Exploring perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member

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CONTENTS

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SUMMARY

Exploring perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member

Keywords: Changes, family functioning, imprisonment, McMaster Model of Family Functioning, nuclear family, subjective experience.

Research regarding the imprisonment of a family member has mainly focused on the effects of parental imprisonment on the children in that family. Literature indicates that the child of an imprisoned parent has to deal with numerous challenges, including stigma and shame related to their parent's arrest and imprisonment. Other common feelings these children might experience include anger, confusion and sadness. Furthermore these children often experience pressure related to keeping the imprisonment a secret from those close to them. These children might also face multiple separations from the imprisoned parent, experience changes with regards to residence, school and friendships, adoption of adult roles and responsibilities, financial distress, lack of supervision and more.

When compared to literature regarding parental imprisonment relatively few studies have been done on the effects of imprisonment on the family as a whole, especially in the South African context. The available research indicates there are numerous implications for the family as a whole. Some of these implications include stigma, financial stress, role changes within the family, relational problems between family members (including extended family), challenges in dealing with the criminal justice system and emotional distress (feelings of loneliness, anxiety, isolation and worry).

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the changes that take place in family functioning when a member of that family is imprisoned as they are perceived by the members of the nuclear family. A qualitative description (descriptive) research approach was used in this study. Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. Six voluntary

participants (all family members of imprisoned individuals) from four families were recruited. Participants were aged between 15 and 75, consisted of one male and five females. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. These interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Initial questions for the semi-structured interviews were obtained using the McMaster Model of Family Functioning as a guiding framework. Therefore, first deductive (directed) content analysis was used, after which thematic analysis was then done on the transcribed data. From the analysis two main themes and nine subthemes emerged.

It was found that participants relied more on their family members for problem solving, were generally more open-hearted and honest with their communication towards each other while limiting potentially distressing communication and they experienced changes in the roles and responsibilities within the family. Participants also reported experiencing new emotions (positive and negative) and experienced increased support, understanding and involvement from their family members. They furthermore experienced changes in behaviour control and household rules ranging from rigid to laissez-faire and often fluctuating between these. Some participants reported experiencing more support from outside the family. Participants furthermore reported feeling stigmatised and isolated within their communities. They also experienced gaining resilience and inner strength and found strength through their religious beliefs.

The findings of this study can't be generalized due to the limited demographic variability and small sample size. Limited research is available regarding the changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member in the family as a whole, especially in the South African context. The identification of religion and resilience (as subthemes identified from the data) as they relate to coping is probably the most important contribution of this study as it is not discussed in any of the models of family functioning mentioned in this study, including the McMaster Model of Family Functioning. It is

recommended that further research focus on both resilience and religion as they relate to coping and possibly contribute to family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member. It is furthermore suggested that specific intervention programs be developed to help families function effectively after the imprisonment of a family member. These intervention programs might include group work with different families or working with individual families either with skills development, psycho-education or therapeutically.

OPSOMMING

Verkenning van waargenome veranderinge in gesinsfunksionering na die gevangenisskap van

'n gesinslid

Sleutelwoorde: Gesinsfunksionering, gevangenisskap, McMaster Model van

Gesinsfunksionering, subjektiewe belewenis, veranderinge.

Navorsing rakende die gevangenisskap van 'n gesinslid fokus hoofsaaklik op die effek

wat 'n ouer se gevangenisskap op die kinders in daardie gesin het. Die literatuur dui aan dat

die kind van 'n ouer in gevangenisskap menigte uitdagings moet trotseer, insluitend stigma en

'n gevoel van beskaamdheid verwant aan die arrestasie en gevangenisskap van die ouer.

Ander algemene gevoelens wat hierdie kinders mag beleef sluit woede, verwarring en

hartseer in. Verder beleef hierdie kinders dikwels druk om die gevangenisskap 'n geheim te

hou van die mense na aan hulle. Hierdie kinders mag ook verskeie skeidings van die ouer in

gevangenisskap beleef, asook veranderings rakende die kind se woning, skool en

vriendskappe, aanneming van volwasse rolle en -verantwoordelikhede, finansiële nood, 'n

gebrek aan toesig en meer.

In vergelyking met literatuur rakende die gevangenisskap van 'n ouer is daar relatief

min studies gedoen aangaande die effek van gevangenisskap op die gesin as 'n geheel, veral

in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die beskikbare navorsing dui aan dat daar menigte

implikasies vir die gesin as geheel ontstaan. Sommige van hierdie implikasies sluit in stigma,

finansiële nood, rolveranderings binne die gesin, verhoudingsprobleme tussen gesinslede

(insluitend uitgebreide familie), uitdagings verwant aan interaksie met die regstelsel en

emosionele nood (gevoelens van eensaamheid, angs, isolasie en bekommernis).

Die doelwit van hierdie studie was om die veranderings wat plaasvind in 'n gesin se

funksionering na 'n lid van die gesin in gevangenisskap geplaas is, vanuit die persepsie van

die gesinslede, te verken. 'n Kwalitatiewe beskrywende navorsings benadering is gebruik in

hierdie studie. Doelgerigte steekproeftrekking is gebruik om deelnemers te werf. Ses vrywillige deelnemers (almal gesinslede van 'n individu in gevangenisskap) vanuit vier families is gewerf. Die deelnemers bestaan uit een man en vyf dames tussen die ouderdomme van 15 en 75. Semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gebruik om data in te samel. Bandopnames van die onderhoude is gemaak en daarna getranskribeer. Die aanvanklike vrae vir die onderhoude is verkry deur die McMaster Model van Gesinsfunksionering as 'n rigtinggewende raamwerk te gebruik. Daarom is eers deduktiewe inhoudsanalise gedoen waarna 'n tematiese sanalise gedoen is op die getranskribeerde data. Vanuit die analise het twee hooftemas en nege subtemas na vore gekom.

Daar is bevind dat die deelnemers meer op hul gesinslede staatgemaak het om probleme op te los, hul was oor die algemeen meer openhartig en eerlik wat hul kommunikasie met mekaar betref het, terwyl kommunikasie oor moontlike ontstellende sake beperk is en hul het veranderings ervaar rakende die rolle en verantwoordelikhede binne die gesin. Deelnemers het ook gerapporteer dat hul nuwe emosies beleef het (positief en negatief) en hul het ook 'n toename in ondersteuning, begrip en betrokkenheid van hul gesinslede ervaar. Verder het hul veranderings ervaar in gedragsbeheer en huishoudelike reëls wat gewissel het tussen rigied en laissez-faire. Sommige deelnemers het genoem dat hul meer ondersteuning ontvang het van buite die gesin. Deelnemers het ook gerapporteer dat hul stigma beleef het en meer afgesonder van hul gemeenskappe gevoel het. Hul het ook 'n gevoel van veerkragtigheid en innerlike krag ondervind en het krag gevind in hul godsdienstige oortuigings.

Die bevindinge van die studie kan nie veralgemeen word nie as gevolg van die beperkte demografiese veranderlikes en klein steekproefgrootte. Beperkte navorsing is beskikbaar aangaande die verandering wat plaasvind in 'n gesin as 'n geheel nadat 'n gesinslid in gevangenisskap geplaas word, veral in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Die

identifikasie van godsdiens en veerkragtigheid (as subtemas wat geïdentifiseer is vanuit die data) soos hul verband hou met 'coping' is waarskynlik die belangrikste bydra van hierdie studie aangesien dit in geen van die modelle oor familie – of gesinsfunksionering bespreek word nie, insluitend die McMaster Model van Gesinsfunksionering. Dit word aanbeveel dat verdere navorsing gedoen word oor godsdiens en veerkragtigheid as maniere om te 'cope' en hoe dit bydra tot gesinsfunksionering na 'n gesinslid in gevangenisskap geplaas word. Verder word aanbeveel dat spesifieke intervensieprogramme ontwikkel word om gesinne te help om effektief te funksioneer nadat 'n gesinslid in gevangenisskap geplaas is. Hierdie intervensieprogramme mag die volgende insluit: groepswerk met verskillende gesinne of werk met individuele gesinne om vaardighede aan te leer of te ontwikkel, psigo-opvoeding of terapeutiese werk.

PREFACE

- This dissertation in article format as described in rules A 4.4.2.3 and A 5.4.2.1 as prescribed by the North-West University.

- The article will be submitted for possible publication in the Journal of Family Psychology.

- The referencing and editorial style of this dissertation are in keeping with the guidelines as set out in the Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). The article will be compiled according to the guidelines of the journal in which the article will be submitted.

- In order to present the minor dissertation as a unit, the page numbering is consecutive, starting from introduction and proceedings to the references.

- Dr. W. de Klerk and Dr. M. M. du Toit, co-authors of the article comprising this dissertation, have provided consent for the submission of this article for the examination purposes regarding a MA Clinical Psychology degree.

- The dissertation was send to Turn-it-in and the report was within the norms of acceptability.

LETTER OF PERMISSION

Permission is hereby granted for the submission by the first author, C. M. Davel, of the following article for examination purposes, towards the obtainment of a Masters of Arts degree in Clinical Psychology:

Exploring perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member

The role of the co-authors was as follow: Dr. W. de Klerk and Dr. M.M. du Toit acted as supervisor and co-supervisor respectively. Both Dr W. de Klerk and Dr M.M. du Toit assisted in the peer review of this article.

Dr. W. de Klerk
Supervisor

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Ek bevestig hiermee dat ek gedurende September 2014 die volgende skripsie se taalversorging behartig het: / I hereby certify that the following dissertation was edited by me during September 2014:

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In this section (literature overview) the effects of imprisonment on families is discussed in depth to ensure that the reader gains a comprehensive perspective on this phenomenon. The following will be discussed: families of prisoners as a forgotten population; the effects of parental imprisonment on children; the effects of imprisonment on how families function; the importance of family; the relevant theories and models; the problem statement; the aim of the study; and the structure of the research.

Families of Prisoners as a Forgotten Population

To a large extent our society isn't concerned with or bothered by what happens to the families of those who are imprisoned, those families left behind (Breen, 2008). According to the International Centre for Prison Studies regarding the latest statistics from the Department of Correctional services, released in May 2013, the prison population in South Africa has reached 153 000, which includes pre-trial detainees. No South African studies regarding the changes in a family's functioning after the imprisonment of a family member could be found. Despite the large and increasing numbers of imprisoned individuals, the families of these individuals have largely remained a forgotten population (Murray, 2005). According to Murray (2005) their special needs have not been adequately understood or addressed. Prison statistics, academic research, public policy and media coverage have almost entirely neglected the effects that imprisonment has on the families of those who are imprisoned (Murray, 2005).

The Effects of Parental Imprisonment on Children

There are however numerous studies that have been done to explore how parental imprisonment might affect children (e.g. Adalist-Estrin, 1994; Arditti, Lambert-Shute, &

Joest, 2003; Fishman, 1983; Foster & Hagan, 2009; Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Hairston & Hess, 1989; Koban, 1983; Lowenstein, 1986; Murray, 2005; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2003; Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010; Stanton, 1980; Travis, Cincotta, & Solomon, 2003; Wildeman, 2009; Wildeman 2010; Wildeman & Western, 2010). According to Adalist-Estrin (2006) adolescents with imprisoned parents not only have to deal with the issues most teenagers face, but they have a unique set of challenging issues facing them as well. Some of these unique challenges include dealing with the stigma and feelings of shame caused by their parent's arrest, crime and imprisonment; the pressure of having to keep their parent's imprisonment secret from friends, acquaintances and even extended family; and also loyalty conflicts stemming from the family's complex circumstances and relationships (Adalist-Estrin, 2006).

Further common challenges that children of imprisoned parents face include multiple separations from their imprisoned parent; having to change residences, schools and friendships; having to assume adult roles with caregivers and siblings; poverty and economic distress; feelings of ambivalence towards the imprisoned parent; feelings of shame, anger, confusion and sadness; and being left without supervision for long periods of time (Adalist-Estrin, 2006; Johnson, 2006).

The Effects of Imprisonment on how Families Function

In comparison to studies relating to the effects of parental imprisonment on children, less research have been done regarding the effects of imprisonment of a family member on the nuclear family as a whole (e.g. Braman, 2002; Council on Crime and Justice, 2006; Hairston, 2002; Healy, Foley, & Walsh, 2000; Wildeman & Western, 2010). However, according to Murray (2005), when considering prisoners' backgrounds it can be inferred that

the families of prisoners form an extremely vulnerable group. Regarding families of imprisoned individuals, literature indicates that numerous changes take place within family life (Murray, 2005). According to Wright and Seymour (2000) it is very rare for a family to experience imprisonment without the presence of other difficulties and challenges. In most cases there are numerous cultural, social and familial risk factors than not only coexist, but add to the total risk for that family (Wright & Seymour, 2000). According to Roguski and Chauvel (2009) some of the main pressures that family members of imprisoned individuals experience include prison visitation, adopting a caregiver role, stigma and financial stress. It was found that the degree to which families were affected by these pressures differs and depends to some degree upon the support networks they have access to (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). Some of the emotional challenges these families experience include feelings of loneliness, anxiety, worry and isolation as well as having to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of other members of the family (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009).

Structural change within families. Family structure refers to the membership and composition of a family, as well as to the organization and patterns of relationships among family members (Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 2009). Thus structural changes refer to changes in the composition and membership within families, as well as changes regarding the patterns and organization of family relationships. According to Wright and Seymour (2000) the most immediate and apparent change that takes place within the family is structural – the absence of a family member necessitates remaining family members to adopt different roles and responsibilities than before the imprisonment, otherwise these roles might remain unfulfilled and cause even more stress for the family.

Concerning caregiving (bathing, dressing, cooking, cleaning, handling finances, running errands, sharing information, caring for sick family members, taking family members to appointments and activities etcetera) the female family members (mothers, sisters, spouses

or partners) often have to take more responsibility (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009; Wright &

Seymour, 2000). The family have to adjust to the absence of assistance with parenting and

childcare support, as well as the increased stress of having to care for unwell or older family

members without the support of the imprisoned individual (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009;

Wright & Seymour, 2000). Those family members responsible for caring for the other

members of the family often experience a lack of support and have an increased sense of

isolation (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009; Wright & Seymour, 2000). Due to structural changes

the responsibilities of caregiving often fall upon the shoulders of family members that did not

have these responsibilities before the imprisonment of their family member (Wright &

Seymour, 2000). These caregivers stated that they needed support in the form of a respite

from childcare, communicating the imprisonment to the children in the family as well as to

non-family members, and counselling for all family members (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009;

Wright & Seymour, 2000). Those responsible for caregiving also expressed a lack of

knowledge about the types of support that exist and how to gain access to those support

structures (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009; Wright & Seymour, 2000).

The financial burden of imprisonment on families. Another challenge that families

of imprisoned individuals have to deal with is the significant financial burden of losing a

member of the family able of contributing to the family's income (Hairston, 2002; Roguski &

Chauvel, 2009; Wildeman & Western, 2010; Wright & Seymour, 2000). Imprisonment

occurs disproportionately for families already experiencing poverty or financial crises, adding

to the financial burden these families have to carry (Wildeman & Western, 2010; Wright &

Seymour, 2000). The majority of families that are affected by imprisonment are of low

income (Mumola, 2000; Wright & Seymour, 2000). This financial burden often leads to the

remaining family members having to reallocate finances which could even be detrimental to

the health and well-being of the family (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009; Wildeman & Western, 2010).

Some of the financial implications of the loss or reduction in household income include the increased financial responsibilities of childcare, such as the costs of children's schooling as well as the added costs of caring for a family, such as food, medical assistance, clothing, transport, housing and personal needs, all of which put an enormous strain on families that might already be living within limited budgets (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). This financial strain often means that the family member who takes up the role of primary caregiver will reduce the fulfilment of his or her own basic needs, intake of food or medical assistance for the benefit of the other family members (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). The financial distress these families experience will often mean having to relocate or change accommodation because they are unable to pay their rent or mortgage (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009; Wright & Seymour, 2000).

Keeping in contact with the imprisoned individual, either through visitation or telephonically, contributes to the financial stress the family has already experienced after the imprisonment (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). According to Roguski and Chauvel (2009) family members will often sacrifice necessities, such as food or clothing, to ensure that the frequency of visits to the imprisoned individual is not compromised, or to enable them to provide the imprisoned individual with money for phone cards.

Stigma associated with imprisonment. Another difficulty faced by these families is the stigma attached to crime and imprisonment (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). The degree to which families of imprisoned individuals experience stigma was found to be dependent on the type of crime, with violent and sex crimes being associated with the highest degree of stigma (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). A history of imprisonment of family members as well as

the neighbourhood or area the family reside in were also factors that played a role in determining the degree of stigma the family faced (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). Stigma was further identified as being an obstacle to securing employment (Hairston, 2002; Roguski & Chauvel, 2009; Wildeman & Western, 2010), which could increase the family's financial burden. According to the Council on Crime and Justice (2006) the isolation created by stigma might contribute to or worsen the difficulties these families face as they might lose social networking capabilities and community resources. The stigma of imprisonment also strains existing relationships. Goffman (1963) describes the contagious quality of stigma with regards to personal relationships. Goffman (1963) explains that the general tendency for stigma to spread from an individual to that individual's connections (family, friends etc.) often results in avoidance of relationships with stigmatized individuals, or if such relationships already exist, termination thereof.

Relational difficulties attributed to imprisonment of a family member. As mentioned above, imprisonment creates a multitude of difficulties with regards to family relationships, including relationships with members of the extended families. According to Braman (2002) imprisonment makes even heavier demands upon the extended family networks that often sustain the families of imprisoned individuals, and these additional demands might result in heightened tension. Morris (1965) concluded that when a husband was imprisoned the crisis experienced was one of family dismemberment rather than demoralisation due to feelings of shame or stigma.

Difficulties when dealing with the criminal justice system. According to Wright and Seymour (2000) a source of additional stress for the family can be found in dealing with the criminal justice system as there is often uncertainty and a lack of information regarding contact with the family member, visitation, and what will happen to the imprisoned family member. For instance, while the interest in service provision to prisoners has increased, very

little consideration has been given to working with prisoners and the families as a cohesive unit (Council of Crime and Justice, 2006). Interventions, such as increased family visitation opportunities, family counselling and family budgeting courses would serve to provide a more comprehensive approach to dealing with the challenges these families (including the prisoners) face (Council of Crime and Justice, 2006).

Wright and Seymour (2000) also emphasize the importance of not stereotyping these families, as all families differ. Just as imprisonment might increase the challenges and difficulties these families face, numerous factors might also lead to positive outcomes for these families, especially if the family member's crime and imprisonment are isolated incidents in a family that is otherwise stable (Wright & Seymour, 2000).

The Importance of Family

To understand why it is necessary to focus on the changes that take place within a family when a member has been imprisoned, it is necessary to understand the importance of family. According to Defrain (2001) families are probably of the oldest and most resilient institutions known to man. When considering our earliest recollections and knowledge of human life, it seems that people have always tended to group themselves into families in order to establish support on an emotional, physical and communal level (Defrain, 2001). According to Defrain (2001) the structures and rules of families might differ over the world, but the value of family connectedness remains the same. In most communities all over the world it seems that families form the basic, foundational social units and that healthy individuals within healthy families are of utmost importance for the establishment and maintenance of healthy societies (Defrain, 2001). It is because of the importance of families that special care should be taken to gain an understanding of, and to assist the families of those who are imprisoned (Hairston, 2002). Throughout this introduction and research study

the focus will be on the nuclear families of the imprisoned individuals – thus focusing on mothers, fathers and children or siblings (Merriam-Webster, 2013). From the onset and throughout the term family should be regarded as referring to the nuclear family.

Relevant Theories and Models

According to Carr (2007) there are various theoretical models that can be used to explore and assess family functioning, such as the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems, the McMaster Model of Family Functioning, and the Beavers Family Systems Model. The McMaster Model of Family Functioning was found by the researcher to be the most comprehensive and therefore the most relevant to be used in this study.

While the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family systems makes use of three dimensions (cohesion, adaptability and communication) to explain marital and family functioning (Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 2014), and the Beavers Family Systems Model makes use of two dimensions (family competence and family style) to explain the functioning of a family (Beavers & Hampson, 2000), the McMaster Model of Family Functioning uses six dimensions (mentioned below) to explain the functioning of a family (Epstein, Bishop, & Baldwin, 1984; Epstein, Bishop, Levin, 1978; Miller, Ryan, Keitner, Bishop, & Epstein, 2000) – thus making the McMaster Model of Family Functioning more comprehensive and better suited to explain the complex changes that may occur within a family's functioning after the imprisonment of a family member. According to Epstein et al. (1978, p. 20) the McMaster Model of Family Functioning deals with the full spectrum of family functioning from health to pathology and therefore "should allow the placement of a given family's functioning on this spectrum".

To be able to gain an understanding of how family functioning changes after the imprisonment of a family member, it is important to understand what it means to function as a family.

McMaster Model of Family Functioning. This model is especially relevant for this study as it takes the reciprocal influence between the family and environment (Ryan, Epstein, Keitner, Miller, & Bishop, 2005) into consideration. Furthermore it does not preclude the type of non-traditional families often found in the South African context (Sherriff, Seedat, & Suffla, n.d.), and it is consist of more dimensions than other well-known models of family functioning (the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family systems and the Beavers Family Systems Model) when it comes to differentiation between dimensions of family functioning (Beavers & Hampson, 2000; Olson et al., 2014).

The McMaster Model of Family Functioning states that the primary and most important function of the family unit is to provide a setting for the maintenance and development of family members on psychological, social and biological level (Epstein et al., 1984). The McMaster Model of Family Functioning has some underlying assumptions as it is based upon a systems theory (Epstein et al., 1978; Miller et al., 2000). These assumptions include: all parts of the family are interrelated; one member of the family cannot be understood in isolation from the other family members; family functioning as a whole cannot be understood by simply understanding the individual members; family members' behaviour are strongly influenced by the structure and organization of the family, and lastly the individual member's behaviour is strongly shaped by the transactional patterns of the family (Miller et al., 2000).

The McMaster Model of Family Functioning consists of six dimensions that provide an understanding of the family's organization and structure as well as the transactional

patterns thereof (Epstein, et al., 1978; Epstein et al., 1984). These six dimensions are problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, and behaviour control (Epstein, et al. 1978; Epstein et al., 1984; Miller et al., 2000).

Problem solving refers to the ability of families to resolve problems at a level that maintains effective family functioning (Epstein et al., 1978, p. 21; Miller et al., 2000, p. 170). If there is an issue that threatens the integrity and functional capacity of the family and the family struggles to find a solution for that issue, the issue is seen as a family problem (Miller et al., 2000). Family problems can be divided into instrumental and affective problems (Miller et al., 2000). Instrumental problems refer to mechanical problems of everyday living and affective problems refer to those problems related to feelings and emotional experiences (Miller et al., 2000).

Communication refers to the manner in which information within the family is exchanged (Miller et al., 2000, p. 170). The McMaster Model of Family Functioning focuses solely on verbal communication (Epstein et al., 1978; Miller et al., 2000). Non-verbal aspects of family functioning is excluded, because according Miller et al. (2000, p. 170) there are the "potential for misinterpretation" and also "the methodological difficulties of collecting and measuring such data for research purposes". According to Miller et al. (2000) communication is also subdivided into instrumental and affective types – it further explores whether the communication is clear or masked (the clarity of the message) as well as direct or indirect (is the message communicated directly to the intended person or via another).

Roles refer to the recurrent patterns of behaviour in which members of the family fulfil family functions (Epstein et al., 1978; Miller et al., 2000; Epstein et al., 1993 as cited in Peterson & Green, 2009). It is subdivided into necessary family functions and other family functions (Miller et al., 2000). Necessary family functions refer to those functions that

family members have to complete recurrently to function effectively (Miller et al., 2000). According to Epstein et al. (1978), these include provision of resources, nurturance and support, sexual gratification of marital partners, life skill development, and maintenance and management of the family system. Other family functions refer to those functions that are not necessary for effective family functioning, but arise to a varying degree in the life of every family (Miller et al., 2000).

Affective responsiveness refers to the ability of the members of the family to respond to a wide range of stimuli with the appropriate quantity and quality of feelings (Epstein et al., 1978). As far as quantity is concerned there is a continuum that measures the degree of response, ranging from non-responsiveness/under-responsiveness to appropriate responsiveness to over-responsiveness (Miller et al., 2000). Quality is concerned with whether family members respond with the full range of emotions possible in the human emotional life, as well as whether the response is appropriate given the stimuli and situational context (Miller et al., 2000). Epstein et al. (1978) states that factors related to cultural variability may have an important influence on the affective responsiveness of families.

Affective involvement refers to the degree to which the family as a whole is interested in, and values the interests and activities of individual family members (Miller et al., 2000). According to Epstein et al. (1978, p. 25), "the focus is on how much and in what way family members can show an interest and invest themselves in each other". Affective involvement can range from a total lack of involvement at the one end of the spectrum to extreme involvement (over involvement) at the other end (Epstein et al., 1978), therefore affective involvement does not simply refer to what family members do together, but rather the degree of involvement among the family (Miller et al., 2000).

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Behavioural control refers to patterns of behaviour the family will adopt to deal with the following types of situations: physically dangerous situations – within which the family will monitor and control the behaviour of family members to ensure safety; situations within which family members need to express and meet psychobiological needs and drives – including eating, drinking, sleeping, sexual activity, elimination and aggression; and situations involving interpersonal socializing behaviour – these include socializing within the family as well as with those outside the family (Epstein et al., 1978). According to Miller et al. (2000, p. 172), in each type of situation is important to the behaviour of all the family members.

According to the McMaster Model of Family Functioning the definition of a healthy functioning family is as follows: a family that functions effectively is expected to deal with each of the above mentioned dimensions successfully (Epstein et al., 1984). These effective families solve their problems with ease while ineffective families have at least some problems that are not dealt with. Furthermore effective families communicate clearly and directly, their roles are clear and reasonable, they are held accountable for their actions, are capable of expressing a full range of emotions, they are involved in and show interest in the lives of other family members, and their behaviour control is flexible (Epstein et al., 1984)**.**

Bowen's Theory. Bowen's Theory is quite relevant to this study as it acknowledges that change (such as imprisonment) for one individual in the family will cause change for the other individuals and the family as a whole (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 2003), and it also takes into account that to understand the individual one needs to understand the family (Corey, 2005), which is important in this study as the focus is on the changes within the family as a whole rather than on only the changes that occur concerning individual members of the family. According to Brown (1999) Bowen focused on patterns that develop in families with the purpose to defuse anxiety. When families perceive that there is either too much closeness or

too much distance in their relationships with each other, it generates anxiety (Brown, 1999).

The current levels of external stress as well the sensitivity to certain themes that might have

been transmitted from previous generations determine the degree of anxiety within the family

(Brown, 1999). Brown (1999) reports that a chronic state of anxiety or reactivity might be set

in place when family members react anxiously to perceived emotional demands rather than to

consider in full their responses to the dilemmas in the relationship. According to Bowen's

Theory, individuals are best understood by assessing the interactions between family

members, and it further states that each family member's behaviour and development are

interconnected with those of the other members of that family (Corey, 2005). According to

Corey (2005) the primary context for understanding how individuals behave and function

with regards to and in relation to others are the family.

According to Bowen's Theory the family is viewed as both interconnected and

reactive, meaning that a change which concerns one member of the family will affect all

other family members and thus the family as a whole (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 2003). Within

families there are both a connectedness and a reactivity that make the functioning of family

members interdependent (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 2003). According to Kerr (2003) this

interdependence is always present to some degree, although it may differ from family to

family, and it is this interdependence that causes a change in the functioning of one family

member to elicit reciprocal changes from the functioning of the rest of that family.

Problem Statement

From the literature discussed up to this point it becomes clear that a family's

functioning should experience changes when a member of that family is imprisoned. This

study is focused on the nature and magnitude of the perceived changes that occur in a

family's functioning after the imprisonment of a family member.

According to Kingi (2009) families of imprisoned individuals continue to endure a whole host of challenges and difficulties with very little official recognition or support. Braman (2002) found that the imprisonment of a family member is often more damaging for the family that is left behind than for the imprisoned individual self. Imprisonment is regarded as socially damaging as it hampers modes of exchange and reciprocity, both of which are of utmost importance when it comes to a family's well-being (Braman, 2002). For some families the imprisonment of an offending family member put that family in a better position because of abuse perpetrated by the offending family member, or the adverse conditions caused by the offending family member's behaviour (Browne, 2005). Browne (2005) however proclaims that many families have to endure hardship and distress due to the imprisonment of a family member. Smith, Grimshaw, Romeo, and Knapp (2007) noted that, following the imprisonment of a family member, the family was left vulnerable to poverty, financial instability, potential housing disruption and debt, and that those factors often left these families disadvantaged. The disadvantages that are associated with imprisonment of a family member include high rates of mental and physical illness (Smith et al, 2007).

While there is an abundance of research focusing on the parent-child relationship after parental incarceration (e.g. Adalist-Estrin, 1994; Fishman, 1983; Hairston & Hess, 1989, Koban, 1983; Lowenstein, 1986; Stanton, 1980; Travis et al., 2003; Wildeman & Western, 2010), especially on the relationship between an imprisoned father and his children (e.g. Bahr, Harker, Guild, Harris, & Fisher, 2005; Clarke et al, 2005; Nurse, 2002; Wildeman & Western, 2010), significantly less literature is available regarding the changes that take place within the family as a whole when a member of that family is imprisoned – this is especially true with regards to literature in a South African context. In order to address the above mentioned problem, the following question was asked:

What are the perceived changes that take place in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member?

Aim and Orientation of the Study

The aim of this qualitative research study was to explore and describe the perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. These questions were developed by using the McMaster Model of Family Functioning, and were then presented to the participants. The McMaster Model of Family Functioning was chosen as it recognizes the reciprocal influence of the environment on the family (Ryan et al., 2005). According to Ryan et al. (2005, p. 24) the McMaster Model of Family Functioning defines a family as: "systems within systems (individual, marital, or dyad) and relating to other systems (extended family, schools, industry, religions)." This definition implies that family interactions cannot simply be reduced to individual or dyadic characteristics, but rather that the family functions within a broader societal milieu.

According to Nsamenang (2000) the family constantly interacts with the environment and is influenced by and influences the environment. It suggests that the functioning of families is contextualised (Nsamenang, 2000), which is important in this study as the imprisonment of a family member often results in the family being influenced by and having to deal with organizations and structures outside the family, such as correctional facilities, courts, social services and more. Another reason why the McMaster Model of Family Functioning was found to be appropriate for usage in this study is because it does not preclude the kinds of non-traditional families often found in South Africa (Sherriff et al., n.d.), making it especially relevant for working with participants from South Africa.

Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2004) report that the families of today present in diverse forms with a diversity of cultural heritages.

Structure of the Research

The research is divided into three sections. Section A, this section, provides a literature review and overview of the theoretical framework to form the basis and background of the study. Section B includes the article that will be submitted to the Journal of Family Psychology for possible publication. The article includes the researcher's discussion regarding the methodology, findings and discussion of the study. In Section C the researcher's own critical reflections as well as the contributions this study will make to academic literature are discussed.

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SECTION 2: ARTICLE

Exploring perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family

member

2.1 Guidelines for authors: *Journal of Family Psychology*

Journal of Family Psychology: Instructions to Authors

Manuscript

For general guidelines to style, authors should study articles previously published in the journal.

All manuscripts must include an abstract containing a maximum of 250 words typed on a separate page. After the abstract, please supply up to five keywords or brief phrases.

The manuscript title should be accurate, fully explanatory, and preferably no longer than 12 words. The title should reflect the content and population studied (e.g., "family therapy for depression in children"). If the paper reports a randomized clinical trial, this should be indicated in the title, and the CONSORT criteria must be used for reporting purposes.

Research manuscripts and review and theoretical manuscripts that provide creative and integrative summaries of an area of work relevant to family psychology should not exceed 30–35 pages, all inclusive (including cover page, abstract, text, references, tables, figures), with margins of at least 1 inch on all sides and a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman) of 12 points (no smaller). The entire paper (text, references, tables, figures, etc.,) must be double spaced. References should not exceed 8 pages.

Brief reports are encouraged for innovative work that may be premature for publication as a full research report because of small sample size, novel methodologies, etc. Brief reports also are an appropriate format for replications and for clinical case studies. Authors of brief reports should indicate in the cover letter that the full report is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Brief reports should be designated as such and should not exceed a total of 20 pages, all inclusive. References should not exceed 8 pages.

Manuscripts exceeding the space requirement will be returned to the author for shortening prior to peer review.

All research involving human participants must describe oversight of the research process by the relevant Institutional Review Boards and should describe consent and assent procedures briefly in the Method section.

It is important to highlight the significance and novel contribution of the work. The translation of research into practice must be evidenced in all manuscripts. Authors should incorporate a meaningful discussion of the clinical and/or policy implications of their work throughout the manuscript, rather than simply providing a separate section for this material.

Manuscript Preparation

Prepare manuscripts according to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition). Manuscripts may be copyedited for bias-free language (see Chapter 3 of the *Publication Manual*).

Review APA's Checklist for Manuscript Submission before submitting your article.

Double-space all copy. Other formatting instructions, as well as instructions on preparing tables, figures, references, metrics, and abstracts, appear in the *Manual*.

Tables

Use Word's Insert Table function when you create tables. Using spaces or tabs in your table will create problems when the table is typeset and may result in errors.

Abstract and keywords

All manuscripts must include an abstract containing a maximum of 250 words typed on a separate page. After the abstract, please supply up to five keywords or brief phrases.

References

List references in alphabetical order. Each listed reference should be cited in text, and each text citation should be listed in the References section.

Examples of basic reference formats:

- Journal Article:

Hughes, G., Desantis, A., & Waszak, F. (2013). Mechanisms of intentional binding and sensory attenuation: The role of temporal prediction, temporal control, identity prediction, and motor prediction. *Psychological Bulletin, 139,* 133–151. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0028566

- Authored Book:

Rogers, T. T., & McClelland, J. L. (2004). *Semantic cognition: A parallel distributed processing approach.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Chapter in an Edited Book:

Gill, M. J., & Sypher, B. D. (2009). Workplace incivility and organizational trust. In P. Lutgen-Sandvik & B. D. Sypher (Eds.), *Destructive organizational communication: Processes, consequences, and constructive ways of organizing* (pp. 53–73). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.

Figures

Graphics files are welcome if supplied as Tiff or EPS files. Multipanel figures (i.e., figures with parts labeled a, b, c, d, etc.) should be assembled into one file.

The minimum line weight for line art is 0.5 point for optimal printing.

For more information about acceptable resolutions, fonts, sizing, and other figure issues, please see the general guidelines.

When possible, please place symbol legends below the figure instead of to the side.

APA offers authors the option to publish their figures online in color without the costs associated with print publication of color figures.

For authors who prefer their figures to be published in color both in print and online, original color figures can be printed in color at the editor's and publisher's discretion provided the author agrees to pay:

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- An additional $450 for each subsequent figure

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It is a violation of APA Ethical Principles to publish "as original data, data that have been previously published" (Standard 8.13).

In addition, APA Ethical Principles specify that "after research results are published, psychologists do not withhold the data on which their conclusions are based from other competent professionals who seek to verify the substantive claims through reanalysis and who intend to use such data only for that purpose, provided that the confidentiality of the participants can be protected and unless legal rights concerning proprietary data preclude their release" (Standard 8.14).

APA expects authors to adhere to these standards. Specifically, APA expects authors to have their data available throughout the editorial review process and for at least 5 years after the date of publication.

Authors are required to state in writing that they have complied with APA ethical standards in the treatment of their sample, human or animal, or to describe the details of treatment.

The APA Ethics Office provides the full Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct electronically on its website in HTML, PDF, and Word format. You may also

request a copy by emailing or calling the APA Ethics Office (202-336-5930). You may also

read "Ethical Principles," December 1992, *American Psychologist*, Vol. 47, pp. 1597–1611.

2.2 Manuscript: Exploring perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of

a family member

Exploring perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family

member

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Abstract

Numerous research projects regarding the effects of parental imprisonment on children are available. In comparison limited research is available regarding the effects of imprisonment on the family as a whole; this is especially true about research in the South African context. This study is qualitative (qualitative description research approach) and explored the perceived changes in family functioning after a member of that family was imprisoned. A purposive sample (n = 6) of family members of imprisoned individuals was taken (four families). The participants consisted of males and females, between the ages of 15 and 75, and they participated willingly. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data. Themes and subthemes emerged by performing deductive (directed) content analysis as well as thematic analysis on the transcribed data. The participants experienced co-operative working and reliance upon each other for problem solving, more closeness amongst family members, and generally experienced more openness in their communication, while limitation of communication regarding upsetting matters was experienced. Participants further reported assumption of new roles and responsibilities. All participants felt supported by their families while experiencing more negative emotions initially, and more positive emotions later on. The participants reported more involvement in each other's lives and being more caring towards each other. Household rules seemed to change, some becoming more rigid while others fluctuated between rigid and laissez-faire. Most participants experienced more support from those outside the family unit, while some felt stigmatized and judged. Participants reported finding a sense of inner strength and resilience, especially those who believe in a higher power.

Keywords: Changes, family functioning, imprisonment, McMaster Model of Family Functioning, nuclear family, subjective experience.

Orientation and Problem Statement

South Africa has become well-known for its prevalent use of imprisonment as a form of punishment for criminal behaviour (Giffard & Muntingh, 2006). The families of imprisoned individuals often become the unintended secondary victims of the family member's criminal behaviour (Codd, 2013). The aim of this qualitative research study was to explore and describe the changes in a family's functioning when a family member was imprisoned, from the perspective of family members who form part of the nuclear family that the imprisoned individual belongs to. The nuclear family is considered as a family group that consists only of father, mother, and children (Saggers & Sims, 2005). As the South African society is so diverse, the families are often non-traditional (Nsamenang, 2000). Families with single parents, adolescent mothers, adoptive parents, and multi-racial or multi-cultural parents may all be classified as non-traditional families (Holden, 2009), but may still fit the definition of a nuclear family (Saggers & Sims, 2005).

According to Bowen (1978) the family is viewed as an emotional unit, meaning that there is an intense emotional connection between the members of a family. The effect that members of a family can have on each other's thoughts, feelings and actions can be profound and intense (Bowen, 1978). According to Kerr (2003) people tend to solicit or seek each other's attention, approval and support, and this tendency lead them to react to each other's expectations, needs, and distress. Both this connectedness and reactivity make the functioning of family members interdependent (Kerr, 2003). This interdependence results in a change in one person's functioning to be followed by reciprocal changes in the functioning of others (Kerr, 2003). The degree of interdependence might differ from family to family, but it is always present to some degree, according to Bowen (1978).

According to Codd (2013) the partners and children of imprisoned individuals have numerous challenges to deal with stemming from the sentencing, imprisonment, release and community re-entry of their imprisoned family member. According to Wright and Seymour (2000) the primary changes families of imprisoned individuals face can be categorized as structural, material, emotional and dynamic; all of these interact, each impacting upon the other. It is thus easy to understand that a change in the situation of the family will cause readjustment of the entire family system (nuclear family), and that such a change could cause problems or challenges for every single member of that family. Because of this interconnectedness of family members, it is also important to gain understanding of what it means to function as a family.

According to Carr (2007) there are numerous theoretical models that can be used to explore and assess family functioning, such as the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems, the McMaster Model of Family Functioning, and the Beavers Family Systems Model. From all the above-mentioned models of family functioning the McMaster Model of Family Functioning has been found by the researcher to be the most comprehensive (due to the fact that it explores more dimensions of family functioning than either the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems or the Beavers Family Systems Model), and therefore the best suited for the purpose of this study. The McMaster Model of Family Functioning integrates a multi-dimensional theory of family functioning, assessments instruments to assess these constructs, and it is empirically validated (Epstein, Bishop, & Baldwin, 1984). According to Miller, Ryan, Keitner, Bishop and Epstein (2000) the McMaster Model of Family Functioning has evolved over a period of 30 years. Furthermore the model focuses on certain aspects (the six dimensions) which have been found important in dealing with clinically presenting families (Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978). The model should also allow

the placement of a given family's functioning on a spectrum, as it considers the full spectrum of family functioning from health to pathology (Epstein et al., 1978).

The McMaster Model of Family Functioning indicates six dimensions of family life and family functioning that were formulated to assist in gaining an understanding of a family's structure, organization and transactional patterns (Miller et al., 2000). These six dimensions include problem-solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement and behaviour control (Epstein et al, 1978; Miller et al., 2000). The McMaster Model does not focus on any one dimension as the foundation for conceptualizing family behaviour (Epstein et al., 1978). Epstein et al. (1978) believe that many dimensions need to be assessed to gain a fuller understanding of such a complex entity as the family. Although Epstein et al. (1978) attempt to clearly define and delineate the dimensions, they also recognize the potential overlap and/or possible interaction that may occur between them.

According to Merriam-Webster (2012) imprisonment is defined as the act of confining or the state of being confined. South Africa has the world's seventh highest number of prisoners, outranking countries with up to nearly five times our population (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2012). According to the International Centre for Prison Studies, on their official website (http://www.prisonstudies.org), in 2010 South Africa's total of 164 793 prisoners was placed after the United States (2,3 million inmates), China (1,6 million), Russia (888 014), Brazil (419 551), India (358 368) and Mexico (217 436). Per capita, the figures are as follows: United States (715 per 100,000 people), China (119 per 100,000), Russia (584 per 100,000), Brazil (169 per 100,000), India (29 per 100,000), Mexico (169 per 100,000) and South Africa (402 per 100,000). The majority of these imprisoned individuals are part of a nuclear family, whether they are someone's father, mother, child or sibling. When considering these figures it is indeed a possibility that

numerous nuclear families in South Africa are currently affected by the imprisonment of family members.

One of the changes that may affect the nuclear family as a whole includes structural changes in the family composition; family members who do not normally reside with the nuclear family may move into the residence to help take care of the household responsibilities (Murray, 2005). Imprisonment of a family member might also result in the whole nuclear family having to move in with another family unit because of their inability to financially support themselves (Murray, 2005). Travis and Waul (2003) state that, when an employed family member (especially a parent) is imprisoned, the family has to learn to adjust to the loss of that income for as long as that family member is imprisoned. This places a huge financial burden upon the remaining family members, and they have to struggle to make sure that the family's basic physical needs are met (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). Very little research has been done regarding the effects of familial imprisonment on the nuclear family as a whole, while a lot of information is available regarding the effects of imprisonment of a family member on the individual (especially on the children within these families).

There are numerous ways in which individuals within the above-mentioned families can be affected. According to Adalist-Estrin (2006) there are some changes in family functioning which are especially hard on the children and adolescents in these families. These changes can include having to endure the chaos of financial instability, having to change schools or residences, and it is often expected of these children to assume adult roles together with caregivers (for example parents) and siblings (King, 2002). Furthermore, these children and adolescents may experience feelings of shame and the fear of being identified as having a family member in prison. These feelings often result in a feeling of ambivalence towards their imprisoned family member (Adalist-Estrin, 2006).

According to Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory the lack of regular and sustained contact between a child and a parent will prevent the development of an attachment and will have a long-term impact upon the child's development and future relationships. According to Schaffer and Emerson (1964) attachment in a child occurs in the following sequence: up to three months of age babies form indiscriminate attachments, responding equally to any caregiver; after four months of age they develop a preference for certain people, distinguishing between caregivers but accepting care from anyone; after seven months of age they develop a preference for a single attachment figure, looking to this person for comfort, protection and security; after nine months of age the child may have developed multiple attachments. One of the main functions of the child's attachment system is to ensure the child's protection and safety by maintaining a close proximity to the attachment figure or caregiver (Bowlby, 1973). According to Bowlby (1980) separation from the attachment figure or caregiver might have various negative effects on the child's attachment and also on their subsequent developmental outcomes and future relationships. Poehlmann (2005) reports that most children of incarcerated parents experience separations and changing living arrangements resulting in family relationships that are disrupted.

Maintaining contact and communication with the imprisoned family member is necessary, but visits to the correctional facility may cause anxiety, frustration and sadness for all members of the family unit (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). Furthermore it is important for the family unit to deal effectively with the emotional effects of the imprisonment. According to Komorosky (2004), the emotional trauma that the members of the family unit experience due to the imprisonment, has been compared to the pain of losing a loved one to death. Some of the emotional needs that might not be met when a family member (especially a parent) is imprisoned, may include the need for love, security, recognition, responsibility, and exposure to new experiences (Aucamp, 2005).

Although much research has been done on the effects of parental imprisonment on children and adolescents, more research is still needed with regards to the effects of imprisonment of a family member on the (changes in) family functioning within the nuclear family as a whole, especially within a South African context. This study could contribute valuable information that may be used to develop specific therapeutic guidelines to address the needs of these nuclear families.

The aim of this study was therefore to explore and describe the changes that take place in family functioning when a member of that family is imprisoned, as perceived by the members of the nuclear family. More specifically the aim was to focus on changes with regards to the families' problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement and behaviour control (the six dimensions of family functioning as suggested by the McMaster Model of Family Functioning), but also to allow for changes that do not fall within one of these previously mentioned categories.

Therefore the research question was:

What are the perceived changes that take place in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member?

Method of Investigation

Research Approach

This research study is explorative and descriptive in nature. Therefore a qualitative description (descriptive) research approach was used for the purpose of the study. The qualitative description approach is according to Sandelowski (2000) the method of choice when straight (rich) descriptions of phenomena are desired. Therefore, according to Neergaard, Olesen, Andersen, and Sondergaard (2009), the aim of qualitative description is

neither thick description (ethnography), theory development (grounded theory), nor interpretative meaning of an experience (phenomenology). According to Sandelowski (2000, p. 335) "researchers seeking to describe an experience or event select what they will describe and, in the process of featuring certain aspects of it, begin to transform that experience or event." Descriptions of experiences or events always depend on the inclinations, perceptions, sensitivities, and sensibilities of the describer (Sandelowski, 2010). The researcher has specifically chosen to use a qualitative approach as it describes the participant's experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007), in this case the experiences of family members regarding the perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member.

Participants and Research Context

Sampling. Purposeful sampling techniques are usually (or may be) used in qualitative description studies (Neergaard et al., 2009; Sandelowski, 2000), therefore purposive sampling was used as it relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units that are to be studied. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on participants of a population which will best enable the researcher to answer the research questions (Given, 2008), in this case family members' experiences of the perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member.

The purposive sampling was conducted by making use of word of mouth (similar to snowball sampling). This strategy can be viewed as a response to overcoming the problems associated with sampling concealed populations (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). The researcher began by identifying someone who met the criteria for inclusion in the study – this person had already been known by the researcher. This possible participant was then requested to recommend others who he/she might know to also meet the criteria. The first possible

participant communicated the aim of the study to those he/she knew and wished to refer. At this point the first possible participants also inquired of those they wished to refer whether they would allow the researcher to contact them. Each subsequent possible participant was asked to follow the same procedure when referring new possible participants. With their permission the researcher then contacted these potential participants to explain the aim of the study and their role in it, to answer any questions they might have had regarding their participation in the study, and to find out whether they met the selection criteria and whether they were interested in and willing to participate in the study.

Participants (sample). In research conducted by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), basic elements for meta-themes were present as early as six participants when it comes to interviewing in qualitative research. Six participants (from four families) were willing to take part in the study, five females and one male. Their ages ranged between 15 and 75 – participants in different life stages were chosen to ensure that changes across the life span could be explored. Some of the participants belonged to the same nuclear family. The participants consisted of an elderly couple (husband and wife) whose son was imprisoned, a middle-aged mother and her teenage daughter whose husband and father was imprisoned, a teenage girl whose parents (mother and father) were imprisoned, and a young woman whose father was imprisoned. All participants were Caucasian and Afrikaans speaking.

Inclusion criteria. The researcher subjectively determined whether the possible participants met the inclusion criteria for the study in terms of age, command of the Afrikaans or English language, and willingness to participate in a research project concerning disclosure of sensitive information about their family life. The imprisoned individual might have been any member of the nuclear family – the father, mother, child or sibling. There were no limitations on the number of family members who might have participated as long as they were part of the nuclear family. According to Mash and Wolfe (2010), participants' reporting

methods require a certain level of verbal ability. Therefore the restriction of the study was set at Grade 8 level and older to ensure that participants would have been able to report their experiences in a reliable manner. The participants might have belonged to any cultural group as long as they were able to adequately understand and express themselves in English or Afrikaans. No restrictions were set on the duration of imprisonment of the family member as criteria for participation in the study.

Data Gathering

Semi-structured interviews (Wengraf, 2001) with individuals within the nuclear families were used to attain data. This is in line with data collection within the qualitative description research approach, because semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are usually used, allowing for a broader insight into the subject/phenomenon (Neergaard et al., 2009). According to Greeff (2011, p. 351) "researchers use semi-structured interviews to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of, a particular topic", in this case the experiences of family members regarding the perceived changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member. According to Drever and the Scottish Council for Research in Education (1995), a semi-structured interview entails that the interviewer sets up a general structure by deciding in advance the ground to be covered and the main questions to be asked. The detailed structure is left to be worked out during the interview, and the person being interviewed has a fair degree of freedom in what to talk about, how much to say, and how to express it. This method allows for more flexibility (Greeff, 2011).

The structure of the semi-structured interviews was as follow: The first question was: "*Can you tell me how your family's functioning changed after the imprisonment?*" This opening question was followed by the following questions (see Table 1) based upon the six

dimensions of family functioning according to the McMaster Model of Family Functioning, and if necessary some follow-up questions (probing) were also asked (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The nature of these questions were open-ended, as the findings will show, some of the data fitted into the six dimensions mentioned above, while other data was grouped into themes that had no relation to the McMaster Model's dimensions.

< Place Table 1 approximately here > *See table in Appendix*

Thorough explanations of each of the different styles of behaviour control namely: Rigid, Flexible, Laissez-faire and Chaotic were provided to participants before expecting them to answer the specific follow-up question mentioned above. The researcher made use of audio recordings to capture the interviews, permission were obtained from the participants.

Data Analysis

First the data were subjected to deductive (directed) content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The data were organised into the six dimensions according to the McMaster Model of Family Functioning, namely (a) problem-solving; (b) communication; (c) roles; (d) affective responsiveness; (e) affective involvement, and (f) behaviour control. These themes/categories formed part of predetermined, open-ended questions that were asked to the participants during the semi-structured interviews. Then the remaining data were subjected to thematic analysis allowing for additional themes to emerge complimenting the McMaster Model. The steps of Braun and Clarke (2006) and Clarke and Braun (2013) were used. Other themes identified after analysis which had no relation to the McMaster model's dimensions include (g) stigma; (h) resilience and inner strength, and (i) religion.

Procedure. The researcher read all the transcribed data and made notes and marked words and sentences to produce initial codes from the data using the predetermined codes (six

dimensions according to the McMaster Model of Family Functioning). Any text that could not be categorised with the initial coding scheme where give a new code. The different codes where then sorted into potential themes and subthemes, and the themes and subthemes were reviewed and refined to tell a coherent story about the data (see findings).

Trustworthiness

According to Krefting (1991) researchers need alternative models appropriate to the qualitative design to ensure rigour without sacrificing the relevance of qualitative research. Trustworthiness was ensured by making use of specific strategies, as proposed by Guba (1981, as cited in Krefting, 1991). Through prolonged engagement with the data, field notes, and the researcher's continuous reflection upon the research (journal), credibility (truth value) was ensured. Through the selection of sources and sampling, dense description of the qualitative findings (themes), transferability (applicability) was ensured. Through step by step replication of data collection and data analyses, as well as coding and recoding of the data, dependability (consistency) was ensured. Lastly, through the researcher who is familiar with qualitative research and bracketed herself, and the fact that the data supports the analyses and interpretation of the findings, conformability was ensured.

Research Procedure

The researcher contacted potential participants (who gave permission to be contacted) telephonically. The aim of the research and the participant's role in the research were explained and any questions they had were answered by the researcher. The researcher also at that stage determined whether they met the inclusion criteria and whether they were willing to participate in the study. A date, time and location were agreed upon for the researcher to meet and gather data from the participant. When meeting the participants the researcher provided each participant with an informed consent letter which they were required to read

and sign before they were allowed to take part in the research process. Semi-structured interviews, using the list of questions mentioned above, were then held with individual members of the nuclear families. Because the questions were open-ended, the participants were able to elaborate as much as they wished. If the researcher felt that further information was required, follow-up questions were asked. These interviews were held at a location of the participant's choice (usually their own or the researcher's home). After having interviewed each participant the researcher answered any further questions that they might have had, thanked them for their time and cooperation, and ensured that they had the researcher's contact details for any further enquiries before finishing of the data gathering session.

Ethical Considerations

This study forms part of a larger research project, which has been approved by the North-West University's Ethics Committee (NWU-00125-11-S1). The researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines set out by the North-West University as well as by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA: Health Professions Act 56 of 1974). Because of the sensitive nature of this study, extra care was taken to ensure that the participants came to no harm. Thorough planning of the study had been done and was continued with each phase in the research process. The participants were treated with respect and their confidentiality and anonymity were guarded throughout. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2008) confidentiality in this sense refers to the fact that any personal information that could reveal the identity of the participants would not be included in the report. Section 129 of the Children's Act (No 38 of 2005) provides for a child of 12 years or older, with sufficient maturity, to consent independently to medical treatment. The Children's Act (No 38 of 2005) goes further to explain that there is currently no definition for 'medical treatment' but states that it refers to non-invasive and innocuous procedures, including psychological treatment.

Strode, Slack and Essack (2010) states that there is currently no specified age for children to be able to consent to participation in health research but that ethical norms apply – specifically obtaining consent from the parent or legal guardian. Assent was obtained from the fifteen-year-old participant while consent was obtained from her legal guardian.

Written informed consent was obtained from every participant. The contents of the informed consent letter were explained in precise detail and appropriate language was used to ensure that every participant, including the adolescents, understood what it entailed. This included every participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time, and also to return if they wished to, without any negative consequences from the researcher's side. Furthermore it included their right to confidentiality and anonymity and the voluntary nature of the participation. All participants were made aware of the foreseeable risks and benefits of this study. A possible risk for participants was the possibility of experiencing powerful emotional responses during or after the interviews, while possible benefits included gaining a sense of closure by discussing the impact of imprisonment on their family; the possibility of contributing to the development of intervention programs to assist families in dealing with the changes that take place after imprisonment of a family member; as well as gaining information on referral sources should they feel the need for professional help. As qualitative interviews on sensitive topics may provoke powerful emotional responses from a participant, an appropriate referral source for professional help was provided for, should referral be necessary. No participants in this study required referral for professional help. Participants were informed that the North-West University accepted full responsibility for the keeping and safe-guarding of all collected data, and that when findings would be published, all identifying information would be omitted.

<p style="text-align:center">Findings and Discussion</p>

From the data analysis the data were grouped into two main themes with nine subthemes. Relevant verbatim quotations are provided to serve as validation, as well as appropriate literature as part of the discussion process of the findings. The table below serves as a summary of the themes and subthemes.

< Insert Table 2 approximately here > *See table in Appendix*

Theme 1: Changes in Family Functioning according to the Six Dimensions of the McMaster Model

Problem solving. Epstein et al. (1978) stated that effective families solve problems easily, rapidly and without too much thought. According to Hairston (2002), when it comes to addressing the problems of children and adult family members in relation to the imprisonment of a family member, families tend not to rely upon the help of formal organizations initially, but rather primarily rely upon each other. One of the changes experienced by the participants after the imprisonment was that they relied more upon each other to solve problems within the family circle. One participant commented: "Well it was a case of everyone had to work together, if there was a problem and we were all involved we all had to help sort it out." Another participant mentioned: "Yes, okay, it did come down to me because the children were still very young but the older they got, the more I involved them … because there was nobody else to ask so we had to solve things ourselves." Another participant commented: "We rely on each other first, our little family; the four of us who remained rely on each other so we try to solve problems among ourselves."

Most of these families found that by coming together and relying on each other they were able to solve problems that arose within the family after the imprisonment of a family member.

Communication. Epstein et al. (1978) state that the more direct and clear communication within the family is, the more effective the family will function. According to Peterson and Green (2009a) one of the most important factors for establishing and maintaining strong family relationships is consistent, positive, open and honest communication. Participants explained that generally they became more open-hearted when communicating with each other, whether about emotional or practical issues. Another change the participants experienced was a sense of deepened and closer relationships between family members because of the openness in communication. One participant commented:

> Yes, you know, we realized from the start that we have to put all our cards on the table, and whatever I felt inside I discussed with my child, so there was completely open communication between us … so it made us strong.

Another family member mentioned: "I want to use a different word than communication; the closeness in the family has just deepened." Another participant commented: "You know, I wouldn't say it changed because of decisions that were made, I think you just talk more about the things about which you would normally not have talked."

While communication was generally more open-hearted, in some instances family members also limited communication about certain issues in order to shield other family members from the adverse emotional effects those conversations could elicit. One participant commented: "You know it is as if our children started treating us more protectively." Another participant mentioned: "I closed myself off regarding things like that, I don't open up to my mother or so, I just feel as if I don't want to burden her with more problems." Another participant commented: "And for my mother … I kept everything from her, I just always talked over things so that she wouldn't live in that fear. So I limited the communication about this."

Effective communication is even more important during times of difficulty or great stress as it will help families to overcome the unavoidable problems that arise (Peterson & Green, 2009a). The participants' discretion and use of open-hearted and honest communication contributed to strengthening of the family units.

Roles. Epstein et al. (1978) define roles as those repetitive patterns of behaviour which family members use to fulfil family functions. According to Wright and Seymour (2000) the change that is often realised first after a family member has been imprisoned is structural. Because of the absence of the imprisoned individual other family members have to take up his or her roles and responsibilities, or those roles remain unfulfilled (Wright & Seymour, 2000). According to Hairston (2002) family members become engaged in a process of adaptability and changing of roles, and this process can be referred to as pitching in and helping out. Family members might pitch in by taking over all the responsibilities previously held by the imprisoned individual (Hairston, 2002).

After the imprisonment of their family members the participants often had to take up roles and assume responsibilities other than those they held before the imprisonment of their family member. Another change after the imprisonment was that the younger family members often had to come forward and fulfil more adult roles to assist with caregiving responsibilities. One participant commented: "She and I had to grow up before our time because you had to look after yourself and when my mother wasn't there and had to work late we had to cook and clean the house." Another family member stated:

You know I think both of them had to mature quicker than other children, because I shared my feelings with them often … it is not as if you have someone to share things with so you share it with the children, so you actually cause them to mature, you expect more maturity from them than what is actually fair.

Another participant mentioned: "I wasn't in the middle anymore, I was the older sister. My mother later on also felt like a sister to me because I was kind of like the mother to all of them." The same participant continued:

> Oh at one stage none of us knew what to do, where should we be now, what should we do, who should we ask, so there was a time that we were all out of our roles and after that we all entered into new roles.

Either taking up new roles or responsibilities, or leaving the imprisoned individual's role unfulfilled, could place the family members of the imprisoned individual under great stress (Wright & Seymour, 2000). According to Earley and Cushway (2002) parentification takes place when a child younger than the age of 18 takes up an adult role (with regards to levels and types of care given) within the family, which is developmentally inappropriate and could be detrimental to their health and development – this is a change that all the younger participants experienced. The participants experienced feeling displaced from their previous roles, and had to learn to deal with their new roles and responsibilities.

Affective responsiveness. Epstein et al. (1978) define affective responsiveness as the ability of the family members to respond to a range of stimuli with the appropriate quality and quantity of feelings. According to Ferraro, Johnson, Jorgenson and Bolton (1983) some of the strongest perceived effects, of imprisonment of a family member on the remaining family members were difficulties in expressing and dealing with feeling. According to Roguski and Chauvel (2009), family members experience worry, anxiety, loneliness and isolation because of the pressure of dealing with the imprisonment of a family member. All of the participants expressed a change in their affective responsiveness after the imprisonment - feeling intense negative emotions at first, and more positive emotions later on in the process of dealing with this difficult time in their lives together. One participant commented:

> Something we noticed and started to look at in our marriage is that our tempers were short and strained, I realised it and he realised it and we handled it well, look it is an obvious stress to one's marriage, but then we would talk about it and the one wouldn't snap at the other and that type of thing.

The same participant stated: "This thing added 20 years to our ages … the shock alone is severe." Another participant mentioned: "You know my husband is not an affectionate man, he will not take me around my waist and tell me that he loves me. After this thing happened, he started doing it frequently just to give me that certainty." Another participant reported: "There were things that you never even knew you can feel. I think it was a disadvantage because it takes a long time to recover again, I think it is shock." Yet another comment from a participant: "One always says 'I love you' but not really… especially when we were younger, my parents didn't really say 'oh, we love you', but now we have it, especially with my mother." Furthermore, the same participant stated: "Yes, we definitely did it as well, tried to spare each other's feelings and just acted supporting and believed that everything will come right."

All participants reported perceptions that other family members responded to their emotional difficulties and gave them extra support in dealing with these emotions.

Affective involvement. According to Epstein et al. (1978) affective involvement refers to the degree to which family members show interest in and value the interests and activities of their family members. Family interaction becomes more effective when the members of that family feel that they are supported and encouraged, and that their personal interests are valued (Epstein, Bishop, Ryan, Miller, & Keitner, 1993). Another change the participants reported was being more involved with each other, knowing what was happening in the lives of the other family members, and acting with more care towards each other. One participant reported: "Yes, it is as if there is more respect from the one to the other and we

see each other's needs more, one takes into account that one shouldn't attempt to handle things alone." Another participant stated: "Many positive things came from this because we support each other better, we are there for each other, and one helps where one can." Another participant commented: "I think that is why we are closer to each other, that we know what is going on in each other's lives."

When family members have an emotional investment in each other and care deeply about each other's feelings and activities they are displaying what is called empathic involvement, which is a precursor for healthy family functioning (Epstein et al., 1993). The participants reported being more supportive and caring as they comprehended what the other family members were going through. This shared experience brought these families closer together, helping them to cope with the effects of the imprisonment of a family member.

Behaviour control. Each family develops its own standards of behaviour according to which the family members find acceptability within the family (Epstein et al., 1993). Daily family interaction reinforces these standards (Epstein et al., 1993). Some behavioural patterns in families, such as those related to physical danger, are important (e.g., telling a child not to play in the street), while other behavioural patterns might need to be adjusted as circumstances within the family change (Epstein et al., 1993). According to research the families able to be flexible and to adapt to changing circumstances more easily, function more effectively (Epstein et al., 1993).

Families whose patterns of behaviour control are rigid will have more difficulty adjusting to difficult circumstances and will also likely experience more conflict among family members (Epstein et al., 1993). Participants reported that the household rules changed after imprisonment of a family member; some families' rules became more rigid in an effort to try to gain control of the stressful situation, while other households' rules fluctuated between rigid and laissez-faire. These different patterns of behaviour control impacted

negatively on especially the younger members of the family, as it caused confusion and uncertainty and often differed from the way things functioned before the imprisonment of a family member. One participant commented: "So there were much stricter rules and we were used to it because that was just how it was." Another family member stated:

I think I threw my children around where they kind of knew mom is this terribly strict person – then it changed to this relaxed person and then back to strict. So they didn't really know, shame, whether they were here or there.

Furthermore the families' patterns of socialization also underwent changes in some cases. The degree of pressure of the challenges that face the families of prisoners often depends on the extent of support that can be accessed to mediate these challenges (Roguski & Chauvel, 2009). These families gained considerable support from the community, relatives, neighbours and acquaintances, often developing new relationships as a result of the imprisonment. One participant mentioned: "As I said, now one speaks to people that one previously did not know, more frequently, or people with whom you did not speak for a long time, such as neighbours, family and acquaintances." The same participant commented: "All of a sudden everyone is available and phones and sends SMS's … it is not just out of nosiness or to hear what is going on with the case or things like that." Another participant stated: "The support that we received was overwhelming."

For other participants not much changed after the imprisonment of a family member. Their relationships with friends and family members stayed relatively unchanged. One participant stated: "Not one of the friends that know us well did not want to continue being friends after this. They were not ashamed to come to us or that people see that we are friends – we appreciated that."

Overall it seems that those families which had changes in their patterns of socialization experienced these changes as positive. Even those families that did not experience any significant changes with regards to their socialization, reported feeling to a high degree supported by others outside of the family.

Theme 2: Changes in Family Functioning not accounted for by the McMaster Model

Stigma. According to Hairston (2002) stigma associated with imprisonment does not only affect the imprisoned individual, but the family as a whole. While most participants felt more supported by people outside the family, some participants experienced stigmatization from relatives, friends, acquaintances and strangers; they experienced being avoided and isolated. This feeling of stigmatization was another change that took place only after the imprisonment of their family members. They often felt like they too were being judged for the crimes perpetrated by their imprisoned family members. One participant commented: "You know it felt as if they thought I am a leper." The same participant stated: "That woman thought … you are inferior, your child is in prison." Another family member mentioned: "It was perhaps because people were kind of weary, you know, what should they say and all that."

Furthermore, another participant stated: "We don't really have a close family, so there are still some of them who judge and keep their distance." Another participant commented: "It changes one's relationships with each other, with society, especially because it was in the paper extensively … then one thinks, goodness, they saw it, these people."

According to Loucks (2004) the effects of imprisonment on the family include stigmatization and fear of disclosure. Some participants felt that they would be shamed, judged and ostracized when it came to light that their family members had been imprisoned. This feeling contributed to the stress that these participants already experienced. Literature

indicates that the effects imprisonment have on families can be conceptualized as a form of family crisis, child victimization, loss and demoralization (Hairston, 2003). All the more reason to develop intervention programs to help these families to deal with the challenges and problems they face after imprisonment of a family member.

Resilience and inner strength. According to Walsh (2006) families that go through a crisis or persistent stresses can emerge strengthened and more resourceful. A functional fit and balance between the family's challenges and resources, the individual and family unit's priorities, and between the different dimensions of family life are what the family needs to achieve (Walsh, 1996). The participants found strength and resilience by relying upon each other to deal with the challenges as a family unit. One participant commented:

> But I honestly have to say, because my husband and my children and I worked together it made our relationship much stronger and deeper. One is very thankful; we actually walked out of this richer. It is difficult to go through something like this; you feel, you realise you just have to be strong.

Another participant stated: "I think it was actually a very good thing, it made us stronger people." Another participant mentioned:

> You are firstly discouraged and you wonder when it will end, but because it has dominated our lives for such a long time now I have decided I am not going to ... I am literally at that point where I say I will leave the windows and the doors open and if he now wants to come and do something to me then let him come.

It would seem that through all the difficulties faced by these families of imprisoned individuals, the family members have managed to not only cope effectively with many of the difficulties, but have gained a sense of inner strength and resiliency in the face of adversity –

something they might not have gained or experienced had it not been for the imprisonment of their family members.

Religion. According to Ellison (1991) research shows that certain dimensions of spirituality can enhance a person's well-being and also that spiritual or religious beliefs serve as a source of strength for many people. Research further shows that when compared to other coping mechanisms, religious coping mechanisms helped people to react in a better way to challenges or stressful situations (Seeman & McEwen, 1996). The participants reported that their religious beliefs helped them to overcome difficulties related to their family member's imprisonment. They reported relying on God and religion at times when they felt that they had no control over the situation. One participant commented: "It was a very traumatic thing, but now I have to tell you, the hand of the Lord, if the Lord was not with us...". The same participant continued: "You know when we stood in court and our child stood there in front of us as the accused, the Lord gave us so much strength." Another participant commented:

> One just notices that above human strength that one receives, you think you are not going to get through it, but we realised from the beginning that the Lord will not bring something across our path that we can't survive, and one has to do it, I feel one has to be an example to other people as a Christian by remaining standing.

Another participant mentioned: "I think one asks all these things in prayer and then it comes about that it is not such a serious problem."

Furthermore, religious groups can be important emotional and tangible support systems (Bradley 1995). Those participants that reported believing in a greater power also reported that this belief and the inner strength they received helped them to cope with the challenges related to the imprisonment of a family member.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore and describe the perceived changes that took place in a family's functioning after a member of that family had been imprisoned. With regards to problem solving the families experienced more reliance upon each other as well as working together to a larger extent. When families make successful decisions it mutually draw them closer and improve their future communication (Danes, 2009).

The participants experienced that, after the imprisonment of their family members, communication between the remaining family members was more open-hearted and honest, although communication regarding possibly upsetting matters was limited when they regarded it necessary. Peterson and Green (2009a) concur with these findings by reporting that communication is very important because it allows every member of a family to express his or her wants, needs and concerns to each other. Open-hearted and honest communication allows families to express their differences as well as love and admiration and enables family members to resolve problems that arise within the family (Peterson & Green, 2009a). Peterson and Green (2009a) found that while it is necessary for families to deal with negative situations or to address problems, effective communication is primarily positive.

Participants reported experiencing both negative and positive emotions but stated that they felt greatly supported by other members of their families. According to Peterson and Green (2009b) emotional responsiveness is of great importance as family members often have to support each other when difficult times arise. Family members who are tuned in and aware of what is going on in each other's lives are able to respond to other family members' emotional states more appropriately and more quickly (Peterson & Green, 2009b). All participants reported that the family members were more involved in each other's lives, supported each other, and understood what they were going through. This shared experience seemed to have brought these families closer together and deepened their involvement in

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each other's lives. Peterson and Green (2009c) report that family interaction becomes more effective when family members feel they are supported and encouraged and that their personal interests are valued.

Participants also reported having to take up new roles and responsibilities after the imprisonment of a family member. Peter and Green (2009c) agree, stating that families need clear and flexible roles to function successfully, and if families have these clear and flexible roles they will be better equipped to deal with everyday life as well as unexpected family crises. Participants experienced changes in behaviour control and household rules which made it difficult for them to know what was expected of them. When behaviour control is inconsistent, fluctuating between styles, it is called chaotic, and results in the family members being confused about their individual roles and the rules that govern their family (Peter & Green, 2009d).

Some participants also experienced being stigmatized, judged and isolated, which might have contributed to the stressful situation they had already been in. Cunningham (2001) concurs with this, reporting that the stigma associated with a family member being imprisoned is central to many of the difficulties these families face. Participants furthermore experienced gaining a sense of inner strength and resilience by going through the challenges with regards to the imprisonment of a family member. According to Walsh (2003) there are some key family processes that could help all members of a family unit to recover. He further states that it is these processes that allow the family to come together in a time of crisis, that buffer stress and support an optimal level of adaptation. Walsh (2003) also reports that resilience doesn't only mean to manage stressful times, carry a burden, or to survive a crisis. According to Boss (2001) resilience involves the potential for family members to gain personal and relational transformation and growth through dealing with adversity or challenges.

Lastly participants reported that belief in a higher power helped them to cope. According to Boss (2001; 2006) a strong sense of spirituality results in a more positive outlook and attitude, hope and optimism when families are faced with difficult times. Faith may play a major role in coping as families turn to their religious communities to find support (Boss, 2001). Therefore, this study shows that there are numerous changes, some beneficial and some less beneficial, that take place in a family's functioning after the imprisonment of a family member.

Bowen's Theory acknowledges that the individual can only be understood in the context of the family and that change for one member of a family will result in change for the family as a whole (Bowen, 1978; Corey, 2005; Kerr, 2003). Thus a change for one member of the family (such as imprisonment) will cause changes for that family as a whole. This becomes clear when considering the changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member as described by the participants in this research study.

Limitations and Recommendations

The research findings cannot be generalised to include all families in South Africa that have a family member who is or has been imprisoned, as the demographic variation in this study is limited. The sample size is also limited due to the difficulties to recruit participants for a study of such a sensitive nature.

Although a lot of literature is available regarding the effects of parental imprisonment on children, literature regarding the effects of imprisonment on the family unit as a whole is more limited, especially in the South African context. With regards to the changes that take place in a family's functioning after imprisonment of a family member, no other study could be found in South Africa.

More research regarding the changes that take place in a family's functioning after imprisonment of a family member, especially in the South African context, is recommended. When more studies of this nature are done, especially with regards to South African families, results/findings can be compared. It is also recommended that specific intervention programs be developed to help these families to cope with the changes that take place after imprisonment of a family member. The challenges that these families struggle with the most, include: dealing with negative emotions, stigma, adopting new roles and responsibilities, and the changing household rules and structures. These families might also benefit from interventions which are focused on helping them to find resilience and inner strength, open-hearted and honest communication, strengthening of family bonds, and problem solving skills.

Possible Contribution of Study

Carr (2007) reports the existence of a variety of theoretical models that can be used to assess and explore family functioning, including the Beavers Family Systems Model, the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems and the McMaster Model of Family Functioning. It was found by the researcher that none of the above mentioned models describe coping as contributing to the way families function. The importance of this becomes evident when considering the following two subthemes: resilience and inner strength; and religion. According to Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) resilience is seen as the ability to adapt and cope effectively despite dealing with adversity, loss or hardship. Religious beliefs also greatly contribute to being able to cope effectively with difficult or stressful life events (Pargament, Ano, & Wachholtz, 2005). Thus both of these subthemes are strongly linked to the ability to cope with adverse circumstances. The most important contribution of this study might be identifying these two themes and how they relate to coping (not described by any of

the above mentioned models of family functioning) in relation to how families function when

they experience difficulties (such as the imprisonment of a family member).

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Appendix

Table 1

Initial Questions according to the Six Dimensions of Family Functioning: McMaster Model of Family Functioning

Dimensions	Questions
Problem solving	How has your family's problem solving changed after the imprisonment?
Communication	How has communication within your family changed after the imprisonment?
Roles	How has this affected the roles of the family members?
Affective responsiveness	How have your family's emotions and the way your family respond to them changed?
Affective involvement	How has this affected the way that your family are involved in and show interest in each other's lives?
Behaviour control	How have the rules that your family abide by changed since this happened?

Table 2

Summary of Themes and Subthemes

Theme 1:	Changes in family functioning according to the six dimensions of the McMaster Model
Subthemes:	Problem solving
	Communication
	Roles
	Affective responsiveness
	Affective involvement
	Behaviour control
Theme 2:	Changes in family functioning not accounted for by the McMaster model
Subthemes:	Stigma
	Resilience and inner strength
	Religion

SECTION 3: CRITICAL REFLECTION

Critical Reflection

Numerous studies regarding the effects of parental imprisonment on children have been done (e.g. Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Foster & Hagan, 2009; Geller, Garfinkel, & Western, 2011; Murray, 2005; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Murray, Farrington, & Sekol, 2012; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2003; Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010; Wildeman 2009; Wildeman 2010). Much of the research regarding parental imprisonment focused on the effects of paternal imprisonment on the children in that family (e.g. Boswell, 2002; Day, Acock, Bahr, & Arditti, 2005; Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998; Wildeman, 2010). There is considerably less research available regarding the effects of imprisonment on the family as a whole (e.g. Codd, 2007; Hairston, 2003; La Vigne, Naser, Brooks, & Castro, 2005; Travis & Waul, 2003), especially in the South African context. No other studies regarding the effects of imprisonment on the family as a whole in the South African context could be found.

The following research question was asked to address the problem mentioned above: "What are the perceived changes that take place in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member?" The aim of this study was therefore to explore and describe the changes that take place in family functioning when a member of that family is imprisoned, as perceived by the members of the nuclear family. A qualitative description (descriptive) research approach was used in this study. Purposive sampling (Given, 2008) was conducted via word of mouth (similar to snowball sampling). Using this sampling method six participants (all family members of imprisoned individuals) were recruited from four families. Participants consisted of one male and five females between the ages of 15 and 75, all of which participated voluntarily to take part in this study. Data was collected through

semi-structured interviews that were audio recorded and then transcribed. The McMaster Model of Family Functioning was used as a guiding framework to obtain the initial questions for the semi-structured interviews. The transcribed data was then analysed by first making use of deductive (directed) content analysis, after which thematic content analysis followed. From this analysis a total of two themes and nine subthemes emerged.

Concerning the first theme, changes in family functioning according to the six dimensions of the McMaster Model, participants reported relying more upon each other for problem solving. Secondly they also reported having more honest and open-hearted communication in general, while some reported limitation of communication regarding upsetting matters in an attempt to protect their family members. Thirdly participants experienced being displaced from previous roles and having to take up new roles and responsibilities within the family. This assumption of new responsibilities and taking up of new roles were experienced by the participants as making it more difficult to function effectively, which was especially true in the case of younger family members who had to take up more mature roles and responsibilities. Fourthly all participants reported experiencing new emotions; more negative emotions initially after the imprisonment, followed by more positive emotions later on. They also experienced that their family members responded to their emotions and felt greatly supported by their families. Fifthly participants reported being more involved with each other's lives, having a greater understanding of what each family member was going through, and also having closer relationships with each other. Lastly the participants experienced changes in the behaviour control and household rules; in some families it became more rigid while in others it fluctuated between rigid and laissez-faire, resulting in confusion and uncertainty, especially for the younger members of these families. Furthermore some participants experienced little to no change in their socialization after the imprisonment, while others reported feeling more supported by people outside the family.

Considering the second theme, changes in family functioning not accounted for by the McMaster Model, some participants reported feeling stigmatized and isolated within their communities. Secondly participants also reported gaining a sense of inner strength and resilience through facing the many challenges that accompanied the imprisonment of a family member, and becoming closer as a family. Lastly the participants who reported believing in a higher power felt that this belief helped them to cope with the effects of imprisonment.

When considering the findings, it becomes evident that there are numerous significant changes that take place in the family as a whole when a family member is imprisoned. Although literature indicated that families of imprisoned individuals often underwent financial difficulties (related to the imprisonment) and had problems with regards to prison visitations, neither of these were reported as being significant difficulties faced by the participants (in this study) or their families. These aspects might be further explored in future research to determine whether families in the South African context experience these same difficulties. Another interesting aspect that came to light is that although literature mainly focuses on the negative consequences of imprisonment for the family, the participants in this study reported more positive outcomes after the imprisonment of a family member.

These research findings cannot be generalised to all families in South Africa having a family member imprisoned, due to the small sample size and the limited demographic variation of the qualitative research study. Although a lot of research is available regarding the effects of imprisonment on individual members of a family (especially the children in such a family), limited research is available regarding the changes in functioning in a family as a whole following imprisonment of a member of that family. There especially is a lack of research focusing on the changes that take place in the functioning of a whole family after the imprisonment of a family member in the South African context.

Carr (2007) describes various models of family functioning: the Beavers Family Systems Model, the Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Systems and the McMaster Model of Family Functioning. The researcher found that none of these models discuss the role of coping in aiding families to function effectively. Religion and resilience (two of the subthemes identified from the data) our both strongly linked with effective coping (Walsh, 1996). Thus a major contribution of this study is that both religion and resilience as related to coping and family functioning are aspects not addressed by any of the above mentioned models of family functioning. Further research might then focus on exploring coping (specifically related to the roles of religion and resilience) as part of family functioning after a disruptive family event (such as the imprisonment of a family member).

This study will therefore contribute to new knowledge regarding the changes in family functioning after the imprisonment of a family member (especially in the South African context). It is recommended that more research be done regarding the changes that take place in a family's functioning after the imprisonment of a family member (especially in a South African context). Further studies could include coping within the family after the imprisonment of a family member. It is lastly recommended that a specific intervention program be developed to help these families deal with challenges related to problem solving, communication, roles, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, behaviour control, stigma, resilience and inner strength, as well as issues related to religion and spirituality. This intervention programme might include group therapy, skills training or psycho-education sessions in group context, where various families of imprisoned individuals can come together to receive information, skills and assistance in dealing with the challenges they face. The intervention programs might also include family therapy sessions, family psycho-education sessions and family skills training sessions focused on addressing specific

challenges related to the imprisonment of a family member and the changes in the family's

functioning.

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Addendum

Please take note: All quotes were translated by a trained linguist.

Themes	Sub-themes	Quotes in English and Afrikaans
1. Changes in Family Functioning according to the Six Dimensions of the McMaster Model	1.1 Problem solving	"Well it was a case of everyone had to work together, if there was a problem and we were all involved we all had to help sort it out." *"Wel dit was maar almal moet maar saam, as daar 'n problem was en dit is almal wat betrokke is moet almal dit maar help uitsort."*
		"Yes, ok, it did come down to me because the children were still very young but the older they got, the more I involved them … because there was nobody else to ask so we had to solve things ourselves." *"Ja, ok, dit het maar op my afgekom omdat die kinders nog heel klein was maar hoe groter hulle geword het, hoe meer het ek hulle betrek om . . .omdat daar nie iemand anders was om te vra nie so ons moet dit maar self opgelos het."*

		"We rely on each other first, our little family; the four of us who remained rely on each other so we try to solve problems among ourselves." *"Ons steun ook eerste op mekaar, ons gesinnetjie, ons viertjies wat oorbly op mekaar so ons probeer probleme onder mekaar oplos."*
	1.2 Communication	"Yes, you know, we realized from the start that we have to put all our cards on the table, and whatever I felt inside I discussed with my child, so there was completely open communication between us … so it made us strong." *"Ja weet jy, ons het van die begin af besef ons moet oop kaarte met mekaar speel, en wat binne in my was het ek met my kind bespreek, so daar was heeltemal 'n oop kommunikasie tussen ons . . . so dit het vir ons sterk gemaak."*
		"I want to use a different word than communication, the closeness in the family has just deepened." *"ek wil vir kommunikasie 'n ander*

		woord sê dat die hegtheid in die gesin het net verdiep."
		"You know, I wouldn't say it changed because of decisions that were made – I think you just talk more about the things about which you would normally not have talked." *"Jy weet, ek sou nie sê dit het verander oor besluite wat geneem word nie – ek dink net mens gesels dalk meer oor dinge waaroor mens nie normaalweg oor sou gesels nie."*
		"You know it is as if our children started treating us more protectively." *"Weet jy dis vir my so asof ons kinders ons meer beskermend begin hanteer het."*
		"I closed myself off regarding things like that, I don't open up to my mother or so, I just feel as if I don't want to burden her with more problems." *"Ek maak myself maar toe met sulke goed, ek maak nie oop teenoor my ma of so nie, ek voel net ek wil haar nie opsaal met nog probleme nie."*

		"And for my mother … I kept everything from her, I just always talked over things so that she wouldn't live in that fear. So I limited the communication about this." *"En vir my ma . . . ek het alles van haar weerhou, ek het altyd maar net so verby dit gepraat dat sy nie heeltyd in daai vrees lewe nie. So ek het maar die kommunikasie van dit bietjie beperk."*
	1.3 Roles	"She and I had to grow up before our time because you had to look after yourself and when my mother wasn't there and had to work late we had to cook and clean the house." *"Ek en sy moes grootword voor ons tyd want jy moet maar na jouself kyk en as my ma nie daar was nie en sy werk laat dat moet jy maar kos maak en huis skoonmaak."*
		"You know I think both of them had to mature quicker than other children, because I shared my feelings with them often … it is not as if you have someone to share things with so you share it with

		the children, so you actually cause them to mature, you expect more maturity from them than what is actually fair." *"Weet jy ek dink altwee van hulle moes vinniger volwasse wees as ander kinders, want ek het my gevoelens baie deurgegee na hulle toe . . .dis nie dat mens iemand het om dit mee te deel nie so jy deel dit maar met die kinders, so jy maak hulle eintlik meer volwasse, jy verwag meer volwassenheid van hulle terug as wat ek dink regverdig was."*
		"I wasn't in the middle anymore, I was the older sister. My mother later on also felt like a sister to me because I was kind of like the mother to all of them." *"Ek is nie meer middel gewees nie, ek was ouer suster. My ma het later ook maar vir my soos n suster gevoel want ek was maar half die moederfiguur oor hulle almal gewees."*
		"Oh at one stage none of us knew what to do, where should we be now, what should we do, who should we ask, so there was a time that we were all out of

		our roles and after that we all entered into new roles." *"Ag op 'n stadium het niemand van ons geweet wat om te doen nie, waar moet ons nou wees, wat moet ons doen, wie moet ons vra, so dit was maar 'n tyd wat almal van ons uit rolle uit was en toe in nuwe rolle ingegaan het."*
	1.4 Affective Responsiveness	"Something we noticed and started to look at in our marriage is that our tempers were short and strained, I realised it and he realised it and we handled it well, look it is an obvious stress to one's marriage, but then we would talk about it and the one wouldn't snap at the other and that type of thing." *"Wat ons agterkom het en na opgelet het in ons huwelik was dat ons humeure was baie kort van spanning, en ek het dit besef en hy het dit besef en ons het dit goed hanteer, kyk dit is vanselfsprekend baie stresvol vir 'n mens se huwelik maar dan het ons dit kalm uitgepraat en nie vir die een afgejak en daai tipe van ding nie."*

		"This thing added 20 years to our ages … the shock alone is severe." *"Die ding het vir ons 20 jaar ouer gemaak . . . die skok alleen is kwaai."*
		"You know my husband is not an affectionate man, he will not take me around my waist and tell me that he loves me. After this thing happened, he started doing it frequently just to give me that certainty." *"Weet jy my man is nie 'n liefderikke man nie, hy sal my nie om my lyf vat en vir my sê hy is lief vir my nie. Na hierdie ding gebeur het, het hy dit nogal baie gedoen net om vir mens die sekerheid te gee."*
		"There were things that you never even knew you can feel. I think it was a disadvantage because it takes a long time to recover again, I think it is shock." *"Daar was goed wat jy nog nooit eers geweet het jy kan so voel nie. Ek dink dit het my ook benadeel want dit vat 'n lang ruk om weer te recover van*

		dit af, ek dink dis skok.”
		"One always says "I love you" but not really… especially when we were younger, my parents didn't really say "Oh, we love you", but now we have it, especially with my mother." *"Mens sê mos maar altyd vir mekaar "ek is lief vir jou" maar nooit rerig . . . veral toe ons jonger was, my ma-hulle het nie regtig gesê "Ag ons is lief vir julle nie", maar nou het mens dit, veral met my ma."*
		"Yes, we definitely did it as well, tried to spare each other's feelings and just acted supporting and believed that everything will come right." *"Ja, ons het dit definitief ook gedoen, mekaar se gevoelens probeer spaar en altyd maar net ondersteunend en geglo dit gaan nou regkom."*
	1.5 Affective Involvement	"Yes, it is as if there is more respect from the one to the other and we see each other's needs more, one takes into account that one shouldn't attempt to handle things alone."

		"Ja, dit is asof daar meer respek vir die een vir die ander is en dat mens meer die ander een se behoeftes raaksien, in ag neem dat mens dinge nie alleen moet probeer hanteer nie."
		"Many positive things came from this because we support each other better, we are there for each other, and one helps where one can." *"Daar is baie positiewe goed wat daaruit gekom het want ons ondersteun mekaar beter, ons is daar vir mekaar, en jy help mekaar waar jy kan."*
		"I think that is why we are closer to each other, that we know what is going on in each other's lives." *"Ek dink dit is maar daaroor dat ons nader is aan mekaar, dat jy weet wat in mekaar se lewens aangaan."*
	1.6 Behaviour control	"So there were much stricter rules and we were used to it because that was just how it was." *"So dit was baie strenger reëls en ons was maar gewoond daaraan want dis maar nou hoe dit is."*

		"I think I threw my children around where they kind of knew mom is this terribly strict person – then it changed to this relaxed person and then back to strict. So they didn't really know, shame, whether they were here or there." *"Ek dink dit het my kinders nogal rondgegooi waar hulle half geweet het ma is hierdie verskriklike streng – het dit heeltemal oorgegaan na hierdie "relaxed" en toe weer na die streng toe. So hulle het nie eintlik geweet, shame, of hulle kom of gaan nie."*
		"As I said now one speaks to people that one previously did not know more frequently, or people with whom you did not speak for a long time, such as neighbours, family, acquaintances." *"Soos ek gesê het mens praat nou weer baie met mense wat jy nie ken nie, of mense waarmee jy lank terug gepraat het, soos bure, familie, kennisse."*
		"All of a sudden everyone is available and phone and send SMS's … it is not

		just out of nosiness or to hear what is going on with the case or things like that." *"Ewe skielik is almal net beskikbaar en bel en stuur SMS'e . . . dit is nie uit nuuskierigheid uit om te hoor wat gebeur in die saak en sulke goed nie."*
		"The support that we received was overwhelming." "Die ondersteuning wat ons gekry het was oorweldigend gewees."
		"Not one of the friends that know us well did not want to continue being friends after this. They were not ashamed to come to us or that people see that we are friends – we appreciated that." *"Nie een van ons vriende wat ons ken wou daarna nie meer vriende wees met ons nie. Hulle was nie skaam om na ons toe te kom of dat die mense sien ons is vriende met mekaar nie - dit het 'n mens waardeer."*
2. Changes in Family Functioning not	2.1 Stigma	"You know it felt as if they thought I am a leper."

accounted for by the McMaster Model		*"Jy weet dit het vir my gevoel hulle dink ek is 'n melaatse."*
		"That woman thought: '…you are inferior, your child is in prison.'" *"Daai vrou het gedink: '. . .jy is benede, jou kind sit in die gevangenis.'"*
		"It was perhaps because people were kind of weary, you know, what should they say and all that." *"Dit was miskien half omdat mense half skrikkerig is vir jou, jy weet, wat moet hy vir jou sê en wat."*
		"We don't really have a close family, so there are still some of them who judge and keep their distance." *"Ons het nie regtig 'n hegte familie nie, so daar is maar nogsteeds van hulle wat oordeel en hul afstand hou."*
		"It changes one's relationships with each other, with society, especially because it was in the paper extensively … then one thinks, goodness, they saw it, these people." *"Dit verander jou verhoudings met mekaar, met die samelewing, veral*

		omdat dit was in die koerante vreeslik gewees. . . dan dink mens o genade, hulle het dit nou gesien, hierdie mense."
	2.2 Resilience and inner strength	"But I honestly have to say, because my husband and my children and I worked together it made our relationship much stronger and deeper. One is very thankful, we actually walked out of this richer. It is difficult to go through something like this, you feel, you realise you just have to be strong."
		"Maar ek moet eerlik sê, omdat ek en my man en ons kinders saamgewerk het het dit ons verhouding baie sterker gemaak en baie dieper gemaak. Mens is baie dankbaar, ons het eintlik uit hierdie ding meer verryk uitgestap. Dit is moeilik om so ding deur te gaan, dit voel, jy besef net jy moet sterk wees."
		"I think it was actually a very good thing, it made us stronger people."
		"Ek dink dit was 'n baie goeie ding eintlik, dit het van ons baie sterker mense gemaak."
		"You are firstly discouraged and you

		wonder when it will end, but because it has dominated our lives for such a long time now I have decided I am not going to – I am literally at that point where I say I will leave the windows and the doors open and if he now wants to come and do something to me then let him come."
		"Jy is eerstens moedeloos en wonder wanneer gaan dit nou ophou, maar oor dit nou vir so lank tydperk ons lewens so oorheers het het ek net besluit ek gaan nie – ek is letterlik op daai punt waar ek se ek gaan die vensters en deure ooplos en as hy nou vir my iets wil kom aandoen dan moet hy nou maar kom."
	2.3 Religion	"It was a very traumatic thing, but now I have to tell you, the hand of the Lord, if the Lord was not with us…."
		"Dit was 'n baie traumatiese ding, maar nou moet ek ook vir jou sê, die hand van die Here, as die Here nie by ons was nie…."
		"You know when we stood in court and

		our child stood there in front of us as the accused, the Lord gave us so much strength." *"Weet jy as jy in die hof staan en jou kind staan hier voor jou in die beskuldigde bank dan het die Here ons soveel krag gegee."*
		"One just notices that above human strength that one receives, you think you are not going to get throught it, but we realised from the beginning that the Lord will not bring something across our path that we can not survive , and one has to do it, I feel one has to be an example to other people as a Christian by remaining standing." *"Mens kom net agter deur daai bomenslike krag wat mens kry, jy dink jy gaan nie deur dit kom nie, maar ons het van die begin af besef dat die Here sal nie so iets oor ons pad bring wat ons nie kan deurmaak nie, en mens moet dit doen, ek voel mens moet 'n voorbeeld wees vir ander mense as 'n Christen om staande te bly."*

		"I think one asks all these things in prayer and then it comes about that it is not such a serious problem." *"Ek dink 'n ou bid al hierdie goed af en dit gebeur dan dat dit nie so ernstige probleem is nie."*