rroma	other		
Disability	yes	no	type:.....	
Other people present			
Accommodation type	apartment	house	other	
Accommodation quality	very poor	poor	good	very good
Area type	rural	urban		
Area quality	very poor	poor	good	very good

2. Please tell me a bit about yourself: What is your age? Where do you live? What is your

level of education? How many children do you have? What is your family income?

The situation of the non-imprisoned parent and of his/her family

3. How long has it been since your husband/wife/partner went to prison? How would you describe your situation prior to your husband/wife/partner's imprisonment? How about the situation of your family?
4. How would you describe your life since the imprisonment? Have things changed since? In what way? Please describe.

(To follow aspects such as: economic status, housing and other responsibilities, social relationships, family interactions, perception of self in terms of strengths/weaknesses following imprisonment)

Relationship with the child

5. How would you describe your child?
6. How would you describe your *relationship* with your child?

(To follow aspects such as: communication, support, ability to express feelings, child's obedience, openness and sharing, control/permissiveness/responsiveness. Examples of behaviors illustrating the relationship will be asked.)

7. Has this relationship changed as result of your husband/wife/partner's imprisonment?
 - If yes, how is it different? Please describe.
 - If no, what do you think were the factors that contributed to your relationship with your child being the same?
8. Has your child changed since the imprisonment? If yes, in what way? If no, what do you think helped him/her cope with the absence of one parent?
9. Have things changed in the way you raise your child since the imprisonment of your husband/wife/partner? *(child rearing before and after imprisonment will be investigated in order to examine differences in patterns that are not due to child developmental stages)*

Relationship with the imprisoned partner

10. Please tell me a about your relationship with your husband/wife/partner. For how long have you been together? How was your relationship at the beginning?
11. Has your relationship changed over time? How did it change? (examples) When did the changes occur? Except for the imprisonment, have you been separated before? For how long and for what reason?

Note: characteristics such as "loving", "rejecting", "involving", "controlling",

“dependency”, “communication”, “social interactions”, verbal/physical violence will be investigated. Examples: “Would you say it was a loving relationship? Please give me examples of behaviors that expressed this love.”; “Did you use to speak and share your feelings?”

12. Since the imprisonment, has the relationship with your husband/wife/partner changed? In what way? Do you visit your husband/wife/partner in prison? How often? What do you usually speak about? Do you share feelings and/or concerns about your relationship?
13. When thinking about the level of satisfaction of your relationship, how would you rate it?

1	2	3	4	5
Strong dissatisfaction	Moderate dissatisfaction	Somewhat satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Very satisfied

Please describe.

14. Do you think the relationship with your husband/wife/partner as you described it so far is affecting your child? In what way?
15. How do you see the relationship with your husband/wife/partner after his/her release from prison?

The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a parent. Think of each of the items in terms of how your relationship with your child or children typically is. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following items by placing the appropriate number in the space provided.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Undecided 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree

- ___ 1. I am happy in my role as a parent.
- ___ 2. There is little or nothing I wouldn't do for my child(ren) if it was necessary.
- ___ 3. Caring for my child(ren) sometimes takes more time and energy than I have to give.
- ___ 4. I sometimes worry whether I am doing enough for my child(ren).
- ___ 5. I feel close to my child(ren).
- ___ 6. I enjoy spending time with my child(ren).
- ___ 7. My child(ren) is an important source of affection for me.
- ___ 8. Having child(ren) gives me a more certain and optimistic view for the future.
- ___ 9. The major source of stress in my life is my child(ren).
- ___ 10. Having child(ren) leaves little time and flexibility in my life.
- ___ 11. Having child(ren) has been a financial burden.
- ___ 12. It is difficult to balance different responsibilities because of my child(ren).
- ___ 13. The behavior of my child(ren) is often embarrassing or stressful to me.
- ___ 14. If I had it to do over again, I might decide not to have child(ren).
- ___ 15. I feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a parent.
- ___ 16. Having child(ren) has meant having too few choices and too little control over my life.
- ___ 17. I am satisfied as a parent.
- ___ 18. I find my child(ren) enjoyable.

Child interview guide

Introduction

I will be interviewing you about how you get on with your father/mother who is in prison. I want to ask you about how this affected you and your family and your relationship with your mother/father (who is not in prison), and other relationships in your family. If you think any of my questions are too personal, then please tell me and I can leave that question out.. Afterwards we can either continue or stop our discussion. Please remember you can choose not to answer some of my questions or you can withdraw at any time you wish and that will be ok. This interview should take about an hour, but it could be anywhere between 30 minutes and an hour and a half.

Date of the interview:

Start time:

Finish time:

Personal data

1. Socio-economic data:

Gender	male	female
Ethnicity	Rroma	other
Disability	yes	no type:.....
Other people present	
Accommodation type	apartment	house other
Accommodation quality	very poor	poor good very good
Area type	rural	urban
Area quality	very poor	poor good very good

2. How old are you? Who do you live with? Do you have any brothers and sisters? How old are they? What is your relationship with the family members?
3. About school: How many school years have you graduated? What was your final school

grade for the last year you have graduated?

4. Please describe yourself. How do you think your parents see you? How do your friends see you? Do you have any friends? Who are they (*colleagues, neighbors, other*)? What are their ages?

Relationship with the imprisoned parent

5. I will be asking you a few questions about your father/mother who is in prison now. Please tell me a bit about your father/mother since the time you were a little boy/girl. How was he/she? What is the nicest thing you remember about your father/mother since then? How about a thing you don't like to recall in your memory?
6. Has he/she changed since you were a little boy/girl? If yes, in what way? When did the change(s) happen? Why do you think the change(s) occurred? How did the change(s) affect the relationship with your father/mother?
7. How did you feel when your father/mother went to prison? Did you speak with anyone about your feelings? If yes, with whom? If no, why not?
8. Do you visit your parent to prison? If yes, how often? How are the visits for you? What do you speak about? What do you feel about the visits? If you do not visit, why?
9. Do you think your life has changed since your father/mother went to prison? If yes, in what way? If no, why do you think things remained the same?

Note: aspects such as school performance, friendships, house chores, preoccupations, sleeping and eating behaviors will be investigated.

Relationship with the non-imprisoned parent

10. How about the relationship with your mother/father (*non-imprisoned parent*)? What can you tell me about her/him since the time you were a little boy/girl? How was she/he? What is the nicest thing you remember about your mother/father since then? How about a thing you don't like to recall in your memory?
11. Has s/he changed since you were a little boy/girl? If yes, in what way? When did the change(s) happen? Why do you think the change(s) occurred? How did the change(s) affect the relationship with your mother/father?
12. How about your relationship with your mother/father after your father/mother went to prison? Has it changed? If yes, in what way? If no, why do you think things remained the same?

Note: aspects such as caring, communication, sharing of feelings, school support, and leisure time/socializing activities will be investigated.

Perception of family and of mother-father relationships

13. Please tell me if there are other persons living with you and your mum/dad (brothers and sisters, extended family, other persons). How would you describe your relationship with every one of them? *(To be named and asked for description)*
14. What do your family members think about the imprisonment of your parent? Do you think their lives have changed since? How? Do they visit your dad/mum to prison? What do they think about the fact you visit/don't visit him/her to prison?
15. What about your mum and dad? Did they use to get along before dad/mum went to prison? Please describe. How about now, when your father/mother is in prison, do you know if they write/speak over the phone or visit?
16. Does your mum/dad speak with you about your dad/mum? If yes, what does she usually say? If no, why do you think s/he doesn't?
17. Do you think your dad/mum will come home when he/she is released from prison? What do you think your family life will be like after your dad/mum's release?

18. What would you like your life to be like when you grow up? Why?

Risk analysis and management

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD: RISK ANALYSIS & MANAGEMENT

ACTIVITY: Research entitled `Exploring the effects of family relationships in children with imprisoned parents`			Name: Liliana Foca, PhD candidate	
LOCATION: Iasi City and surrounding areas. The specific locations are as follows: family homes, schools, police stations			Date: 07/02/2013	Review Date:
Hazard(s) Identified	Details of Risk(s)	People at Risk	Risk management measures	Other comments
I will be going to Iasi Prison to ask permission from imprisoned parents to offer contact details of their families.	I don't think this would imply any risk for my safety.	Researcher	A formal letter will be submitted to the Prison Governor in order to support this process. The staff from the Intervention and Psycho-Social Assistance Service within the prison will make the selection and prison staff will accompany me during my presentation.	I have worked in Iasi Prison as volunteer for 2 years and I am familiar with internal procedures, conduct, and management of risk situations.
Most of the interviews will be conducted in family residences.	The family residences may be in high criminal risk neighborhoods. There could also be conflicts in the family at the time of my visit.	Researcher	The carers will first be contacted by phone. Where this is not possible, direct visits will be made. In either case, where the residence of the family is located in a considered high risk neighborhood, I will ask the local social worker or the community police workers to accompany me.	I will always carry a mobile phone with me and a person of confidence will always know about my whereabouts.
The interviews conducted with the children and the non-imprisoned	Some of the questions included in the interviews relate to feelings the interviewed persons	Children Non-imprisoned	A list of institutions that can offer emotional support will be handed to research participants.	If the situation gets too emotional I will ask if it is better to postpone the interview and come back another time. At

parents can be sensitive.	have in relation to the imprisoned parent or in relation to their everyday life.	parents		the same time I will ask the interviewee who is the most supportive person for him/her and encourage having a meeting with the respective person.
Family stories, especially of those affected by parental imprisonment may be disturbing.	The stories told by the persons I interview may affect my emotional state.	Researcher	A debriefing session with my supervisor will be scheduled.	None
Research data safety	Research data (recordings, writings on the computer, hard copies) could be lost.	Researcher The research	A back up copy of data gathered throughout the research will be made and stored in a secure place. The computer is also password protected and I am the only person with access to it.	None
Research participants	Participants may want to refuse to take part in the research.	The researcher The research	Although the main source for recruitment of participants for my research will be Iasi Prison, I will simultaneously approach Iasi Proximity Police and schools in the city through letters addressed to managers in order for these institutions to provide me with contact details of the non-imprisoned parents' they are familiar with.	None

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