



# **Radically rethinking imprisonment: A Photovoice exploration of life in and after prison in South Australia**

by

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## Summary

This thesis explores the experiences of twelve people who have spent time in South Australian prisons. It does so by employing a theoretical framework that combines a radical social work approach enhanced by intersectional feminism and the scholarship of the prison abolition movement, whose cornerstones are built on a critical understanding of class, gender and race. Placed at its centre are the voices of people who have been to prison. In effect, the thesis considers how experiential knowledge might contribute to improved social work practices and outcomes with, and for, ex-prisoners.

I examine the social structures and systemic patterns operating before, within and beyond prisons, exploring the place imprisonment occupies in relation to state sanctioned social oppression. Here I identify consonances in radical social work and in scholarship emerging from the prison abolition movement. My research suggests that these consonances may offer new ways for social workers to think about and respond to the social problems imprisonment both produces and reflects. In short, this thesis argues that it is not individuals, but the unequal structures in society that pose the greatest threat to the safety of communities and, because of this, imprisonment is a violent response to social problems.

A lot of research conducted with former prisoners comes from the perspective of the 'expert researcher', focusses on individual deficits and ponders how those deficits may be resolved with interventions and programs. In this thesis, participants are positioned as experts, not just of their own lives but of the realities of imprisonment and release.

To harness their knowledge, I used the participatory action research method, Photovoice. Armed with a camera and the research question, "*if you had 15 minutes with a policy maker or politician, what would you want them to know about your experiences?*", participants created a bank of data that is both unique and visually engaging. At its core, action research builds and respects egalitarian partnerships. By placing control over the data collection and initial analysis in the hands of participants, Photovoice values self-expression, validates individual experiences, and can create alliances and meaningful relationships. It is through the process of participants thinking about and constructing their accounts of their experiences in photographs and narratives that this thesis has been informed, thus making this work an original contribution to knowledge.

Participants showed how surviving post-release is not easy. Having non-judgemental, sustained support along with personal determination and resolve does not automatically mean successfully staying out of prison, however, these supports and qualities were present throughout participants' accounts. Collectively, participants spoke of imprisonment as violence and how their punishment extended beyond prison walls post-release. They share 'what worked' for them and their recommendations for supporting others in similar situations. I conclude by arguing that deploying abolitionist thinking in everything we as social workers do is a collective response to oppression.

### **Key words**

Photovoice, ex-prisoners, radical social work, prison abolition, prison industrial complex, intersectional feminism



## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed

Date     January 8, 2018

## Acknowledgements

I acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia. The lands where I live, work, research, study and play are the traditional lands of the Kurna people. As the custodians of these lands I pay my respects to Kurna Elders, past, present and emerging, and through them to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I respect their spiritual relationships with their country—the lands, the skies and the waters—and acknowledge that their cultural and heritage beliefs are as important to them today as they have ever been. Their sovereignty has never been ceded.

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*“Prison abolition is an intentional and critical commitment to struggle, but it is also a battle of imagination, creativity, and love. It is about possibilities. It is expanding our mind to imagine a world in which prisons do not exist, one made up of societies and communities that are self-determined, accountable, safe, healthy, and free. To share those ideas with each other by any means necessary. And so, we dream; we read and we write.” (Editors Collective, *The Abolitionist*, 2015, p. 1).*

# Chapter 1: Locating the research

It's not a holiday hotel, it's prison and I don't think South Australians are concerned with the inconvenience of prisoners. South Australian Treasurer, Tom Koutsantonis (ABC News, 2015).

We take prisons for granted but are often afraid of the realities they produce. After all, no one wants to go to prison. Because it would be too agonising to cope with the possibility that anyone, including ourselves, could become a prisoner, we tend to think of the prison as disconnected from our own lives. Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003, p. 15).

## Introduction

This thesis explores the experiences of ex-prisoners in the context of increasing prison populations and high rates of re-incarceration after release. It adopts an enhanced radical social work approach, informed by an intersectional feminist framework and the scholarship of the prison abolition movement, whose cornerstones are built on a critical understanding of class, gender and race. Placed at its centre are the voices of people who have been to prison. In effect, this thesis considers how experiential knowledge might contribute to improved social work practices and outcomes with and for ex-prisoners. In what follows in this chapter, I introduce the context for this project, outline the theoretical and disciplinary frameworks that inform my research and offer a rationale for undertaking it. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapters to follow and offers a justification for the structure of this work.

Incarceration is a big and growing social problem. Over ten million adults are being detained in prisons and jails worldwide (Walmsley, 2013). Since the 1970s, coinciding with the 'war on drugs' (Stern, 2006; Hari, 2015), the dismantling of the welfare state (Mendes, 2003; McElligott, 2007) and the rise of neoliberalism (Kendall, 2013), imprisonment rates—especially of the poor and the working-classes—have skyrocketed (Stern, 2006; Reiman & Leighton, 2012). According to a recent article in *The Washington Post*, the United States, which has the highest incarceration rate in the world at 707 adults per 100,000 people, has 'more jails and prisons than degree granting colleges and universities' (Ingraham, 2015, para, 4).

Australia is following the world trend of mass incarceration. At the end of the twentieth century, just over 20,000 people or 107.85 per 100,000 Australian adults were in prison (Graycar, 2001). Seventeen years later, 41,237 people or 217.3 adults per 100,000 were being held in custody (ABS, 2017). At least double that number are under the supervision

of Community Corrections, either on home detention or parole (ABS, 2017). Figures on the number of prisoner receptions indicate that in the 2017 June quarter 10,869 people were given a full-time custodial sentence in Australia (ABS, 2017). Over the last two decades, men's imprisonment rates have increased by around 70 percent—for women the increase is close to 140 percent, although women make up around eight percent of the prison population. In Australia—much like other colonised countries—the likelihood of imprisonment is much higher for First Nations Peoples (Stern, 2006, p. 33; Cunneen, 2009), who make up two percent of Australia's adult population but over twenty five percent of the men's prison population, and thirty percent of the women's prison population (Sudbury, 2013; Baldry, 2013; Bartels, 2012; ABS, 2017).

People who have spent time in prison almost invariably struggle with re-entry into the community (Maruna, 2001; Halsey & Deegan, 2015a). Unsuccessful attempts at reintegration are most likely to be blamed on the individual rather than recorded as an institutional failure (see for example, Hampton, 1993; Davies & Cook, 1999; Halsey, 2007). In its current state, the criminal justice system generally fails to rehabilitate or reform, as within five years of their release, more than half of all prisoners in Australia are re-incarcerated (Baldry, 2010; ABS, 2017). It is easy to imagine that if any other social institution—schools or hospitals for example—had such a high rate of failure, people would be outraged. However, the failure of imprisonment to reform or rehabilitate is not outrageous, but routine. Indeed, incarceration exacerbates marginalisation and criminalisation. Out of sight and mind of most of society, prisoners have been described as non-citizens, or the 'civil dead' (Anderson, 2013), a death that isolates, excludes and continues long after a completed sentence, making the transformation into a non-criminal identity near impossible.

Upon release, ex-prisoners seem to be set up to fail especially if we take into account the way parole and probation regimes are structured (Halsey, 2007; Carlton & Baldry, 2013). Having a criminal record and limited formally recognised skills can make finding post-release employment difficult (Henry & Jacobs, 2007). Accommodation is scarce, while fractured social networks provide limited social capital. Special or creative programs and supports targeting ex-prisoners, people at risk of going to prison or in-prison programs aimed at successful re-entry into the community are pounced upon by politicians seeking to play to voters' resentments (Gilligan, 1998) generating what could be described as 'downward envy' (Lewis & Woods, 2014) or 'civilised oppression' (Harvey, 1999; 2010). Given these difficulties, Carlton and Baldry (2013) argue that people who are successful in

staying out of prison have done so *in spite of* adversity, close surveillance, poverty and stigma.

Upon release, even people who serve short sentences are likely to find the structural, social and emotional changes in their lives difficult to navigate, while the people close to them often report encountering a different person to the one that went to prison (Terry, 2003). Ex-prisoners are often advised to try to forget about the prison experience, to move forward and get on with their lives. But, this is not easy. To survive prison people must harden themselves so they are not consumed by isolation, shame, humiliation and despair. Complete restoration to their former selves is rare.

For women, leaving behind and forgetting about their prison experience can be even more difficult than for men, as stigma and shame oblige them to be silent: to ignore, deny and thereby minimise the impact of their prison experience (Hampton, 1993, p. xvii). Women often make strong, deep bonds with women they have served time with and, upon release are torn between the prospect of freedom and severing those bonds (Hampton, 1993; Davies & Cook, 1999; Jarldorn, 2015). Many women to rely on each other for support in prison because sharing of experiences is central to how they interpret personal and social issues (Coates, 1996). They also know that it can be a risk to reconnect with their pre-prison associates when they get out. As Debbie Kilroy, ex-prisoner and founder of Sisters Inside,<sup>1</sup> explains:

The importance of severing ties when I got out was tied to survival. I knew that if I kept one link in that vulnerable time, and then if something happened, I would have to go with my loyalty to those old links. So, it was about staying strong, and it's the most isolating, lonely place I've ever been my whole life (Kilroy in Olsson, 2005, p. 179).

The experience of imprisonment and release is so manifestly a site for social work that it hardly needs justification. However, each social worker brings their own particular motivations and interests to their inquiries, and these bear setting out not only in the interests of transparency, but also situating the researcher in the field.

### Why do this research?

After graduating from my bachelor's degree in social work, with placement experience in addiction, I was employed in the Gambling Support Service (GSS) at *OARS Community Transitions*, a secular NGO that has provided services to prisoners and ex-prisoners in

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<sup>1</sup> Sisters Inside is an organisation that supports criminalised women in Queensland, Australia. Sisters Inside is run and driven by women with lived experience of prison. For more see, <http://www.sistersinside.com.au/>

Adelaide for over one hundred years<sup>2</sup>. In 2006 the organisation expanded their existing programs to include working with people whose gambling addiction had drawn them into contact with the criminal justice system, usually through fraud and theft. In South Australia the number of problem gamblers grew quickly after the introduction of electronic gaming machines (EGMs or 'pokies') in the early 1990s. Although other Australian states had pokies for years. South Australia held out until realising that the expected revenue would help pay off debts created by the economic disaster that followed the collapse of the publicly owned State Bank (McCarthy, 2002).

My role was to work with mandated and voluntary service users including men and women inside three suburban prisons; Adelaide Women's Prison (AWP), Yatala Labour Prison (YLP) and the Adelaide Pre-release Centre (APC).<sup>3,4</sup> The majority of service users were working-class, underclass (Bagguley & Mann, 1992), or precariat (Standing, 2011), having little or no security or predictability in terms of employment or housing, now or in the foreseeable future<sup>5</sup>. Commonly, they struggled with addiction to licit and/or illicit substances, lived in crippling poverty, had limited formal education and experienced violence, abuse or poor physical and/or mental health, often over many years. This was a site of capacious, intersecting oppression.

Abundant in hotels and clubs in low socio-economic areas, the pokies prey on the poor. I still remember asking one of the women I worked with why she gambled—she told me, 'it's because I am sick of feeling like a loser'. For many GSS users, a 'big win' was in their eyes, the only way that they could ever envisage escaping poverty, yet their gambling actually further entrenched, rather than released them poverty. Others began gambling as a bit of fun but would find that while they played the pokies they were able to ignore the problems of often chaotic lives. Here, I saw a significant number of middle-aged women who played the pokies as a way to disassociate from their experiences of violence and abuse. Often they used gambling as a form of self-soothing. The third, albeit the smallest

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<sup>2</sup> This organisation was formerly called *Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services*. Recently it has changed its name to *OARS Community Transitions*.

<sup>3</sup> There is a great deal of tension in the language used to describe the people 'receiving' social work services—see for example McLaughlin (2009). Therefore, while I use the term 'service user' throughout this thesis, I acknowledge the contradictory nature of doing so.

<sup>4</sup> These three prisons are situated close together on Grand Junction Road, Northfield situated 11 kilometres from Adelaide's CBD.

<sup>5</sup> The people that are given a custodial sentence tend to be from the precariat class. Guy Standing (2011) describes the precariat as being most likely to be: 1) poor; 2) unlikely to have quality legal representation; 3) have an addiction or poor mental health, and are unable to access holistic, publicly-funded treatment facilities; 4) have little formally recognised education; and 5) are unlikely to have held secure well-paid, meaningful work. As Standing argues, even when the precariat are not being held in a prison, they are already experiencing a broad loss of rights across civil, cultural, social, political and economic spheres, responsibility for which he places firmly with neoliberal ideologies.



group were men who had formed a problem gambling habit whilst they were in prison, because prisoners often gamble to counter boredom (for more, see McEvoy & Spirgen, 2012).

I soon began to notice patterns in my work. Similar to what I saw when I worked with people with drug or alcohol addiction, I saw that problem gambling often went hand in hand with unresolved grief, loss and trauma. I saw that most people were released from prison to the same (or worse) social problems that shaped their lives before going to prison. Acknowledging that for each problem gambler, many people close to them are directly affected (Problem Gambling SA, 2015), program funding gave me the scope to support gamblers' loved ones—usually partners, mothers or children—if they chose to seek it.<sup>6</sup> It was through this work that I began to see the wide-ranging harm that imprisonment caused families and communities, and the difficulties that people encountered post-release.

It was an incident at the AWP that planted the seed for this research. One day, only months after starting my job, I was sitting with 'Sarah' at a table in a quiet spot outside the visits centre<sup>7</sup>. Sarah had used gambling as a way to self-medicate and self-soothe the trauma of years of abuse at the hands of her husband. Together we were working on some strategies to overcome triggers to gambling in preparation for her release. It was in early spring and after a persistently cold and wet couple of weeks, the sun was finally shining. We could feel the warmth on our backs. If it weren't for the presence of razor wire and prison walls, we could have been two women enjoying a chat anywhere in the world. Then a commotion broke the quiet. A woman prisoner was walking down the path to the administration building, with two prison officers at her side. She had her arms raised above her head and was shouting in delight; 'Woo hoo,' she screamed, 'I'm leaving, I'm getting out, woo hoo!' I smiled and felt excited for her. I asked Sarah how seeing that made her feel, especially as her own release date was close. Sarah told me, 'Oh that's 'Mary, she's been out before'<sup>8</sup>. As excited as she seems, I can tell you that she is terrified. She's putting on a brave face. Even though she's leaving and everyone's happy, there will be someone sitting in here who is heartbroken and sad, and deep down 'Mary' is actually afraid, she knows how hard it is to survive on the outside.' I couldn't stop thinking about what I witnessed and heard that day. What it might mean to *fear* release from prison? After all, not only did this go against everything that the community, including me, had been led

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<sup>6</sup> This broad level of support is extremely rare.

<sup>7</sup> This is not her real name.

<sup>8</sup> This is not her real name.

to believe about getting out, it also contradicted the focus of many workers, scholars and activists whose goals are to get people *out* of prison. It made me realise that perhaps the 'free' world is not as free as we are led to believe.

While I have learned a lot from the literature and much more from the participants in this project, I have gained substantial and especially useful knowledge over the three years that I have volunteered with the women's ex-prisoner group *Seeds of Affinity*. As an 'accidental ethnographer', I have seen for myself the barriers that criminalised women face, especially once they return to the community. Seeds of Affinity is a grass-roots, community development response to supporting criminalised women in South Australia, providing a safe, supportive and non-judgemental space for criminalised women to meet, share, learn and grow. As an outsider, I feel privileged to be welcomed by the 'seeds women' and to learn from them.

## The politics of language

In thinking and writing about prisons and prisoners, I came to understand the importance of terminology. Language matters because it helps to create, not just reflect reality; it is a 'practical consciousness' (Marx & Engels, 1843/1972). Language can empower (Slovenko, 2007), but at the same time the words we use can marginalise, dehumanise and exclude (Riggins, 1997). It is not only the words themselves that inflict pain, but the way that they are delivered (Butler, 1997). Social workers especially, must be aware of the ways in which language can be both a tool of oppression, but conversely can minimise oppressive categorisation of the people we work with (Ferguson and Lavalette, 1999, p. 32). As such, the twelve ex-prisoners in this project are always referred to as 'participants' rather than 'informants'. In a research setting informants offer data or information to a researcher, for example in answering a questionnaire. Participation means much more. The term participant is deployed here in its truest sense in that the literature review and direction of the thesis are driven by the data provided by participants, who were free to discuss anything that they felt was important to them.

In his book, *Limits to Pain*, Nils Christie (2007) suggests that people whose work finds them allied with prisoners tend to use language that minimises prisoners' experiences in their own attempt to survive the abuses they witness, thereby enabling them to continue their work. A recent example of minimising acts of violence comes from former prison social worker Mary Buser (2015), who documented her attempts to mitigate the brutal treatment of prisoners affected by poor mental health held on the notorious Rikers Island

Prison in New York. Starting out as an eager young social worker who thought she could 'make a difference', Buser traces her experiences of witnessing violence, abuse and terror inflicted upon the women and men held there. Eventually she realised that she was unable to make a difference at all, leaving the prison system altogether. Of course, prisoners have no such luxury. What Buser's account shows is that having good intentions and wanting to 'make a difference' is entirely inconsistent with a system that shackles the people who work within it almost as tightly as the people it holds<sup>9</sup>.

Christie (2007) asks that we stop and think more deeply about the language we use (or avoid) that ultimately minimises the hurt, suffering, sorrow and sadness that 'pain inflicting' institutions create. By minimising the visibility of language that bears grief, sorrow and misery in public life we, in turn, evaporate the pain and suffering of punishment. I want to avoid using language that dehumanises people who have been to prison, yet, the language used in reference to prisons and punishment can be confusing and politically loaded. There is no real consensus on terminology, even amongst people with lived experience of incarceration. The words 'offender' and 'ex-offender', at first sound gentle, but are problematic as they describe a behaviour that defines and categorises a person. People do not continually commit crimes every hour, every day, every month or every year—or even frequently enough to render 'offender' an appropriate identity-label. Richards and Ross (2003), who use the term 'ex-con' to describe themselves, argue that it is important to challenge such terms as 'offender' and 'inmate' as they are drawn from the 'official language' of the criminal justice system (Richards & Ross, 2003, p. 244). Even the term, 'in conflict with the law' has been challenged as being 'control talk' (Maidment, 2006, p. 15).

Blanche Hampton, an Australian scholar with personal experience of imprisonment, acknowledges that while the term 'prisoner' encompasses both 'the innocent and the guilty', prefers the term inmate. Hampton explains that for her, 'inmate' offers 'a better notion of the enormously powerful impact of being institutionalised...of being interfered with at every level of your existence' (Hampton, 1993, p. xvii). Yet, *Critical Resistance*, a grassroots abolition movement in the United States and the *Elizabeth Fry Society* in Canada both argue that using 'inmate' does not accurately represent the reality that someone is locked in a cage, because the word originally was a term used to describe people in a voluntary, shared living arrangement. Gayle Horii (2000) is adamant that

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<sup>9</sup> Universities commonly advertise that a social work degree is for people who 'want to make a difference' in people's lives. See for example <https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/the-benefits-of-a-career-in-social-work/>

advocates must use language which reflects 'the reality of imprisonment', arguing that 'prisoner' is the *only* appropriate term, going on to explain the hidden power in such terms as 'institution', 'corrections', 'offender', 'programs' and 'treatment' (Horii, 2000). Some have suggested that using the term 'prisoner' is degrading (Caputo-Levine, 2012, p. 183) while others propose that using offender/ex-offender minimises the reality of time spent inside a prison and prefer the term convict/ex-convict instead (Maruna, 2001). However, in Australia, the term convict is more closely associated with British Colonisation and therefore does not reflect—and problematically excludes—the experience of imprisoned First Nations Peoples. Furthermore, some people who are convicted for violating the law do not spend time in prison, are never caught or, if they are caught, go unprosecuted or are given a non-custodial sentence. Criminalised is the term I prefer to use. Although the word 'criminalise' can be used to explain how an activity becomes a criminal offence, it also describes the (lasting) effect that contact with the criminal justice system has on people who are treated like a 'criminal other', both before and well after prison sentences and other sanctions are complete. I acknowledge that no term is perfect, but will use the terms 'criminalised', 'prisoner', 'ex-prisoner', unless it is a direct quote of a participant or another author.

## Research questions

All of these considerations mark the prison experience as a target for knowledge about social work. When I began this research, I hoped to learn how social work might help to prevent people from going to prison, avoid or decrease rates of re-incarceration, and provide opportunities for ex-prisoners to participate and thrive in the community after release. As the project continued, my research questions shifted to examine the social structures and systemic patterns operating before, within and beyond prisons. My key questions, now, concern the place imprisonment occupies in relation to systematic social oppression grounded in class, race, and gender. Does imprisonment function as a punishment for social problems? Is it plausible to suggest that such punishment extends beyond individuals to affect prisoners, their families, and communities in fundamentally collective ways? To explore these questions, I used a framework of intersectionality to enhance a radical social work approach in the design and analysis of this project. This is germane given the recent interest in, and return to, radical social work approaches; approaches which aim to prevent oppression and liberate individuals, communities and the whole of society—including social workers themselves. As my research progressed, I identified consonances in radical social work and in scholarship emerging from the prison

abolition movement. My research suggests that these consonances may offer new ways of thinking about and responding to the many problems imprisonment both produces and reflects.

In trying to work radically in a research setting, I combined my own critical analysis of the existing literature with the insights and evidence provided by the twelve participants in this project. I have used Photovoice as my method of data collection. Photovoice is a qualitative, community-based, participatory action research (PAR) method that employs photography as a means to highlight the experiences and insights of often excluded or marginalised people. Photovoice is a useful and egalitarian method for socially marginalised groups to inform consultative policy making by combining participants' photographs and narratives as a means of initiating social change (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999; Molloy, 2007). As I will reveal throughout the thesis, there is much value in using participatory, arts-based action research approaches in social work. By placing control over the data collection and initial analysis in the hands of participants, Photovoice has demonstrated potential in valuing self-expression, validating individual experiences and building alliances and meaningful relationships. It is through the process of participants thinking about and constructing their accounts of their experiences in photographs and qualitative explanations that this thesis has been informed. New and unique insights into the participants' lives before, during and after spending time in prison were documented, influencing and changing my own understanding along with the direction and shape of this thesis.

Using photography in social work is not new. Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jane Addams and her colleague Ellen Gates Starr set up Chicago's *Hull House*, envisioning a community of educated women who could provide opportunities for social connection and education for the poor, the working-class and recent migrants from Europe. Addams and Gates had seen for themselves the value of participating in the arts in their youth (Stankiewicz, 1989), soon introducing arts programs into Hull House (Addams, 1912; Brieland, 1990). The precursor to modern day community centres and community development social work, Hull House was a secular space with a progressive agenda offering everything from access to a doctor, providing kindergarten for children whose parents were working, food for the unwell, to advocating for women's suffrage and challenging oppressive legislation (Addams, 1912). In the 1920s, Wallace Kirkland, social worker and photographer, taught photography to children at Hull House, documenting everyday scenes that brought to life the 'sense of hope and ultimate respect for all human beings that embodied the spirit of

Hull House' (Foerstner, 1989, p. para 4). This and other evidence suggests that the use of an arts-based research method such as Photovoice can empower groups and communities to make a claim for social equity (Anwar McHenry, 2011).

Without doubt, images and photography can illustrate the severity of social injustice (Marshall, Craun, & Theriot, 2009) better than words alone. Writing about the potential of photography to challenge the way we see and think about the world, Marvin Heiferman (2012) explains the power of photography thus:

Photographs don't only show us things, they do things. They engage us optically, neurologically, intellectually, emotionally, viscerally, physically. They demand our scrutiny and interpretation. Photographs seduce and motivate us; they promote ideas, embed values and shape public opinion (Heiferman, 2012, p. 16)

It has been argued that social work itself is an art form (England, 1986; Gray & Webb, 2008; Stirling, Warren, & Paton, 2014)—an 'artful practice', which employs a combination of 'art, science, heart and ethics' (Steinberg, 2006). If social work is an art form, it can only be enriched by the use of images. The use of photography in this project serves a number of purposes: to tell a story, to document experiences, and to provide a form of non-verbal expression that enhances the testimonies of the twelve participants.

## Theoretical framework

I began this research using a structural feminist framework informed by Marxism. However, as I moved through phases of the project reading widely in areas I had not previously encountered, I came to realise that using an intersectional framework offered a more appropriate lens. Although radical social work is informed by Marxist ideas which holds challenging class oppression at their heart, Marxism has been charged with paying too little attention to feminist arguments (Jagger, 1983; Luke, 1992). Given that the participants in this project face multiple axes of oppression, attending to intersectionality enhances a radical social work approach, offering a good match for this project. This does not mean that I ignore how capitalism privileges (white-western) patriarchal arrangements at the expense of all others. Instead, by using intersectionality, rather than class oppression as a stand-alone lens, I understand that a number of overlapping oppressions such as race, class, (dis)ability, ill-health, sexuality, age, culture, nation and place all operate in different ways, sometimes reinforcing and sometimes complicating each other.

Finn Mackay describes feminism as 'one of the oldest and most powerful social justice movements the world has ever known' (2015, p. 6). Mackay reminds us that although

there are different *types* of feminism, common amongst every feminism is agreement that the oppression of women holds everyone, women and men, back from realising their full potential. In other words, rather than feminism seeking any kind of simple reversal, where women own and wield the majority of power to oppress the majority of men, true equality will only be possible when women *and* men can break free from the gender stereotypes that shape their lives (Mackay, 2015, p. 6). Gender stereotyping manifests in the generalisations which place women as caring and nurturing and men as strong and chivalrous. It begins at birth with toys and clothes (Paoletti, 2012), is reinforced in art and advertising (Berger, 1973; Guerrilla Girls, 2003) and is reflected in career choices and pay rates of those careers (Smith, 2015). However, these ideas focus almost entirely on gender while ignoring class and race.

It was Angela Davis, in her book, *Women, Race and Class* (1983), that most forcefully challenged the white, middle-class focus of the feminist movement, providing a series of powerful arguments against the philosophy of capitalism underpinned by systemic racism. However, the term intersectionality is mostly credited to law professor and critical race scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991; 1993). Germinating from her own experience as a lawyer, Crenshaw found that when asked to moderate on anti-discrimination cases, the law was incapable of addressing gender, race and class simultaneously. For Crenshaw, the objective of liberation could only be met if the 'intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalise' could take into account differences between and *within* groups (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242). Later, Patricia Collins built upon intersectionality by describing how the social identities of gender, race, class, (dis)ability, religion and occupation interact with existing social institutions (Collins, 2000). Arguably all institutions, both socially constructed and constructed with bricks and mortar, are built on and maintained by capitalist, racist and patriarchal ideals, therefore intersectionality is most likely to capture the intensity of multiple and overlapping oppressions which ultimately lead to disadvantage and discrimination.

All social work, not just radical social work is grounded in social justice and, as Angela Davis (2016) argues, social justice work must be informed by intersectionality. For example, 'prison' researchers know that the incarceration of the working-class is much higher than for people who have middle and upper-class privilege. Women, who make up a growing majority of the working-class (Gimenez & Vogel, 2005) are the world's fastest growing prison population. Because of their gender, and exacerbated by their poor mental health, women tend to be given longer sentences than men for similar crimes due to their

higher level of 'risk', ostensibly to mitigate their risk of further harm. Women who have experienced violence and abuse, have been failed by the education system, have unstable housing and employment—if any—and poor mental and physical health, are automatically 'categorised' as high risk—doubly so if they identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Yet 'risk' is, in itself, a measure of oppression, consistent with the individual responsibilities focus of neoliberalism. This is evident in the fact that around the world, First Nations women and women of colour are imprisoned at a higher rate than their white contemporaries (Sudbury, 2013).

Aguilar (2015) maintains that in the twenty-five years since Crenshaw's work brought the concept of intersectionality to the fore, it has been mutated, de-radicalised along with the project of feminism itself (see for example, von Werlhof, 2007), the responsibility of which she places firmly on the 'corporatisation of the academy and its increasing subservience to a neoliberal global regime' (Aguilar, 2015, p. 203; Eisenstein, 2009). In her critique of this co-option of intersectionality, Aguilar argues that there have been problematic ways that intersectionality has been deployed by feminist academics. One is that scholars have attempted to ascribe the experience of gender, race and class oppression in equal measure, thereby ignoring the complexities that intersectionality is meant to address. The other is the avoidance of employing a structural class-based analysis which considers how capitalism is the basis of domination and oppression. For Aguilar (2015), Giminez (2001; 2005) and Eisenstein (2009), without understanding class as central to women's oppression, feminism plays into the hands of the global elites. True intersectional feminism decentres white women's issues. Intersectionality is relevant as a framework for activists, enabling them to resist the tool of oppression that aims to 'divide and conquer', by linking seemingly disparate issues to construct collective struggles for social justice (Davis, 2016, p. 19).

## Radical approaches and radical social work

Radical ideas prevail in this thesis and rest upon Audre Lorde's argument that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' (Lorde, 1984, p. 123), meaning that liberation 'gifted' to the oppressed will always include caveats and clauses that ensure that the status quo is maintained. Using the theoretical framework described earlier means that I understand that it is not individuals but the unequal structures in society that pose the greatest threat to the safety of communities. The radical perspective in criminology, for example, places conflict as central to criminality, looking automatically to class as the



source of that conflict (Finley, 2002; Lynch & Michalowski, 2006). The legal system, enshrined in capitalist, patriarchal and classist ideals (Quinney, 1974; 1980; Hahn Rafter & Natalizia, 1981; Reiman & Leighton, 2012), has a vested interest in the subordination of women and the working-classes who, along with people of colour, the addicted, and the mentally and physically unwell, are disproportionately represented in carceral settings (Stern, 2006). Consequently, the over-representation of these groups in prison populations has been used to 'prove' their moral inferiority, rather than reflect their multiple, overlapping levels of oppression that comprise the foundations of their disadvantage.

Being radical in a criminological sense means to try to 'get to the root of things and to value social reorganisation or social change' (Finley, 2002, p. 150). Influenced by the social climate of the time, radical criminology, described by Shank (1999) as a worldwide social movement, grew in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite claims that the approach should be dismissed as utopian, 'fallible' (Johnson, 1978) and would eventually 'die out' (Inciardi, 1980), there continues to be a body of work across disciplines supporting Richard Quinney's argument that capitalist based societies, via the state and ruling classes, use the legal system to 'effectively suppress resistance that threatens its survival' (1974, p. 192).<sup>10</sup> Similar to the development of feminist theories, radical criminology is not a static concept; rather, it is fluid, continually evolving to address contemporary problems.

Feminist radical criminologists believe that men's propensity for violence is not biologically determined but is shaped by histories entrenched with racist, classist and imperialist values of dominant groups (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988, p. 521). Operating together, sexism and capitalism denigrate women at every point in the criminal justice system, whether they have committed a crime, are a victim of crime or are a woman employed within the system, because of the linked social and legal structures that represent 'dominant bourgeois ideology' (Hahn Rafter & Natalizia, 1981, p. 83; Graycar & Morgan, 2002). For example, Hahn-Rafter and Natalizia (1981) describe the paternalism present when women are given longer sentences than men for the same crime because of the assumption that they will be 'reformed' in prison. Being reformed in this sense is when women learn to behave like 'good' women who are proficient at cooking, cleaning and sewing (Carlen, 1983) and is thus an arm of social control.

The oppression of ageism plays its part in the imprisonment of young people too. Meda Chesney-Lind (1989) in the United States and Kerry Carrington (1993) in Australia have

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<sup>10</sup> See also: (Davis, 2003; Stern, 2006; Milhaupt & Pistor, 2008; Russell, 2002; Tiff, 2002; Hahn Rafter & Natalizia, 1981; Wozniak, Cullen, & Platt, 2015).

described how young women, especially those who are First Nations or poor—are prosecuted more often and more harshly than young men for similar crimes. Ageism contributes to the adult prison population because of the strong correlation between people held in an adult prison and those who have been before the courts as a juvenile (Halsey, 2010). Ageist oppression posits youth as a ‘metaphor for trouble’ (Carrington, 1993, p. 2) and, when adding other layers of oppression such as gender, poverty, race and colour it is easy to see how poor, young women of colour can be the target of surveillance and control simply for being who they are.

Despite a chorus of feminist and radical critiques (Hahn Rafter & Natalizia, 1981; Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988; Hahn Rafter, 1997; Sudbury, 2004; Faith, 2011; Belknap, 2015), criminology was, and arguably still is, a discipline that poses its research questions in the context of ‘white, economically privileged men’s experiences’ (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988, p. 506; Smart, 1995; Naffine, 1996), where legal structures are embedded with ‘bourgeois morality’ (Hahn Rafter & Natalizia, 1981, p. 83), oppressing people of colour, the poor, the working-class, and particularly women (Graycar & Morgan, 2002). Such an approach individualises the social problems that underlie the lives of the majority of people who go to prison. Therefore, in the age of hyper-incarceration, alternative interpretations to the ‘norm’ such as feminist and radical analyses are more germane than ever before.

Radical theorists reject outright the notion of using ‘objective means’ in research as this generally means to ‘go with the flow’ of the existing social order (Woods, 2016). Radical scholars of the social sciences unapologetically combine their politics with their research to inform public policy (Schram, 2002, pp. 51-53; Woods, 2016). In the discipline of criminology, early radical approaches were borrowed from labelling and deviance theories (Quinney, 1970; Becker, 1973), where an understanding of class oppression was closely linked to the civil rights movements (Zinn, 1997). Feminist analyses of patriarchal justice and women’s criminality are central to radical criminology (Platt, 2014), while Finley (2002) argues that radical approaches should not be confined to criminology or even the broader academy, maintaining that for radical ideas to take hold, they must traverse the walls of universities and make connections with outside audiences. As Angela Davis reminded activists in a recent speech, ‘you have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world, and, you have to do it all the time’ (2014). It is through radical, grassroots, action-based community organising that real political transformation is born.

Writing about his work with radical social movements, community organiser Saul Alinsky argued that those who had privilege discouraged and penalised ‘ideas and writings that

threaten the ruling status quo' (Alinsky, 1972, p. 7).<sup>11</sup> Alinsky provided the example of professional social workers trained in community development, saying that while they had the vocabulary and the formal education, their goals remained within the confines of the existing state of affairs, which undeniably favoured dominant groups. He clarified this by describing the difference between radical community organisers and community development social workers, saying that the latter "organise to get rid of four legged rats, but will stop there", whereas the former will "get rid of the four-legged rats so that they can move on to get rid of the two-legged rats" (Alinsky, 1972, p. 68). What Alinsky is referring to are the 'band aid' or social 'reform' solutions found in social policies and delivered by social workers that stop well short of social change, a charge that did not go unnoticed by some sections of social work.

Observations like Alinsky's, the dismantling of the welfare state (Piven & Cloward, 1971), the rise of civil rights movements (Piven & Cloward, 1979; Ferguson, 2008, p. 97), a sociological understanding of deviance and social control (Walker & Beaumont, 1981) and the end of the long boom (Ferguson, 2008, p. 22) were just some of the converging events that sowed the seeds of 'modern' radical social work (Lavalette, 2011; Ferguson, 2008). During the late 1960s and into the 1970s, concerned social workers witnessed the rapid deterioration of social conditions of the people they worked with, together with a reduction in available resources for them to effectively carry out their work. Bailey and Brake (1975) established the legitimacy of radical social work with their critique of the pervasive, deficit-based, individualistic, 'professionalisation' of social work practice (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009). Radical social work approaches were a response to the growing disquiet amongst social workers about the attribution of people's distress to individual pathologies and personal failings that failed to acknowledge the structural, systemic oppression that shaped their lives (Bailey & Brake, 1975; Fook, 1993; Reisch & Andrews, 2002). According to Langan and Lee (1989, p. 5), radical social workers became 'mistrustful of the way the state used social workers to control *sections* of the population' [my emphasis]. What Langan and Lee observed was that the controlled 'sections' of the population—voluntary or mandated—were primarily working-class, poor and people of colour, with the majority being women.

However, no social theory perfectly fits every situation in every context or every dimension of each context. Radical social work ideas and related texts have attracted criticisms.

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<sup>11</sup> Although Alinsky is considered a 'founding father' of community organising, he has attracted criticism for ignoring gender and race and for being a 'professional', paid organiser/bureaucrat. See, Petitjean, (2017).

Common has been frontline social workers' disillusionment in their ability to be 'radical' in a climate of neoliberalism and New Public Management approaches (Lavalette, 2011, p. 7). In terms of statutory social work, it can be a source of great discomfort at the least, and thoroughly demoralising at worst, to even try to be radical in a work environment that is essentially about control and surveillance (Senior, 1989; Rogowski, 2010). There can be a real fear of losing one's job when using radical approaches (Garrett, 1980; Mendes, 2007; Greenslade, 2013; Greenslade, McAuliffe, & Chenoweth, 2015). Being 'radical' in the workplace can place social workers in a precarious position in which they can be seen simultaneously as unrealistic, 'bleeding heart' utopians or troublesome, lefty agitators (Reisch & Andrews, 2002; Ferguson, 2008). However, I would argue that creating unease and undermining the confidence of the possibilities of radical social work marks the success of neoliberal ideologies, a success that must be critiqued and challenged.

Radical social workers understand that the majority of 'evidence' used in evidence based practice is provided by professionals rather than service users, is based on an analysis of 'risk' and tends to support existing social policy agendas (Ferguson, 2008, p. 52; Webb, 2001). As Michelle Fine (2012, p. 4) argues, there is a danger of privileging the evidence of professionals over the evidence of members of oppressed groups, which she says, 'creates a science of banal dispossession', which, when used in 'scientific synchrony' in the current neoliberal climate, such 'evidence' can simultaneously slash funding to public programs, silence voices, and create barriers to achieving social justice (2012, p. 10).

Without the emergence of radical and structural perspectives, anti-oppressive social work approaches would not have developed (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009). Donna Baines (2011) suggests that being radical is a necessity for social workers to support people with the common problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. For Baines, being 'radical' means going to 'the roots of the problem and to be active and direct in the search for social peace' (Baines, 2011, p. 24). Langan (2011) proposes that radical social work is only possible where social policies and practices developed using an individual, psychological deficit framework are challenged. As feminism and social work, especially radical social work, are both inherently political practices (Fook, 1993; Baines, 2011), understanding and challenging power imbalances is central to this thesis.

An appreciation of systemic and structural oppression is fundamental to radical social work. Radical social workers avoid uncritical conformity to the operational norms of the agencies they work for (Turbett, 2014). Critically analysing literature, policies and procedures, working *alongside* service users, resisting oppressive systems by participating

in collective resistance and political campaigning all constitute radical social work (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009, p. 153; Turbett, 2014, p. xvii). When radical social workers conduct research, they employ these same political tools and analysis in the design, approach and distribution of findings. They understand that social justice, equality and liberation require genuine collaboration, that being an ally is the key to challenging oppression (Bishop, 2002) and effecting liberatory practice (Beresford, 2011). In terms of research with women who have been in prison, Carlton and Segrave (2013) provide their own 'radical vision', where research will be critical, independent and create new knowledge by recognising and drawing on the expertise of women with lived experience. Still, they are careful to remind researchers that it is not up to criminalised women to provide all the solutions but instead that they contribute to the discourse and benefit from their contribution (Carlton & Segrave, 2013, pp. 204-205). A good example of such expertise is the work of former Australian prisoner Blanche Hampton, who knew first hand that the voices of women who had been to prison were either ignored or trivialised. She hoped her research would raise awareness of New South Wales women's correctional policy as "another level of lunacy altogether" (Hampton, 1993, p. viii).

Throughout my social work education, but in particular from this study, I have learnt that one cannot be an agent for change by providing band aid measures, uncritically accepting policies and practices, or by failing to challenge injustice, violence and oppression. Radical social workers are self-reflexive, knowing that they must continually reflect upon their own views, morals, opinions and biases if they are to be truly radical (Fook, 1993; Mullaly, 2007; Turbett, 2014). Radical social workers understand that keeping a 'professional distance' actually undermines the humanity and possibilities of social work (Langan, 2011). Although, returning to the definition of 'radical', I would contend that it is hardly a radical act to treat our fellow humans as equals and with dignity and respect, whether that be in our personal lives or our work. As Desmond Tutu wrote in his introduction to Donna Hicks' book, *Dignity* (2011, p. x), 'Dignity not only sustains but also energises and enables. It accomplishes great things. It lifts the fallen and restores the broken'. Respecting the people we work with as social workers means wanting to see them flourish, rather than merely to survive.

## Challenging oppression through research

Baines (2011) points out that there are always differences in theoretical frameworks, but contends that 'significant similarities predominate in the work of most anti-oppressive scholars' (p. 10). Baines recommends using anti-oppressive social work practices as a way to 'relieve people's emotional pain and immediate difficulties', while at the same time working to change hierarchical relations as a means of transformation (Baines, 2011, p. 3). Challenging oppression, and the unjust human relationships that involve 'domination and exploitation—economic, social and psychological' (Gil 2013, p. 12) are the primary focus of structural social work practices (Mullaly, 2002; 2007). Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (2005) propose that 'traditional' quantitative, evidence seeking approaches limit the creation of knowledge to those with power and are oppressive to those already on the margins of society. They suggest that research can be transformative when it seeks to 'reclaim and incorporate the personal and political context of knowledge construction' (Brown & Strega, 2005, p. 7). Similarly, Potts and Brown (2005, p. 18) argue that, 'we do not have to wait for a job description that says "anti-oppressive researcher" before we can do anti-oppressive research'. To achieve transformation, Baines (2011) asks that we employ thoughtful critique and scepticism, while opposing the mainstream social work tendency to uncritically accept labels. While acknowledging that this can be a messy and uneven process, Baines recommends that we take a radical stance, aligning ourselves with other allies in the struggle for social justice because:

We will remember the times we advocated for and with clients and found a way to improve things, the times we helped build campaigns to resist cutbacks, the participatory processes we helped to develop for program evaluations, and the many times we marched, advocated, sang, laughed, cried and dreamed about a better future with our clients, co-workers and fellow activists (Baines, 2011, p. 24).

The ideas in this quote from Donna Baines encapsulate what social work means to me. As a former social work service user and like the majority of people I have worked with as a social work practitioner, I know that people want their worker—even in mandated relationships—to truly believe in their dignity and worth as people; to see and to *hear* them. Singing, laughing and crying acknowledges and solidifies a shared humanity that must be present in social work practice if we are genuine in seeking social justice, human rights and dignity for the people we work with.

## Overview of Chapters

By employing the theoretical framework set out in this chapter, this thesis is formed by knitting together critiques of the existing literature, the insights of a radical social work

perspective enhanced by intersectional feminist theory and by seeing and hearing ex-prisoners' experience as expertise. The thesis unfolds in a somewhat unconventional way. The mixed methods approach I have taken involves a critical analysis of existing scholarly literature, the experiential knowledge of ex-prisoners through their contributions via Photovoice integrated with an ethnographic viewpoint. I extend the analysis by considering where these ideas collide, concur and clash. The participants' voices and images are the heroines and heroes of this thesis. Because the Photovoice method is so integral to this research, the following chapter details the methodology of the research undertaken for this thesis. I describe how I came to recruit participants to my study, introduce Photovoice and explain how it works, and detail the scope and substance of its place in this thesis. I argue that Photovoice is a particularly useful and appropriate tool for the purpose. Here I also discuss the limitations of the scope of this research project. I conclude with the 'radical' ways that this research has been used to engage with individuals and groups outside of academia (Finlay, 2002), who would not normally find an interest in, or have access to, academic research findings.

Australia's history as a penal colony has continuing effects in the way that prison experience is understood. Yet, the geographical location of this research—Adelaide, South Australia—places it in a historically intriguing context. This history, alongside the trajectory of interdisciplinary scholarship on prisons and prisoners, will be outlined in Chapter 3. My main contention is that historically, research on prisons and prisoners privileges an individualising framework, when in fact prison experience is strongly tied to social stratifications and collective identities. The individualising nature of this approach seeps into the ways in which criminalised women and men are treated in the current moment, with, I argue, detrimental effects. Chapter 4 introduces the twelve participants who participated in the project and outlines the circumstances and personal histories that played a role in their imprisonment. Chapter 5 conceptualises imprisonment as violence, where retribution outweighs any potential for rehabilitation. Central to my analysis in this chapter is my challenge to the commonly held assumption that people held in prisons are protected from violence and abuse with the 'guarantee' of human rights.

In Chapter 6 the participants share their experiences of imprisonment. Here they talk about boredom, violence and how their human rights were stripped from them. Chapter 7 focusses on the way the criminal justice system remains central to experiences of release. It explains how social workers are co-opted into social control roles and the impact that neoliberalism has on human service work with released prisoners. I explore the role of

prison staff in this chapter, while the Prison Industrial Complex and its associated 'therapeutic' industries are critiqued. In Chapter 8 the participants talk about the release experiences that complicated their re-entry into the community. Chapter 9 pairs what went well for the participants on their release, where they found hope, support and growth alongside the literature on what does work to keep people out of prison. In the final chapter, I consider what conclusions can be drawn from the project as a whole, suggesting ways to radically rethink imprisonment by de-centring the use of prisons to resolve social issues.

This introductory chapter has discussed the context for this project and my motivation for undertaking the research. In this chapter, I outlined my research questions and addressed the importance of the use of language and have described the theoretical framework that this research rests upon. Previewing the broad scope of the thesis, I offered a chapter by chapter outline of the project. In the following chapter I build a case for why I have chosen to use Photovoice as an approach.



## Chapter 2: Method and methodology

If my conscious eye is sleeping or afraid, my guardian eye often reminds me to take pictures. Jo Spence in, *What can a Woman do with a Camera?* (1995, p. 93)

### Introduction

As I explained in the previous chapter, I wanted to hear directly from participants about their experiences of imprisonment and release in a way that positioned them as experts. To do this, I needed to find a way to learn about their experiences that was radically different from traditional research approaches used with criminalised people. In this research, I consider lived experience as important knowledge. As Carter, Everitt and Hudson (1992, p. 112) explain, 'experience is not a second-rate form of knowledge: the examination of personal experience can be a crucial step in developing theoretical and empirical material'. Convict criminologists<sup>12</sup> Richards and Ross firmly believe that researchers must speak directly with criminalised people to ensure a 'convict perspective' when researching prisons and punishment (2003, p. 244). They argue that privilege must be given to the evidence provided by people who have experienced the pain of incarceration, while outsiders and allies must be willing to hear stories that locate criminalisation within the 'socio-political constructions of class domination and the logical priorities of capitalism' (Richards & Ross, 2001, p. 186). To meet the challenge of ensuring that former prisoners had a voice that could be heard by outsiders, Photovoice seemed like a good fit for this research. Photovoice is a participatory action research (PAR) method, influenced by feminist theory, Marxist philosophy and the teaching and thoughts of Paulo Freire (Davis, 2008, Molloy, 2007, Wang, 1999).

In this chapter I explain the theoretical framework underpinning Photovoice and illustrate how I used that framework in the design, implementation and analysis used in this thesis. I describe the modifications I made to Wang's (1999) Photovoice method, discuss ethical considerations, the recruitment procedures and the challenges I encountered along the way. I conclude by outlining the steps I took in choosing which photographs and narratives to discuss in later chapters and explain how I disseminated the research.

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<sup>12</sup> Convict Criminology is an area of criminology led by former prisoners who, fed up with the 'positivist, functionalist and labelling approaches' found in mainstream criminology, decided to create a formal network that would critically challenge this approach. Members of the *New School of Convict Criminology* are criminalised men and women who have earned academic qualifications and contribute to scholarly research, writing and teaching from a 'convict perspective'. For more see: <http://www.convictcriminology.org/about.htm>

Although Photovoice tends to be modified to suit particular communities and contexts,<sup>13</sup> essentially, Photovoice begins with community members and facilitators agreeing to take action and deciding upon which issues are important to them. Participants are trained to use camera equipment and schooled in ethical approaches to photographing in public. Next, people head into their community, taking photographs that represent their concerns. Afterwards, participants and facilitators meet as a group to analyse the photographs, later taking those findings to a wider public with the intent of influencing policy decisions. The rationale behind using photographs is that images are likely to resonate with 'time poor' policy makers by creating lasting reminders that words alone would not (Wang & Burris, 1997), while for participants being able to articulate their experience with the aid of images can reduce anxieties around not 'knowing' what to say.

Photovoice has been used as a community development method, where using Photovoice aims to empower the disempowered, encourage community members to engage in mutual aid and to develop policy through social action, while 'portraying the realities' of their oppression (Molloy, 2007, p. 42). It is a means of seeking social justice and 'nurtures self-advocacy' that can educate the wider community while, at the same time, raises the critical consciousness of the group (Molloy, 2007, p. 45). Sometimes Photovoice has been used more specifically as a form of group consciousness raising, enabling group members to see that their 'private pains' are actually a collective experience (Mills, 2000). Mostly though, Photovoice is an action research method, where academic researchers either have a previous connection with, or create a new relationship with a group or community with a view to working together to address a social issue important to them. This approach acknowledges that communities closest to the issue are likely to know as much—if not more—than professionals or 'experts'.

Based upon documentary photography and visual anthropology methods (Banks, 2001; Collier & Collier, 1986), the defining feature of Photovoice is that participants produce and analyse their own data. Grounded in lived experience, Photovoice aims to address significant structural problems (McIntyre, 2003). By having participants create knowledge based on their lived experience, Photovoice can develop new ways of seeing and understanding the context of social problems. Photovoice facilitates community participation in identifying and resolving social problems and seeks to influence policy and public awareness.

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<sup>13</sup> See for example; (Castleden & Garvin, 2008; Newman, et al., 2009; Stevens, 2010; Sethi, 2016).

Often ignored in favour of individual interventions (Mendes & Binns, 2013, p. 605), promoting community participation and development are core tasks for social workers (AASW, 2010, pp. 19-20). It is in the community space that the social work profession's commitment to dignity, social justice and human rights can be claimed. One of the main purposes of community development is to achieve human rights through what Jim Ife calls 'rights from below' (2009). Ife clarifies the importance of community work in all social work endeavours, arguing that:

We must understand community development in a broad sense, as an approach to working, living and progressive change and as a way of thinking, rather than simply as an occupation or a set of practice prescriptions' (Ife, 2009, p. 49).

Photovoice is a research method with the potential for claiming 'rights from below', as it provides a way for participants to articulate the needs of their community and pursue social rights by seeking to transform social policy, the responsibility of which is usually placed in the hands of those 'above' them such as politicians and policy makers.

Caroline Wang and colleagues (1999; Wang & Burris, 1997) are credited with developing Photovoice in their much-cited research into the health needs of women in rural China. Since then, Photovoice has been used with many communities and groups, including homeless youth (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000), people who have a disability (Newman, et al., 2009), Indigenous communities (Castleden & Garvin, 2008) and other 'diverse' populations (Stevens, 2010) in order to hear the voices of people least likely to have a voice, but most likely to be affected by policy decisions and social service provision.

Rather than generating *data*, PAR aims to *create* knowledge and recognises that, together, a group knows more than the sum of individuals' knowledge (Fine & Torre, 2004; Fine 2012). PAR seeks to democratise processes concerned with the creation of knowledge by enlisting lived experience as the benchmark in informing research. PAR has six underlying principles. It: 1) is grounded in lived experience; 2) is developed in partnership; 3) addresses significant issues; 4) works with people; 5) develops new ways of seeing and; 6) leaves infrastructure in its wake (Bradbury & Reason, 2003).

Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 1) maintain that PAR:

seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

Photovoice works well when used with disadvantaged, marginalised communities, whose members often attract stigma or contempt (Link & Phelan, 2001; Winnik & Bodkin, 2008). People and groups who attract stigma are usually researched 'on' to find out what is

'wrong' with them, rarely asked to contribute beyond the narrow confines of deficiency focussed research. Ex-prisoners certainly fall into this category—as stressed by Shadd Maruna, who argues:

...discussion with offenders is largely based on a deficit model, illustrating all of the handicaps and obstacles faced by the sample, rather than emphasising the group's collective strengths and abilities (2001, p. 57).

Using Photovoice in this project aims to create new knowledge by encouraging participants to explore and demonstrate their strengths, while challenging the dominant discourse of their lives—a discourse that is dominated by the voices of people without intimate knowledge or lived experience of imprisonment.

## Photovoice theories

Photovoice relies heavily on the use of a feminist approach to research. Feminist research methods strive for researcher reflexivity and equitable power relationships, acknowledging that it is those *with* power that determine discourse (Wang, et al, 2000, p. 87). Photovoice unashamedly attempts to share power between participants and researchers. Participants choose which issues they would like to address and their input is integral in the analysis of the data they produce. Feminist research methodologies aim to give equal attention to the 'social and cultural context of events as well as the events themselves' (Parr, 1998, p. 89). An appealing perspective of feminism's influence on research is provided by Shulamit Reinharz, who argues that 'feminist research is connected to social change and social policy questions' (1992, p. 251). Similarly, Fook (1993) stresses the importance of unlocking the consciousness of the oppressed as an aid to empowering individuals and communities as central to feminist social work practice. Although research designed using a feminist framework pays attention to the social and cultural contexts of people's lives and challenges normative gender stereotypes, not all feminist research attends to race and class, hence the deployment of a theoretical framework informed by intersectional feminist analysis.

Reinharz (1992) reminds feminist social researchers that 'feminism is a perspective, not a research method' in and of itself (p. 240). Feminist research requires 'creativity and variety' (p. 243), is not tied to any one method or approach and is informed by 'feminist distrust' to critique the 'conventions of any academic discipline' (p. 247). The strength of feminist research is, that while it is guided by feminist theory, it is transdisciplinary, strives to represent human diversity and aims to create social change (pp. 249-258). Feminist research rejects 'detached passionless or cool objectivity', instead it includes the

researcher as a person—where they acknowledge their own experiences as a starting point and report the changes to themselves as a part of *doing* the research (Reinharz, 1992, pp. 258-261). Feminist researchers embrace the potential ‘blurring’ between the role of ‘researcher’ and ‘subject’, seeking to actively involve the people they study, while their writing aims to develop a relationship between themselves, participants and the reader (pp. 263-269).

Once on the margins of research methodologies, feminist and participatory research methods have gained a strong foothold in the social sciences (Kovach, 2005, p. 24). Brown and Strega (2005, p. 11) argue that social science research has traditionally ‘silenced and distorted the experiences of those on the margins, taking a deficit-informed approach to explaining their lives and experiences’. Participatory methods like Photovoice aim to engage and empower participants to produce knowledge outside of traditional ‘scientific’ means of data collection. Photovoice gives a voice to the silenced and access to ‘unfamiliar’ spaces by the (once) invisible and aims to disturb and interrupt dominant discourse. Feminist PAR approaches reject dominant research traditions, recognise that knowledge is socially constructed and seeks egalitarian power relations between researchers and participants. The beauty of feminist research methods is that approaches, procedures and findings tend to be neither tidy nor linear—this is especially true of this research project.

Embracing an intersectional perspective means paying attention to class struggles and class oppression as it intersects with race and gender. Karl Marx and his colleague, Friedrich Engels, theorised that class struggles shape historical change (Marx & Engels, 1848/1948). Marx believed that the alienation of labour, or the separation of workers from the means of production, held society back from fully realising the potential progression of the social order through creativity and community (Marx & Engels, 1848/1948; Ollman, 1971). In terms of research, traditionally, the voices of the oppressed have also been separated from the production of knowledge. This has privileged the perspectives of the bourgeoisie in their pursuit of social and political advantage. The discrediting and exploitation of proletariat labour (and knowledge and experiences), forms the foundations for struggle between oppressors and the oppressed (Marx & Engels, 1848/1948). Most relevant to the use of Photovoice and other participatory research methods is that Marxists believe that wide participation by members of society is the hallmark of good government and social planning (Mullaly, 2007, p. 145). Further, Marx stressed the importance of

combining theory and action as 'praxis' in the process of the struggle for equality. Praxis is central to the Photovoice method.

The teaching approaches of Paulo Freire's have strongly influenced the Photovoice methodology (Wang, 1999). From his experience in working with labourers and farmhands in his home country of Brazil, Freire realised that there was a 'culture among the dispossessed' (Freire, 1970). He saw and felt a sense of fatigue amongst his beloved community that led them to believe that they had no way of challenging their oppression. Freire understood that this fatigue was a result of economic, social and political domination which combined to submerge them under the burden and violence of oppression. Freire wanted his people to be liberated but knew that this could only be possible through collectively raising their critical consciousness through community education. Freire believed that this approach would mean his people would be emancipated from their oppression while at the same time educating their oppressors, liberating them from their own power. Freire, like Marx, argued that only the oppressed could liberate themselves via 'meaningful praxis' (hooks, 1994, p. 47) or the practical application of theory.

For social workers—and especially community development educators and practitioners—Freire's work is incredibly influential. His concepts around teaching resonate closely with the work we do (Hegar, 2012). He challenged the power implied by the dichotomy of teacher and student, arguing that 'there is no teaching without learning' (Freire, 1998, p. 29). Related specifically to Photovoice and social work, this translates closely to, the 'client' and the 'worker' or the 'researcher' and the 'researched', where 'interventions' and 'research' can perpetuate and re-inscribe power differentials and social injustice. Therefore, the teacher, social worker or researcher is not the lone expert. Rather, when social work researchers work together with the community in question, their shared knowledge, skills and abilities are more powerful than if they were to work separately.

For Freire, community development approaches can simultaneously empower individuals and entire communities (Purcell, 2009). Henry Giroux acknowledged the powerful potential of Freire's critical pedagogy, believing that it offers:

a way of thinking beyond the present, soaring beyond the immediate confines of one's experiences, entering into a critical dialogue with history and imagining a future that did not merely reproduce the present (Giroux, 2010, para 7).

Photovoice is informed by Freire's concept of the three levels of group consciousness (Sakamoto & Pitner, 2005). At the lowest level of consciousness people may be passive in accepting outsiders' assumptions of their 'inherent inferiority' (Freire, 1970) and are generally unaware of the oppression that mediates their situation. At the middle level,

group members understand the unfairness in social reality but still place 'blame' for this within, rather than outside their group. This is sometimes referred to as lateral or horizontal oppression (Mullaly, 2002, p. 124; Prilleltensky, 2003). It is only once people reach the third level of consciousness that group members begin to fully understand the impact of social structures upon their lives and, rather than seeing those structures as beyond reform, believe in the possibilities of change and their strength to initiate that change.

Photovoice aims to enable participants to reach and engage at the third level of consciousness. This is made possible as Photovoice participants come together with a collective commitment to investigate a problem; to engage in self and collective reflection, while purposely seeking social change, with the overarching aim to secure solutions that benefit the people involved (McIntyre, 2003, p. 391). This raised consciousness can remain in a group or community, long after the research project is complete.

Many researchers writing about Photovoice research either gloss over or neglect to mention the Marxist influence (Molloy, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to draw on Marxist theory when using Photovoice because Marxism focuses on the 'structural nature of social problems and political issues' by drawing on the knowledge of people 'who do not hold power, own the means of intellectual production, or benefit from high cultural status' (Cox & Nilsen, 2014, p. 5). Failure to acknowledge that Marxist theory buttresses the logic of Photovoice research and is possibly due to the perceived conflict between Marxist and feminist ideas. Engaging with the work of Marx and Freire can be troublesome for feminists, sometimes confronting, because of their male-centric language. For some, this is reason enough to dismiss or ignore mainstream (or 'malestream') Marxism. Yet many second wave feminists, along with members of other social movements whose goal is to end oppression, 'identify strongly with a Marxist class analysis' (Dunbar, 1970, p. 486).<sup>14</sup> Writing about the scholarship of Paulo Freire, bell hooks (1994) describes his use of sexist language as a constant 'source of anguish' for herself and other feminists, but she argues that this should not prevent feminists from learning from his 'critical insights', because if we do we are ignoring a valuable resource (1994, pp. 49-50). Specifically, in research with ex-prisoners, Marxist theory is salient in that the working or under-classes and racial minorities attract the most (negative) attention from the state (LeBaron & Roberts, 2010). As a result, they are the people most likely to be imprisoned, to have their human rights jeopardised while imprisoned (Cunneen, 2007) and, post-release, to experience 'economic

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<sup>14</sup> See also, (Davis, 1983).

exploitation, political disempowerment and social inequality' (Stephenson, Stirling, & Wray, 2014, p. 411). Put simply, criminalisation amplifies oppression.

## The politics of speaking for others

According to Fiona Williams (1989), issues of race, gender and class have been overlooked or marginalised in the discipline of social policy. Williams believed that a feminist critique of social policy was vital, especially because socially constructed oppressions intersect at the heart of the welfare state in its allocation and distribution. Ultimately, informing social policy means to speak for the needs of other people, yet this is not as simple as one might immediately think. Linda Alcoff (1991) expands on this in her essay, *The Problem of Speaking for Others*. She writes that:

[t]here is a strong, albeit contested, current within feminism which holds that speaking for others—even for other women—is arrogant, vain, unethical and politically illegitimate. Feminist scholarship has a liberatory agenda which almost requires that women scholars speak on behalf of other women, and yet the dangers of speaking across differences of race, culture, sexuality, and power are becoming increasingly clear to all (1991, p. 6)

The speaker's social and privilege location can be significant in determining if one has the authority to speak for others. Speaking for the oppressed can, in itself be an act of oppression, being both harmful and dishonourable. Importantly, how those words are interpreted is, to a large extent, determined by the social location of the listener (Alcoff, 1991). Because very often social workers do speak for others it is important to understand the politics of doing so, and the potential for our own privileged 'professionalised' view to overshadow the lived experience of the people we speak for (Ife, 1997). Criminalised people are seldom consulted in the development of policies and procedures that directly affect them and are rarely given the opportunity to have their voices heard. Yet, penal policy, legislation, program direction and funding directly impacts on criminalised people, their families and communities. Perhaps it is that their criminal identity means they do not 'deserve' the right to speak, or the fear that, if given a voice, it will be used as a platform to protest their innocence.

These considerations have led me to ask myself, what right do I, or the twelve participants in this research, have to speak for or about the needs of others? How can I or the participants know what these needs are? Michael Ignatieff (1984) asks a similar question, challenging his readers to move past focussing on what others need to survive, asking instead, what they need to flourish. He posits that we must be careful to not assume that rights stop at providing basic needs as, by doing so, we may lose the chance for a 'decent



society'<sup>15</sup> where belonging and dignity are the language of human good (Ignatieff, 1984, pp. 10-14). For Ignatieff, we should not speak about the need of strangers without using flourishing as a framework. Anne Bishop (2002) has a slightly different perspective on this, arguing that if we do speak for others it needs to be done in consultation and in the spirit of being an ally, rather than as an expert or professional. Canadian feminist, scholar, prisoners' rights advocate and human rights activist Karlene Faith speaks to the notion of flourishing as a right, arguing that 'the first human right is to speak in one's own voice' (Faith, 2000, p. 160).

While this project was designed to give participants space to voice their own thoughts, ideas and opinions, later in this thesis it will become apparent that many participants spoke about the needs of others as well as themselves, immediately contradicting assumptions and stereotypes about what constitutes an 'ex-prisoner'—as being selfish with little empathy for others. Given ample time to think about what they wanted to say and a safe space to do so, participants did not protest their innocence, rather they were prepared to look deeply at themselves, their experiences, their social location and the policies, practices and procedures that have both helped and hindered their progress post-release.

### Photovoice as radical social work research

Despite the apparent match between Photovoice and social work research, projects from the social work discipline using Photovoice are relatively rare (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). Perhaps this is partly due to the 'professionalization' of social work practice, where professional insight is privileged over lived experience (Anleu, 1992; Brown & Strega, 2005). A casualty of the neo-liberal climate of service provision (Ferguson, 2004; Wallace & Pease, 2011) the commitment to grassroots, community driven research to inform policy and practice has been left behind in favour of 'evidence-based practice' (Webb, 2001), 'fixing' individuals (Fook, 1993), managing risk and meeting 'Key Performance' and 'Quality Assurance' indicators demanded by 'Third Way' approaches (Ferguson & Woodward, 2009, p. 110; Beddoe, 2010).<sup>16</sup> For these reasons, a combination of feminist

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<sup>15</sup> For more on what would constitute a 'decent society', see Margalit, (1996).

<sup>16</sup> Described by Isaac (2001, p. 61) as 'neoliberalism with a human face', the 'Third Way' is a political ideology created by Tony Blair and sociologist Professor Anthony Giddens in the late 1990s (Jordan & Jordan, 2002). Third way politics involves campaigning from the centre, acceptance of the inevitability of capitalism and its use to deliver welfare policies steeped in surveillance, obligation and social control. Third Way political philosophy posited that we live in a 'classless society', while at the same time selling itself with the promise of middle-class membership to the working-classes (Ferguson, Lavalette & Mooney, 2002, p. 55). Third Way politics were embraced by Bill Clinton in the US, while here in Australia, Third Way ideologies became synonymous with former ALP frontbencher, Mark Latham, albeit in a 'bastardised' form (Hamilton, 2001, p. 90).

and radical social work perspectives is essential in the pursuit of emancipatory, egalitarian social work research. Of explicit relevance for this project, Photovoice challenges the politics of representation, providing ex-prisoners a means to surveil operations of power, validating their shared experience while seeking policy and structural change, rather than pursuing changes to individual behaviours.

My approach in this thesis aims to add to the theoretical framework employed by all social workers, not just those who identify as radical or progressive. This potential for considering new perspectives to promote growth and change is one of the strengths of the radical movement which, while unable to change the past, can work to change the future.

Feminist and radical social work values and ideals are woven throughout this project, while the use of photographs has ensured that interest in this research does not sit on a shelf gathering dust, but has extended beyond the world of academia.

### The power of images

Using the arts in research can push the boundaries of inquiry and representation (Knowles & Cole, 2008, 58), but using arts that require skills and artistic talent such as painting, drawing or writing poetry can create fear for participants of judgment by those who view the work. Using photography in research has the potential to allay these fears as people have more familiarity with the medium of photography, being less likely to feel the need to self-censor images that may not seem 'good enough'. Producing a poor-quality photograph does not create the same fear of producing 'bad art' (Craig, 2009, p. 20), due in most part to the ability to keep on taking photographs, with little time or cost investment. Images can be digitally manipulated to enhance composition, lighting and clarity. Therefore, the use of photography is fundamentally 'democratic' in that it does not require a lot of training or skill and because it is so easily accessible.

Photography is a way of seeing, where composition, lighting and subject matter can tell stories in profound ways. As Stzo, Furman and Langer (2005, p. 141) suggest, 'photographs are the eyes with a memory'. Take the iconic image, *American Gothic* (1942) created by African American photographer, Gordon Parks (Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1 AMERICAN GOTHIC, GORDON PARKS**

Source: American Social History Project

*American Gothic* is a parody of the modernist artist Grant Wood's (1930) painting of the same name (Figure 2). Taken on Parks' first day as a photographer for the *Farm Security Administration Project*,<sup>17</sup> Parks instructions were to document everyday life in Washington, DC. Within minutes, and without leaving the building, Parks met Ella Watson, a cleaner whose moving account of entrenched racism, poverty and despair endured daily by her community led Parks to pose Ella holding her cleaning tools in front of the American flag. This image symbolises Jim Crow segregation in the United States and became an iconic image for the civil rights movement (Kidd, 2004).

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<sup>17</sup> The Farm Security Project was funded by the Roosevelt Administration with the goal of convincing the American people to agree to a raft of social engineering ideals. It employed photographers to document the struggles of poverty during the depression in the United States (Kidd, 2004)



**FIGURE 2 AMERICAN GOTHIC, GRANT WOOD**

Source: Art Institute, Chicago

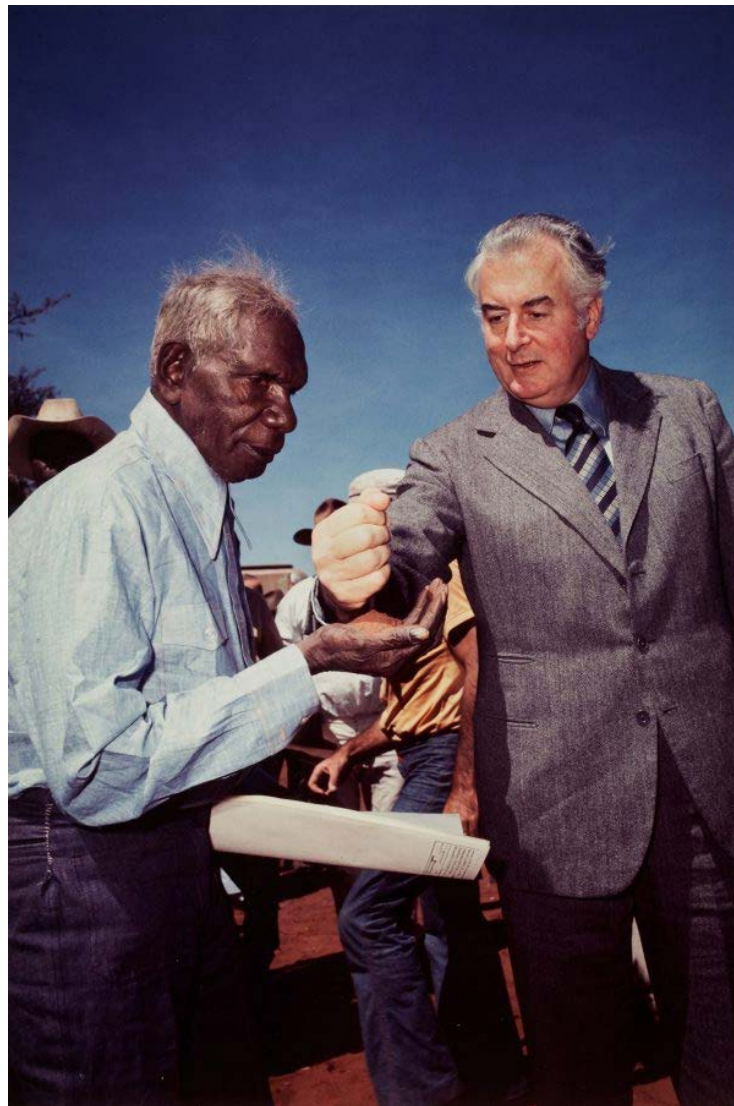
Photographs can record history in moving ways. The image captured by Mervyn Bishop, the first professional Aboriginal Australian photographer, of Gough Whitlam pouring sand into the hand of Vincent Lingiari (Figure 3) is an immediately recognisable symbol of the struggle for Aboriginal Land Rights (NSW Art Gallery, 2008).<sup>18</sup>

Photographic evidence makes it harder to 'disbelieve' than a written list of facts and claims. For example, American photographer Lewis Hine is recognised for documenting (illegal) child labour practices, providing visual proof that children as young as three years of age were working in unsafe conditions. His images added weight to the campaign to stop such breaches, eventually influencing public support and substantial reform (Kidd,

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<sup>18</sup> This photograph was taken in 1975 during a ceremony where the lands of the Wave Hill Cattle Station in the Northern Territory were handed back to their rightful owners, the Gurindji people, through their activist leader, Vincent Lingiari. Wave Hill was owned by Vestey's, a British pastoral company which employed local Aboriginal people, but paid them far less than non-Aboriginal employees. Mr Lingiari led a strike where, in 1966, more than 200 Aboriginal workers and their families walked off Wave Hill, setting up a camp nearby and running an extensive campaign to reclaim their rights. The Gurindji people called Mr Whitlam, 'Judgadi', meaning 'big man'. When Mr Whitlam died in 2014 was mourned by many Arnhem Lands clans as a 'true friend'.

2004; Macieski, 2015). Throughout (recent) history, hidden social problems have been brought to the public's attention via photography. As actor Will Smith quipped during a recent interview, 'racism isn't getting worse, it's getting filmed' (Johnson, 2016).



**FIGURE 3 GOUGH WHITLAM AND VINCENT LINGIARI, MERVYN BISHOP**

Source: Art Gallery, NSW

The late Jo Spence argued that creating photographs can make the once unseen visible by re-enacting memories (1982; 1995), be a safe way to speak, and could enable communication without words. Spence saw the power of using photography as a political tool to generate discussion and question the public (un)representation of working class women. Spence had a confrontational style, and a commitment to showing aspects of women's lives that were rarely seen, including highlighting the 'secrets' of working-class women in Britain, her self-documented battles with breast cancer (Figure 4) and, later, leukemia (Dennet, 2009).

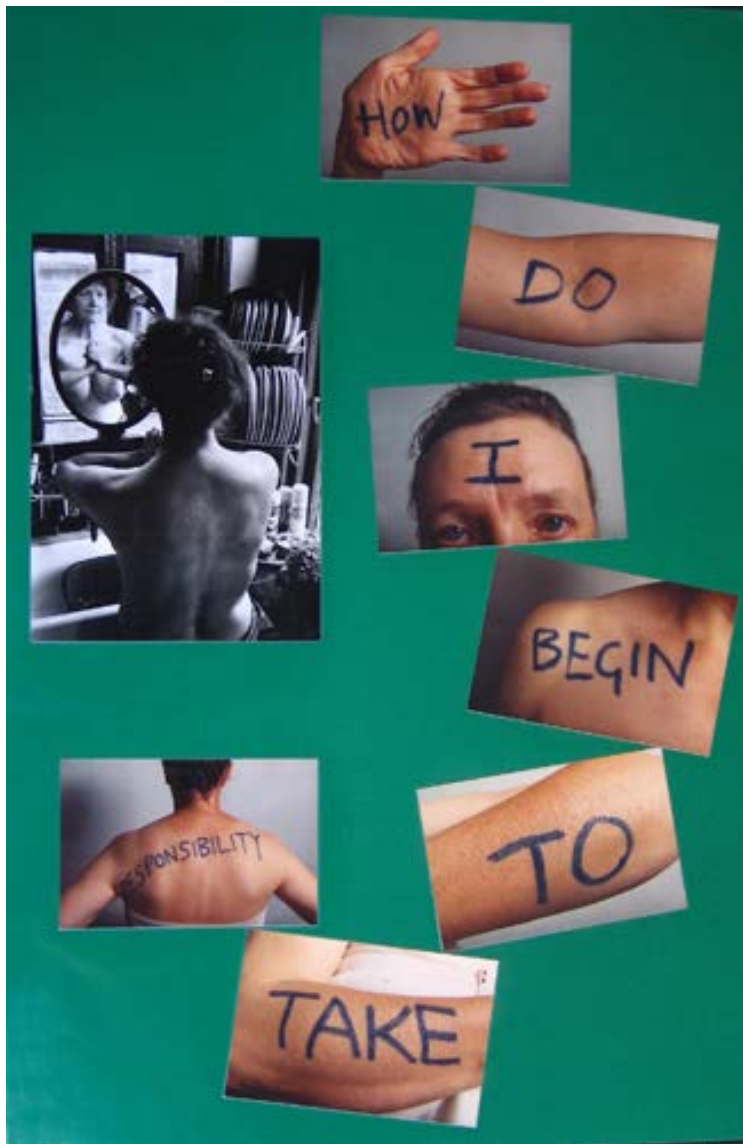


FIGURE 4 THE PICTURE OF HEALTH? JO SPENCE

Source: Jo Spence Online Collection

Writing about using photographs to convey the atrocities of war, Susan Sontag proposed that photographs are a 'means of making real (or more real) matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore' (2003, p. 7). However, even photographs of war atrocities are seen through the 'filter' of the viewer's own social position and political perspectives. Take for example the aftermath of the publication of photographs taken inside Abu Ghraib prison during the Iraq war. Forced to pose naked, wearing hoods and in dehumanising poses, Iraqi prisoners of war were photographed with their captors, standing over them like big game hunters; some prisoners were smeared in excrement or held on a leash like a dog (Hersh, 2004). At the time of the photographs becoming public, Australian Prime Minister John Howard spoke of being 'appalled by the photographs', but immediately deflected and minimised the torture, praising the US for punishing individual

perpetrators rather than questioning practices of abuse as a tactic of war (Allard, 2004), a war that millions of people across the world told their governments that they did not want (Boyle, 2013). Later, in a discussion with Angela Davis regarding the Abu Ghraib images, Eduardo Mendieta pointed out that people seem to be ‘fixated on the fact that the photographs—not that torture—exists’ (Davis, 2005, p. 46).

Using images in ‘scientific’ research is not new. When the camera was first invented, its most common application was by inventors, chemists, astronomers and botanists (Locke, 2015). As the twentieth century progressed, cameras became both accessible and affordable, leading to photography becoming a popular hobby and a means for capturing every day, commonplace events. Technological advances mean that anyone with a mobile phone can produce and share quality photographs. Yet, these advances have a more sinister side as they have helped create a society that is under increasing surveillance under the premise of keeping society ‘safe’.<sup>19</sup> Thus, while on one hand, using a camera can be an empowering way of documenting community concerns, cameras can be, at the same time, a tool of oppression and surveillance.

Surveillance becomes central in the lives of criminalised people. While incarcerated, prisoners’ lives are closely surveilled, through the design and architecture of the prison (Semple, 1993), observation (Sykes, 1958), physical body searches by prison officers (McCulloch & George, 2008) and the monitoring of communication with the outside world through telephone or mail (Wunder, 1995). Post-release, electronic tracking technology (Winkler, 1993) and parole conditions (Halsey, 2007) monitor the movement and behaviour of ex-prisoners, sometimes for years. This surveillance is in addition to the increased attention of welfare and social service providers.

In her book, *What can a Woman do with a Camera?*, Joan Solomon explains that ‘the ways we [women] are positioned in society in terms of gender, class, race and sexual orientation’ are socially constructed by those who *have* power (Solomon, 1995, p. 9). Daily we are confronted by the power relations present in images created by the ‘institution of the mass media’ such as that of man/woman, (or for this project—citizen/criminal) that tell us who or what we ‘should’ (or should not) be (Solomon, 1995, p. 9). As Solomon points out, even photography is a gendered practice, where ‘how to’ photography magazines

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<sup>19</sup> Recently, at the 2018, 5<sup>th</sup> Ashes test match held at the Sydney Cricket Ground, this wholesale surveillance of the community occurred through the presence of ‘800 high-definition digital cameras that can capture the images of crowds approaching the stadium from up to 1.5 km away’ (Morri, 2018), well before their entry into the stadium. For more see, <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/facial-recognition-cameras-to-protect-cricket-fans-at-scg/news-story/edd5cb7f7327cdb4afad6e276650c89a>

include sections on photographing the nude that are little more than 'soft porn' and where women with perfect, model-like hands are used to advertise photographic equipment (1995, p. 10). For John Berger, what is seen from behind a camera, is 'relative to your position' in society (1972, p. 18), where the person creating the image is as much 'a part of the record' as what is being photographed (1972, p. 10). Since making the observation that 'men act and women appear' the association between scopophilia and power as a thoroughly gendered arrangement has become obvious (Berger, 1972, p. 47). Thus, placing a camera in the hands of someone with little power to document their experiences—such as a criminalised woman or man—in any way they choose, is an inherently subversive act, radical in subject matter and approach.

## Research procedures

Social workers are guided by ethical codes; understanding and responding to ethical dilemmas are important elements of good social work practice. Research activity widens the possibility of ethical issues arising and, because of this, researchers in Australia are expected to adhere to the standards set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NECHR, 2007). The NECHR (2007) (from hereafter called 'the statement') is explicit in its expectations that researchers will adhere to their values and principles of ethical conduct (p. 9). The statement's values of 'respect for human beings, research merit and integrity, justice and beneficence' (p. 9) closely align with the values that guide the social work profession. The statement acknowledges that qualitative research contributes to new knowledge by enabling researchers to better understand complex social processes and to make sense of the experiences of communities through 'eliciting contextual data' (pp. 25-6). The statement explains that research projects must have merit and integrity, exhibit justice in participation, be respectful of participants' identity, deal respectfully with sensitive topics and information and researchers should 'reflect on the impact' that their research might have on participants and themselves (NECHR, 2007, pp. 27-8).

Throughout this research, I have kept the *Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010) close to my heart. I am acutely aware that 'data' is 'gifted' to researchers and believe that these gifts must be treated with respect and care. I carefully considered my methodology when designing this research, taking the statements in the social work Code of Ethics about social justice and human rights, not only at face value but through a feminist lens. This means that I am committed to critiquing male-centric, positivist research biases that privilege 'professionalism over relationships' in the spirit of contemporary feminist ethics (Pitt,



2014). The values in these statements and codes are integral to my research rationale, design, methodology and procedures.

Sometimes, researchers find that the process of gaining procedural ethics approval for research a roadblock that stymies their ideas or 'academic freedom' (Sykes & Piper, 2010), or experience 'ethics' as one of a series of hoops to jump through (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). However, I have found that adhering to formal ethical guidelines, although through a feminist lens, is not only important in 'doing no harm', but can provide a useful foundation for conceptualising the processes and procedures of a research project (Jarldorn, 2014). Rather than being an onerous task, writing an ethics application early in the research process can have an enormous benefit, adding clarity and precision to how research procedures might unfold (Jarldorn, 2014).

### Amendments and project modifications

Gaining ethics approval for research with human subjects, especially people who are considered at risk, vulnerable or 'political' can be challenging. By default, the participants in this project met these criteria. The relatively small prison population in South Australia means that participants may easily be identified, therefore special consideration was given as to what demographic information was sought and recorded. I did not ask participants about their crimes, although most chose to speak about them frankly in our initial (un-recorded) interview and later, seven participants provided photographs to help them discuss their trajectory into prison. To protect participants identities, there will be no discussion of specific crimes in my written work.

Given the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian criminal justice system and their cultural representation in images created by colonisers (NSW Art Gallery, 2008), I gave special consideration to possible ethical issues that may arise for Indigenous participants (AASW, 2010, p. 36). I sought and consulted texts relating to the appropriate ways of producing and displaying images and narratives, learning that there are specific protocols around the use of images, especially those that represent people who may have died. All documents (and three subsequent amendments) were submitted to the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee and *Yunggorendi*, the First Nations Centre at Flinders University for their consideration. Ethical clearance was granted in late 2013 (#6255).

Initially, I planned to present participants' work at an *OARS Community Transitions* (OARSCT) Annual General Meeting or another similar function, but as I continued to read I

understood the importance of seeking a wider audience for the Photovoice work (Kuratani & Lai, 2011), especially as I learned how little 'truth' the public knows about post-release experiences (Petersilia, 2001). I decided to seek an amendment to present the work as an exhibition at the 2015 *Adelaide Fringe Festival*. A second amendment asked for approval for the content of a visitor feedback form to be used at the Fringe and other exhibitions, and a third sought approval to approach and recruit participants from a local, women's post-release community group, *Seeds of Affinity*.

## Recruiting participants

In late 2013, after gaining initial ethics approval to recruit up to fifteen participants service users of OARSCT, I was awarded a small research grant to cover the cost of single use cameras, film developing, small photo albums, participant honorariums [3 x AUD\$40 per participant] and bus tickets for participants to travel to interviews. Limited funding and limited access to participants meant that I needed to make modifications to Wang and Burris's original Photovoice procedures (1997). Despite the practical difficulties, I was encouraged by others who have modified Photovoice to suit their project.

Prior to heading out into the field, Photovoice projects usually begin with one or more group sessions where participants and research facilitators decide upon the parameters of the project. Professional photographers are employed to teach the technical aspects of photo composition and reiterate ethical concerns of taking photographs in public. However, the group work approach is not appropriate for all people or cohorts. For example, in her Photovoice project exploring racism in Canada, Sethi (2016) chose to interview her participants individually, because many of her participants worked multiple jobs it was unlikely that they could all meet at the same time and location. The reasons I chose individual interviews in my project were a little more complicated. As well as the constraints around bail, parole and home detention, there was a real risk that the sharing of personal stories between people who may one day return to prison could potentially cause harm. Further, after working with criminalised people and in the field of addiction, I knew that setting strict meeting times were both culturally inappropriate (Tomaino, 2004) and aspirational at best. I also decided not to employ the use of a professional photographer to train participants for a few reasons. The costs would have been prohibitive, it could jeopardise the privacy of participants and, I wanted to keep the research 'organic' in every way. I was certain that participants would find creative ways to represent their views with minimal instruction. Although I worried that this individual approach could have undermined my commitment to collective knowledge and practices, I

built in opportunities for collective validation by exhibiting the images and having participants share their work with each other, albeit anonymously. In later chapters, there are many examples of a shared, group consciousness where similar experiences are expressed with a variety of images and narratives.

With ethics approval and research funding in place, I began recruiting participants. My ethics application stated that this would occur by people responding to flyers placed in OARSCT waiting rooms and boarding houses, enabling participant self-selection. OARSCT management verbally agreed to this, but this did not happen—instead OARSCT workers were directed to propose participants from their client lists. I was provided a contact number and first name of potential participants by just a few OARSCT workers. Initially I sent participants an SMS telling them who I was, asking for a preferred time to call. During the ensuing phone call, we briefly discussed the research and what constituted full participation. Participants were advised that they could choose their own pseudonym; that their identity would be kept confidential and that they would be informed of any publications, presentations or exhibitions that arose from the research. I reiterated that if they chose to participate or not, or later decided to withdraw from the project that it would not in any way affect the services they receive from OARSCT or any other service provider. I asked for a postal address to send the project information and for permission to call again in a week's time. I suggested that if they had difficulty understanding any part of the written material that they should ask a trusted friend or family member to read through it with them. I encouraged them to contact me if they had any further questions.<sup>20</sup> Within ten days of posting the information package, I called participants to organise a mutually convenient time and location for us to meet. Initially, six women and four men agreed to meet with me, with two of the women and one of the men identifying as Aboriginal.

Four of those initial recruits—including three Aboriginal people—became uncontactable after our initial meeting. Eventually, three women and three men who were OARSCT service users completed the 3 steps needed to fully participate. They are known in the project as 'Ruby', 'Kate', 'Gidget', 'David', 'Robert' and 'Trent'. Later, when speaking with an acquaintance about my research she informed me that she had spent time in prison and wanted to participate. Her research name is 'Deer'.

I began to see a noticeable difference between the women's and men's stories and after consulting my supervisors I decided to focus on recruiting additional women for the project. I found and approached *Seeds of Affinity: Pathways for Women*, a relatively new, post-

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<sup>20</sup> See the appendices for participation information documents.

release community group for women ex-prisoners. I sent them an email explaining the research and was invited to join them for a shared lunch to explain the project in person.

Over lunch that day, seven women expressed interest in participating, with one identifying as Aboriginal. Some of them wanted to start there and then, and seemed disappointed when I told them I would have to gain further ethics approval before we could start. This process took close to a month. By the time approval was granted, two women, including the Aboriginal woman, had become uncontactable. The five second-round of recruits who fully participated were 'Jennifer', 'Feeney', 'Georgia', 'Joy' and 'Stella'. By early-February 2015 the participants completed the data creation process, with twelve people—nine women and three men—completing each of the three steps.

While frustrating, I understand the drop-out rate of participants closely reflects current recidivism rates (Baldry, 2010). I knew from my own work experience that many ex-prisoners re-enter the community into chaotic lives, unstable homes and communities with competing demands. My project was not their priority. Moreover, many prisoners and ex-prisoners are sick of telling their story to 'professionals' without anything positive coming from doing so. For people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, this situation is compounded by personal and community experiences of loss and grief (Krieg, 2006), distrust and frustration at mainstream service provision (Pease, 2002) and the importance they may place on community obligations over and above any other 'Western' demands or needs (Bishop, Colquhoun, & Johnson, 2006). Additionally, I am acutely aware of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people constantly being the 'subjects' of research (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003), especially the research of white social workers—they may have feared that this was more of the same. Of course, some may have chosen not to participate for other reasons.

We began the research process by attending to the consent forms, and the up-front payment of honorariums.<sup>21</sup> Making the payment up-front was important in terms of seeking to keep operations of power as equal as possible. I reiterated that participants could decide to end the interview at any time without question or recourse and without forfeiting the up-front payment. I provided participants with a list of free social services in case they had personal issues arise as a result of our interview and as a resource for their future use. I explained that signing the consent form was not the end of the consent process asking permission to remain in contact so participants could check the accuracy of any

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<sup>21</sup> An honorarium of AUD\$40 in the form of a supermarket shopping voucher was paid at each of the three project steps; before the initial interview, upon completion of the photography phase and before our final interview.

written material for the purpose of publication and to notify them of any public displays of their work.

During the interviews most participants recounted stories spanning their childhood until the current time, recalling significant relationships, events or turning points. Without prompting, most spoke about the crime they committed and events that occurred before, during and after their incarceration. Importantly, all participants told me that they did not want to return to prison and most identified something or someone who had been integral in their re-entry goals. Many described how their prison experience had made them more accepting of 'difference and diversity'.

Participants were shown examples of other Photovoice projects to demonstrate how their data would be used. I purposely chose articles that used simple photographs while highlighting accompanying narratives. Along with a single-use camera, I provided participants with a handbook of basic instructions I designed for the project,<sup>22</sup> using ideas drawn from a variety of sources (Spence & Solomon, 1995; Banks, 2001). The only 'pilot' of the handbook prior to the research, was a small 'test run' with my teenage daughter.<sup>23</sup> Here, I was guided by Collier and Collier whose text instructing researchers in the use of photography suggests that the 'fascination with the technology and mystique of technical paraphernalia can be a deadly block to making significant camera records' (1986, p. 1). The handbook was never meant to be a set of instructions; rather, it included simple ideas for photo composition, suggestions to keep identities confidential and reiterated the importance of ethical practices when using cameras. This is because of the sensitive nature of either the participants or their families being identified as contributors to the research, especially if they were to say or show things that could potentially attract recourse. Anonymity would thus facilitate speaking freely.

Participants were invited to respond to the research question, *'if you had 15 minutes with a policy maker or politician, what would you want them to know about your experiences?'*

Apart from this guiding question and the ethical constraints, I made it clear that the only limit was their imagination. I feel that this kept the project within the spirit of PAR. I took brief notes during these initial discussions, later typing them up as de-identified field notes.

A guiding rationale in the genesis of Photovoice was that having access to a camera would empower participants (Wang & Burris, 1997). Nearly twenty years after Photovoice was developed, this is a different situation. Even the most basic mobile phones have a camera

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<sup>22</sup> See Appendix F

<sup>23</sup> Two of the images she created are in the final version of the handbook.

function and, as smartphones become ubiquitous, their inbuilt cameras are capable of providing images of similar quality as point and shoot cameras. Rather than utilizing this possible resource, I decided to use disposable, single-use cameras, costing less than AUD\$10 each. This meant that participants could collect data on an equal footing, having access to exactly the same equipment. Upon reflection, I am embarrassed that I had asked participants to do their best using such an outdated product, which gave them little chance to make mistakes—a situation not far removed from their post-release experience. I am not sure if the participants saw the similarities, but I can (now). If I had another opportunity to conduct a Photovoice project, I would seek funding for better quality equipment which would be more respectful of the participants and their expertise.

The participants either returned their camera in a pre-paid postage bag, dropped the camera off at a pre-organised place or sent me the images via email or phone. The usual process for Photovoice projects is to hold another group session after the films are developed to analyse the data. Instead, I met with participants individually to discuss the images they produced. I used an iterative approach, discussing previous participants' de-identified ideas with subsequent participants. These interviews were recorded and later transcribed, verbatim.

Despite my inexperience and the dated technology provided, the participants produced some impressive work, some going to extraordinary lengths to create their photographs. Many used humour or metaphor in their images and narratives. Most used props, two accompanied their photographs with poetry,<sup>24</sup> some took photographs of existing photographs, artwork, computer screens or newspaper clippings, while others involved family members or pets. Even though I did not think of asking them to take notes during the photography phase, four of the participants did, bringing them to our final meeting.

### The accidental ethnographer

Along with the participants' experiential knowledge contributed via Photovoice and my critical analysis of the literature, an unplanned research approach—ethnography—informs this project. As the thirteenth participant in this project, and as a feminist researcher, I know it is important to position myself (Reinharz, 1992; Kirsch, 1999). I also understand how ex-prisoners can distrust researchers from academia (Newbold, Ross, Jones, Richards, & Lenza, 2014), even those with a social justice agenda. *Doing* action research properly requires a long-term commitment from the researcher. Walking the 'action

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix A

research walk' meant that after completing the data collection and holding the initial exhibition of the Photovoice material, I attended another Seeds of Affinity community lunch to ensure that women who could not attend the exhibition could view the material and hear about the visitors' feedback. That day, I contributed a cake I baked, helped prepare lunch and stayed back to do the dishes. Not long after, Seeds of Affinity invited me to exhibit the Photovoice material at their high tea fundraiser. This has led to (to date) a continuing, three-year relationship with the organisation and its members. I now volunteer weekly in the kitchen, provide study support, participate in fund-raising and advocacy work, have co-delivered in-prison information sessions about the organisation and am on their board of management. This insider perspective across all levels of the organisation means that I have been privy to conversations and situations that outsiders rarely hear. A couple of times I have been mistaken for a former prisoner, once asked by a woman new to the group 'when did you get out?'<sup>25</sup> Being a 'seeds woman' provides me with a privileged viewpoint, that, while a completely unplanned and unexpected element of this research design has taught me a great deal about women's post-release experiences.

## Limitations

Every research project has limitations, and this project is no exception. As indicated earlier, initially I had hoped to interview anyone who self-selected to participate, and had agreement to do so from the recruiting agency. This did not happen and instead, the participants from OARSCT were the ones that workers felt were doing 'well'. Therefore, this project did not hear directly from the people who were 'hard to reach' (Duvnjak & Fraser, 2013), the ones who were unhappy service users, or the ones who chose not to be involved with social services of any kind. This aspect is not unique to this project though, and is a limitation of many social science research projects and social service evaluations. Nevertheless, by hearing from people who were 'doing well' a number of conclusions and recommendations can be drawn to inform how people released from prison might also be supported.

Another potential limitation is the relatively small number of participants. Qualitative research usually has small sample sizes, although this need not be seen as a drawback at all. Small qualitative projects tend to provide formative data that stimulates thinking. Indeed, one of the most well-known and analysed studies in the field of criminology, *The Jack-Roller* (1930), had just one participant, 'Stanley' (Maruna & Matravers, 2007). For this

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<sup>25</sup> I think this is mostly about class allegiance and the nature of the organisation which positions all members as equals.

project, the addition of the photography, the number of points of contact with the participants and the time needed to organise and hold public exhibitions of the work meant that it was beyond the scope of a PhD project to include more participants. Further, even though there were only twelve participants, I have been unable to find the space to address all their material within the word limit of this thesis.

A further limitation is the unequal number of women and men who participated. Initially this caused me concern, until I realised that many mixed-gender, ex-prisoner research projects include far fewer women than men. Sometimes, when women are included it is almost like a tacked-on afterthought, a tick-box affair of attempted inclusivity. While I am aware of one project that focussed on the experiences of fourteen former female prisoners and used the experiences of one man as a means of comparison (see Hampton, 1993), the role of the men in this project was more than just as a comparison, although their stories are—in places—quite different from the women's. To simplify the writing and analysis I could have 'cleaned up' my data by not including the men's photographs and testimonies but, this is an action research project. According to Hilary Bradbury (2010), action research has, at its core, respect for partnership and participation, so I believe that it would have been disrespectful and unethical to reject the work of three participants to simplify my task. However, if I was to undertake another project with ex-prisoners, it would focus entirely on women's experiences.

I acknowledge that by OARSCT proposing 'selected' service users to participate, and later the six women who self-selected to participate that the 'success' stories of some participants described in forthcoming chapters may not be typical. The people who completed this project were good at keeping appointments and were reasonably settled in their post-release lives. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the majority of the participants in this project were doing well, and they knew it.

The final limitation was that no First Nations Peoples completed each step of the project. Given their over-representation in custodial settings, both as young people, adults and women, I wish that this had not been the case. Their experiences and voices are typically silenced by systemic racism and paternalistic approaches to policy and service delivery. More than any other group of people, their prison experiences are brutal, damaging and shared collectively. It is so important that the voices of First Nations Peoples are clearly heard. First Nations Peoples must be central to any investigation, research (Taylor, 2016), responses and solutions of the violence of incarceration. I acknowledge though, that as a white, and (recently) educated social worker/researcher, my social location may very well



have been a barrier to their participation and, if they had participated, I may not have been able to do justice to their stories.

## Managing and transcribing the data

Eleven participants agreed to have the interview where we discussed their photographs audio-recorded. 'Jennifer' declined, instead submitting handwritten notes that explained her photographs and experience. Before these meetings, I uploaded each of the participant's photographs into a PowerPoint presentation on my laptop. First, participants named their photographs. Then, sitting alongside them, looking directly at the images, I asked about each photograph, recording each discussion using the microphone function on my laptop. This process seemed to help break down barriers between researcher and participant—we were working together, bouncing ideas off of each other. It emulated the way that people interact when they look at each other's photographs, and seemed to make it easier to talk about difficult or upsetting issues.

The first five recorded interviews followed a set structure where we focussed on one image at a time, stopping and re-starting the recording for each new image. Each time the space was quiet and uninterrupted. Each of the three men's interviews took place in an OARSCT counselling room. Ruby's interview took place in my university office on a Saturday morning. Six interviews were undertaken in women's homes and two were held in a small private space at the church where *Seeds of Affinity* meet. Listening back to the recorded interviews, I can hear that I became more confident as the project progressed—the interviews had less structure and seemed more 'conversational' with a natural flow of dialogue where rich complex stories and experiences were raised and discussed. To replace the usual group discussion process, I used an organic approach, informing participants when their data either replicated or challenged findings from academic research or dominant discourse. If their themes matched ideas discussed in earlier interviews with other participants, we explored the similarities and differences. Later I transcribed the interviews verbatim. I noted in the transcripts when participants become emotional, when we laughed and when we digressed.

Together, we conducted an initial analysis of the data during the recorded interview. When we looked at a photograph together, I asked why participants had chosen to take the photograph and what they were trying to demonstrate. I asked how that personally affected them and the people close to them and asked how things could be done differently. Sometimes I offered up my own interpretations—participants were forthright in

telling me when I got it wrong and seem comfortable in correcting me. I found this process an huge learning experience and really enjoyed the exchanges. Some participants actively used symbolism and metaphor in their images, while others used it less consciously. I pointed this out when I saw it in their photographs. This always generated further discussion. For example, Trent's photograph called '*The Bridge*' (see Figure 62, p. 215) enabled him to speak about the friendships he abandoned in order to address his drug addiction and to rebuild his family.

The interviews that took place in women's homes (Deer, Gidget, Kate, Stella, Feeney and Joy) were what I consider the 'best' interviews. The rapport seemed simple, the conversations were energetic and unrestrained by the less personable spaces of counselling rooms, my university office and to a lesser extent *Seeds of Affinity*. In the women's homes I met companion animals and family members. I was fed a home cooked meal during one interview, had many cups of coffee and one participant gave me a pot plant to take home after a tour of her garden. These typically 'feminine' interactions demonstrate the effectiveness of using a research approach that not only *thinks* about power relations but enacts a reversal of power *whenever* the research is taking place. As feminist researchers before me have explained, women interviewing women without formal structure avoids hierarches of power and is less likely to 'objectify our sisters' (Finch, 1984, p. 72; Oakley, 1981; 2016). Interviewing in women's homes is not just about convenience or ambience but is also about dismantling the perceived power of the researcher. I am confident in claiming that these were comfortable experiences for the women, as attested by Kate who said at the end of our interview, 'I really liked that you came to my home and that we talked one on one'.

Over one hundred and thirty photographs were submitted. Ruby and Stella submitted more than twenty photographs each. Trent, Gidget, David and Robert submitted between eleven and nineteen photographs, Deer submitted nine photographs and a fifteen-verse poem<sup>26</sup> while the remaining participants submitted between five and nine images. The image quality ranged from poor to spectacular. Although the cameras had an inbuilt flash that worked during testing, it sometimes failed to work or was inadequate for the situation, leaving some images, especially those taken indoors, dark and unusable. Once I became aware of the problem I contacted the participants to let them know, asking that they take indoor photographs electronically. It was a relatively simple, albeit time consuming task to

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix A for the two poems submitted by participants

collate the specific narratives for each image. A more difficult task has been to utilise the stories that went beyond the images, which are ultimately powerful and personal.

## Exhibiting the material

One of the most important tasks of a Photovoice project is to display the work in the public sphere.<sup>27</sup> As informing the public through ‘praxis’ is integral to the Photovoice method, I wanted the material to be seen by as many people as possible. I also wanted to ensure that participants could engage with the material on their own terms—to be able to invite anyone they wished and to take as long as they liked to view their own and other participants’ work. A solution was to present the material as an event at the 2015 *Adelaide Fringe Festival*—known locally as ‘The Fringe’. The Fringe is an annual, open access arts festival. Created in 1960 as a covert, grassroots alternative to the often-elitist *Adelaide Festival of Arts*, The Fringe is the second largest fringe festival in the world, attracting a diverse range of domestic and international visitors. Many Adelaideans ensure that they go to shows and exhibitions that are anything but ‘mainstream’ entertainment as Adelaide bursts out of its reputation as a sleepy town for five weeks at the end of summer each year (Marks, 2015). There is a perceptible ‘vibe’ in Adelaide during The Fringe, recognised by Eltham (2009, p. 44), who describes open-access arts festivals as a ‘platform for the flowering of the human spirit’.

For a small registration fee (AUD\$220 for a three-day event), anyone with a ‘creative vision’ can hold an event as long as they have access to a venue. The venue I used was the foyer space in my university’s city campus—a central, accessible and appealing space—at no cost to me. The Fringe registration fee includes an advertisement for the event in the *Fringe Guide*, which has over 1 million online ‘hits’ while over 30,000 hardcopies of the guide are distributed throughout the state. As an event organiser, the registration fee also covered my attendance at a workshop on event marketing and support to upload a media release<sup>28</sup> promoting the exhibition. I also created a postcard using participants’ photography to promote the event, distributing them to participants and through my networks to social service providers.<sup>29</sup>

To prepare for the first exhibition of photographs at The Fringe, I selected the sharpest images possible but also ensured that I included the photographs—despite their quality—wherever participants used humour or metaphor, and especially where they said, ‘this

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<sup>27</sup> For a list of all public exhibitions of this work to date, see Appendix K.

<sup>28</sup> See Appendix G for a copy of the media release.

<sup>29</sup> See Appendix H for a copy of the postcard.

photo is important'. In total, 88 photograph folders made up *The Fringe* and subsequent exhibitions.

I purchased black cardboard photograph folders from a wedding photography wholesaler that could be pinned onto display boards that I hired for the event. These hold an 8" x 10" photograph and provide space alongside to include participant narratives which I printed on quality parchment paper. I printed the photographs and enlargements at a self-serve photo-lab in a department store, using the technology to brighten and sharpen the images. I then divided the material into relevant themes spread out on my kitchen benches (Figure 5). I separated the folders into roughly organised groups, later dividing the three groupings into sub-grouped themes

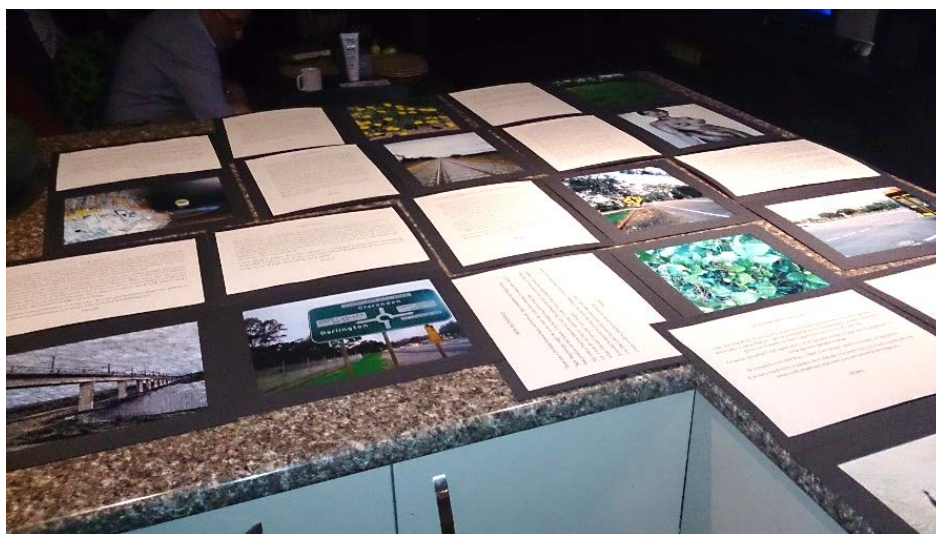


FIGURE 5 VISUAL ANALYSIS, AUTHOR

While this project would have been more inclusive if participants could have been a part of this process, this was not possible under the ethical conditions of the project. Although, by attending to this work in the manner that I did, I tried my best to imitate the grassroots approach that would be used in community Photovoice projects. However, most of the participants attended *The Fringe* exhibition. Some came alone, but others came with family members, their partner or friends. Participants introduced me to their guests. It was satisfying to witness them interacting with their own and other participants' work and being present during the entire three days led to many conversations with visitors to the exhibition.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 10 for more on exhibiting the work.

## Deeper analysis

Doing action-research requires a significant contribution of time to carry out the research and to create and build trusting relationships with participants. The analysis is informed by contributions of participants, our interactions, my own interpretations and the interest and feedback from people who see the material. I had indicated in my research proposal that I would use NVivo to thematically analyse my data, feeling confident in doing so after attending a training session on its use. However, the recommended text book for the program warns against early researchers with small scale projects using computer software to code and analyse data (Saldana, 2013, p. 26). I decided this was good advice, but more so for reasons linked closely to the theoretical underpinning of Photovoice. I was acutely aware that the impersonal use of a software program was counter-intuitive to my grassroots approach. I understood that at the heart of the Photovoice method is the promise of egalitarian sharing of data analysis and that for me to over-ride participants' interpretation of their data using a computer program unavailable to them would be an oppressive act, an overt use of researcher power, going against the promises I made to participants and myself about the unique approach of the project.

I had such a rich and deep involvement with participants and their contributions that I was not confident that the nuanced complexity present in their work could be properly captured using anything other than a hands-on approach. I understand that this may be unviable in a larger project, but for me, the intuitive nature of analysis seemed to be the better approach, especially as participants created such vast and varied styles of images and data. For example, two participants submitted poems, but even then, both are very different. Deer's poetry was a serious self-reflection that follow her photographs (see, Jarldorn & Deer, 2017), while Feeney's was humorous, submitted to provide an example of the ways she used writing poetry in prison to sustain other women's spirits, for birthday gifts and to farewell women about to be released.<sup>31</sup>

More importantly, a software program would be unable to fully capture the emotion, passion, sadness or joy expressed by participants. How could a software program analyse the meaning of the tears welling in Stella's eyes as she spoke of her dogs saving her life? How could it collate Ruby's ironic tone when she spoke about why she took a photograph called 'Money', share the sense of joy when Trent reflected on how he feels being 'present' in his childrens' lives, or hear the pride in Gidget's voice on the day I interviewed her on

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix A

the two-year anniversary of her release from prison? I feel that the complexity and variety of the data has been respected by my personal attention. I still vividly remember the mood and setting of the interviews closely and became ‘immersed’ in every aspect of the data.

I was able to contact ten of the twelve participants when preparing for The Fringe exhibition, who saw and approved their work prior to it being displayed at the first exhibition. I asked them to check that my interpretation matched theirs. All were happy with the way their stories were presented and agreed that no changes needed to be made.

Initially I wrote up my summary and conclusions for display at the exhibition. The three main organisational categories arising were, 1) pre-prison; 2) in-prison and 3) post-prison experiences. Later, as I set up the exhibition, the large display boards (Figure 6) provided a blank canvas for a second, deeper data analysis. I grouped images that told a similar story or theme on each board. I then identified sub-themes for the in-prison and post-release sections, grouping related material together.

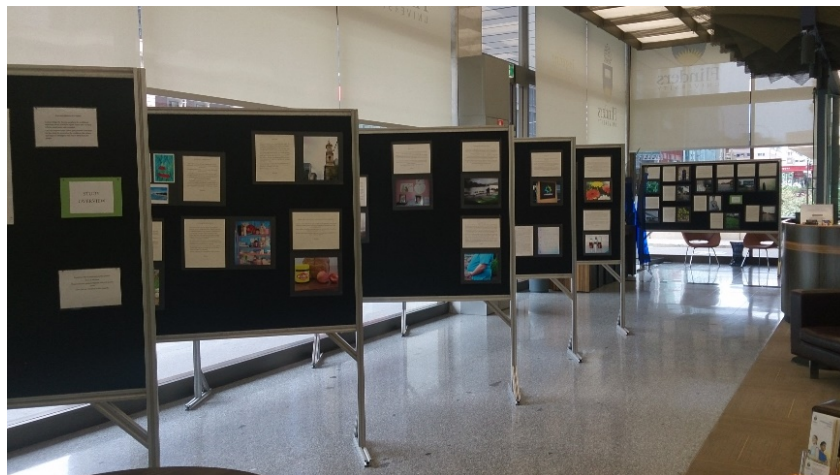


FIGURE 6 DISPLAY BOARDS AT THE FRINGE, AUTHOR

As noted earlier, informing policy is the ultimate goal of the Photovoice method. Policy, and especially penal policy, is shaped by (often poorly) informed, sought and measured public opinion (Roberts, Stalans, Indermaur, & Hough, 2003), so I sought feedback from people who attended the exhibition in various ways. Some left a note of ‘quick feedback’ (see Figure 7), others provided a response on a feedback form,<sup>32</sup> some sent feedback later via email while others stopped to provide verbal feedback. Once the exhibition was over, I collated and transcribed the feedback. The feedback was vital and reassuring in that visitors said that they were moved by the data, often noting that it challenged their

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<sup>32</sup> See Appendix I.

assumptions. Visitors took the time to read participants' stories, with their feedback showing an understanding of the broader social implications of imprisonment and the collateral damage experienced by families and communities. Being present to answer the questions raised by people who viewed the work presented me with perspectives I had not previously considered.

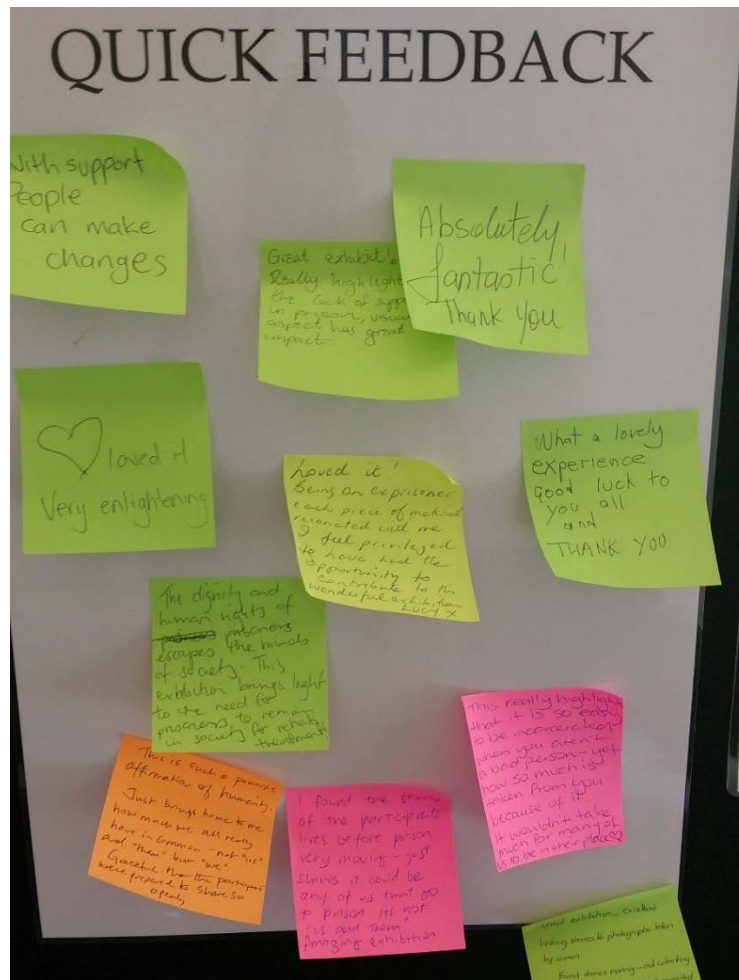


FIGURE 7 VISITOR FEEDBACK, AUTHOR

To prepare for the analysis in forthcoming chapters, my first step was to re-visit the display folders used in the exhibition, where I noted my overall impressions. I also linked the visitor feedback if it was about specific images and noted when I was surprised at the attention some images gained over others. I closely read the transcribed interviews again, coding the data into themes and then themes within themes. I specifically noted the themes that were repeated in several places and when testimonies resonated with published research or current affairs. I also noted the themes that did not 'fit', seemed unusual, surprising or counter-intuitive. Again, I ensured that when participants said that something was important to them, used humour, analogy or metaphor, I made note of it. Some

participants specifically stated in their testimonies that they would like policy makers to hear about a particular issue—these points were duly recorded. It is this coding that led me to combine my analysis with that of participants and visitors, where I transitioned from data collection to ‘more extensive data analysis’ (Saldana, 2013, p. 5).

## Conclusion

This chapter has explained the theoretical framework that underpins Photovoice, documented the steps that I took to gain ethical clearance and how participants were recruited. It described how I modified Photovoice, documented how participants created their data and conveyed their testimonies supported by their photographs. I have discussed how I exhibited the material in public for the first time.

Out of respect for the quality and vibrancy of the participants’ work, the forthcoming chapters are organised in the following way. Rather than providing a critical review of the literature first, and following with participant data, I have intertwined chapters focused on participant data with related analyses of relevant literature. This begins with Chapter 3, which discusses the growth of the prison and questions how social problems are criminalised.



## Chapter 3: Creating and criminalising social problems

I started out doing the course because all those dog social workers were the ones who made the decision to lock me up as a kid, so I decided I'd get the degree and tell them to get fucked, and dispute everything...But the biggest thing about being a social worker was that I got to work in their court, on equal footing with other social workers. These are the people who took me away from my family, and who still take kids from their families. I needed the degree so they would recognise me, give me some credibility. Debbie Kilroy as quoted in, *Kilroy was Here* (Olsson, 2005, pp. 197-199)

### Introduction

Born in the 1960s to a working-class family in Queensland, Australia, Debbie Kilroy's parents—like most working-class families at the time—had been socialised to privilege, without question, the opinion of professionals such as social workers, teachers, psychologists and lawyers. From her early childhood, Debbie bore the injustice of systematic physical punishment by the nuns who taught her in infant school. The nuns believed that white girls should behave like 'ladies', refrain from climbing trees with the boys, being friends with Aboriginal children, and must *never* question authority (Olsson, 2005, p. 8).

As she got older, Debbie's distrust of, and resistance to, authority grew. She began skipping school to be with her mates and refused to obey her parents. By the time she was in her teens, and upon the recommendation of the police and social workers, Debbie's parents agreed that she could be detained in the Wilson Youth Hospital (WYH) for an 'assessment'. This was much more than an assessment, though; upon her entry to WYH at fourteen years of age, Debbie was stripped, showered and deloused; along with many other young people detained at WYH, she suffered brutalising physical punishment, emotional abuse and neglect.

WYH was a government run 'child guidance hospital' which claimed that it could 'treat' delinquency. Staffed by a combination of medical and security personnel, WYH provided a 'scientific', institutional approach to social problems in Australia, described by Ashton and Wilson as an 'unholy union of welfare and punishment' (2014, p. xi). Reflecting on her decision to follow the advice provided by professionals, Debbie's mother said 'I would have painted the house hot pink if the social workers had told me it would fix her' (Olsson, 2005, p. 15). Like many people held in institutions as juveniles, as an adult, Debbie later spent six years in prison. It was while she was in prison that she began working towards creating

Sisters Inside, an organisation respected internationally for the work it does in supporting criminalised women.

WYH is but one example of institutional responses to social problems where, instead of repairing social problems, the result was damage, hurt and despair (Kilroy, 2012; Ashton & Wilson, 2014; Grant, 2014). WYH has since been described as a 'cross between a mental health unit and a jail' (Penglase, 2005, p. 370) resembling what Wacquant calls an 'outlaw institution' (2012). Wacquant explains that:

The prison is supposed to enforce the law but, by the very nature of its organisation, it operates *exlex*, in the manner of an outlaw institution. Promoted as a remedy for insecurity and marginality, it does little more than to concentrate and intensify them, but so long as it renders them politically invisible, we ask nothing more of it (2012, p. 7)

Ashton and Wilson argue that institutions like the WYH operated in a 'parallel universe' unfettered by the constraints of legislation or human rights treaties, becoming the platform upon which the welfare system in Australia was built (2014, p. xi). Social workers have been present at many of these sites, either as complicit observers, who did little or nothing to challenge injustice, or as actors playing a direct part in perpetrating state sanctioned violence and abuse.

These 'parallel universes' are not confined to history. Recently, images of Aboriginal teenager Dylan Voller shackled to a restraint chair, wearing a spit hood and being brutalised by staff at the *Don Dale Youth Detention Centre* in Darwin (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017) showed that repeated, sustained physical punishment, emotional abuse and neglect are still deployed as cruel and usual tools of 'reform' on young bodies, suggesting that there is a blurring of boundaries between child protection, youth detention and the continuing, longstanding practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families.<sup>33</sup> Without these images being aired on Australian television in 2016 (Meldrum-Hanna & Worthington, 2016), and the subsequent national grass-roots protests demanding justice, it is unlikely that a Royal Commission would have been called. Mistreatment at Don Dale had been investigated in the past, but findings were never made public nor were recommendations enacted. Examples like Don Dale are not exceptional but occur throughout Australia. This places social workers and other human service providers in a

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<sup>33</sup> Even though the *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory* (2017) heard that staff were poorly trained to work in 'under-resourced' youth detention centres, they were also told that permission had been granted allowing children to be tear gassed by officers. The Royal Commission found that the entire 'system', not just Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, was 'not fit for accommodating, let alone rehabilitating, children and young people' and that the young people held in youth detention were denied even the most basic of human rights. For more, see: <https://childdetentionnt.royalcommission.gov.au/Pages/Report.aspx>

position that is far removed from 'doing good' in terms of seeking social justice and respecting the dignity and worth of the people who are in their care.

My central argument in this chapter is that contemporary criminological knowledge tends to individualise crime through its own privileged view of the world. The approach I use to understand and clarify this position is informed by an understanding of the porous and pervasive influence of the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC).<sup>34</sup> I aim to present an argument that helps to better explain the construction social problems grounded in oppression as crime, beginning with an exploration of the role of colonising practices that reproduced Britain's class system in Australia.

### Criminalising social problems

The current 'lock and key' response to social problems did not happen in a vacuum, but has developed through history. The Poor Laws, in place in Britain from 1601 and, later, the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 sought to closely govern the poor through the administration of poor relief (Trattner, 1979). The Poor Laws formed the basis of similar laws in the United States (Trattner, 1979), Australia and in other colonised countries (Kimber, 2013), shaping notions of the ways that 'deserving' and 'un-deserving' welfare recipients are defined and regulated (Piven & Cloward, 1971; Garland, 1985; Ignatieff, 1978).

Driven by moralistic assumptions (Garland, 1985, p. 52), still familiar as 'tough love' rhetoric (Jordan, 2000), the Poor Laws responded to the notion amongst the 'haves' that so long as the 'have nots' were supported through charitable means, they would continue to be lazy and refuse to take responsibility for their situation (Conning & Kevane, 2002). A centrally administered system of rules, record keeping and means testing established control and surveillance of the poor to prevent them approaching multiple parishes for support, similar to current concerns of welfare recipients shirking responsibilities and 'double dipping'. The able-bodied who sought welfare were held in contempt, viewed by authorities as a dangerous class (Garland, 1985). The existence of the Poor Laws led to the construction of hundreds of purpose-built workhouses throughout Victorian Britain whose aim was to 'deter the idle, punish the immoral, reform the redeemable and treat the physically unable' (Newman, 2014, p. 124). The growth of workhouses underpinned an

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<sup>34</sup> The term 'Prison Industrial Complex' (PIC) describes the overlapping and intersecting industries that sell products and services to governments to build, operate and maintain prisons. The PIC extends to policing, the courts, surveillance industries, and the social service industries that accompany prisons such as community corrections and other 'therapeutic' service providers (Critical Resistance, 2004). The PIC will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

ensemble of 'scientific' approaches supported by institutional responses to social problems. Later, many of these same workhouses were transformed into institutions for orphans and children with disabilities (McKay, 2009), continuing the practice of hiding social problems from public view and, in doing so, providing fertile ground for abuse and neglect. The physical location of most workhouses, on the outskirts of cities and on the edges of populated areas, was symbolic of the way the poor were marginalised. Much like prisons, the architecture of workhouses provided mechanisms to monitor and control their residents, through segregation and surveillance, serving as a constant reminder to those still 'free' that their situation could be worse (Newman, 2014, p. 140) as the implicit threat of imprisonment loomed large.

### Transporting social problems

Prior to the use of custodial sentences as punishment, punishment was meted out as a public spectacle (Foucault, 1995), to warn others of the perils of committing crime.<sup>35</sup> People were shamed by being held in stocks in public spaces, for all of the community to see. Nearly one in six people appearing before a judge was sentenced to a public execution (O'Toole, 2006, p. 10). However, shaming and public executions did not always go to plan. Increasingly, the public understood that the condemned were due rights, occasionally taking the accused's side, turning public punishment into a 'shambles' (Ignatieff, 1978, p. 23). Sometimes, the public adorned the person in stocks with flowers as a form of resistance to this public mode of brutal punishment or, as they were led to the gallows, the accused would garner personal support by telling the gathering crowd of their unfair trial (Ignatieff, 1978, p. 21). The awarding of a death sentence meant that someone—other than legislators or the sentencing judge—had to perform the task of carrying out the wishes of the court. Because executions were held in public, executioners usually wore hoods to disguise their identity, but still had to bear the abuse of onlookers and live with the horror and memories of carrying out administrative, state sanctioned killing (Camus, 1963). Later, executions were also moved behind prison walls, but public outrage over wrongful executions (see for example, Pierrepont, 1974), led Britain and other countries to abolish the death penalty. However, this reform led to the concealment of punishment behind prison walls, resulting in systematic institutionalised violence and confinement.

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<sup>35</sup> The main thrust of Foucault's argument is that punishment was corporeal, inflicting pain as both retribution and deterrence. In more recent times punishment was harnessed to rehabilitation and reform, shifting punishment from the body to the mind.

The transportation of Britain's prisoners was advanced as a 'merciful' alternative to the death penalty (Ignatieff, 1981). Britain's early, mostly privately-owned prisons were becoming increasingly overcrowded, rife with graft and corruption. A short-term solution was the creation of the *Hulks Act* in 1776 (Hughes, 1987, p. 41), which sanctioned using the decommissioned, rotting troop transports and war ships floating in the Thames and Plymouth Harbour as makeshift prisons (Dickens, 1861-2006; Hughes, 1987; Ignatieff, 1978). Within just a few years, the hulks were full to overflowing, deemed an eyesore (Ignatieff, 1978, p. 156), their captives frequently rioting and wracked with disease (Hughes, 1987, p. 65). Britain's population was becoming increasingly afraid of the people sentenced to the floating prisons. Transportation to Australia solved more than the 'problems' of overcrowded workhouses, prisons and hulks (O'Toole, 2006, p. 10). Transportation successfully removed from sight and mind the 'criminals' created by British laws and regulations (Hughes, 1987, p. 42), hiding the results of the problems created by class division and poverty.

In the eighty years that Britain transported convicts to Australia, over 160,000 people were sentenced to transportation to the antipodes (Clarke, 1986; Hughes, 1987; O'Toole, 2006). Very few arrived in good health. Once in Australia, most were utilised for compulsory public work, assigned as labourers for free settlers or to work on government sponsored colony-building projects. An early rendition of the PIC, at a time of economic downturn and widespread poverty, criminalised bodies became expendable—and somewhat invisible—slave labour, used to widen the rule of the British Empire through a greater presence in the Pacific (Hughes, 1987, p. 40). However, it wasn't long before British authorities began to question the deterrent value of transportation to an increasingly prosperous colony. They were afraid that transportation as punishment was not severe enough (Hughes, 1987, p. 76), especially as once word spread about the opportunities, fresh air and sunshine in Australia, people standing before a judge began *requesting* transportation as their preferred punishment (Ignatieff, 1978) hoping to escape the oppression and squalor of industrialised Britain. Spurred on by abolitionists—who had long argued against the 'vileness' of slavery and, by extension, transportation—the last convict ship arrived in Australia in 1868 (Hughes, 1987, p. 580).

As a response to the abolition of transportation, and increasing concerns about the use of the death penalty, prison sentences became longer. Around the same time, Britain's first professional police force was created (Emsley, 2011) resulting in a steady increase in prison numbers, not through an increase in crime, but because of a higher rate of arrests,

convictions and longer custodial sentences. Responding to prison overcrowding and the idea that imprisonment could reform lawbreakers, in 1853 an early release program was devised, the precursor to modern day parole, where good behaviour saw prisoners released early on a ticket of leave (Emsley, 2011). Witmer (1927, p. 24) argues that transportation and the parole system were 'intimately bound' and, although transportation ended, parole and its complexities exponentially increased.

The stigma of being an ex-prisoner brought with it barriers to successfully re-enter the community as:

almost immediately they found themselves blamed for every crime, large or small...barred from most employment, harassed by the police ... vilified in the press ... and identified as a potential source of danger to the state (Ignatieff, 1978, p. 201).

Over 160 years later, little has changed in this respect, as the modern day ex-prisoner still struggles with the same problems once they leave prison. Ex-prisoners are constructed as the 'dangerous other' to be feared at all costs (Jewkes, 2004), and are maligned in and by the media, which has more reach and power than ever before.

Drawing on Cesare Beccaria's 1764 *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* (Beccaria, 1986), Enlightenment ideologies endorsed the view that rational or scientific approaches could be used to solve social problems, such as crime. The question naturally follows, then, as to why the 'scientific' approach to crime and punishment has not 'cured' or 'deterred' crime? One fascinating scientific approach to the social problem of crime is unique to South Australia. Based on 'utopian ideals' (Lonie, 1978; Scheiffers, 2002; Faber, 2015), the colony of South Australia was planned by Robert Gouger and Edward Wakefield (the cousin of early prison reformer Elizabeth Fry) throughout the time when Gouger visited Wakefield while he was serving a two-year sentence in Britain's Newgate Prison (Telfer, 2003a, p. 31).<sup>36</sup> Gouger himself was an ex-prisoner, having previously served a prison sentence over his unpaid debts.<sup>37</sup> <sup>38</sup> In contrast to other Australian states—and despite the obvious irony—South Australia was planned to be settled as a pastoral colony, where it was thought that by choosing the 'right' people South Australia would be 'free of the problems that had plagued the other Australian colonies' (Archer, 2003, p. 5).<sup>39</sup> In writing

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<sup>36</sup> Edward Wakefield was imprisoned for abducting and marrying Ellen Turner. Miss Turner was aged 15 at the time and was an heiress to a family fortune.

<sup>37</sup> Later, Gouger served another custodial sentence in South Australia, this time for a felony (Telfer, 2003a, p. 33).

<sup>38</sup> Despite their criminal past, Wakefield's and Gouger's names are well recognised in South Australia, where major city streets are named in their honour.

<sup>39</sup> In producing the two pamphlets that outlined their plans (*A Sketch of a Plan for Colonising Australasia*, and *A Letter from Sydney*) Gouger accrued debts that went unpaid, leading him to serve another prison term. (Telfer, 2003, p. 33).

about how to plan a colony, Wakefield (1849) described colonisation as an 'art', an art that ensured Britain's class structure was safely reconstructed in South Australia. This did not go un-noticed by Marx, who critiqued Wakefield's ideas for colonisation for perfectly capturing the essence of capitalism throughout an entire chapter in Volume 1 of *Capital* (Marx, 1867/2013). South Australia's history as a colony then was driven more by the greed of capitalism than by 'utopian dreams'.

Because of its 'crime free' design, the original plans for South Australia did not include a prison; so around two hundred convicted 'criminals' were transported out of South Australia to penal colonies elsewhere in Australia (Telfer, 2003a, pp. 102-3). Continuing attempts to keep South Australia 'crime free', when Tasmania was having its own convict 'problems' an anti-convict league was formed in South Australia to prevent their arrival (Witmer, 1927). South Australia regarded itself as a moral community (Whitelock, 1985) and did not want to have those morals tainted by 'criminals'. This is a story that continues to hold traction.

Even though these espoused morals underpinned the philosophy behind the creation of South Australia, they did not extend to the treatment of the Aboriginal people already living here. Their lands were stolen from them, while their resistance was met with violence and death (Attwood, 2005; Foster & Nettleback, 2012). Moses (2000) is explicit in naming the violence suffered by First Nation's Australians in the name of colonisation as genocide.

Despite the ideals of creating a crime free society, just five years after South Australia was proclaimed in 1836, Adelaide Gaol opened. Informed by the principles of the 'separate system' (Henriques, 1972) and borrowing from Jeremy Bentham's radial or panopticon design (O'Toole, 2006, p. 76), Adelaide Gaol is distinctive for its extravagant castle-like towers and ornate features (see Figure 8), the construction cost nearly sent the state bankrupt (Telfer, 2003a, p. 78; O'Toole, 2006, p. 191). The Adelaide Gaol was decommissioned in 1988 and is now a museum, where former guards are tour guides in what is described as 'dark tourism' (Wilson, 2008; Brook, 2009).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> As a museum, Adelaide Gaol, like other prison museums, privileges the voices of former prison guards and sensationalises the stories of executions, pain and punishment with little respect paid to former prisoners. (Brook, 2009; Jarldorn, 2016a). In the foreground of Figure 8 for example, the visitors path to the 'Execution Tower' covers the graves of executed prisoners and is called, 'Murderers Row'. Apart from being open daily to visitors, the Adelaide Gaol website claims that Adelaide Gaol is the most haunted site in South Australia, offering ghost tours and 'paranormal' workshops. For more about Adelaide Gaol, see <https://adelaidegaol.org.au/>



FIGURE 8 THE EXECUTION TOWER: ADELAIDE GAOL, AUTHOR

## Using science to understand crime

Post Enlightenment saw growth in the professions that used ‘scientific’ measures to solve social problems; professions such as social work, psychiatry, medicine and criminology (Klein, 1973/2013). According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2017), criminology is an academic discipline which conducts the scientific study of the causation, correction and prevention of crime. Exploring the history of criminology—especially in the ways that it views and ignores women—has resonances for this project because of early criminology’s influence in shaping contemporary penal practices.

Late in the nineteenth century, Cesare Lombroso, considered a founding thinker in criminology, claimed that he had discovered a new ‘human sub-species’, the born criminal (Lombroso, Ferrero, Rafter, & Gibson, 2003). While there were other criminal anthropologists before and after Lombroso (Quetelet, 1842; Ellis, 1890; Sheldon, Stevens,



& Tucker, 1940),<sup>41</sup> his theories gained a large following despite his original work (written in his mother tongue, Italian) being reproduced in abridged versions and through secondary sources (Rafter, 1997, p. 114). Lombroso proposed that there was a certain ‘type’ of criminal, easily recognisable by their physical characteristics. Lombroso’s theories defied the arguments of earlier classical theorists, such as Cesare Beccaria, that crime was ‘the product of an arbitrary free will’, committed by those seeking individual satisfaction (Ellwood, 1911, p. 723; O’Toole, 2006, p. 17). Although a recent full English translation of Lombroso’s *Criminal Man* suggests that he had considered sociological causes of crime and proposed ‘humane’ options for imprisonment (Lombroso, Ferrero, Rafter, & Gibson, 2003), these recommendations were largely ignored. Instead, most uncritically agreed with Lombroso’s ‘born criminal’ theory (Rafter, 1997), ensuring that criminology began as a field that was ‘classist’ (Ellwood, 1912, p. 721) ‘heavily racist in content’ (Rafter & Brown, 2011, p. 31) and the domain of misogynist ideals (Faith, 2011, p. 43; Klein, 1973/2013; Rafter & Heidensohn, 1995).

Lombroso drew upon Darwinist concepts to create a ‘racial hierarchy’ of who commits crime. White skinned Europeans were at the top, elevated as ‘law-abiding’, while people of colour sat at the lowest level, considered most likely to be a ‘born criminal’ (Lombroso, et al, 2003, p. 17). Lombroso connected his observations of criminals’ tattoos, writing, art and language with his hypothesis that these insignia were ‘indicative of their primitive state’ which he believed he had seen in First Nations Peoples in Australia and New Zealand (Bradley, 2010, p. 26). Lombroso gathered data from hundreds of autopsies as well as from the living, his research leading him to believe that large jaws, protruding cheekbones, big—or small—ears, curly hair, dark skin, bad teeth, long arms and large hands were just some of the physical indicators of a born criminal. He extended his analysis to include behavioural traits such as laziness and sexual promiscuity. Lombroso appeared proud of his scientific discoveries. Writing in the introduction to his book, *Crime, its Causes and its Remedies* (1911), he exalted:

seeing these strange [physical] anomalies, the problem of the nature and of the origin of the criminal seemed to me resolved. This was not merely an idea but a flash of inspiration. At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal (Lombroso, 1911, p. xiv)

Lombroso documented his discoveries with the use of photographs and drawings, driven by his idea that the ‘born criminal’ was a human sub-species. Perhaps this is the junction where stereotyping and criminal profiling first met.

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<sup>41</sup> For more see (Rafter, 1992).

## Feminist interpretations of criminal women

Lombroso's 1893, *Criminal Woman* (Lombroso, et al, 2003), deployed the 'born criminal' thesis as a starting point for the study of criminalised women (Zedner, 1991, p. 315). For the purpose of his analysis, Lombroso divided women into three categories, 'criminals, prostitutes and the "normal" or law-abiding woman' (Lombroso, et al, 2003, p. 7).

Returning to his approach of measuring anomalies such as skull sizes to identify born criminals, he contradictorily believed that 'as a whole, prostitutes are more remarkable than criminals for *smaller* as well as for *larger* cranial capacity' (Lombroso & Ferrero, 1898, p. 22). Despite the contradictions in this claim, for Lombroso, his colleagues and supporters, this was proof that prostitutes were the worst criminal type of all. Important to this understanding is the social construction of how women 'should' use their bodies. This meant that women's sexuality was deemed deviant, and that this deviance was in need of men's control (Faith, 2011, p. 44). In Lombroso's era, women's sexuality was criminalised (Faith, 2011, p. 44); women were deemed prostitutes if they had sex outside of marriage. This was the case even if the woman lived with the same partner for many years, bearing children and in a loving partnership, but without the 'benefit' of a church sanctioned marriage. Much like current times, sex workers were demonised while the criminality of their paying customers was rarely questioned.

Lombroso knew that women committed less crime than men; however, he attributed this to women's inferiority. He supported his position explaining that it was easy to prove that women were inferior by looking at their 'passive roles in courtship, reproductive apparatus and maternal functions' (Lombroso, et al, 2003, p. 9). His arguments were guided by misogynist ideals, forming the basis of criminological research which later linked women's criminality to their menstrual cycle (Pollak, 1950)<sup>42</sup> and suggesting that women needed to be rescued by 'chivalrous men' (Faith, 2011, p. 44). While arguing that women's low involvement in criminal activity proved that, as a group they were inferior, Lombroso proposed that criminal women were 'abnormal' (Davies & Cook, 2000), habitual liars who could not reason as well as men, concluding 'that all women are to some degree deviant' (Lombroso, et al, 2003, pp. 9-10).

One of the few investigations into women's criminality at the time, Lombroso's *Criminal Woman* theories gained a lot of traction, especially as his views of women's inferiority and expectations of their moral behaviour were widely held. Hahn Rafter and Gibson (2003)

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<sup>42</sup> Pollak also claimed that women were 'the powers behind the throne', instigators of criminal activity, but smart enough to have men do the 'dirty' work for them (1950, p. 3).

and Faith (2011, p. 45) argue that Lombroso's misogynist attitude was fortified by his fear of the strength of the demands being made by the evolving women's suffrage movement; Lombroso, like many other men (Atkinson, 2010) and a significant number of women (Benjamin, 2014) resolutely believed that women did not need voting rights because their needs could be addressed via their husband's vote. After all, women's 'natural' role was as wives and mothers *inside* the family home. Civic participation for women would get in the way of what they were 'supposed' to do, which was to support the family (and capitalism) through a class-based society (Engels, 1972; Bloodworth, Hose, & Taylor, 2009).

Despite numerous flaws in the 'science' of criminal anthropology, Klein advances that 'the road from Lombroso to the present is surprisingly straight' (Klein, 1973/2013, p. 198). The ease with which women's criminal activity was attributed to their lack of morality is reflected in the approaches, methods and standpoints used in criminological research (Naffine, 1996), which have influenced in-prison programs that emphasise restoration to 'the ideal of femininity' (Zedner, 1991, p. 308). The moralising of women's and girls' sexuality, the expectation that they fulfil roles as 'mothers of future mothers' (Swain & Musgrove, 2014) combined with the stigma of poverty, ill-health, race and class bias continues to dominate the lives of women who come under the surveillance of the arbiters of social control (Carrington, 1993; Kilroy & Pate, 2010; Faith, 2011).

There were some notable, but largely ignored, studies published by early women criminologists whose research challenged the born criminal ideology (Belknap, 2010). One example, published early in the twentieth century aimed to explore possible links between 'abnormal' physical traits and criminal behaviour in women. Conducted by Alberta Guibord in New York with 200 incarcerated women, the study documented physical traits and recorded the women's life histories. Guibord (1917) found that the majority of the women—if they had been employed prior to incarceration, had low paid, menial positions. Almost 90 percent were illiterate and over 40 percent experienced what Guibord described as 'disturbed home conditions' as children. After analysing their life stories, Guibord concluded that there was a high proportion of preventable physical health problems amongst the women, most likely caused by poor diet and hygiene regimes and having little or no formal education, all of which she attributed to poverty. She explained the women's oppression in this way:

In our zeal to demonstrate some obscure scientific fact at the base of delinquency we swallow the camel while straining at the gnat. We institute with naive enthusiasm intricate laboratory research or, impatient at the roundabout methods of science, we put into immediate practice in our penal institutions some high ethical formula. We journey about the earth to confer on the historical, the psychological, the philosophical, the eugenic aspect of

crime. We, in short, talk all around the edges of the subject meanwhile closing our eyes except for an evasive squint to the one clearly evident fact that at the base of practically all cases sentenced to reform institutions is the one common fact of poverty (Guibord, 1917, p. 94).

Thus, one hundred years ago in a comparatively large study, the author was clear that without addressing the social issues caused by structural poverty it would be misguided to jump immediately to punishment to resolve social problems. Given the systemic gendered oppression and the masculine bias of the epoch, it would be reasonable to surmise that Guibord's arguments were ignored or dismissed, firstly, because of her gender and secondly because her findings questioned the inequities between rich and poor. Indeed, the first of four recorded citations of Guibord's study (according to Google Scholar) was over 30 years later, by Otto Pollak (1950).<sup>43</sup> Male domination in criminology continues. As Daly and Chesney-Lind (1988) explain:

A large price is paid for structures of male domination and for the very qualities that drive men to be successful, to control others and to wield uncompromising power. Most theories of crime suggest the "normalcy" of crime in the light of social processes and structures, but have barely examined the significance of patriarchal structures for relations among men and for the forms and expressions of masculinity (1988, p. 527).

Patriarchal structures are present at every instance where crime, law, prisons, punishment and the discipline of criminology exist. While the social work profession is dominated—numerically—by women (Pease, 2011) (although dominated at managerial levels by men), the criminal justice system—including the people who undertake research, make laws, enact them and carry out punishment—has traditionally been dominated by men (Graycar & Morgan, 2002; Hahn Rafter & Natalizia, 1981; Naffine, 1996; Faith, 2011), the majority of whom are white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied and Christian (Quinney, 1974). Up until the late stages of the twentieth century, criminology deployed gender essentialism and reflected its male dominance by 'overlooking and misrepresenting half of humanity' (Carrington & Hogg, 2012, p. 54). Historically, in all disciplines, including criminology, 'men have traditionally done the research and men generally study men' (Faith, 2011, p. 43; Naffine, 1996, p. 8).

As Foucault (1995) argued, the discipline of criminology developed as a scientific rather than physical approach to discipline. Foucault's theories around power and knowledge have informed the analysis of many social scientists (see for example, Cohen, 1985; Garland, 1985), although according to Sumner (1990) and Howe (1994) Foucault failed to observe the gendered dimensions of power and knowledge. Little wonder then that when

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<sup>43</sup> It is important to put this citation into context. Pollak does not engage in any substantial way with Guibord's work at all, but includes it in a list of eight other researchers of women's criminality in the introduction to his book (Pollak, 1950, p. xix).

criminologists did study women it was constructed upon the framework of what a 'good' bourgeois woman 'should' be. Based on biological theories and an uninformed understanding of the implications of gender, early criminology research tended to position women as deceptive, based on their 'ability' to fake orgasms, hide their menstrual cycle and, due to their 'confinement in the home, conceal criminal activity' (Faith, 2011, p. 44; Worrall, 1990; Zedner, 1991; Hahn Rafter, 1997). This thinking has fortified a belief within the criminal justice system that its role when dealing with women was primarily about keeping them 'under control' (Faith, 2011, p. 44) with the underlying assumption that women need to be rescued and/or controlled by men (Naffine, 1996; Worrall, 1990). Naffine argues that criminology's 'enormous blind spot' will continue to hinder the discipline unless and until it engages with feminist perspectives, to challenge its stereotypical assumptions around gender, class and race (Naffine, 1996, p. 9).

The Australian experience neatly discredits Lombroso's theories. Around twenty percent of non-Indigenous Australians can trace a convict history, so subscribing to the possible 'genetic disposition' for committing crime (Williams, 2015) would mean much higher rates of crime than currently exist. On the contrary, most transported convicts to Australia eventually became productive members of society, fuelling the idea that providing opportunities to flourish can reduce recidivism.

However, Wacquant (2009) maintains that Lombroso's ideas have been rejuvenated, where classic criminal types are now visible as the avatar of 'career recidivist' and the rise of criminal profiling which now guides 'the gigantic bureaucratic-cum-scholarly enterprise of 'risk assessment' for the release of sensitive categories of inmates' (Wacquant, 2009, p. 31).<sup>44</sup> Wacquant argues that new social categories are another 'by-product of the emerging social-insecurity regime', leading directly to the expansion of youth imprisonment (2009, p. 31), despite strong, sustained arguments against their use due to the long-term, widespread damage they create (Giroux, 2003). Similarly, Garland and Sparks (2000) argued that although research consistently demonstrates the damage that imprisonment causes, corrective policy tends to be retributory, based upon 'highly politicised articulations of public sentiment' (2000, p. 12) that are tied closely to notions of stigma, a fear of the 'underclass' and the diversity of minority groups. Ian Taylor noticed this in the late 1970s in Britain, arguing that punishing youths and young adults by 'expell[ing] them from the community' placated politicians and working-class communities alike (Taylor, 1981, p 21).

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<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of 'risk', see Pat Carlen's (2010) chapter, Imaginary penalties and risk-crazed governance, in *A criminological imagination: Essays on justice, punishment, discourse*.

This action is, in itself, a function of capitalism in that working-class people are encouraged to look sideways, towards those who appear to be not contributing to society as the root of their problems rather than considering diminishing opportunities and looking to those in positions of power who exploit their labour as the cause. The rejection of large numbers of discontented and dissenting youth satisfied the punitive mood simmering in a society overtly divided by class and racism (Taylor, 1981, pp. 21-26; Scraton & Chadwick, 1986) under Thatcherism.<sup>45</sup> Thatcherism is responsible for an economic philosophy which privileged the 'free' market, where businesses are left to self-regulate with little government intervention. Self-regulation relies heavily on trust—and, as Shapiro (1990) argues, fiduciary relationships of trust in business provide fertile ground for manipulation, exploitation and corruption, all of which are defined broadly as white-collar crime.

## White-collar crime

'White collar crime' is a term attributed to Edwin Sutherland who described white collar criminals as "suave, deceptive captains of finance and industry" (1940, p. 2). Sutherland argued that white collar crimes are committed by men who have respectability, trust and status earned from their position in society, thus challenging the commonly held view that criminal acts are perpetrated mostly amongst the working-classes. Unsurprisingly, he never sought to understand the 'gender question' (Naffine, 1996) by exploring why it might be that women were not in positions of trust via employment. Sometimes white-collar crimes are committed alone, by a single employee and tend to be crimes of fraud for personal gain or to fund an addiction. On a larger scale, they are defined as organisational or professional crimes.

However, a much earlier work by Ross (1907) also delved into 'professional' crime. Ross coined the term 'criminaloid' to define the men who were committing such crimes, claiming that criminaloids have 'the livery of virtue and operate on a titanic scale', (Ross, 1907, p. 59). He believed that the sheer scale of professional criminal activity occurred because such crimes are largely impersonal, the victim/s unknown to the perpetrator. Referring to Lombroso's work, Ross said of 'criminaloids', not only do they 'lack the stigmata of the true criminal type', but if 'Lombroso were to look at their crania he would not see his criminal avatar' (Ross, 1907, p. 28).

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<sup>45</sup> Thatcherism is the collective term used for the political policies devised and enacted by former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher who was elected on a platform of anti-unionism, 'family' values, law and order, and a reinvigoration of the 'deserving and underserving poor' (Carlen, 2010, p. 126). For Margaret Thatcher, family values meant conventional heterosexual marriage and nuclear families, the presence of which are vital to modern capitalism.

Ross recognised that time rather than space could divide the 'criminaloid' from their victim, citing examples such as seizing 'public land', the 'butchery of forests' and the use of child labour in factories. He observed that to avoid any 'unpleasantness', middlemen were often used to enact these crimes, and that by aligning themselves with other 'legitimate' businessmen, 'criminaloids' could evade scrutiny. In short, his argument was that the capacity for people to commit what we now call white-collar crimes (or crimes of trust) emerged from, and would continue to grow in, a capitalist society and, left unchecked, each 'breach of law begets counter-breach' (1907, p. 141). However, his recommendations were to 'reform' corporations through the use of 'public opinion and statute' (1907, p. 116). Instead of dealing directly with the root of the problem, which Ross himself persuasively identified as sitting within capitalism, he argued that self-regulation and tighter legislation was the key to ending 'criminaloid' behaviour (p. 158).

A central idea of the work of Ross (1907), Sutherland (1940) and Shapiro (1990) is still relevant, in that the power of white collar criminals outweighs the fragility of their victims. Being left to 'self-regulate' and tightening legislation does not prevent the misuse of power or having disregard for the safety and wellbeing of the community. Further, self-regulation facilitates incorporate practices that, while 'legal', are socially harmful (Passas, 2005).

White collar crime has a number of guises, including but not limited to:

- Insider trading, embezzlement, Ponzi schemes, misappropriation of pension funds or tax evasion (Reiman & Leighton, 2012)
- Refusal to recall a faulty product that may cause injury or death (Jain, 2006)
- Continued production and sale of a product despite the knowledge of its health risks (Glantz, Slade, Bero, Hanauer, & Barnes, 1996), for example, cigarettes and asbestos
- Brand counterfeiting, for example in the fashion industry (Carrabine, et al., 2014)
- Illegal dumping of toxic waste (Vidal, 2013)
- Mistreatment, such as unnecessary surgery, medical errors and making fraudulent claims to medical insurers (Jain, 2006)
- Causing environmental disasters, such as the Seveso dioxin cloud in Italy in 1976, the Union Carbide gas tragedy in Bhopal, India in 1984, the Chernobyl nuclear

meltdown in the Ukraine in 1986, the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska in 1989 and the 2015 collapse of the Fundao dam in Brazil.<sup>46</sup>

However, because there tends to be an individual to blame, it is lower level, white collar crime that gets the most media attention, for example the rogue medical professional who 'skims' Medicare,<sup>47</sup> or the 'shonky' builders providing 'dodgy' work. White collar crime, corporate crime, professional crime and occupational crime (Shapiro, 1990; Carrabine, et al., 2014) are areas of crime that do not receive as much attention—in terms of policing and funding to aid apprehension—as 'street' crime, even though the cost to the public of white collar crime exceeds that of street crime by over 14 times (Holtfreter, Slyke, Bratton, & Gertz, 2008). In contrast, harsh and punitive punishment and crime prevention measures, matched by high levels of public funding, are prioritised for the crimes framed as 'street crime' (Holtfreter et al, 2008). The amount of attention paid to 'street crimes' and the costs of maintaining 'law and order' makes it easy to blame the working or 'under' classes, for the community's fears for its own safety (Faith, 2011, p. 183; Reiman & Leighton, 2012) while providing a focus for community anger at the spiralling costs of the 'criminal justice system'.

People who commit white-collar crimes can often avoid or minimise prosecution for their crimes through amnesties or 'official pardons' and because they can afford quality legal representation. Reiman and Leighton's view is that this is not the result of an organised conspiracy but instead is a 'system that has grown up piecemeal over time' that 'serves the interests of the rich and powerful' (2012, p. 6). Contrary to the axiom that people are equal before the law, one's treatment depends on social standing, connections and ability to pay for services and legal representation. Thus it is no surprise that poverty is experienced by the majority of people punished for their crimes with a custodial sentence.

## Welfare and the feminisation of poverty

Women—and by extension their children—are more likely than men to live in poverty. From when the first female convicts arrived in Australia, women were expected to rely on men to survive, provided with only half of the amount of men's rations. In 1907 the *Harvester Judgement*<sup>48</sup> (Jamrozik, 1994) enshrined women's poverty through Australian

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<sup>46</sup> While these examples are of environmental disasters on a large scale, many more 'small' disasters happen daily across the world.

<sup>47</sup> Medicare is the name of Australia's publicly funded, universal, primary health care system.

<sup>48</sup> The Harvester Judgement was made by Judge HB Higgins in 1907 under the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court to set 'fair and reasonable' wages. It endorsed the principle that a man needed money to support a wife and children, while a woman was assumed to either be supported by her husband or to support no one but herself—thus locking in a rationale for gendered wage inequalities.



social policy, continuing the oppression of women through capitalism and the 'traditional' expected gender roles performed in the family (Bloodworth, 1990; Summers, 1994, p. 383). Women's caring responsibilities, lower wages across most fields of employment and the significantly high rates of violence in heterosexual relationships, has led to women having a greater reliance upon welfare to support themselves and their children. Even though each of these situations are, by their very nature, structural, recipients of social welfare funding models are seen by conservatives as undeserving, and continue to be blamed for all economic ills, past and present (Mullaly, 2007, p. 73). People believed to be 'non-deserving' or unworthy, are constructed as the modern-day 'underclass' (Bagguley & Mann, 1992) deemed 'feral families' (Beddoe, 2014), 'shirkers and scroungers' (Garthwaite, 2011), reflecting a conflation of poverty with deviance and criminality.

Demonising crimes of poverty perpetuates stereotypes of 'welfare queens' and their 'unruly, unkempt children' (Hancock, 2004; Beddoe, 2014). It assumes underlying criminality amongst the poor, where flawed 'personal choices', not inequality and limited or meaningless opportunities, are to blame for their situation (Mosher & Brockman, 2010). Welfare benefit fraud is a gendered crime, where at least two thirds of the perpetrators are women, most of whom are the head of sole parent families. Media portrayal of welfare fraud stories leads to the belief that welfare recipients are greedy and morally deficient. According to Marston and Walsh (2008), the breadth and depth of welfare benefit fraud is grossly overestimated by the public. They point out that in 2004/2005 financial year, over one third of Australia's population were receiving some sort of direct welfare benefit,<sup>49</sup> yet there were only about 4,000 cases of benefit fraud successfully prosecuted<sup>50</sup> (Marston & Walsh, 2008, p. 287). Compliance initiatives are often costly, with little or negative return for effort, while future savings calculations are methodologically flawed (Marston & Walsh, 2008).

One common benefit 'fraud' is undeclared or under-declared income. Importantly, Marston and Walsh argue that increases in undeclared income benefit fraud correlates directly with the casualisation of the workplace and that casualisation is clustered in low-wage jobs that are either seasonal or have irregular hours and shifts—this is the contemporary experience of poverty and the working poor. Fluctuating working hours, managing multiple casual jobs, parenting alone, plus lengthy waiting times if you want to speak to a 'real' person complicate income reporting to Centrelink. As Mosher and Brockman (2010, p. 13)

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<sup>49</sup> According to Marston and Walsh (2008), in 2005 approximately one third, or almost 7 million people were receiving some sort of welfare benefit in Australia.

<sup>50</sup> Approximately 1 in every 1,625 recipients.

argue, welfare systems are 'intentionally constructed to generate rule violations'. A recent example is the Centrelink automated 'robo-debt' recovery system, which issued debt notices to around 20,000 welfare recipients, creating widespread fear, confusion and distress. Yet of these notices approximately sixty percent claimed that the recipient owed more than they actually did, while close to one-third of the people who received debt notices were found to owe nothing at all. A report by the Commonwealth Ombudsman (2017) found that the system was highly flawed and recommended a comprehensive evaluation of the compliance measures. However, not only has the government resisted this recommendation, it plans to ramp up attacks on welfare recipients as it forges ahead with its proposal to drug test welfare recipients, even though this has failed to 'work' elsewhere in the world (Macdonald et al, 2001). Although addiction is a social problem, punishing people into treatment and further poverty is an abusive response. Clearly, the Australian government is waging war on the poor. Criminalising and publicising welfare fraud positions every welfare recipient as flawed individuals. Because poverty creates social and cultural exclusion, for Heitzeg (2016), poverty is, in itself, a prison.

Increasing reliance on data-surveillance 'defines and categorises the population based upon their resources' (Webster, 2002, cited in Henman & Marston, 2008). As neoliberal ideologies continue to gain traction in 21<sup>st</sup> century agendas, the demonization of the poor parallels increasing poverty, unemployment and underemployment (Marston & Walsh, 2008; Ferguson, 2008; Mosher & Brockman, 2010; Jones, 2011; Tirado, 2014). Much like the unequal distribution of wealth in society (Titmuss, 1976), there is a similar unequal distribution of the practice of surveillance, most often used to monitor people living on the margins of society (Giroux, 2014; Beck, 2006). This practice reinforces the deserving/undeserving divide of welfare provision, as it focusses on recipients of social welfare rather than the fiscal welfare benefits of the taxation system or the occupational welfare benefits conferred through the course of employment.

Attacks on 'privileges' received by 'undeserving' social welfare recipients are made through sensationalised media reporting, where a story's 'newsworthiness' is gauged by its ability to create public indignation. Welfare fraud prosecutions have become a public spectacle, mediated through a complicit media, underpinned by an agenda of racism, classism, sexism and welfarism, an agenda which uncritically attacks the most disadvantaged (Deutchman & Ellison, 1999; Mosher & Brockman, 2010; Jones, 2011; Lewis, 2011; Beddoe, 2014). The fear that the cost of welfare will send countries into ruin is a message spruiked by mainstream political parties as their neo-liberal ideologies shape

party platforms. However, for Aboriginal people in Australia, poverty is not only experienced through low income, or unemployment, but ‘non-materially’, through the ‘loss of children, identity, spiritual and cultural heritage, the loss of contact with the land, and the loss of dignity and self-respect’ (Taylor, 1993, p. 1).

## Race: The oppression of First Nations Peoples

In the space of 250 years, Aboriginal people have gone from having no need for prisons to being over-represented in every juvenile and adult prison across Australia. While free settlers and a significant number of transported convicts (eventually) benefited from the opportunities that Australia provided, post-invasion, those same benefits were not experienced by Australia’s traditional owners. The invasion and colonisation of Australia resulted in brutal treatment of Aboriginal peoples (Moses, 2000; 2008; Mendelsohn, 2016). Deemed ‘uncivilised’, no attempt was made to acknowledge the ‘tjurkurrpa’<sup>51</sup> or the Dreaming laws, which were in place for thousands of years before invasion and colonisation (Mundrooroo, 1995). A complex set of systems based upon spirituality and law understood by women and men across Aboriginal Nations, tjurkurrpa respects ancestral beings and was a way of life that recognised community obligations, kinship and cultural processes (Lechleitner, 2013).

The existence of tjurkurrpa goes directly against the justification of white invasion which declared Australia ‘terra nullius’ (Moses, 2008; Cunneen, 2001, p. 238). Terra nullius is a Latin term used in the context of international law, meaning land that belongs to no-one. Despite First Nations Australians having organised societies that responded collectively to social problems, colonisers chose to ignore tjurkurrpa. Lands held and managed by Aboriginal communities for over 40,000 years were stolen, with colonisers imposing their laws, policies and practices upon them with devastating effects. This devastation continues. First Nations peoples are oppressed by systemic racism and, as a consequence, suffer the ‘prison of low expectations’ (Pearson, 2016), leading to their disproportionate representation in custodial settings across Australia (ABS, 2017) and in every other colonised country in the world.

In 1987 the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* (RCIADIC), also known as the Muirhead Inquiry, was called to investigate why so many Aboriginal people were dying in custody. Justice Muirhead discovered that the Aboriginal prison population was

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<sup>51</sup> There is no direct English translation of the Dreaming or Dreamtime, while there are many Aboriginal terms because there are so many Aboriginal languages. Tjurkurrpa is just one of the words used to mean the Dreaming used by the Pitjantjatjara people from South Australia.

much younger than the non-Aboriginal prison population, concluding that young black men and women were the targets of police surveillance (Hazlehurst, 1991). Although police brutality, racism and poor mental and physical health played a significant part in the rate of deaths in custody (for an example, see the film *Utopia*, Pilger, 2013), the key finding was not that Aboriginal people were more likely to die in custody, but that there was a disproportionately high number of Aboriginal people imprisoned. Despite Muirhead's recommendations—there were over 330 of them—very few have been implemented and today more Aboriginal people are dying in custody than ever before (Korff, 2015). Thirty years after RCIADIC, over ten percent of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander have been to prison in their lifetime (Georgatos, 2016), exponentially compounding the damage caused to their families and communities.

Ten years after the Muirhead Inquiry, the Australian Human Rights Commission (1997) produced the report, *Bringing them Home*, which found a clear link between Aboriginal deaths in custody and being a member of the Stolen Generations. The Stolen Generations refers to the Australian government policy which, between 1909 and 1969, sanctioned through legislation the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities (Huggins, 1998, p. 136). It has been argued that the sustained and forced removal of Australian Aboriginal children was intentional genocide (Fejo-King, 2011). The Australian Human Rights Commission accepted submissions from hundreds of individuals and organisations outlining their experiences of being removed from their families and the long-lasting implications to their social and emotional well-being. The following anonymous submission begins to explain the personal losses of members of the Stolen Generations:<sup>52</sup>

Our life pattern was created by the government's policies and are forever with me, as though an invisible anchor around my neck. The moments that should be shared and rejoiced by a family unit, for [my brother] and mum and I are forever lost. The stolen years, which are worth more than any treasure, are irrecoverable. (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997, p. 4.)

Similar policies have been used in Canada (Wagamese, 2009) and New Zealand (Mikaere, 1994) to remove First Nations children from their families. The plural term—Stolen Generations—is used as many families had generations of family members removed and placed into the 'care' of usually white, middle-class families or on missions, reserves and in institutions (Huggins, 1998). Communities were forced off their traditional lands; any resistance was met with guns and violence (Baldry, 2013). Aboriginal women and men were often separated to keep them from having children (Huggins, 1998). Jackie

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<sup>52</sup> Five hundred and thirty-five Indigenous people provided written or oral evidence to the inquiry, many chose to remain anonymous.

Huggins argues that it wasn't just being removed from families and communities that was traumatising, but being removed from 'country' as her people have 'a special relationship' with their land.<sup>53</sup>

Aboriginal children were exploited for their labour; physically and emotionally abused and neglected in the process. Young girls were dispatched to be house maids, and young boys as farm labourers, with the view to have them conform to patriarchal colonialism. Those who did not conform were harshly punished (Huggins, 1998; Baldry, 2013). They were not paid appropriate wages, instead provided with paltry rations. Yet one of the excuses given to remove a child from their community was—and still is—due to their living in poverty. Government services never attempted to address the poverty that the children were removed from, nor were the children's parents paid properly for the work they did. Even those stolen children who were loved and treated well by their adoptive families wish that they had not been taken from their birth families and communities; they felt like they didn't belong in white Australia and report feeling that something was missing in their lives (Australian Human Rights Commission, 1997). Until 1967 First Nations Australians were still counted as flora and fauna;<sup>54</sup> were still being forced off their land with guns so their land could be handed to mining interests (Huggins, 1998; ABC News, 2016), while their participation and losses in fighting Australia's wars went largely unrecognised. While First Nations Australians are now officially recognised as human, they continue to endure racial oppression and the forced removal of their children continues at rates higher than when the official policy was in place (Baldry, 2013, p. 100).

South Australian Aboriginal Elder, Tauto Sansbury explained the ongoing struggle that his people continue to experience in an open letter. Just two weeks into 2012 he had attended eight funerals of South Australian Aboriginal people. Violence, poor physical health and suicide were the reasons for their deaths, arguably stemming from the intergenerational loss, grief, poverty and racism experienced by his people. Sansbury (2012) wrote:

While death is the natural conclusion to life, it's not natural for Aboriginal people to be dying of preventable causes at this rate, years and years before the rest of the population. And yet this is what's taking place, as eight funerals in 13 days show. The government says it's

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<sup>53</sup> Whereas First Nations peoples have a deeply spiritual connection to land and water and hold the belief that the lands own them, colonisers generally see land as a resource for the generation of wealth, an asset or a commodity to buy, sell and pillage

<sup>54</sup> In 1967, after years of campaigning, a referendum was held to make changes to the Australian Constitution, where it was proposed that Aboriginal people would be included in the census and that the Commonwealth could create laws for them. The referendum recorded a yes vote of just over 90 percent (Attwood & Markus, 2007).

committed to Closing the Gap.<sup>55</sup> This isn't occurring. In some areas things are getting worse. I'm compelled to stand up and say something about what's happening. Nothing is changing. It's not just an issue for me to raise; we need to stand up as a community and say that this is unacceptable, and something has to be done. And we too need to do something about it ourselves as Aboriginal people. We can't just keep ignoring it, from generation to generation.

The lives of First Nations' Australians are punctuated with broken promises. In former Prime Minister Paul Keating's *Redfern Speech* (1992), Keating proposed that:

We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through fifty thousand years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation.

Yet First Nations Peoples are being denied a place in modern Australia as shown by the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody and the distance between the social outcomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.<sup>56</sup> Aboriginal lands are continually threatened by development, the resources industry and climate change (Korff, 2014) while Aboriginal communities struggle to survive under constant threat of closure, with few resources and often in extreme poverty (Toussaint, 2015). The collective suffering of First Nations Australians can be juxtaposed against the fact that the majority of non-Aboriginal Australians, including social workers (Briskman, 2007), have participated in and benefitted from their oppression. While social workers may or may not be directly involved in creating the policies that tear apart First Nations families and communities, they often are the people to enact them in practice, rarely questioning the structural oppressive context of systemic racism built on colonialist practices.

Racism ensures that communities of colour are over-surveilled and over-policed (Davis, 2003; Gilmore, 2007; Crenshaw, 2012). Rather than reducing crime or making communities safe, over-policing widens the net of surveillance especially for women of colour (Kilroy, 2013; Cunneen, 2001; Crenshaw, 2012). Over-policing leads to the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in youth detention centres and prisons and, increasingly, this is the case for Aboriginal women (Bartels, 2012). Since colonisation, Aboriginal women have endured protectionism over their sexuality, the sole purpose of which was to 'stem the growth of the mixed-race population' (Watson, 2011, p. 157). Public servants were endowed with the power to surveil and regulate Aboriginal women's lives, homes and communities (Watson, 2011, p. 157; Carrington, 1993). Despite

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<sup>55</sup> *Closing the Gap* is the name of a government policy/campaign which began in 2006 which aims to achieve equality for First Nations Australians by the year 2030 in terms of health, education and employment. It appears that most of the targets set by the program will not be met.

<sup>56</sup> For example, *The Report of the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory* (2017) states that Aboriginal children make up 94 percent of the people being held in youth detention in the Northern Territory.

disproportionate surveillance and regulation, women of colour are often invisible victims of crime, yet when they themselves are in conflict with the law, the criminal justice system takes notice (Crenshaw, 2012; Watson, 2011, p. 158).

Psychological distress is prevalent amongst First Nation's Australians, not through individual deficit but from loss and grief, dispossession, disenfranchisement and systemic racism (Briskman, 2007; Baldry, 2013). Aboriginal people are more likely than non-Aboriginal people to have their first police contact at a young age (Carrington, 1993) and to spend time in juvenile custody, setting them up for long term interaction with the criminal justice system (Cunneen, 2001), intensifying already poor health (McEntyre, 2015; Lloyd et al, 2017), while diminishing future opportunities for self-determination. The oppression women of colour experience through their race, gender and class is magnified, for example, when they are assigned a white lawyer and amplified as they are fed through a white, patriarchal criminal injustice system that has little understanding of the cultural complexities specific to Aboriginal women (Kina, 2005; Lucashenko & Kilroy, 2005). Aboriginal women have the highest rate of re-incarceration of all cohorts of people in Australia (ABS, 2017), indicating that imprisonment does nothing to improve their lives (Kilroy, 2013) but instead contributes to the revolving door of incarceration, decimating their families and communities. First Nations Australians' experiences of poverty, racism, over-surveillance, the forced removal of children and structural, systemic oppression is not an isolated example. Karlene Faith (2006, pp. 274-308) recounts strikingly parallel experiences for First Nations women in Canada, while Dannette (2010) describes an almost identical situation in New Zealand. Similarly, oppressive policing, surveillance and imprisonment are the reality for communities of colour in the United States (Gilmore, 2007; Ritchie, 2002; Davis, 2003; 2016). As Julia Sudbury (2013) explains, the problem has global contours consistent with global capitalism.

## Addiction and ill-health

Historically, the insane asylum paralleled the creation of workhouses, built upon the belief that locking up social problems would 'disappear' those problems. Asylums looked and operated just like prisons, but unlike prisons, the majority of the people held in them were women, often with an indefinite sentence length (Rafter, 1997). As Swain and Musgrove (2014) argue, 'the boundaries between lunacy and criminality were porous and for women, loosely defined' (2014, p. 7). Because of criminologists' focus on women's morals—or rather their 'lack' of them—as the driver of their criminal activity (Zedner, 1991, p. 309), it was believed that the propensity to commit crime could be passed on biologically—that

criminals were 'born'. This meant that women were most likely to be committed to an asylum and kept there throughout the years they were physically able to conceive to prevent the birth of new generations of criminals (Rafter, 1997). Medical science fed into the process of eugenics as many women deemed insane and committed to an asylum were forcibly sterilised—a practice that continued in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century worldwide, including in Australia (Roy, Roy, & Roy, 2012) with surgical procedures, contraceptive medicines or induced amenorrhoea.

Up until the late 1960s and into the 1970s institutions were used to 'house' children and adults with disabilities. Abuse and neglect were rife. As Ian Dury explained in his biography, *Sex & Drugs & Rock 'n' Roll*, living in a former workhouse after contracting polio as a seven-year old exposed him to abuse on a daily basis. Dury said 'It was like a hospital in one way, like a school in another way, and like a prison in another way' (quoted in Balls, 2000, p. 40). While the use of institutions for people with disabilities or poor mental health is not as prominent as in the past, siloed generic services tend to systematically fail them. From when they are children they tend to struggle to 'fit' in at school (Ellem, Wilson, & Chui, 2012), which as Meiners (2011; 2016) argues, supports the school to prison pipeline.

Deploying an intersectional feminist analysis foregrounds the way that overlapping oppressions of gender, race, class and sexuality magnify the struggles experienced by people who, physically, mentally or intellectually, sit outside the mainstream definition of 'normal'. Disabled people bear the brunt of 'dehumanising discourse' that posits them as having incomplete, incompetent, ineffectual bodies (Rozengarten & Brook (2016, p. 6). I conceptualise disability broadly to encapsulate a number of chronic or long term mental and physical health conditions and illnesses, including addiction and the health implications associated with long term drug use such as the presence of blood borne viruses (Fraser & Seear, 2011). The 2015 *Health of Australian Prisoners* report suggests that at least one third of people who enter prison have some sort of disability. Significantly, the majority of disabled prisoners were existing on the Disability Support Pension before their imprisonment. Prior to their imprisonment, people who have an intellectual disability, are likely to have lived isolated lives steeped in poverty and abuse.

Choosing to use drugs—while potentially damaging—can provide brief moments of relief from the oppression of everyday life. Despite calls for the decriminalisation of drug use, addiction is prevalent amongst prisoners in Australia (Health of Australian Prisoners, 2015)



as governments continue to bow to penal populism.<sup>57</sup> Based on the premise that drugs—and by association, drug users—are ‘evil’ (Brook, 2002, 2010; Brook & Stringer, 2005), and that the threat of severe punishment would prevent drug use, mandatory minimum sentences led to hyper-incarceration, where parallels can be seen between the war on drugs and the rise in mass incarceration. Yet, there are some factors about drug use and addiction that are overlooked in the criminalisation of drugs and drug users. For people who have been exposed to trauma, drug use becomes a way to self-medicate the pain in their hearts and minds. Once the effects of the drug subside, memories of trauma return, reinforcing the need to use again. For others, problematic drug use begins with uncritical, over prescribing of licit drugs with little consideration of the social reasons underlying the presentation of symptoms. While a street level dealer and their ‘customers’ are constructed as deviant, an over prescribing doctor is ‘assumed to be a virtuous neo-liberal citizen and as such, capable of self-regulation’ (Mosher & Brockman, 2010, p. 11). Further, the most commonly used mood-altering substance, alcohol, is socially sanctioned, promoted and taxed, yet misuse is equally or more damaging to individuals, families and communities as are illicit substances. Finally, there is little acknowledgement of the pleasures derived from drug use (Brook, 2002; Brook & Stringer, 2005).

Contrary to contemporary understanding, the ‘War on Drugs’ and the resulting mass criminalising and imprisonment of drug users did not begin in the 1970s with Richard Nixon’s claim that drugs were ‘public enemy number one’ (Sharp, 1994, p. 1), or with Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, although few will forget Nancy Reagan’s plea to Americans to ‘just say no to drugs’.<sup>58</sup> Instead, according to Hari (2015, p. 7), the ‘war’ as a concentrated effort began in the 1930s in the US. Only thirty years before this time some drugs were legal and freely available. Products containing opiates were especially favoured by ‘well-to-do women’ (Terry, 2003, p. 21) as for them, using opium was more socially acceptable than consuming alcohol. However, the use of opium by Chinese migrants and marijuana by Mexican ‘illegals’ changed this landscape of ‘acceptable drug use’ to something that ‘other’ people do, thus becoming a practice to be avoided at all costs.<sup>59</sup> After having themselves contributed to the creation of dependent users through the supply of over the counter medications, in the 1920s the medical profession began to offer a range of opinions about the causes of, and treatment for, addiction. Because

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<sup>57</sup> The report found that upon imprisonment, of Australian prisoners, 74% smoke tobacco, 67% used illicit drugs—mostly methamphetamine and 45% were injecting drug users—all higher rates than the general population.

<sup>58</sup> For more on Nancy Reagan’s ‘Just say no’ plea, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQXgVM30mIY>

<sup>59</sup> For a discussion of this phenomenon in an Australian context, see Manderson (1993).

treatment was offered by 'professionals', it followed that those who did not respond to treatment were seen as doubly deviant, leading to the criminalisation of drug use, informed by racism and fear of the criminalised 'other' (Becker, 1973). Public opinion that drug users were to be feared accelerated in the politically conservative 1950s where the 'drug problem' was portrayed as an 'epidemic of young, black heroin users' (Terry, 2003, p. 27; Calathes, 2017).

The war on drugs, although 'declared' in the United States, was taken up worldwide. The war was—and still for the most part is—fought using a zero-tolerance law enforcement approach, drawing on policies created outside of a public health framework. While this approach might make 'good politics', it plays upon the human propensity to fear and the need to control the 'other'. Particularly, early on in the 'war', the spread of blood borne viruses such as hepatitis and HIV-AIDS was widespread as drug users (and gay men), who were unable to access clean injecting equipment and afraid to seek treatment for fear of legal repercussions. Especially in the United States, the war on drugs created significant collateral damage, as the mass imprisonment of mostly black men for drug use left their families to fend without them, ensuring their entrenchment into poverty (Alexander, 2010; Calathes, 2017). Michelle Alexander (2010) argues that the war on drugs in the United States was used as a form of racial control that continues to this day. Then and now, drug users are reluctant to seek help for fear of attracting social stigma (Link & Phelan, 2001) and criminal repercussions; or, if they are courageous enough to seek formal support, face long waiting lists and strict entry requirements into publicly funded programs.

However, addiction is more broadly constituted than drug dependence alone. As Helen Keane (2002, pp. 3-5) observes, there are several 'non-drug' or 'habitual disorders' that confirm some sections of the population's socially unacceptable lack of self-control. While this includes addiction to tobacco, sex, food, shopping or hoarding, most relevant to this research is gambling addiction. Gambling, especially electronic gaming machines (EGMs) or 'pokies', casts the net of addiction more widely than ever before because it often begins as an innocuous and entirely legal activity—a 'flutter' or a 'punt'. Again the notion of the neo-liberal citizen is evoked here as gamblers are reminded to 'gamble responsibly' thus placing responsibility for the actions and consequences of gambling addiction within the (flawed) individual.

Gaming venues are ubiquitous and, in the most part, accepted as 'usual' in the South Australian community, most prevalent in suburbs with low socio-economic status (Mannix, 2013). Since the introduction of Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) in hotels and clubs

in South Australia, thousands of people and their families have experienced the harms of problem gambling, which Young describes as the 'state-sanctioned commodification of chance' (2010, p. 255). EGMs and, to a lesser extent, online sports betting, create state sanctioned addiction problems that are located squarely within the forces of late capitalism (Young, 2010).

During the last twenty years, the annual turnover from EGMs in Australia has risen from 20 billion to 140 billion dollars, with a large proportion of that money coming from the pockets and purses of problem gamblers (Livingstone, 2015). Recent research has shown that EGMs are designed to stimulate the brain in ways that mimic chemical addiction. EGMs 'trick' the brain, by disguising losses as 'near wins' (Dixon & Daar, 2014). That the government—along with the hotels and sporting clubs who host EGMs—seem to be addicted to the revenue derived from the machines is rarely addressed, while claims that EGMs contribute to supporting grassroots community groups are, at best, overstated (Livingstone, Francis, & Wynen, 2015). For any of the groups discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, their likelihood of being locked up because of their social problems increases if they experience intersecting or overlapping disability, poor mental or physical health (Lloyd, et al, 2017) or struggle with drug addiction. Problem gambling therefore, is a state sanctioned addiction that is as socially damaging as the over consumption of licit and illicit drugs. Viewed in this way, the gambling industry helps feed the growth of the PIC.

## Conclusion

This chapter has provided a critique on early, mainstream 'scientific' criminology and the criminalisation of social problems which has led to individualising approaches that do not take into account the implications of race, gender, ableism and poverty. Indeed, John Braithwaite argued that criminology as a science is a failure, given that countries with the most criminologists also have the highest number of recorded crimes, violent crimes and incarceration rates (Braithwaite, 1989; cited in Smith, 1995, p. 13). The evidence presented here suggests that social stratification—not genetics, 'race' traits or similar categories—are a major influence in a person's likelihood of being caught in the net of the PIC. I laid the foundations for what follows in the forthcoming chapters by documenting the historical practice of criminalising the poor, race and ill-health, built into the 'settling' of Australia. In Australia and elsewhere the expediency of 'solving' social problems with imprisonment continues. The literature clearly demonstrates that poverty, racism, substance dependence and other addictions create prison populations of plurally

oppressed people. In Chapter 7 I will argue that this suits neoliberal regimes operating within an individualising framework.

The following chapter introduces the 12 participants in this project, providing the social context and struggles of their lives before prison. Their contribution to the project begins to shine through as many of them chose to use photographs to enhance the stories of their experiences.

## Chapter 4: Who goes to prison?: Meet the participants

It's the ones that are trying to feed their habit or feed their family that get caught, end up in prison and then lose their families. Deer, participant.

### Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis I set out the parameters of this research and explained the theoretical framework deployed throughout this project. In the second chapter I described how Photovoice was used as the method of creating data, how I recruited participants and how I exhibited the material. In the previous chapter I examined the literature relating to prisons and punishment in Australia through a lens that showed how crime and criminalisation are constructed through the presence of multiple layers of oppression. In doing so I argued that these individualised accounts feed the neoliberal ideologies of individual blame and responsibility, necessary for feeding the growth of the Prison Industrial Complex. Throughout this and the forthcoming chapters, the voices of the participants—in the form of photographs and words—respond to the academic debate about the use of prison as a response to social issues. The narratives are *their* analysis of *their* photographs. I add to their contributions by drawing comparisons between individual perspectives and the group as a whole, and locate their analyses within—or, alternatively, outside—other academic research.

Even though my original intention had been to focus on post-release experiences, participants made more than just passing comments on what led them to prison. More than half provided photographs that represented their criminal activity and the socio-political context of their lives, while all but one participant spoke at length about it. I understood this to signal their willingness to discuss the importance they placed on their pre-prison experiences in providing context to their experiences. In respecting them as researchers, not just participants, I felt it imperative that I reshape my initial plans for this thesis, respecting their judgement of the importance of delivering the whole story. Because I asked the questions, I must honour the answers. Therefore, this chapter focusses on pre-prison experiences. Although I did not probe participants for their history, some chose to share a lot about their lives, some just a little. Nor did I directly ask about their criminal activity, although many did talk about it and some chose to depict why they went to prison in their photographs. The purpose of this research was never about collecting demographics or gathering reams of data: it was about providing a platform for participants

to share their stories. As the thirteenth participant in this research, I have gathered up these stories and examined them using a theoretical framework built on the pillars of intersectional feminism, radical social work and the scholarship of the prison abolition movement.

Even though a person can be blind to their oppression, it does not mean that it does not exist or that it is not causing them harm. However, most participants could draw an explicit link between their social issues and their criminal conviction. Collectively they are older than most cohorts in prison research projects. I suspect that this maturity—described by Halsey and Deegan (2015a) as generativity—has been central to their broader understandings of oppression, collectivism and struggle. Even though they worked individually when creating their contributions, their stories and photographs often share similarities. Throughout this chapter, each participant is introduced. My focus is on their experiences of individual and systemic oppression, while my intention in this chapter is to explore whether their experiences of ‘offending’ squares with criminological rationales that individualise responsibility.

### Before prison demographics

Out of respect for anonymity, I have generalised the following information, altering specific names, places and events mentioned by participants. Of the twelve participants, nine were women and three were men. The oldest was a woman in her mid-sixties and the youngest was a man in his early thirties, their average age approximately 45 years, close to ten years older than the median age (35.5 years) of South Australian prisoners (ABS, 2015). This places them at middle-late adulthood which, according to human development theorists such as Erik Erikson (1974), is when people are most likely to care for future generations and begin to actively address issues that have plagued their attempts to thrive and flourish. Although this is a small group of participants, between them they spent well over 20,000 days behind bars in South Australia.

Only one person, ‘Deer’, identified as not being from an Anglo family background. Two men and seven women were parents, three of the women were grandparents. Ten explicitly identified as coming from a working-class background, with most of that group explaining that they had experienced sustained periods of extreme poverty as children and/or adults. Only one participant had formal qualifications before going to prison, while three had spent less than three years at high school. Eleven of the twelve identified as struggling with an addiction and its associated social, health and financial impacts upon

their entry into prison. Of those who identified as having been a previous injecting drug user, most identified as having blood borne viruses such as Hepatitis C, HIV or both. Two participants had sustained head injuries which, at times caused them cognitive challenges, and one had the smoking related disease, emphysema. The majority of women indicated that they had or continued to struggle with anxiety and depression and four women spoke specifically of being a survivor of sexual assault or intimate partner violence.

## Meet the women

### **Jennifer**

Jennifer is in her mid-sixties and has spent the longest time of all participants in prison in one single sentence (more than 20 years). Jennifer is the only participant who did not disclose having an addiction prior to her imprisonment and did not in any way discuss anything related to her criminal activity. I met Jennifer while she was participating in day release activities. Her movements were closely monitored, which restricted the photographs she could produce and submit for this project. Jennifer told me that she had been involved in an 'incident' at the prison on the evening before our scheduled interview. Because of this she declined to participate in an audio-recorded interview, instead choosing to submit four pages of hand written notes to accompany her photographs. While this complicated data analysis, Jennifer was still an eager participant and her perspective has important implications for female prisoners with lengthy sentences.

### **Stella**

Stella is in her early fifties and grew up in Sydney. From her early teens she began injecting heroin and spent a lot of time hanging around Kings Cross. At the time, Kings Cross was the bohemian heart of Sydney, home to artists, musicians, painters, brothels, nightclubs, drug dealers and organised crime. Stella spent a total of 14 years in and out of prison, with breaches of parole conditions due to drug use continually disrupting her life. Her father was violent, especially when he had been drinking heavily and, as a child and a young adult, Stella was sexually assaulted. Stella now has four children, is a grandmother and has a solid relationship with her family. She has been out of prison for more than 15 years and has been off the methadone program for well over a decade. Stella is currently parenting, volunteering in the community and is studying a bachelors degree at university.

## **Deer**

Deer spent the shortest term in prison of all participants (less than 6 months) and had been out of prison the longest (more than 18 years). Although Deer had been deeply involved in many activities deemed 'criminal', such as intravenous drug use and sex work, it was driving unlicensed and in an unregistered car that led to her imprisonment. Towards the end of this project this caused quite a conundrum for Deer. We co-authored a journal article together (Jarldorn & Deer, 2017) about her contribution to the project. Even though she has been successful in desisting from crime and using drugs for almost twenty years, Deer felt it would place at risk her future career aspirations by 'outing herself' in writing. Our solution was for her to co-author under her chosen pseudonym, which shows how deeply the shame and stigma of being a female ex-prisoner cuts, despite her obvious successes. As will be explained in detail later, Deer experienced abuse as a child and later as an adult. Deer is now in her mid-fifties, has three children and is a grandparent. A short-lived social policy at the time of her release enabled her to access funding for her tuition fees and financially supported her over the first year of university studies. She has since attained two degrees, one with Honours. Deer now works in the social services sector in Adelaide.

## **Kate**

Kate is almost sixty and has no children. She had nursing qualifications and experience before she was incarcerated but her crime saw her stripped of them. Kate had spent almost five years in prison and had been out for more than four years when we met. During our interview, Kate recounted a long-term affair she had with a married man who always promised to leave his wife for her, but he never did. This seemed to be a pattern in her life where people preyed on her need for connection to meet their own needs with little regard for how this hurt her emotionally. Kate grew up in a home with a violent father. Kate had been misappropriating and misusing pharmaceuticals from her workplace at the time she committed her crime and spoke of spending a large proportion of her income and time using electronic gaming machines. For many years before her imprisonment, Kate had sought help from a psychologist for her poor mental health. Despite this, Kate told me that she felt "mentally unhinged" when she committed her crime. Since her release from prison,



and although she is serviced by a job network provider,<sup>60</sup> Kate has not been able to secure paid work; however, she volunteers in the community and provides (increasing) care for her elderly mother.

## **Georgia**

Georgia grew up with her parents and three siblings in Adelaide's Western suburbs. Her parents—European migrants—both had low paid, 'unskilled' jobs, working long hours to keep them housed, fed and to send their four children to a private school in the city. Georgia told me that even though she was a private school kid she felt that she did not belong there—she was uncomfortable with the prevailing private school elitism, leading her to seek friendships with other marginalised people. Georgia is in her early forties, has been out of prison for about three years after serving more than three years in prison. She lives with her husband. Georgia has no children but has a meaningful relationship with her siblings' children. At the time of the project she was studying at TAFE,<sup>61</sup> volunteering in the community and working part-time. Georgia began studying in prison, where, for a brief time, TAFE offered a Women's Education Certificate<sup>62</sup> inside the Adelaide Women's Prison (AWP). She completed the certificate after leaving prison, with the qualification facilitating her entry into university. Her criminal activity was conducted with a friend and was fuelled by her addiction to methamphetamines. Since her release Georgia has chosen to have no contact with her co-accused.

## **Feeney**

Feeney is in her early sixties and lives with her husband; they have adult children. She spent around a year in prison, returning to the community around a year before participating in the project. One of Feeney's sons was killed in an accident when he was primary school age in horrific circumstances, deeply affecting her, her husband and their remaining children. She told me that the unresolved loss and grief have been a big part of her family's life ever since. At one stage, Feeney and her husband accessed counselling

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<sup>60</sup> In Australia, a job network provider offers 'personalised support to help job seekers find a job': <https://www.employment.gov.au/news/job-services-australia-support-job-seekers-and-employers>

<sup>61</sup> Technical and Further Education (TAFE) campuses are run and funded by the Australian Government. They are situated across Australia and mostly provide vocational education courses, ranging from hairdressing through to building and construction courses. TAFE is similar to the Community Colleges found in the United States. Intermittently, TAFE educators are given access to the AWP to teach female prisoners.

<sup>62</sup> The Women's Education Certificate provided by TAFE is unique in that it is taught using a feminist perspective and enrolments are only open to women.

but did not feel that it was helping them overcome their grief. Tired of telling their story and feeling that they were not heard, they gave up on counselling altogether. Feeney stole money from her workplace to fund her addiction to electronic gambling machines.

## **Joy**

Joy is in her fifties, has three adult children and is a grandparent. Her fourth child died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome as a baby. Her children's independence came at a cost, as Joy experienced a loss of purpose and meaning; her life felt empty once they left home. She explained that much of her family life revolved around her being the 'good mother'. Her weeks had been spent cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing while her weekends were spent taxiing her children to multiple sport commitments. Soon after her last child left home, Joy separated from her husband after he had an affair. As a single woman, Joy began to use drugs recreationally with her friends. Through this group of friends, she met a man and they began using drugs together. Very quickly she lost control of her drug use. Joy and this man committed their crime together to support their addiction; they both received prison sentences. Joy has no contact with her co-accused, has been out of prison for over two years, and does occasional cleaning work to supplement her welfare benefits. She struggles with poor health, experiences pain daily but is managing her health without the use of illicit drugs.

## **Gidget**

Gidget is in her late forties and has young adult children living interstate. Gidget became a wife and mother at a young age, separating from her husband before her children became teenagers. Gidget and her new partner 'Jim' committed their criminal activity together and were incarcerated in neighbouring prisons (Yatala Labour Prison (YLP) and AWP). Gidget served four years in the AWP released six months earlier than Jim. At the time of the research, Gidget and Jim were living together. When I met Gidget she had just completed the second of her three year parole term. Gidget struggles with poor physical health that prevents her from participating in a range of daily activities. Although 'Jim' was not a formal participant in this project he was present during a large portion of the time I met with Gidget, providing informed comparisons between Gidget's experience and his own in YLP.

## **Ruby**

Ruby is in her mid-forties. She had been out of prison and on home detention for almost 18 months at our first meeting, moving onto parole during the course of the project. She has one teenage daughter. At the time of the project, Ruby was estranged from her daughter, while Ruby lived with her own parents who hosted her while she was on Home Detention and later parole. Ruby had been employed as an accounts clerk her entire adult life. At the time of her crime, Ruby was suffering depression and was engaging in problem gambling behaviour which she began funding with her criminal activity. Ruby does not use illicit drugs and described herself as a social drinker.

## **Meet the men**

### **David**

David was the oldest man to participate in the project. While he did not provide any photographs about his pre-prison life, he spoke about it at length. Similar to Stella but five or six years earlier, David was an injecting drug user, spending his days hanging around Kings Cross in Sydney. His family had recently moved to one of the nearby suburbs from New Zealand. For David, Kings Cross was where he found connections and rebelled against his parent's middle-class aspirations. David and Stella survived an era where deaths from overdose and HIV-AIDS were commonplace (van Beek, 2004). Despite his use of illicit drugs for over twenty-five years, David first went to prison in his forties. His criminal activity took place at his work, where his administrative role enabled him to steal money to fund his heroin habit. He is what is referred to in addiction treatment as a 'high functioning user' and was working until the day of his arrest.

David has no children. At the time of the project he had begun to re-connect with his elderly mother after a long estrangement. He had not told her about being in prison until after he got out, worried how it might affect her. David's prison sentence began interstate, in a recently opened, private prison. On the day of his release David was served with papers, which saw him immediately escorted by police to YLP in South Australia. Later he was transferred to Mobilong Prison, located in a regional centre around a 90 minute drive from Adelaide's CBD. Prior to his imprisonment, David had no connections in South Australia. At the time of the project he had been in the community for 12 months, had

secured employment in manufacturing and, after a year in post-prison housing, was moving into a private rental property with a mate he met in prison.

## **Robert**

Robert is in his early thirties and has two children who live with their mother, his ex-partner, in regional South Australia. Robert remembered his father abandoning his mother when he was young and growing up in poverty in a sole parent household. However, Robert excelled at sport and had managed to get a good job, enabling him to be 'one of the boys', describing his typical weekends as a combination of drinking, partying and 'chasing the ladies'. Robert had a girlfriend when we met, but revealed in our interview that he had been unfaithful to every woman he had ever considered a 'girlfriend'. Before prison he frequently drank to get drunk, gambled 'a lot' and regularly used what he called 'party drugs'.

Robert was imprisoned for a string of minor crimes, traffic offences and unpaid fines, first at YLP, later transitioning to the low-security Cadell Training Centre (located around a four hour drive out of Adelaide's CBD). Not long after his first release from prison, he was returned to YLP for breaching his parole conditions and committing further driving offences. Robert had been released for almost a year when we first met. During the time he was in prison, Robert had no contact whatsoever with his children. Since his release he travels to visit them and occasionally they stay with him during their school holidays.

## **Trent**

Trent is in his mid-thirties and grew up in Adelaide's outer suburbs. He hardly remembers his father who died when he was very young. Although his mother re-partnered, Trent had a strained relationship with his stepfather who always seemed to single him out for discipline. At times, Trent's parents believed that his behaviour was 'out of control', yet Trent says that he was not skipping school, rude or violent, especially compared to his friends. But his step-father continued accusing Trent of being a trouble maker. This led his mother to seek specialist help, and subsequently Trent was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and prescribed dexamphetamine at the age of 12, which he began misusing almost immediately. At the age of 15 his parents sent him to live in a boys' home. Trent hated it there. Within a week he ran away, breaking into his family's home where he took some money, gathered up some personal belongings and spent the next few years couch surfing. He remembers during that period having a youth worker set

him up in a flat and with a job (which he hated). He said he got to a point where he thought 'where to from here?' which he said led to life 'crashing down around him'.

Trent committed many minor thefts to fund his substance use (mostly methamphetamine)<sup>63</sup> and also engaged in problem gambling. Like Robert, Trent was first imprisoned in YLP and later transferred to the low-security Cadell Training Centre. Post-release Trent has continued to access counselling to help him manage his mental health, substance use and problem gambling and had been out of prison almost a year when we first met. Immediately after our initial interview, Trent enrolled in a Vocational Education and Training course at TAFE. Six months later he secured full time employment as a tiler and completed his parole term the same time as completing his participation in the project.

### On the margins: Violence, trauma, grief and addiction

Despite their diverse childhoods and reasons leading to their imprisonment, there were similarities across the participants' stories. Deer, Stella, Kate, Trent and Robert all spoke of having fathers who were physically and/or verbally abusive to their mothers. The solution for Kate's mother was to send Kate and her sister to Goodwood Orphanage while she tried to 'sort out' her marriage. In an era when patriarchy was rarely questioned or challenged and when men's violence in intimate relationships was accepted as part and parcel of marriage, Kate's mother decided to send her children away for their safety. Prior to the creation of the women's refuge movement in the early 1970s (Theobald, 2015) this was the only option for Kate's mother who had no other family support. In the late 1950s, it was common that children sent to orphanages were not orphans at all. Orphanages were used for short term, out of home residential care, a 'non-stigmatising' option for the 'deserving poor' (Swain, 2014). Their imposing facades were 'an important assertion of civic pride, a sign that a community honoured its obligations to children in need' (Swain, 2014, p. 6). History has shown that the 'needs' of children in institutions were rarely a priority (Ashton & Wilson, 2014) and many experienced emotional and physical abuse and neglect at the hands of their carers.

Some of the British migrant children depicted in the film, *Oranges and Sunshine*, were sent to Goodwood Orphanage at the same time that Kate was there (BBC News, 2015; Irizarry, 2009; Swain, 2014). Cruel and humiliating punishments for bed wetting, talking out of turn, not standing straight, spelling mistakes and other minor infractions were commonplace.

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<sup>63</sup> There is a strong correlation between boys who are diagnosed with, and medicated for, ADHD and problematic misuse of methamphetamines as adults.

Isolation and beatings were used as the primary mechanism of punishment. Children who wet the bed were punished by having to stand with their urine soaked bedsheet over their head; mistakes in class were punished with having to wear a newspaper dunce hat, while all children were dehumanised, called by a number rather than a name. For Kate, even if she was not physically abused, witnessing such treatment would have been profoundly traumatising, the effects of which are usually debilitating and long-lasting.

Stella also grew up in an abusive home. She spoke of living with an alcoholic and violent father. She remembers not fitting in at high school, saying:

I never felt a sense of belonging at school, anything mainstream I always felt apart from. I questioned authority, I questioned things and I spoke up, I always liked to butt heads with authority. I had grown up with a father who was a tyrant and I probably didn't fear things that I should have.

When Stella was in her mid-teens the way young women in suburban Australia connected was to spend time at each other's houses after school and on weekends. Stella could think of nothing worse than having friends come to her house and witness her father's behaviour. However, avoiding doing so left her isolated. Leaving high school at the age of 14, she soon started using drugs on the streets of Sydney. Stella was first sent to prison in 1980 at the age of 16 on a minor drug possession charge. Initially lying about her age so her mother wouldn't find out about her arrest and drug use, she soon retracted that when she was given a custodial sentence in an adult prison. She pleaded with authorities that she was actually a juvenile. However, they ignored her pleas, instead throwing her into the back of the police van, taking her to her first of many prison admissions. Young, frightened and detoxing from heroin, Stella remembers the other women prisoners immediately recognised that she was not an adult. They took her under their wing and protected her. All of a sudden, Stella realised:

In all my life I'd never felt such a strong sense of belonging

Soon, encouraged by the other women to stand up for herself, Stella wrote to her mother to let her know what had happened and where she was. She recalls:

Mum raised merry hell when she found I was in a women's prison, so they let me out pretty quickly after that, dropped all the charges, but that started the cycle

The cycle that Stella describes is the cycle of addiction and imprisonment. Addiction, when viewed through a health framework is a chronic relapsing condition (Sellman, 2009), so even when people are adamant that they want to stop using drugs it can take many attempts to completely desist from drug use. Lapses and relapses are a normal part of the process and do not mean that the person is weak or has no resolve to change.

Not long after her release from prison at the age of 17, Stella met her first long-term partner. However, the sense of belonging she found in prison was never far from Stella's mind. After using heroin together for a while, Stella and her partner moved to Adelaide to 'dry out'. They believed that the problem was Sydney, and that a geographical solution would work for them. Together they made a good attempt at fitting into mainstream ideals, for a short time anyway, but, it was as easy to buy heroin in Adelaide as it was in Sydney.

Stella did her best to break the cycle of addiction when she became pregnant with her first child, enetering the methadone program. Even though she tried living up to the cultural expectation of the 'good' women, keeping house and being a mother, she struggled to feel comfortable in that role, saying:

I still felt that...a sort of a hole, that I don't belong I don't fit...when everything broke down I'd go back to the drugs and with the misfits, because that is where I fitted. That's why I felt more at home in a prison than anywhere else. I spent close to 14 years of my life locked up

Deer's parents were Roma people. They met and married young and against their parents' wishes. The Roma people have been persecuted throughout history, where they have suffered discrimination, forced sterilization, forced assimilation and genocide (Marin-Thornton, 2014). Deer described her parents' daring escape from their home country in Eastern Europe near the end of the Second World War. They were crossing a river in a rowboat while being shot at by soldiers. It was only luck that they made it out of the range of fire and safely to the river bank on the other side. After spending time in a refugee camp in Europe, they migrated to Australia where Deer's father, like thousands of other post-war migrants, worked as a labourer on the Snowy River Mountain Scheme. The work was gruelling, dirty and dangerous, living conditions were harsh, eventually becoming too much for her father.

Deer's parents then moved to Adelaide. Deer's father drank regularly; the more he drank, the more he physically abused her mother. Deer described many times when she, her mother and siblings would get into the car and drive around the city looking for refuge from his violence. She remembers frantically knocking on doors for help but no one answering and her growing frustration at her mother returning to her father once he had sobered up, knowing that before long, the cycle of violence would begin again. Eventually her mother met another man, leaving Deer's father. But while her mother found safety in her new relationship, Deer was unwelcome in their home. None of her post-family living arrangements were stable and, as a result, Deer never stayed in one place for long.

Despite these obstacles, Deer completed high school but, isolated from her family and with few close friends, she found connections, friendships and excitement in the injecting drug

culture. However, her male partners were physically violent, something that Deer had seen as 'typical' between intimate partners. As addiction took hold, Deer began to commit crime to fund her drug use, further entrenching her isolation from mainstream society.

To illustrate her situation, Deer used the image of a cracked concrete fence pillar to highlight her lack of networks and connections:



**FIGURE 9 MY BROKEN LIFE, DEER**

This picture speaks to the part of my life that was absolutely cracked to pieces. It had been building up for quite a long time. I had no support left, all my networks were cracking.

However, Deer was quick to point out her belief that her drug use was not all bad and that she credited using drugs and her experiences with providing her with a sense of community. It was with the people that she used drugs with that she found a place where she 'fitted in and was accepted'. This view concurs with Denton, who suggests that



participation in the drug culture is a way to counter what could otherwise be 'boring and unfulfilled lives' (2001, p. 161).

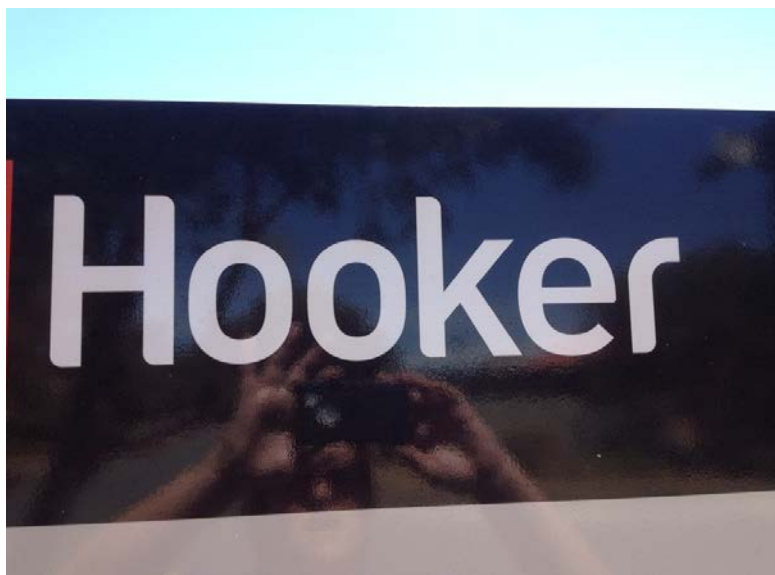


**FIGURE 10 MY SANITY, DEER**

The needle was my friend and a place to escape, it was really all I had. Some people would say that I chose a very difficult life, but I had nobody to guide me. I fell into drug use at an early age. It kept me sane for a long time, it actually kept me alive. Addiction is a funny thing, I had a lot of fun in addiction. It wasn't all doom and gloom.

Here Deer is touching on an important point frequently missing from the debates within addiction research and drug policy in that drug use can be pleasurable (Brook, 2002; Brook & Stringer, 2005). Like criminal activity (Maruna, Immarigeon, & LeBel, 2011; Halsey & Deegan, 2015), many people—although not everyone—age out of serious, problematic drug use without any formal treatment (Keane, 2002, p. 3; Heyman, 2013). Often drug use starts as 'fun' or to fit in with peers but especially for people who have experienced trauma, the fun can quickly become an addiction. Drug use then becomes a way to self-medicate, to numb recurring memories of past experiences. For people with a history of trauma, one of the main barriers to overcoming an addiction is that as they reduce their drug use (or gambling or other addictive behaviours) the traumatic memories often flood back with alarming clarity.

Deer created the following photograph to talk about her career as a sex worker, with a glimpse of her reflection in the sign creating a strong link between Deer, her photo and her story.<sup>64</sup> To accompany this image, Deer said:



**FIGURE 11 UNACCEPTABLE WORK, DEER**

This picture says that I was a working girl [sex worker] in my previous life. Nearly all of the women I used drugs with were working girls, a lot of women in prison were working girls. If it wasn't to support their children, it was to support their partner who was also using drugs. It was such an unacceptable line of work though. We are expected to use our bodies in our relationships and at work. Being a sex worker is the one time you can be exploited but actually earn some money. Because our politics are mixed up so closely with religion, we cannot separate the two, hence why women who do that line of work are unacceptable because it's an 'immoral' thing to do. I grew up in the institution of marriage between my parents and it wasn't good...a culture where the women were getting beaten and the men were bullies. Somehow being a working girl was more immoral than being an abusive partner.

Here Deer recognises that marriage and marriage like relationships can be a site of violence and oppression. While marriage privileges heterosexuality (Braun, 2003) and is portrayed as being what 'good' women should aspire to, marriage is a site where women and their children endure emotional, physical, verbal and financial abuse. Deer asks who decides which acts are more 'immoral', citing the example of women who are paid for sex compared to the actions of violent men who use physical violence to exert power and control. Often sex workers endure violence from their customers, some die from customer violence, are blamed for the violence they experience and have the violence perpetrated against them minimised. As Sanders (2004) argues, women working in the sex industry experience a continuum of health, physical and emotional risks in order to earn a living.

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<sup>64</sup> The Hooker referred to in the sign is the name of a well-known real estate franchise in Australia, *L J Hooker*.

Importantly, Deer points to the influence that religion has on the state, through politics, arguing that policy and legislation are propelled by religious values. These overlapping controls over women are explored at length in Marion Maddox's (2005) book, *God under Howard: The rise of the religious right in Australian politics*, where she uncovered the classist, racist and patriarchal values imposed on women by men in power in Australia. Maddox proposes that women—and especially Aboriginal women—are oppressed within the religious right's framework of Christian, 'family' values and capitalism.

Gidget had tried following the social script of the 'good woman',<sup>65</sup> marrying without seeking a career, becoming a stay-at-home mother to three sons. Living in the outer suburbs of Brisbane, her children's father was a FIFO<sup>66</sup> worker in the mines in regional Queensland. Gidget told me this made her 'a single parent, three weeks out of every four'. Feeling intellectually isolated, Gidget gained entry into university. But parenting alone and having to then focus only on her husband and his needs during his week at home sabotaged her ability to study effectively, resulting in her withdrawal from university in her first year of study. The pressure of Gidget's husband's FIFO employment resulted in them ending their marriage shortly afterwards.

Gidget met and moved in with a new partner, 'Jim'. Not long into their relationship Jim was seriously injured in a traffic accident. Jim was prescribed strong pain killing medication; neither Jim nor Gidget was provided with any social support during this difficult time. Faced with the pressure of caring for a man in constant pain, Gidget shared Jim's medication to self-manage her anxiety, stress and pain from her own poor health. Just like Stella and her partner, Gidget and Jim moved to Adelaide in the belief that a different location would help them end their drug use, but their addiction did not end, but spiralled out of control. This led them to doctor shop,<sup>67</sup> forge prescriptions and become involved in minor drug dealing to support their opiate addiction. Once they were caught and their supply stopped, they struggled with debilitating withdrawal symptoms. Gidget remembers the pain being so overwhelming that they discussed committing suicide together.

Gidget was an injecting drug user. Her photograph of the contents of a 'fit pack'<sup>68</sup> titled '*What I have left behind*', depicted not only ending her drug use, but the lifestyle and

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<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the 'good woman script', see, Fraser and Jarldorn (2015).

<sup>66</sup> FIFO is an acronym for the term 'fly in, fly out' and refers to workers who travel to remote areas for their employment, returning to their home and families for a short time in between extended periods of work.

<sup>67</sup> Doctor shopping is a term used to describe the practice of visiting multiple doctors in order to obtain prescriptions for pharmaceutical drugs of dependence

<sup>68</sup> A 'fit pack' is a package of injecting equipment including syringes, sterile water, swabs and a container for the safe disposal of used syringes. They are available in some chemists and in vending machines and are just one element of harm reduction approaches used in clean needle programs.

connections that went with that. She questioned the value of locking away an addict who has overcome their addiction, saying:

If there had been a way to access care and help to get out of the situation I would have done it years ago, but I was too scared to ask for help because I thought I would end up in jail just for talking to someone about it. I did not know what help was available because I wasn't mixing with the right people to get help. If I had been able to get that help I would have never ended up in jail. One year would have done the same as 3 years, I just needed long enough to get it out of my system and get my head straight.

Gidget's fear of prison was justifiable. Gidget spent many of her Saturdays during her childhood and early teens visiting her father in Boggo Road Gaol in Brisbane, notorious for inhumane conditions, violence and riots.<sup>69</sup> After years of visits, Gidget's father finally forbade her from visiting him anymore. He did not want her to be scarred by his prison experience. Around the world, at least one quarter of prisoners have no visits, phone calls or letters from their families and children (Terry, 2003; Halsey, 2007; Arditti, 2012; Schenwar, 2014). Strict rules upon arrival, searches—of visitors and prisoners—distress at the prison environment and lack of privacy during visits can make it seem simpler to have no visitors at all, adding to prisoners' disconnection from their people on the outside.

Research has consistently found that retaining significant relationships reduces the likelihood of recidivism (Clemmer, 1940; Terry, 2003; Halsey, 2007). Gidget loved her father, so ending her visits with him was profoundly difficult to accept. Like Gidget, children who lose a parent to the prison system suffer trauma, grief and distress. More often than not, their grief is disenfranchised, in that their loss is neither socially recognised nor effectively supported.<sup>70</sup> The stigma, insecurity, disruption and upheaval of having a parent imprisoned causes financial and emotional stress and distress for all concerned, the effects of which are most often ignored (Arditti, 2001; 2012; Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Flynn, 2014).

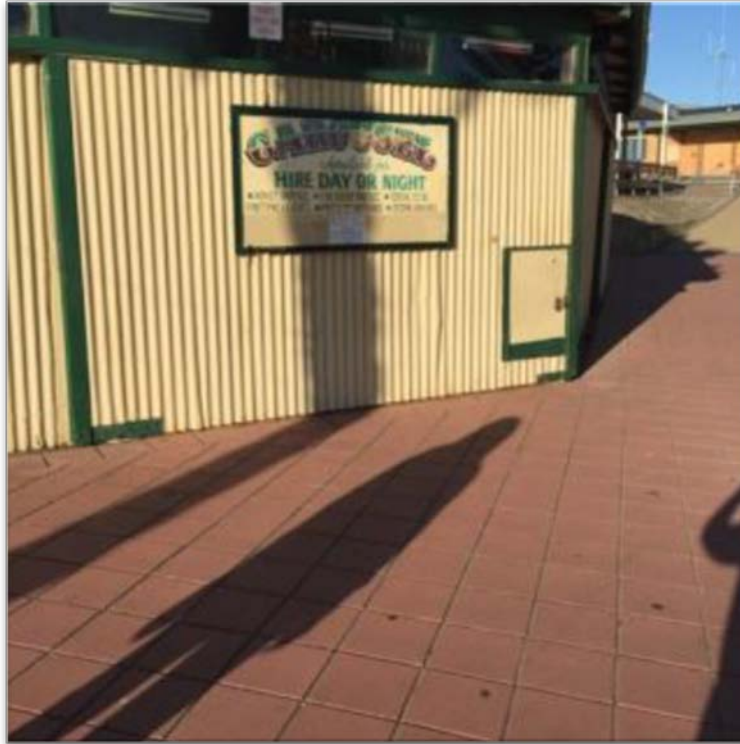
Some people try to manage the stigma of incarceration by keeping their loved ones' court proceedings and imprisonment a secret (Arditti, 2012), although this option is not open to everyone. The 24/7 news cycle means that crime news is a commodity necessary for the production and sale of newspapers and television ratings. Joy became one such commodity. For most people, a crime like hers would have gone unreported or relegated to a couple of lines in the back pages of a local newspaper. However, Joy was related to a

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<sup>69</sup> Boggo Road is now a decommissioned Gaol used as a museum where visitors can take tours and hire the premises for events, weddings, films and photography. For more see, <http://boggoroadgaol.com/>

<sup>70</sup> Prisons, by their very nature are disenfranchising, and the stigma attached to prisoners so powerful that personal losses from a relationship with someone who is imprisoned can be seen by outsiders as a good thing.

high profile South Australian, making her 'newsworthy'. She was chased out of court by journalists and had her story and photograph splashed over local newspapers and television. Even when she arrived at the AWP, journalists were waiting to capture images of her in handcuffs. But the newspapers do not provide all of the story. Here, Joy took a photograph of a closed merry-go-round or carousel to talk about her route into addiction and later prison:



**FIGURE 12 DRUGS ARE LIKE A MERRY-GO-ROUND, JOY**

I took this picture because being on drugs is like being on a merry go round, because you get on the gear and it is all or nothing. It takes over your life, you are chasing you tail and you can never get off it. When it begins you are enjoying yourself, but not at the end.

It started after a whole heap of bad stuff had happened in my life. It all started to mount up and even though it is no excuse, I started to use drugs, I was over 40 when I started. At first it was fun and stopped me thinking about my problems. Then when I hurt my back I started to use them more because they stopped the pain. Then I got really sick and used them even more, I was in denial.

Like Deer, Joy talked about her drug use beginning as a pleasurable experience, but after suffering a back injury she found that her recreational drugs worked very well to manage the pain. She said she was glad that the merry-go-round was closed when she took this photograph, liking how her own shadow in the foreground resembles the few options she had for addiction support.

Addiction comes in many guises. At the time of her crime, Ruby was suffering depression. The medication she was prescribed has been linked to its users partaking in ‘unusually risky behaviour’ and has been linked to problem gambling (O’Sullivan, 2012). Ruby has never used illicit drugs and describes moderate, safe alcohol consumption during her adult life. In Figure 13, called, ‘*What started it all*’, Ruby took a photograph of a computer screen depicting an electronic gambling machine to talk about how gambling to have a little bit of fun after work became an addiction that cost her dearly:



FIGURE 13 WHAT STARTED IT ALL, RUBY

From start to finish, this is what started it all and led me to jail. Something totally legal that started off as a bit of fun, just \$5 on a Thursday night for a bit of light entertainment. Then I got my first win and I thought, wow, this is easy money. I won the jackpot, the maximum that a machine could pay out, which back then was \$250. It was so exciting. I thought, if I could do this every week I wouldn't have to work. It got a lot worse when I began taking an antidepressant that has been linked to compulsive behaviour. That is when it just spiralled out of control. Then when I started stealing money I was gambling bigger and bigger amounts. Wins were exciting, it was a feeling I had never had before. But the wins never felt like they did that first time.

Ruby, like Deer and Joy, described entry into her addiction as fun. Unlike drug addiction though, gambling advertising is ubiquitous, portraying the activity as enjoyable; a place where beautiful people meet and enjoy each other's company over good food, without depicting the misery and pain caused by problem gambling. Gambling advertising teasingly suggests the possibility of becoming rich quickly. This is an appealing possibility for the working poor who are well aware that 'winning big' will be the only way they will ever escape the constant financial struggles that are a central feature of their lives.

Even though the route of administration is different, gambling produces similar effects to drug use. Not all people who gamble, or use drugs, become addicted—many do so without

serious harm; however, for those that are susceptible to harm, such as being mentally or physically unwell or exposed to trauma and abuse, the effects are often very similar. For example, when Ruby speaks of never getting the same feeling that she did the first time is a similar experience for people who use illicit drugs. It is that first high that is the 'best' and every time after that, the experience falls a little short. As the effects wear off, the body craves a repeat of the same euphoria. With each use, the body builds a tolerance to the drug, requiring a little more to recreate the same effect. Withdrawal symptoms encourage the body to seek more of the drug to placate its distress and so a journey towards addiction self-perpetuates. Even though the term 'chasing the dragon' originally meant a particular way of smoking opium from foil to create a swirl of smoke, its broader urban meaning describes the cycle of drug dependency and the ends to which a person will go to meet the body's need for the drug.

Gambling casts the net of addiction widely as it captures people who do not have the connections to obtain illicit drugs. Through my work I saw that middle-aged women who had experienced abuse and trauma were particularly prone to becoming addicted to playing EGMs. When using EGMs, some gamblers enter an almost hypnotic state, where painful memories and difficult life circumstances are, for the moment anyway, forgotten. Addiction is nurtured as EGMs are programmed to trick players into thinking that losses are 'near' wins and that winning their own jackpot is not far off. What tends to set crimes that fund gambling addiction apart from crimes that fund drug addiction is that (like gambling itself) they are conducted alone. Often the people around the gambler are unaware of the severity of their addiction, their level of financial losses or how they are funding those losses.

Like Deer, it was driving offences that enabled the police to catch up with Robert. Being in control of a motor vehicle that is unregistered, defectable or when the driver is unlicensed is a common point of detection for police in Australia. Parole conditions often include restrictions on driving that can last for many years, yet frequently in the 'heat of the moment' unlicensed drivers take the risk to drive (Halsey and Deegan, 2015a). Robert took a photograph of him getting into his car to help him explain his observations:



**FIGURE 14 MY CAR, ROBERT**

My car means freedom, it is a privilege to be able to drive. It is a key to the door to where I want to go. Yet it was cars that got me into prison in the first place. Prison is full of disqualified and drink drivers with driving offences, so now I think before jumping in the car, I don't drink or use drugs before I do and don't hurry to places. Being irresponsible meant losing the key to my own life.

## Conclusion

Even though none of the participants who contributed data to this project identified as First Nations Peoples, their experiences of oppression are (somewhat) structurally similar in terms of social positioning. Between them, participants have been exposed to violence, held in institutions before they were adults, displaced from family homes, had a parent or relative in prison, experienced unresolved grief and loss, had poor physical and mental health and struggled with addiction. Gendered oppression, rebellion against authoritarian parents, trauma due to the death or forced removal of a child, drug overdoses, abuse, neglect and extreme poverty feature throughout participants stories.

Within their accounts was the rejection of the social script that all 'good people'—with good here taken to mean the white, middle-classes led by patriarchy—are expected to follow. Apart from Jennifer, Feeney and Robert, participants indicated that they overwhelmingly felt a sense of not fitting in with 'mainstream' people, communities and ideas. To overcome their rejection, they sought out communities or behaviours that were not mainstream, even though for many of them, the choices they made were damaging to their health and wellbeing. The use of 'mainstream' here translates as a recognition of class hierarchies where the participants knew their place within that hierarchy. The euphoria of capitalism's promise of financial success were not evident in any of their lives.



Rather than trying to fit were they felt they did not belong, Stella, Deer and David found their place in the world within the counter culture of heroin users and sex workers. Gidget, Joy and Trent did too, although to a lesser extent than the group of heroin users. Each of them expressed feeling most comfortable amongst other people whose lifestyle 'choices' were met with social disapproval, holding similarly stigmatised identities. Problem gamblers Ruby, Feeney and Kate in particular, struggled in isolation although they were, superficially at least, positioned within the broader, mainstream community. Robert had a slightly different experience. His stigmatised 'prisoner identity' began, not when he entered prison, or even when he was sentenced, but when people close to him learned of his prison sentence. Robert used this image to help him recount the day that he travelled to a town in regional South Australia to see his children and former partner to tell them that he would be going to prison. On the way he stopped at this lake to think about the enormity of what he was about to tell them.



**FIGURE 15: THE LAKE, ROBERT**

Seeing that lake when I go to see my kids is like a marker, or a trigger, it's almost surreal; a touch of another time when I was just me, a bloke with two kids that loved to party. The time when I had never been to prison, the point when I became a different person to my family.

If we were to take the pathologising position favoured by criminology, it would be easy to locate the participants' troubles within an individual responsibility framework of blame. However, by deploying a structural, collective, intersectional analysis it becomes apparent that their pre-prison histories held many overlapping accounts of oppression. Living in a neoliberal world led the participants to endure these struggles individually without the ability to locate them within collective experiences of oppression. For the criminalised other, especially if they are a person of colour, poor, unemployed, have poor mental health

and struggling with addiction, the prison sentence adds another layer of overlapping oppression.

In the following chapter I conceptualise the use of prison and its associated operations as a violent response to social problems which are the result of gender, class and racial oppression. I also consider the harm that imprisonment causes families and communities.

## Chapter 5: Prison as violence and retribution

Some years ago, I became an artist, a painter; and one night, as I often did, I was laying on my bed, in my cell, sounding my mind and soul for inspiration. Suddenly, in the stillness of the dark, an image came to me that sent shivers through my body: I saw an endless and beautiful landscape, green grass, flowers and trees, and a radiant sunshine flooding it all; and everywhere, like pebbles on a lawn, on top of the hills and in the valleys, besides the streams and on mountain flanks were prisons, thousands of large, red-bricked buildings with bars in the windows. And as far as the eye could look there was no one to be seen. I never painted that, but the image is as vivid today as it was then. Yves Bourque, *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (1988, p. 7)

### Introduction

Throughout this thesis I conceptualise the prison experience broadly to include all of the operations and consequences of the criminal justice system, many of which extend beyond, or apart from, prison. For this reason, I include surveillance, interaction with the police, legal representation, the court experience, media attention as well as the ‘virtual prisons’ (Roberts, 2004) of remand, bail, home detention, parole and other sanctions as elements of the entire prison experience.

Beginning during the late 1800s, reformers, driven by a ‘rehabilitative ideal’, proposed that prisons should serve a range of purposes, including rehabilitation, reform and retribution (Jenkins, 1982), an ideal that has held a lot of traction since, despite equally longstanding arguments that prisons do not attain these ideals (Davis, 2003, p. 9). In this chapter I will focus on and explore how the violent retribution of prison drowns possibilities for ‘reform’ or ‘rehabilitation’, ultimately emptying those terms of their potentialities. As such it is hardly surprising that the people who endure that violence might respond defensively or even violently themselves—creating a vicious circle.

The framework of this thesis contends that there is a massive disconnect between justifications for the purpose of prisons and the experiences of the twelve participants. This chapter argues that there are discrepancies between what prisons are supposed to be for and what they actually achieve from prisoners’ points of view. On an interpersonal level, prisons are experienced as abusive, violent, gendered spaces fuelled by patterns of domination that deploy surveillance, deprivation and emotional repression to control the people held within their walls, while at a community level, prisons create and entrench communities of disadvantage (Davis & Gent, 2001). Neoliberal perspectives argue that the welfare of prisoners, including protections from violence, are guaranteed by a range of

human rights; however, I will argue that the use of prisons to lock up people suffering social problems is a violent response by the state experienced as politically perpetrated misery and oppression. As Genevieve LeBaron and Adrienne Roberts (2010) explain, 'in the contemporary era, the reproduction and extension of capitalism continues to involve relations of violence, coercion, and constraint' (2010, p. 19). Thus, there can be no separation between capitalism, the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and the violence present in carceral settings.

## Prisons as a violent response to social problems

Interpersonal violence has gendered and spatial dimensions. For women violence is most likely to happen in their own home and be perpetrated by an intimate male partner (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Scutt, 1983; Wendt & Zannettino, 2015).<sup>71</sup> Conversely, men are likely to experience violence while in public, on the streets, or in sporting arenas, where violence is perpetrated by men against men (Beazer, 2014). However, framing violence purely within an interpersonal framework allows state-sanctioned violence to escape scrutiny as it exists in the creation and deployment of structurally violent and/or abusive policies and procedures (Gil, 2013, p. 110; Green & Ward, 2004) enacted within oppressive systems.

Prisons, from prisoners' points of view, are a form of state sanctioned violence (Shaylor, 2009); brutalising, isolating spaces of violence, pain and blame. Writing in the United States almost 30 years ago, Richard Quinney (1989) similarly argued that 'we are fully aware by now that the criminal justice system in this country is founded on violence. It is a system that assumes that violence can be overcome by violence, evil by evil' (1989, p. 5). As participants in this project confirm, they experienced prison as multiple layers of normalised violence, including those outlined in this chapter.

In their book, *The Rich get Richer and the Poor get Prison*, Reiman and Leighton (2012) build on concepts like those proposed by Marx and later, Quinney, deploying the analogy of the pyrrhic defeat theory<sup>72</sup> to explain that the current criminal justice system does not reduce crime, but instead oppresses the poor through policies and procedures created by a class biased system at every point of their engagement within it. The authors explain that much like a pyrrhic defeat in war, the pain and damage caused by mass imprisonment to

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<sup>71</sup> The poem 8-8-98, written by former prisoner, Barbara Saunders, describes the violence of imprisonment in a way that emulates the cycles of a domestic violence. See the book, *Wall Tappings: An international anthology of women's prison writings. 200 to the present* (Scheffler, 2002, p. 111).

<sup>72</sup> For Reiman and Leighton, a pyrrhic defeat is a 'military victory purchased at such cost in troops and treasure that it amounts to a defeat' (2012, p. 7).

individuals, families and communities far outweighs any public 'benefit'. They argue that prisons fail to protect people from the crimes they fear because no attempt is made at alleviating poverty which fosters street crime. Propped up by a complicit media, the focus and sensationalising of street crimes make it appear that crime is almost exclusively the work of the poor (Reiman & Leighton, 2012; Scraton & Chadwick, 1986), enabling the state, institutions and the powerful to continue committing their own crimes with little scrutiny.

Chris Cunneen (2009) defines violence broadly as 'overt physical violence, including the use of cruel, inhuman and other forms of ill-treatment', which for him includes a 'failure to exercise a reasonable duty of care to persons in custody' (p. 209). As McCulloch and Scraton (2009) contend, 'violence and gross violation of human rights take place daily in domestic prisons and detention centres' (p. 6). That violence is made possible due to unrelenting deprivation of dignity and human needs, appropriated through dehumanising, and for women, infantilising daily regimes. According to Ruth Gilmore (2007, p. 26), prisons have 'depersonalised social control, so that it can be managed across time and space'. Despite the supposedly popular notion that prison is a holiday camp, Moore and Scraton (2013) propose that, especially for women, prison systems and the physical and emotional surroundings 'regularly fall below minimum standards of decency, humanity and international human rights' (p. 52). In effect, prisons have become a central tool used to reinforce neoliberal politics and ideologies by inflicting pain and hurt upon the marginalised and the poor.

Violence is material, corporeal but also symbolic and institutional. The very threat of violence can ooze from a building. For example, in a study of Australian decommissioned prisons operating as tourist attractions, Wilson (2008, pp. 38-9) discusses the implied, latent violence of the 'quasi-castle' or fortress style architecture of prisons, which she argues are designed to intimidate and evoke disquiet in the wider community. Wilson maintains that prisons channel violence inwards, shaping public opinion that prisoners must be feared, and outwards, reminding the public of the power of the State. Wilson notes how decommissioned prisons rarely display material relating to their most recent prisoners and that the loudest voices at these sites are those of former guards, thereby leading visitors away from even contemplating the plight of the 'modern day' prisoner (Wilson, 2008, p. 44). Taking into account the gendered, spatial and architectural dimensions of society (Ahreterzen, 2003)—of which prisons can be understood as a cornerstone—the power of the white, colonising, 'patriarchal polis' (Arendt, 1958) remains

a dominant feature. Because the role of a museum in contemporary society is to provide community education, awareness and appreciation of heritage, groups and cultures, the messages prison museums promulgate are a powerful cultural mechanism which compromises accounts of violence and suffering experienced by former prisoners (Jarldorn, 2016a, p. 5). In the following chapter, participants demonstrate their keen awareness of the powerful influence of architecture, often photographing buildings in their Photovoice contributions.

While some men may see prison as a place of belonging that adds to their sense of authority, for others, prison becomes their first—or part of a continuum of their—experience of being on the receiving end of racial, physical and sexual violence (Terry, 2003, pp. 68-72). However, violence features prominently throughout many criminalised women's lives; from within their homes, their experience of welfare systems and, especially in their accounts of imprisonment. It has been suggested that women who are in violent relationships will be safe from physical intimate partner violence while they are imprisoned (Mauer & Chesney-Lind, 2002, p. 8). Arguing against the misconception that a prison term can in this way be 'therapeutic', Kilroy (2012, p. 26) contends that prisons should not be thought of as a healing space, an education provider nor a substitute for a safe and secure home. While it is true that *some* women reoffend to enable their return to prison and that for others, prison feels safer than 'freedom' (Mauer and Chesney-Lind, 2002, 8), many women continue to endure control and emotional abuse from men who refuse them personal or phone contact with their children (Richie, 2001). Writing in South Australia, O'Keefe (2000, p. 6) assures us that prison walls are not always a barrier to the cycle of domestic violence. Thus, many women are powerless both inside and outside of prison. Especially for the women in this project who disclosed experiences of interpersonal violence and the structural violence of inequity and injustice, their imprisonment stretched and extended this continuum.

Prison changes a person. While each prisoner brings their own set of characteristics that are the culmination of their pre-prison lives, the entry point into prison strips most of the signs of their individuality away, shedding women and men of their clothes, identity and dignity. Fear, alienation and a number replace the person they were on the outside. From that day on, every new morning in prison reminds prisoners of being a failure in the eyes of society. No longer can one eat, sleep, work or exercise when they choose. For many prisoners, their non-prisoner social status means nothing once they are locked up because humiliation and subjugation are central to the prison experience (Goffman, 1961, p. 18;

Scraton, 2009). To cope, many prisoners make the (un)conscious decision to acquiesce to their violent surroundings to survive. Donald Clemmer (1940) coined the term 'prisonisation' to describe this process of assimilation or the 'dynamic process of prisoner socialisation' (Crewe, 2007, p. 132) into the way of life in prison. Clemmer concluded that the longer a man was in prison,<sup>73</sup> the more he was likely to lose touch with his non-prisoner identity—this concept is now understood as being institutionalised. He argued that becoming institutionalised happens when prisoners accept their ascribed (negative) social status and become attuned to the prison habits of eating, dressing, working and language usage. Contrary to Goffman's (1961, p. 66) argument that the effects of being institutionalised are not permanent, Clemmer reasoned that institutionalisation makes re-adjusting to life on the outside very difficult. This is hardly surprising when survival in prison requires a person to be hard and tough in an environment that was designed in the nineteenth century by men, for men (Sloane, 2016). Clemmer found that institutionalisation is most likely to occur for men who had few 'pro-social' networks on the outside and very few visitors while inside. The participants in this project—often in creative ways—submitted data confirming how they experienced institutionalisation and the loss of connection with people on the outside.

It stands to reason that becoming a member of the prison community solidifies connections with people considered society's 'others'. Gresham Sykes (1958, pp. 76-7) pointed out the absurdity of society choosing 'to reduce the criminality of the offender by forcing him to associate with more than a thousand other criminals for years on end'. Nevertheless, this does not mean that all prisoners adjust to, or experience imprisonment in the same way. Some might react by withdrawing, regressing, rebelling or conforming while others become innovative, sometimes at an extreme level. The majority of people in prison find ways of coping that use a combination of these strategies. The responses of the participants confirm this, describing a range of tactics and approaches, although, as they attest, in different ways this led to manifestations of institutionalisation and disconnection with people on the outside. According to Sykes, there is no 'perfect solidarity' or 'warring aggregate', but instead an 'uneasy compromise' between people confined together for long periods of time (1958, p. 83). However, Scraton (2009) argues that above all other considerations, the imperatives that shape prisoner behaviour are guided by their attempts to survive the dehumanising, hostile and violent space that is prison.

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<sup>73</sup> Clemmer did not include women in his research.

Maya Schenwar (2014, p. 63) expands on these ideas, explaining that to survive prison, people need to ‘mentally disconnect’, thus distancing themselves from their previous lives outside prison walls. In Chapter 7, I will argue that this phenomenon is present amongst the majority of prison guards who also mentally disconnect from their outside lives. Initially, they do this to survive an oppressive workplace but, eventually this disconnect becomes habit, a daily occurrence that manifests in overt, sanctioned uses of power and violence to ‘manage’ the people locked up in prison.

## Intersections of gender and race

It has been said that for some men—especially those from poor communities of colour—crime and imprisonment are part and parcel of ‘doing gender’ (Jefferson, 1996, p. 340)—almost a rite of passage. For some men, involvement in criminal activity can contribute to an almost ‘hero-like’ status.<sup>74</sup> The men who participated in my research project did not identify as men of colour, and were perhaps not ‘typical’ prisoners in other respects. None reported any expectation that they would go to prison, nor did they consider their imprisonment as a ‘rite of passage’. In any case, understanding prison as a ‘toughening’ or hero-building experience does not ring true for women prisoners. Writing about criminalised women in New South Wales, Hampton (1993) claims womens’ experiences are far different, who post-release find it difficult to shake off the same, sometimes isolating survival strategies that helped them endure imprisonment, often separating themselves from others without understanding why. This isolation is not described by women prisoners as enriching in any way and helps explain why understanding the in-prison experience is central to understanding the difficulties ex-prisoners experience when returning to the community.<sup>75</sup>

In an exploration of historical responses to crime and punishment, Lucia Zedner (1991) argues that because of socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity, men have been the primary target of overt surveillance and policing. This, she says, has led to sites of imprisonment being ‘identifiably masculine in their culture and orientation’ (Zedner,

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<sup>74</sup> An Australian example is Mark ‘Chopper’ Read. Before his death in 2013 of liver cancer as the result of contracting Hepatitis C in prison. Read wrote and published a number of books, wrote columns for men’s magazines, was interviewed a number of times on Australian current affairs shows, starred in television commercials, was the subject of the film, *Chopper*, (in which he was played by Eric Bana), will be the central character in a forthcoming instalment of the *Underbelly* franchise, and continues to be parodied by comedians.

<sup>75</sup> Apart from meeting their post-release obligations, a significant number of former female prisoners tend to spend most of their daily, post-release activities in their bedrooms—such as eating and watching television.



1991, p. 312),<sup>76</sup> extending from their physical surroundings, the ‘hyper-masculine’ prison culture (Murphy, Terry, Newbold, & Richards, 2007) through to daily punishment regimes. To the outside world men often ‘take it like a man’ and attempt to make light of the prison experience.<sup>77</sup> However, the masculinity present in every facet of prison does not benefit men or make their experience any less painful. Combined with the presence of systemic racism, the masculine prison has helped create the assumption that there is an unquestionable connection between men, violence and race (Davis & Gent, 2001). While Michelle Alexander (2010) draws this distinction in the United States in her book *The New Jim Crow*, this situation is perhaps more immediately apparent in the Australian context, where First Nation’s Peoples—and especially First Nations women—are over-represented in juvenile and adult prisons, thus leading to a dominant understanding that equates people of colour as being violent and an ‘other’ to be feared. Contradicting this dominant idea, Deer, Stella and Georgia specifically spoke of the profoundly meaningful connections they made with Aboriginal women whilst they were in prison.

Indigenous and non-indigenous women ‘do’ gender in prison in different ways to men. They often report being intimidated and hounded by correctional officers who tend to have a narrow view of female prisoners as being ‘needy’, ‘manipulative’ or ‘attention seeking’ when they request access to counselling, health care or other entitlements (Hampton, 1998, p. 104), each of which are thinly spread in women’s prisons. This constructs women prisoners as ‘difficult to manage’ rather than as seeking their need for, and rights to, support. Contradictorily, female prisoners endure infantilising treatment yet at the same time are likely to be classified as maximum-security (Kilroy, 2012, p. 14).

From the Victorian era it was believed that social control of the feminine ideal could be restored through imprisonment, where women who committed criminal acts such as prostitution or public drunkenness could be ‘reformed’ into good women—usually by ‘upskilling’ them in the womanly arts of sewing, laundry, cooking and cleaning (Zedner, 1991). More often than not, moralising over women’s sexual conduct, relationships and mothering skills, even if they had no bearing on the crime they were charged with, continues to be used as ‘evidence’ against women’s character and is in itself a form of structural gendered violence. It is a form of violence consistent with imperialism and the

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<sup>76</sup> For an example of the gendered, ‘maleness’ of prisons, prisoners and prison guards see Murphy, Terry, Newbold & Richards (2007).

<sup>77</sup> A local example is the product of a South Australian Prison Radio project devised by Dr Heather Anderson and Dr Charlotte Bedford, who worked with men in Mobilong Prison to produce and record their own radio show, *Mob Radio*. The project created a CD recording for new prisoners to inform them of prison life, covering buy-ups, hairdressers, medication regimes, how to be a ‘good cellie’ and how to make prison pancakes.

colonisation of indigenous women, who were (and still are) subject to similar tactics even outside of prison (Haebich, 2000). As Hampton suggests, the imprisonment of women is a 'strong rejection of what is too often perceived as their "anti-feminine" behaviour' (1993, p. xii).

It was these moralistic assumptions that led to the imprisonment of women for the purpose of 'moral regeneration' (Zedner, 1991, p. 325). The recognition of the masculinity of the carceral space has led prison reformers—often feminists—to call for 'gender responsive' prisons and punishment regimes (Shaylor, 2009). The belief that prisons can perform moral regeneration endures as women's prisons still mostly offer 'feminised' activities or 'women's work'. Hannah-Moffat (2001) and Shaylor (2009) argue that calls for women's prison reforms have centred on the misguided belief that if prison spaces were more 'feminine'—for example women guarding women, women holding management positions in correctional settings and instilling 'women focussed' programs—the pains of imprisonment would be mitigated. The belief that a feminised environment is a benefit without harm is misguided. Shaylor (2009, pp. 148-151) maintains that these approaches not only fail the women they intend to support, they also fuel the growth of the PIC. This, Shaylor argues, is compounded by the fact that reformers ignore the voices of prisoners and ex-prisoners, instead speaking *for* them through a framework of privilege and paternalistic viewpoints and assumptions. While none of the men made specific reference to gender, the nine women in this project discussed and/or photographed gendered experiences, sometimes using imagery of flowers—a thoroughly 'feminine' symbol and through speaking in collective ways about women's experiences—in contrast with the more 'individual' nature of the men's data.

## The myth of rights in prison

According to Jim Ife, 'the concept of human rights represents one of the most powerful ideas in contemporary discourse' (2012, p. 1). Internationally, the social work profession reflects this discourse in their codes of ethics, teaching and practice principles (Healy & Link, 2012). Along with a commitment to social justice, self-determination and respect for the inherent dignity of every person, the *Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics* (AASW, 2010) has human rights, social justice and respect for the dignity of all people as core, fundamental objectives of the profession. The Code of Ethics specifically states that the mission and aims of social work can be met by 'subscribing to the principles and aspirations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), other international

conventions derived from that Declaration as well as other human rights documents' (AASW, 2010, p. 7). However, there is a conspicuous omission in the current *Code of Ethics* in that none of the human rights documents relating specifically to the treatment of prisoners are included in the appendices of human rights treaties. Given that a significant number of qualified social workers are and will be employed within criminal justice system settings—including prisons—one wonders if this is more than just an oversight, but is an extension of the 'deserving' and 'non-deserving' binary present from the Poor Law era.

In 1955 the United Nations adopted the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners* (SMRTP) (United Nations, 1955) and later, specifically for women, *The Bangkok Rules* (United Nations, 2010) to ensure that the principles and practices used in the management of prisons provide suitable minimum conditions for the people held within them. Acknowledging that 'violence against women has specific implications for women's contact with the criminal justice system', the *Bangkok Rules* were created to supplement the SMRTP, as a response to the UN General Assembly's comments that 'physical and psychological safety is critical to ensuring human rights and improving outcomes for women offenders' (United Nations, 2010). In 2015, the United Nations adopted a revised set of international standards for the treatment of prisoners, called the *Nelson Mandela Rules*.(2015).

One of the groups of people least likely to be afforded even the most basic of human rights are people who are convicted of criminal offences. Often regarded as 'alien others' or 'moral strangers', unworthy of community concern (Connolly & Ward, 2008, p. 81) the human rights of prisoners are often forfeited in the name of security measures (Jean, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2015), or somehow negated by criminal conviction (Plews, 2015). As Connolly and Ward argue, while some people are in prison because they have violated others' human rights, it is 'counterproductive' to violate prisoners' rights as, without their own framework of what rights are, they are more likely to violate others' rights upon their release (2008, p. 84).

It is often assumed that because human rights treaties are in place, the rights of the people that they are meant to protect will be upheld. This is clearly not the case for many groups and individuals (Davis, 2003, p. 45; Ife, 2009; 2012). This position is reflected in the report, *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston* (Arbour, 1996) which investigated the management of women's prisons in Canada, after video footage of a violent confrontation between correctional staff and eight women at a

women's prison was aired on national television. In her report, Madam Justice Louise Arbour wrote:

One must resist the temptation to trivialise the infringement of prisoners' rights as either an insignificant infringement of rights or as an infringement of the rights of people who do not deserve any better. When a right has been granted by the law, it is no less important that such right be respected because the person entitled to it is a prisoner (Arbour, 1996, p. 101)

Connolly and Ward (2008) suggest that because of the perception that 'offenders' are non-deserving, having 'forfeited' their rights, their assessment and treatment by workers within the criminal justice system is unfairly weighted towards risk rather than need. This approach fails to recognise that when using a human rights framework, class, race and gender oppressions *are* breaches of human rights. Human rights treaties have 'privileged the rights of men...served the needs of colonialism' and 'been used to replace or devalue a class analysis' (Ife, 2012, p. 10), doing little to ensure human rights are enacted in practice. Tellingly, every participant in this project described breaches of their rights in prison in their data.

Australia is falling well short of meeting the obligations set out in the UDHR, SMRTP, the *Bangkok* and the *Nelson Mandela Rules* (Mackay, 2017). This was recently evidenced in the *End of Mission Statement* by Dubravka Šimonović. Šimonović is the United Nations *Special Rapporteur on violence against women*. Over a period of 15 days in February 2017, Šimonović travelled across Australia to hear about violence against women, both structural and interpersonal; of special relevance was her visit to a women's prison in Queensland. In her statement, Šimonović points to the 'multiple, and intersecting violence, sexual assault, trauma and abuse' experienced by First Nations women held in Australian prisons (2017, p. 6). Šimonović used the statement to voice her concerns about 'over-incarceration, prison-overcrowding, strip-searching, solitary confinement, lack of alternatives to custodial sentences...inappropriate health care...and inadequate re-entry programmes' (Šimonović, 2017, p. 7). This is a glaring example of the unsanctioned, counterproductive and retributive punishment experienced in Australian prisons that demonstrates the futility of relying on the human rights model for prisoners

The *Nelson Mandela Rules* provide a list of principles under which prisons and other penal institutions should be managed. Rule 1 states that:

All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings. No prisoner shall be subjected to, and all prisoners shall be protected from, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, for which no circumstances whatsoever may be invoked as a justification (Nelson Mandela Rules, 2015, p. 9).

With a total of 122 rules, space prevents a discussion of each of the *Nelson Mandela Rules*, but important in the context of this research are the basic principles which state that prisons should not aggravate the suffering caused by loss of liberty; that prisons should prepare prisoners for release and reintegration; and they must attempt to minimise the potential for prisoners to lose their dignity as human beings. Importantly the *Rules* must be applied impartially in terms of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (United Nations, 2015, pp. 2-3). Recently Anita Mackay found that breaches of the Mandela Rules are systemic in Australian prisons and stem from ‘a policy level, rather than isolated incidents of bad practice’ (2017, p. 285).<sup>78</sup> The following sections in this chapter address just a few of the areas where rights are contested, withheld, withdrawn and breached in the name of security, budget restraints and punishment.

### Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: Violent oppression of First Nations peoples<sup>79</sup>

Nothing could be a more violent result of imprisonment than a death in custody. The greatest proportion of deaths in custody are recorded as suicide. Although ‘blame’ for suicide tends to lie within the individual, the violence of imprisonment plays a significant role in prisoners’ successful and unsuccessful attempts at self-harm. Deaths are also attributed to substance use and ‘external/multiple trauma’ (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013, p. 51). Deaths in custody include deaths while under arrest, when in police custody as well as in prison. Writing about deaths in custody in the UK, Scraton and Chadwick (1986) explained how the ‘politics of marginalisation’ (p. 94) had ‘real consequences for people in their daily negotiation with state agencies’ (p. 95). As I argued in Chapter 3, Aboriginal people—and especially Aboriginal women—constantly endure marginalisation brought about by race, class and gendered oppression. While deaths in custody occur across all races in Australia, I focus here on the deaths in custody of three

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<sup>78</sup> Prisoners are not given access to any of the United Nations documents, as they are not binding but ‘aspirational’. However, a copy of the *South Australian Correctional Services Act 1982*, is, by law meant to be available in all SA prisons. The current version of the Act is 116 pages in length, is laden with legal terminology and there are just three copies held in the AWP. In a recent memorandum to all staff and prisoners of the AWP, the rules of access to the Act are explained as follows: The prisoner may borrow a copy of the Act for a period of 24 hours, the prisoner must liaise with a correctional officer to complete a registration form recording all their details, they may not print additional copies and must return the document ‘undamaged and in tacked’ [sic]. The Act is not available in languages other than English and is unlikely to be clearly understood by anyone apart from those with high levels of literacy. See, <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/CORRECTIONAL%20SERVICES%20ACT%201982/CURRENT/1982.48.AUTH.PDF>

<sup>79</sup> Please be aware that the names of Aboriginal people who have died are present in this section.

Aboriginal people, each of whom were denied the most basic of rights in their interactions with the criminal justice system.

In 2008 Mr Ward, a respected and well connected Aboriginal elder from Ngaanyatjarra lands died of heatstroke in the back of a police van as it travelled 400km across the Western Australia desert in searing temperatures. He had been denied bail after being locked up for driving under the influence of alcohol. Mr Ward was also denied water and fresh air during that journey, while the drivers of the van travelled in air-conditioned comfort. It was found that the WA Department of Corrective Services and GSL Custodial Services (now G4S Custodial Services)<sup>80</sup> had been warned of the dangers of transporting people in the type of vehicle that they did and were both to blame for the preventable death of Mr Ward (Hunyor, 2009).

A recent preventable death in custody was that of Ms Dhu in 2016, from Western Australia. Locked up for non-payment of around AUD\$1000 in unpaid fines, she arrived at the South Hedland Police Station<sup>81</sup> with pre-existing injuries caused by domestic violence at the hands of her partner and was in extreme pain. Police ignored her escalating distress and delayed seeking medical attention for Ms Dhu, claiming that she was faking and exaggerating the pain. This response, according to Brull (2016), was due to institutionalised racism and the perception that Ms Dhu was a 'junkie' and therefore was undeserving of medical assistance. For Ms Dhu, the overlapping oppression of gendered violence, racism, poverty, poor mental health and the stigma of being a drug user combined to result in her death.

In South Australia, Wayne Fella Morrison, was remanded in custody, held in Yatala Labour Prison even though he could have been bailed to family members. He had no prior convictions. Beaten by five prison officers, Mr Morrison died on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016 after spending just six days in prison. According to his family, Mr Morrison was almost unrecognisable as he lay brain-dead in the intensive care unit of the hospital, with bruises all over his body, including on the tops of his feet. At the time of writing the correctional officers involved have had no action taken against them, and there has been no coroner's inquiry into the death of Mr Morrison because of a lack of state government funds (Wills, 2017), yet the SA government continues to announce increased spending on prison

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<sup>80</sup> According to their website, G4S is 'the leading global integrated security company, specialising in the provisions of security products, services and solutions', <http://www.au.g4s.com/>

<sup>81</sup> South Headland is predominately an iron ore mining town approximately 1,300 km north of Perth in Western Australia.

expansion.<sup>82</sup> Mr Morrison's family are still waiting for the Department of Corrections to be made accountable for his death.

These deaths are not isolated incidents but mark a systematic pattern of racialised violence and oppression. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) found that *the* reason for the high numbers of Aboriginal deaths in custody was due to their over-representation in prisons. Over-representation in carceral settings correlates directly with extreme marginalisation and disadvantage; situations that are maintained by the forces of social stratification (Anthias, 2001). In a recent media release, the *Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement* in South Australia (Axelby, 2017) pointed out that many of the recommendations made in the RCIADIC submitted in 1991 are still not being met—recommendations which, if followed would have prevented these deaths. There is still no fully-funded Custody Call Notification Service in most states, including South Australia. This service would ensure that the detained person would have immediate access to legal assistance, culturally appropriate support services and contact with family. Other recommendations include the condemnation of physical violence by police; the restriction of arrest to an intervention of last resort; the requirement that police must be aware of the health needs of Aboriginal people; and the requirement that police must immediately provide resuscitation and seek immediate medical assistance when required. Because good health and healthcare are privileges, oppression ensures that health care is not equally available to everyone in the community.

### The violence of withholding health-care

For most prisoners, one of the characteristics of their social disadvantage manifests in their poor mental and physical health.<sup>83</sup> Oppression is written on, and in, their bodies. Combined with high rates of exposure to trauma or previous injuries, prisoners often have a comorbid health status. Complicating this situation, many arrive in prison with untreated or undiagnosed health problems because they are less likely to have had regular contact with a health practitioner (Butler, Allnut, & Yang, 2007, p. 108) or to have participated in public health measures aimed at reducing preventable diseases.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> In April 2017, the SA Government agreed to spend AUD\$9 million as a 'prop-up measure' to create 308 new 'beds' across 5 men's prisons, the Holden Hill Police Station and the City Watch House, see (Donnellan, 2017)

<sup>83</sup> In a recent Australian study, Harris and Calder (2017, para 1) found 'Australians with lower incomes are dying sooner from potentially preventable diseases than their wealthier counterparts'.

<sup>84</sup> Some of these measures are vaccinations, cancer prevention and screening (for cancers such as cervical, breast, prostate and bowel cancer), tobacco control, diabetes testing and eye testing.

The temptation for sentencing judges to award a custodial sentence with the belief that a prison term will mean that the person will—if nothing else—be able to access decent health care and addiction treatment is an enduring idea (Freudenberg, 2001; Cunneen, 1992). This assumption is not unfounded because the *Nelson Mandela Rules*, along with previous prisoner human rights treaties, state that ‘prisoners should enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community’ (pp. 8-11). Although prison health programs have the *potential* to reach previously ‘hard to reach’ populations—for example sex workers or drug users—and even though prisons provide some health and dental care, the majority of prisoners do not or cannot access these services (Mackay, 2017; Lloyd, et al, 2017; Butler et al, 2007; Freudenberg, 2001). Consequently, the criminalisation of sex workers and drug users completes what is a vicious circle. Inside prisons, health care is poor and thinly spread while outside health services report struggling to access high-security prisons in South Australia (Holmwood, Marriot, & Humeniuk, 2008, p. 199),<sup>85</sup> thus challenging the assumption of freely available in-prison health care. Women in particular experience health care in prison in profoundly negative ways as their sexual and reproductive health is rarely prioritised, especially if their health needs are attached in some way to their criminalisation, while many women are reluctant to seek medical care when it is accompanied by a strip-search. Sometimes female prisoners choose not to access health care because of previous poor experiences, especially if their needs were trivialised, or their symptoms deemed an exaggeration (Faith, 2011, p. 237; Peak, 2017).

When women present as distressed in prison, that distress is either medicated or managed with ‘therapeutic’ approaches (Kendall & Pollack, 2005)<sup>86</sup> that focus on individual ‘deficits’ with little or no acknowledgement that imprisonment causes distress. According to Kendall and Pollack (2005) and others,<sup>87</sup> prisoner medicating is as much about the smooth running of the prison as it is about the health and well-being of women prisoners. Former prisoner Victor Hassine (1996, p. 79) is adamant that medicating prisoners is a ‘quick, cheap and effective’ solution to prison overcrowding, thus enabling the provision of fewer prisoner support services. In a study interrogating the gendered experiences of 92 South Australian prisoners<sup>88</sup>, Francine Pinnuck (1998; 1999) found that women were more likely

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<sup>85</sup> Because there is just one women’s prison in South Australia, it is, by default classified as high security.

<sup>86</sup> One such therapeutic approach is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). DBT is a cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy, a ‘talking treatment’.

<sup>87</sup> See for example, Hampton, 1993; Pinnuck, 1998; Faith 2011

<sup>88</sup> Male=54, female =38.



than men to be medicated, although she found that male protectees<sup>89</sup> and 'difficult to manage' young men were also most likely to be medicated (Pinnuck, 1998, p. 17). The most commonly prescribed drug at the time of Pinnuck's study was *Doxepin*, a sleep medicine which has side effects ranging from weight gain, abnormal thinking, behaviour changes, memory loss, aggression, panic attacks and suicidal thoughts (Drugs.com, 2015). What follows are comments from three female prisoners in Pinnuck's research who explain that:

Everybody is medicated at some time...you can't survive jail unless you get medicated...they [the prison] medicate [us] to keep us under control ('Betty')

The women who are on them end up fucking stupid. They [women prisoners] come in all right and they walk out fucked up in the head...once you get used to the pill, if they see you are starting to show some emotions, they double the dose ('Sarah')

'Sally', who had served many custodial sentences since her youth spoke of the disabling effect of being medicated:

I was a zombie, a walking zombie.

Medicating prisoners in this way has been described as 'psychiatric abuse' (Auerhahn & Leonard, 2000). The reliance on medicating prisoners without consideration of the ongoing violence and abuse in prisons cannot be considered an acceptable approach and is arguably more about prisoner management and creating docile bodies rather than treating poor mental health.

Yet, the imprisonment of people who are mentally unwell is common practice around the world, usually because of a lack of mental health facilities in the community, where few alternatives to imprisonment are available.<sup>90</sup> A South Australian example is that of Ms Jacqueline Davies. Imprisoned when she was mentally unwell, Ms Davies was shackled to a bed by her wrists and ankles for over 20 hours a day for nine months, in Yatala's G Division<sup>91</sup> (Jean, 2012), because of her ongoing attempts at self-harm. With the help of a public advocate, Ms Davies filed a human rights complaint against the South Australian government to protest her treatment. The ensuing investigation by the Ombudsman's office (OmbudsmanSA, 2013) reported that during her imprisonment, Ms Davies was expected to urinate in nappies, forced to wear a canvas smock, had only canvas blankets,

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<sup>89</sup> A protectee is a prisoner who is kept separate from other prisoners because it is deemed that they need to be protected from them.

<sup>90</sup> Stapp, K. (2002) cited in Davis (2003, p. 10) <http://www.ipsnews.net/2002/03/health-prisons-double-as-mental-wards-researchers/>

<sup>91</sup> In Yatala, G Division is a 'special handling unit', the highest security section of the prison, which holds up to 24 high-security male prisoners in physical isolation from each other (Dawes, 1993). In the course of my volunteer work, former female prisoners have disclosed being taken to G Division as 'punishment' rather than for mental health 'treatment'.

was often unable to brush her hair or teeth and had minimal fresh air or exercise. For sustained periods she was denied phone calls, her mail was stopped, she was fed on a diet of mostly tea, toast and junk food, while the only human contact she has was with prison staff. This regime of restraint elicited a succession of self-harm attempts and became a self-perpetuating cycle of prisoner 'management' that did not include mental health treatment.

In Australia, prisoners with poor mental health are also likely to have poor physical health. Levels of infectious blood borne viruses, head injuries, asthma, peptic ulcers, back injuries, cancer and poor eye and dental health are high amongst prisoners when compared to the general population (Butler, et al, 2007; Egeressy, Butler, & Hunter, 2009). Butler et al (2007) argue that because of this, health services that attend to both physical and mental health would be best practice for prisoner wellbeing. However, this level of 'service' is almost impossible to guarantee as a significant percentage of people admitted into South Australian prisons are un-sentenced and more than half are released within a month (Holmwood, et al, 2008) with little attention paid to providing through care. Further, meeting post-release parole requirements puts participating in health, social or emotional wellbeing activities low on the list of ex-prisoners' priorities.

As well as chronic health conditions, most people experience day to day minor 'health problems' such as sprains, strains, headache, toothache, gastroenteritis or cold and flu symptoms. The overarching approach to prisoners reporting feeling sick or unwell is the administration of paracetamol or aspirin (Hampton, 1993; Murphy, 2002). Due to the low numbers of women prisoners, many women are treated offsite for medical conditions. In the first instance they may be transported to a men's prison for treatment or, if the matter is more serious, to a civilian hospital. Rarely are they treated in a dignified manner; instead, they are shackled when they attend hospital (Mackay, 2017; Peak, 2017). Prisoners with ongoing health conditions have difficulty getting referrals and, due to 'negative attitudes' toward prisoners by correctional staff (Hampton, 1993, p. 101), struggle to access outside medical appointments, all of which can only be made possible with organised, engaged, caring staff and adequate resources.

## Punishing families

As indicated by participants, the violence of the PIC extends beyond the prison walls disproportionately affecting women, the effects of which ripple throughout families and communities. Imprisonment creates a struggle for survival for parents, partners, ex-

partners, children and grandparents on the outside (Cooke, 2014), effectively punishing them as well (Arditti, 2001; Richie, 2001; 2002), making imprisonment a family experience. The harm that the imprisonment of a family member or loved one causes has been described as ‘collateral damage’; they are forgotten victims while at the same time seen as guilty by association (Codd, 2008). Every person in prison has some family connection, even if their relationships are strained, dysfunctional, estranged or lost. The number of people impacted by this is significant (Flynn, 2013), as is the shame and stigma they endure. Although families can play a significant part in supporting prisoners re-enter the community, rarely are their important roles recognised or supported by social services. Instead, Codd (2008, p. 169) argues that prisoners’ families tend to be maligned, deemed undeserving for ‘being poor, or behaving in ways that are socially unacceptable, for forming a part of an undesirable underclass, thus contributing to the ongoing risk of criminality’. This treatment suggests to families that they would be better to ignore or forget their imprisoned family member.

Men, who make up more than 90 percent of the people in prison are, for the most part, visited and supported by women (Comfort, 2003; Halsey & Deegan, 2015). When their men go to prison, women and children are effectively voiceless in the criminal justice system (Arditti, 2001), suffering the indignity of increased surveillance and having to approach welfare and charity providers for food parcels or further support. This extended ‘family’ punishment is not just about having fewer resources, living in poverty, feeling alone and isolated. According to Halsey and Deegan (2015, p. 142), women whose men folk are repeatedly incarcerated experience a ‘state of uncertainty’ whereby they learn to never make plans for the future. Their own needs are rarely met, and their health suffers as they attend to the needs of their imprisoned loved one or family member (Halsey & Deegan, 2015). In effect, the pains of imprisonment are not confined to the confined. Instead, the burden of caring becomes another burden that women carry, all the while attracting social stigma and layers of state surveillance in their daily lives (Comfort, 2017; Brook, 2009). As Comfort (2003) argues, women experience ‘secondary prisonisation’ as they attempt to meet the often frustrating and punitive rules of prison visits, thus depriving them of any semblance of autonomy—if they ever felt they had any—instead creating powerlessness and fear (Comfort, 2003; Light & Campbell, 2007).

Invariably it is women who are most likely to face poverty and state surveillance because of the imprisonment of a family member (Comfort, 2017; Light & Campbell, 2007; Meagher & Healy, 2003), with many women moving from being poor to enduring extreme, chronic

poverty. As well as losing a wage earner or having welfare benefits reduced, maintaining social ties with someone in prison is costly in terms of money and time. Travelling long distances regularly to regional prisons can be difficult to sustain. The time devoted to a supporting a prisoner deemed a 'lost cause' can result in a sustained loss in social capital as friend and family support dwindles over time. Time is a commodity that few poor or working-class people have (Tirado, 2014), and while time stands still for prisoners as they wait for release, this is more complicated for prisoners' families. They too have to wait; but as Foster (2016) writes, they are 'waiting for the visit; waiting for the court date; waiting for release; waiting for the letter; waiting for the phone call; waiting for things to go back to normal; waiting for things to get better' (p. 2). Comfort (2003) suggests that waiting is something that is expected of prison visitors as if their time is of little or no value. Nothing brings this to the fore more than travelling hours to a regional prison for a visit to find that, without notice, visits have been cancelled because the prison is in lockdown. In women's prisons too, the majority of visitors are women. A study by Casey-Acevedo and Bakken (2002) found that only one in four prison visits to women were from men in their lives. For the most part, women visit men and women visit women.

A significant number of women enter prison as the head of a sole parent household (Flynn, 2013). Parental distress upon incarceration makes it likely that the prison experience will be extremely damaging for a parent. Because of the proportionately smaller numbers of women prisoners, they are often locked up far from their home and community. Although, by the time that they go to prison their apparent failures have led many of them to be estranged from their family and other social supports.

For dependent children, having a parent in prison can be the source of shame, embarrassment, teasing and bullying, all of which impacts on their engagement with study, friends and networks (Flynn, 2014). Especially for young children, it is likely that they will be placed in state care or be cared for by their extended families. The incarceration of a parent is an indicator of the likelihood of a cycle of generational incarceration (Halsey & Deegan, 2012). The cycle of cumulative disadvantage is then maintained through disengagement with education, unemployment and poverty.

The needs of adolescent children of prisoners are often overlooked, creating a raft of debilitating consequences for their health and well-being (Sheehan & Levine, 2006; Flynn, 2013; 2014). Children of women prisoners, especially, suffer the effects of parental imprisonment, prior to, during and post-incarceration: damaging effects that attract minimal recognition or social support (Sheehan and Levine, 2006). Social services tend to focus on

the needs of adults and as a result are poorly placed in terms of procedures, protocols, experienced staff and resources (Flynn, Bartlett, Fernandes Arias, Evans, & Burgess, 2015). Flynn et al. report that children of imprisoned mothers tend to 'fall through the gaps' (2015, p. 20), arguing that agencies and government departments do not communicate with each other, somehow believing that another agency—but not theirs—has the responsibility for taking care of the children. During a recent community forum it was agreed that South Australian prisons and their staff appear insensitive to the needs of children when they visit their parents in prison (Seeds of Affinity, 2017). The social, emotional and financial implications experienced due to the incarceration of a parent, child or family member are far reaching and long lasting (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Braman, 2002). As Arditti describes, relationships between parents and their children are undermined by the prison experience because 'stigma bleeds onto family members because of their association with the offender' (Arditti, 2012, p. 32).

Because of their social location and collective family units, familial networks are substantially impacted by the over representation of First Nations Peoples in carceral settings. For the large number of First Nations children whose mother, father or both parents are imprisoned, the responsibility for the care of children often falls to grandparents, who often live in poverty and have failing physical health. Yet despite the difficulties, grandparents take on this role because they are well aware of the long-term damage that removing Aboriginal children from their communities creates.

No matter who takes care of dependant aged children, it can be very difficult for women to regain custody of their children once they are released from prison. The loss of parenting rights is more likely to happen due to mothers', not fathers' incarceration and undoubtedly influences at the intersection of sexism and racism play out when trying to regain custody post-release. Losing custody of children leads to often unrecognised loss and grief (Doka, 1989; Janzen & Melrose, 2017) which, if unresolved can play a fundamental role in returning to prison (Leach, Burgess, & Holmwood, 2008).

Imprisonment creates an 'identity interruption' for many parents that is rarely completely resolved once they are released. This can lead to a parent believing that their child/children may be better off without them as the prison experience undermines the potential for the sense of self-worth necessary for parenting post-release. These weakened social bonds intensify post-release difficulties, placing former prisoners at greater risk of returning to prison.

## Strip-searching: A cruel but usual punishment

Strip-searching is one of the areas of dispute between correctional services, prisoners and prisoners' rights organisations. In the *Nelson Mandela Rules*, rule 52 states that 'intrusive searches, including strip and body cavity searches, should be undertaken only if necessary' (2015, p. 16). Yet evidence shows that men, women and children are strip-searched as part of the daily regime of imprisonment (Mackay, 2017).<sup>92</sup> <sup>93</sup> In an article written while he was in prison, Yves Bourque recalls:

One after the other, we were taken out, walked by three guards in front of all the caged men and forced to disrobe, to bend over and to spread the cheeks of our ass in the full view of everyone (Bourque, 1988, p. 2)

The issue of strip-searching women and the collateral damage it causes is a significant, ongoing concern for academics, advocates, prisoners and ex-prisoners alike (see for example (Arbour, 1996; Davis, 2003; Carlton, 2006; McCulloch & George, 2009; Kilroy, 2012; Mackay, 2017), with four of the female participants in this project choosing to speak specifically about strip-searching. Jude McCulloch and Amanda George describe a routine day in a Crisis Support Unit in a Queensland Women's Prison:

7.30 am let out of cell, strip-searched, breakfast; 11.00 am strip-searched, locked down in cell; 12.15 pm strip-searched, lunch; 4.00 pm strip-searched, locked down in cell; 5.10 pm strip-searched, dinner; 6.10 pm strip-searched, locked down in cell (McCulloch & George, 2009, p. 110).

Strip-searching is dealt with explicitly in the *Bangkok Rules*. Rule 19 states that 'effective measures shall be taken to ensure that women prisoners' dignity and respect are protected during personal searches', while Rule 20 appeals for the development of alternative methods of screening to 'avoid the harmful psychological and possible physical impact of invasive body searches' (United Nations, 2010). What is evident from the *Bangkok Rules and The Mandela Rules* is the acknowledgement that strip-searching can and often does cause harm. Given that prior to their imprisonment, a large percentage of women have experienced physical and sexual abuse (McCulloch & George, 2009, pp. 109-10), the regular, routine strip-searching of women prisoners can and does re-

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<sup>92</sup> In a report released on November 30, 2017, the Victorian Ombudsman defined the routine, repeated strip-searching of women held in the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, Victoria as 'cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment', (2017, p. 18). Strip-searching occurs after all contact visits and extends to pregnant women attending medical appointments (p. 57). Despite the ombudsman recommending an immediate end to strip-searching at the facility, management at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre has out rightly refused (p. 103). See <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/getattachment/432871e4-5653-4830-99be-8bb96c09b348>

<sup>93</sup> *The Report of the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory* (2017) found that at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre over the previous eight years, 4898 strip-searches were carried out. Contraband was found on just 29 occasions.

traumatise them, amplifying the effects of sexual violence experienced prior to incarceration.

Every prisoner in South Australia is strip-searched upon their entry into prison, even if they are unsentenced and/or being held on minor, non-violent, non-drug related charges. Once in the prison, if there is intelligence that drugs are present, a blanket search of all prisoners in entire wings/sections can be undertaken. Strip-searches are more likely to occur if prisoners are prescribed S-8 medications (Mackay, 2017),<sup>94</sup> if the prisoner is released to attend court or to receive medical attention off-site, and prior to and/or after visits with professionals and family. Even though prison officers are often accused of bringing drugs into correctional facilities, they are not subjected to regular, routine strip-searches.

The rationale behind strip-searching prisoners is that it prevents the entry into prisons of drugs or implements that could be used for harm (Anti-Discrimination Commission, Queensland, 2006), yet prison conditions themselves can increase the reliance on drug use. For example Gillespie (2005) found that illicit drug use in prisons is closely related to prison overcrowding. Strip-searching of women, especially if they have experienced past trauma, may in fact *increase* unsanctioned drug use in prisons, while the long-term prescribing of tranquilisers continues, uncritically (Pereira, 2001, pp. 189-190; Pinnuck, 1998). The practice of routine strip-searches of women prisoners has been likened to the treatment of detainees in the war on terror (McCulloch & George, 2009; Carlton, 2006).

Advocates argue that strip-searches are ineffective, rarely discovering contraband (Kilroy, 2005) and that strip-searching is 'intended to terrorise and therefore subdue' (Arbour, 1996, p. 53). McCulloch and George (2009) propose that strip-searches of women 'constitute an, official, deliberate and gendered strategy aimed at breaking down prisoners' (p. 108) and that strip-searches *do not* create a safe prison environment (2009, p. 119). Correctional organisations argue that strip-searching is an effective deterrent to drugs and weapons entering prisons (Anti-Discrimination Commission, Queensland, 2006). Yet, despite deterrence measures like strip-searching, drugs have long been widely accessible in Australian prisons (Hampton, 1993, p. 108; Dolan & Rodas, 2014).

Although strip-searches take place as a part of routine, daily prisoner 'management', at other times they occur as the result of 'intelligence' that contraband is present in the prison. A choice is then made as to whether strip-searches should target specific individuals, using 'reasonable suspicion' or, if a blanket strip-search of a specific section of

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<sup>94</sup> S-8 medications include Codeine, Oxycodone, Methadone, Morphine, Pethidine and Benzodiazepine. These medications are considered drugs of dependence and are often diverted or misused.

the prison is warranted. No matter which approach is taken, these decisions can be fraught with contradictions. Blanket strip-searches will ensure that all prisoners suffer the same treatment—although they may not experience the damage equally, while the use of ‘reasonable suspicion’ has the potential to be discriminatory and racially motivated (Newburn, Shiner, & Hayman, 2004; Schlanger, 2008, p. 85; Li, 2013). Blanket strip-searches are, in themselves a breach of Rule 43 in the *Mandela Rules* because they are a collective punishment, delivered often without reason, or on suspicion rather than evidence.

The resulting collateral damage of mandatory strip-searching is that some women request that their families do not visit. Enduring such a humiliating process before and after visits has the potential to undo any good that came from the visit in any case (Kilroy, 2005; McCulloch & George, 2009, p. 112). If we return to Clemmer’s (1940) notion of prisonisation, limiting contact with people from the outside can have an continuing impact on the success or failure of the post-release experience. Further, the gendered nature of imprisonment, where ‘prisoners’ equal men and male prisoners equate to ‘dangerous masculinity’ (Curtis, 2014) means that prison regimes are built on a framework of risk, fear and control which assumes all prisoners are a risk to others, impacting on prison workers, visitors and prisoners. The violence inherent in strip-searches compound existing addictions, poor mental health and the potential for physical violence in prison. In this context, it is no wonder that depression, hopelessness and suicidal thoughts prevail.

### Prison reform: The master’s tools?

In the face of so much evidence attesting to the brutality and violence of prison, it can be tempting to think that perhaps reforming prisons might help. However, reform, by its very nature, serves to maintain the status quo (see for example, Freire, 1970; Alinsky, 1972; Gil, 2013). Audre Lorde spoke to the problems with seeking ‘reform’ when she wrote that ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’ (1984, p. 123). What she meant was that the theoretical perspectives of the oppressor cannot ever liberate the oppressed. Liberation ‘gifted’ to the oppressed always includes caveats and clauses. As Karlene Faith (2000, p. 164) reminds us:

Every reform raises the question of whether, in Gramsci’s terms, it is a revolutionary reform, one that has liberatory potential to challenge the status quo, or a reform reform, which may ease the problem temporarily or superficially, but reinforces the status quo by validating the system through the process of improving it.

The problem with prison reform then, is that reformers tend to focus their energy on incremental change that preserves the status quo.



For as long as there have been prisons there have been prison reformers. Around 200 years ago, prison reformer Elizabeth Fry and her brother Joseph Gurney toured jails and prisons in Scotland and England. They were shocked at what they saw. Appalling prison conditions confronted them at every stop on their journey. Even though Fry and Gurney observed how the Poor Laws were implicated in creating and maintaining the prison population, when Gurney (1819) documented his recommendations, he did not argue for creating a more equal society. He recommended building 'better' prisons, provision of further religious instruction and more in-prison work. This is exactly how the PIC, at its most basic, functions and feeds itself—prison construction, exploitative labour practices and programs to create new (passive and compliant) citizens.<sup>95</sup>

In discussing early prison reform ideologies, Michael Ignatieff (1978) suggested that the philanthropy of reformists had very little to do with creating an equal society, but was more to do with 'resolving religious tensions', arguing that 'this created a sense of dependency and obligation between rich and poor' (Ignatieff, 1978, p. 153). In doing so, class divisions were maintained. Richard Quinney posits that 'reforms never go beyond the interests of the capitalist system itself; they merely update the existing institutions in order to assure the survival of the system' (1974, p. 169). 'Reshaping' the criminal justice system, Quinney argued, never benefitted prisoners; instead, it was those with privilege who were the main beneficiaries of such reforms. Analysing the *President's Crime Commission* report as an example, Quinney noted that none of the report's 35 recommendations attacked the 'existing social and economic arrangements', instead calls for higher wages, better training, ease of promotion for officers, additional screening, complex classification, greater emphasis on evaluation and the 'immediate need for more diagnostic, rehabilitation and research personnel' (Quinney, 1974, pp. 175-181). As Quinney observed, there appeared to be little in these recommendations that aimed to keep people out of prison; rather, most recommendations could only result in perpetuating prison growth.

Prison expansion is often sold as 'prison reform', where extra 'beds' are planned and budgeted for to address overcrowding and poor conditions (Kilroy, Barton, Quixley, George, & Russell, 2013, p. 163; Shaylor, 2009). For example, responding to questioning over the Jacqueline Davies case,<sup>96</sup> the South Australia Correctional Services Minister at the time told State Parliament that, 'to better handle such cases in the future, the

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<sup>95</sup> See Chapter 7 for an expanded discussion on the Prison Industrial Complex

<sup>96</sup> This case was referred to earlier in this chapter.

government has funded two, ten bed high security units at the Adelaide Women's Prison for women with complex mental health and behavioural issues' (Novak, 2013).<sup>97</sup> Later, in December 2016, the SA Government announced that they would be spending a further AUD\$21million on another 20 'beds' for women prisoners describing this as an 'important investment' a 'long-term solution' and that this 'investment' reflected 'this government's commitment to reducing reoffending' (Fewster, 2016). This is clearly what Faith meant by 'reform reform' (2000, p. 164), where, instead of planning to reduce the number of women entering prison, or providing better mental health support in the community, plans were made to house more prisoners. Although addressing oppressive conditions may alleviate the immediate situation for current prisoners, in the adage of 'build it and they will come', empty prison beds rarely stay empty (Shaylor, 2009). Less oppressive prison conditions do not reduce the number of people who go to prison (Wright, 2000; Lawston & Meiners, 2014). While money can always be found for prison expansion, funding for community legal services is precarious (Doran, 2016), domestic violence services funding is continually under threat and, according to the *Mental Health Coalition of South Australia* (2017), the 2017 state budget provided very little funding for much needed community based mental health services.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown how relying on imprisonment to resolve social issues is a highly flawed approach, creating more problems than it solves. Prisons are sites of violence and human rights breaches, with pain and hurt consequent to this and, therefore cannot be relied upon to create compassionate, empathic citizens. How can a former prisoner be expected to learn non-violent ways to live their lives when violence permeates even everyday prison regimes? Prisoners who have every moment of their lives run to a schedule created by others are unlikely to become more responsible for themselves or others once they return to the community. Further, even though it is well known that having stable family support post-release can help former prisoners stay out of prison, the imprisonment of a loved one creates strain and suffering for families, thus broadening the reach of punishment.

Upon their release, ex-prisoners are expected to be aware of the risks associated with committing further crime, even when time spent in prison may in fact have been a time

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<sup>97</sup> This high security section of the AWP is called the Opal Unit. Women are locked in their individual cells from 4 pm in the afternoon. They are allowed to go into a small caged area with a concrete floor for two hours per day.

when they could be housed, clothed, fed and felt more of a sense of connection with others than when they were 'free' in the community. We must question why there is an expectation that ex-prisoners become productive members of society when they have spent months or years living in an environment devoid of societal rhythms, liberties, and responsibilities. All the while, the correctional system continues to operate under the false belief that imprisonment can somehow achieve these outcomes despite the fact that it has been shown that imprisonment directly undermines these objectives.

In this chapter I have argued that prisons are a site of violence, both implied and tangible. The entire criminal justice system, from policing, surveillance, prisons, visitors and release has a gendered dimension and manifests as both a visible and invisible site of race, gender and class oppression that happens behind and outside of prison walls. Further, I have argued that imprisonment can be emotionally, spiritually and physically damaging, yet this is minimised as collateral damage in the pursuit of placating community 'fear', with little recognition of the resulting pain and suffering. Throughout the following chapter the participants provide an account of their own experiences in regard to the violence of imprisonment discussed in this chapter.

## Chapter 6: Insiders knowledge: Doing time

They just get a whole bunch of people who have done something wrong, put them in a place and just let them sit there. There is nothing in prison for you. The health system sucks, the dental system sucks. Even on remand you are treated as a guilty prisoner. Trent, participant.

### Introduction

If academic opinion is divided on the capacity for prisons to reform and rehabilitate, there is no such equivocation from participants in the current project. In fact, the critical analysis presented in Chapter 5 is informed by, and consistent with, project participants' views of prison and their 'inside knowledge' of the institution. This chapter presents participants' responses to a number of issues raised in the previous chapter in some detail, focussing on the photographs they took to illustrate their knowledge and the explanations they offered. Most participants confirm that their prison experience was violent, describing this violence in terms of human rights violations and material deprivations. However, their accounts depart in some respects from the critical analysis presented in Chapter 5, particularly in relation to their embodied experience of time.

Neo-liberal perspectives argue that the welfare of prisoners and protections from violence are guaranteed by a range of human rights, yet this is not how the participants experienced prison at all. The assumption that prison is a 'holiday hotel' or that prisons offer opportunities for change are challenged by participants in various ways. Participants speak to the prison's failure to address them as rights-bearing human beings and the health risks attached to imprisonment. Women, in particular, register strip-searching as violent, but both men and women recognise the impact of prison on their family. As a whole, this chapter focusses on how the participants experienced their imprisonment as violence and their visual representations of those experiences.

**Why would you expect human rights when you're treated worse than animals?<sup>98</sup>**

While outsiders may feel content—or possibly outraged—that prisoners have rights and entitlements, this is a dominant discourse that is far from the reality experienced by

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<sup>98</sup> In 2015, Justice Action released a report based on a case study that compared the conditions of gorillas kept in Taronga Zoo, Sydney and people being held in NSW prisons. Across each of the following areas they found that the gorillas fared substantially better: minimum space standards, time spent outside their primary living space, mental stimulation, access to fresh air and accountability to the general public. For more see; <http://www.justiceaction.org.au/images/03122015ZoosPrisonsAnalysis.pdf>

participants, beginning with a reluctance to fully inform prisoners of their entitlements—as Stella remarked, ‘the [criminal justice] system works very hard to keep them [prisoners] from finding out about their rights’. Feeney confirmed this, saying:

When you go to prison, your civil rights get taken away, I understand that, but what shouldn’t be taken away is your human rights. The degradation is already there by being in prison, but for them to treat you like scum, it is the worst thing.

Prior to her imprisonment, Kate had been mentally unwell, was self-medicating with misappropriated prescription medication and was spending a lot of time gambling. Even though she had sought professional help, it did not prevent her from committing a serious crime. Kate told me:

I was feeling mentally unhinged at the time of my crime. Once I realised what I had done, I immediately surrendered myself to the local police station where I was remanded in custody. After questioning me for hours, they handcuffed me, put me in the back of a van and took me to the women’s prison. As soon as I arrived I was strip-searched and placed into solitary confinement for almost twenty hours without contact with my family or a legal representative.

Because of her initial experience, Kate learned not to talk to prison staff about feeling mentally unwell as she feared another spell in solitary confinement. This is reiterated by Stella, who told me that women prisoners do not ask for help, saying:

...they learn never to say that they need help.

Fear of being placed in solitary is justified as evidenced by Hagan et al (2017) who found that stints in solitary confinement can significantly damage prisoners’ mental health well past their release from prison. In her book, *As Black from White*, former prisoner, Sally Graham (2007, p. 54) explains what solitary confinement looks like in the Adelaide Women’s Prison (AWP):

...a single clinical bare cell with a toilet bowl in the corner and a bed...at meal times a plastic plate was shoved through the door

Gidget remembered how basic hygiene and personal care is compromised in the AWP, saying:

When you are in prison, and don’t even have clean underwear, nice soap or a comb that’s yours, these things really affect you...Your laundry all gets washed together, you just get given a pair back in your size...Girls used to get scabies and crabs.

Gidget described two instances of collective punishment, where an infraction by one person impacted upon everyone. Human rights treaties state that collective punishment is unacceptable, yet this is a common occurrence in prison. She said:

When I was in the cottages I got some women together to start a little veggie patch. We had that going for about six months, it takes a lot to do that, then just one person doing the wrong thing and the whole thing falls apart. Once a woman didn’t put the tools away so the

whole project got closed down. That was something that really gave me pleasure and fulfilment and they took that away.

Recognising the benefits of physical activity, Gidget explained that the women prisoners campaigned for months to have yoga classes taught in the women's prison, but it was taken away when:

One girl had a go at the instructor and we lost it all, the whole thing was shut down, we couldn't have it any more. The women were really, really craving that. They were disappointed and hurt that they'd lost it because of one person's mistake.

According to Gidget, the yoga participants directed their anger at the woman who had the outburst saying she 'suffered for months' because of it. Gidget wished that instead of pitting them against each other, the woman could have been taken aside and spoken to personally about the incident, saying:

They needed to teach her strategies to not have outbursts of anger, skills on how to communicate maturely. It seems to me to be a vicious circle, a vicious circle of failure.

Marx was well aware of the use, by those who hold power, of the tactic 'divide and conquer' in maintaining the status quo (Tetziaff, 1991). So, while creating division works on one level between guards and prisoners, it works even better when it is used to undo solidarity between prisoners. Keeping prisoners fighting amongst themselves prevents them from collective organising, but at the same time prevents correctional officers from considering how close they are to prisoners themselves. The success of this approach means that prison management and wider structural inequalities are rarely questioned by correctional officers, who are grateful that they have employment and are not in the ill-fitting and uncomfortable shoes of the prisoner.<sup>99</sup> It helps them to ignore the ineffectiveness of their work and for some, justify their abuse of prisoners.

## Material deprivation as a violation of human rights

Participants described emotional and material deprivation as a core element of their experience of incarceration. Robert remembered how difficult it was to access the simple things that most of us take for granted:

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<sup>99</sup> See following pages, Figures 16 and 17.



**FIGURE 16: WARM FEET, ROBERT**

I love wearing my ugg boots, they make me feel warm, they're comfortable, they warm you up in an instant. In prison you are lucky to get extra socks, you have to make a request for them, it's not instant. Prison can be a cold place; your hands and feet can get so cold. It doesn't sound like much, a small thing like missing my ugg boots, but when you add up all the small things it seems huge.

Material deprivation can amount to a violation of human rights. Robert's photograph and narrative resonated directly with a visitor to the Fringe exhibition. In their anonymous feedback, they wrote:

One particular aspect of the exhibition for me that captured the truth behind life within and post-prison was the story of one person who explained how wearing ugg boots help them feel more like a human being because they were not allowed the comfort of additional socks in prison and was constantly freezing. This truly denied them the human right to warmth, hence their human rights were compromised.

Being cold might seem like a minor irritation, a consequence of committing a crime and being housed in a prison that is over 160 years old.<sup>100</sup> However, Debbie Kilroy, who was incarcerated in sub-tropical Brisbane, speaks to the same feeling of coldness, which remained with her well after release, saying;

...it's a core, ice-cold, freezing sense in the pit of your guts, that real prison cell coldness...sometimes I feel so cold my teeth chatter...even years later, I can get cold to the bone; I can stand so close to the heater my legs are burning but I'm still cold (Kilroy as quoted in Olsson, 2005, p. 256)

Similarly, Feeney used a self-portrait of her small feet to describe the difficulty of accessing even the basics, but she also touched on the notion of collective punishment, where the action of one prisoner, is used to as an excuse punish all prisoners. Reflecting on her experiences, Feeney told me:

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<sup>100</sup> This was Robert's experience when was held in Yatala Labour Prison.



**FIGURE 17: JUST A PAIR OF SHOES FOR MY FEET, FEENEY**

In prison the options for shoes were either two-dollar thongs or prison issue men's sandals. The thongs really hurt my feet and men's sandals<sup>101</sup> were too big and uncomfortable, they always ran out of small sizes. I wasn't allowed to have someone bring me in a pair of my own sandals because that was against the prison rules, even when the prison doctor said I needed decent shoes for my health. It took months to get decent shoes. Apparently, there had been an incident once around shoes, so nobody was allowed to use their own.

The deprivations described by prisoners are often markedly embodied: feeling cold, being unable to exercise, being unable to satisfy appetites. Those material, embodied deprivations extend to interpersonal and social matters, and impact on prisoners' health.

Jennifer held a space both in prison and in the 'free world' having permission to attend sanctioned day release activities.<sup>102</sup> She also spoke of the lack of meaningful activities and

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<sup>101</sup> Most female participants comment on the fact that their clothes and shoes tended to be cast offs from the men's prison, where clothes were ill-fitting, and shoes were generally too big.

<sup>102</sup> This privilege has since been revoked.



the resulting boredom in prison. Jennifer created the photograph below to represent her feelings of social isolation and to describe the repercussions of that.



**FIGURE 18: CULTURAL DEPRIVATION, JENNIFER**

In prison you miss the cultural interaction that you get from some of the simplest things, like preparing and sharing food with others and the general banter that accompanies that. Prison creates a culture that encourages selfishness which makes it so much more difficult for integration upon release. Boredom combined with overcrowding contributes to prison violence. I wish that women in prison were able to access programs in the arts, such as painting, sculpture, drama or debating. Something more than just basic education. Investment in providing art programs could help promote self-esteem, encourage and enhance talent. It is not only an inspiration for those who feel they have no self-worth, but it is great therapy—no therapists needed.

Jennifer is attempting to regain some control of her life via self-expression made possible by the creation of art, with her photograph a modern take on the genre of still life paintings. The oldest participant, and serving the longest single sentence, Jennifer is one of the increasing number of ageing, long term prisoners that seem to perplex correctional services.<sup>103</sup> Rarely are there any clear plans in place to accommodate them—literally or figuratively—or specific practice guidelines that respond to age-related health and care needs or to meet their post-release challenges (Dawes, 2009). As if living in a physical space designed over 50 years ago for young, able-bodied people was not hard enough,<sup>104</sup> older prisoners are susceptible to victimisation and, as they age, their demand for health services grows, far outstripping what is offered in prison. Clearly, material, embodied deprivation and provision of adequate health care are related issues.

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<sup>103</sup> According to the most recent ABS statistics, 44 percent of the non-Indigenous and 20 percent of the Indigenous prison population is aged 40 years and over; <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4512.0Explanatory%20Notes1March%20quarter%202017?OpenDocument>

<sup>104</sup> This is the case for women in the Adelaide Women's Prison; for men held in Yatala Labour Prison, some are held in spaces that were built in the 1850s.

## Health and ill-being

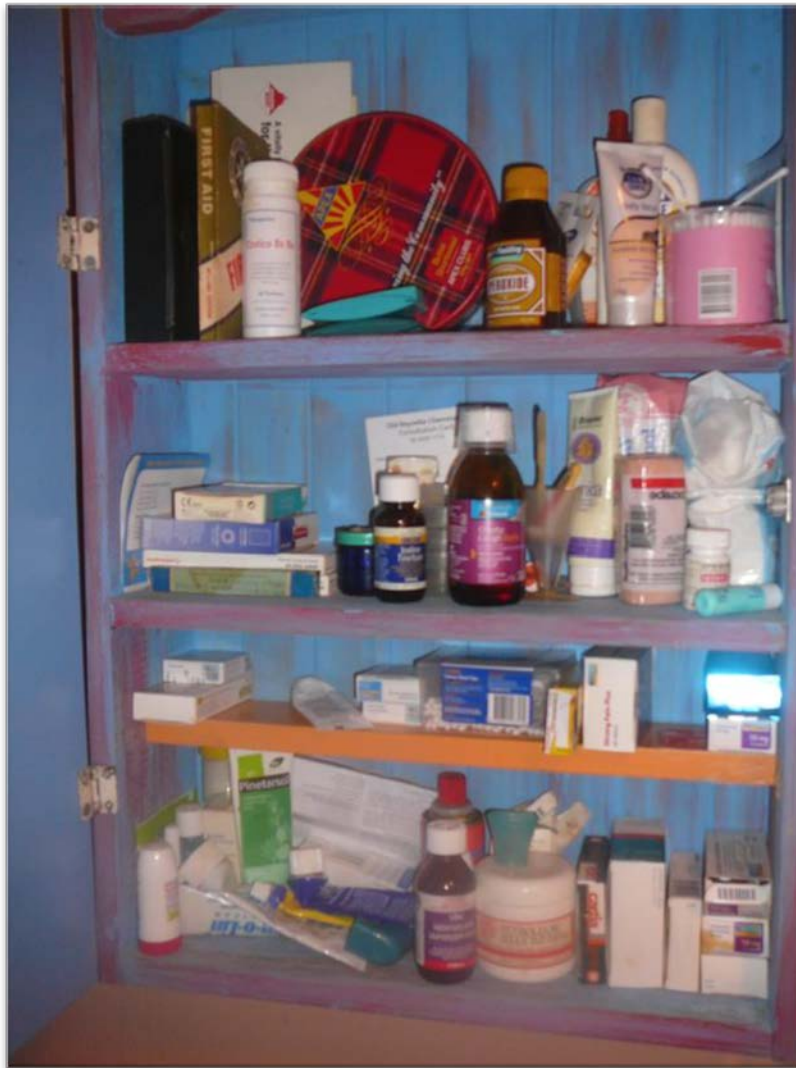
Women and men with poor physical and mental health are over-represented in prisons (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2013; 2015; Lloyd et al, 2017) yet prison medical facilities are basic, and especially for women, trivialise their health needs. Although prisons cannot replace early holistic health support, the United Nations asserts that prisoners have a right to access 'health services available in the country, without discrimination due to their legal situation' (United Nations, 1990). Further, Australian prisoners are denied access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme<sup>105</sup> (Georgatos, 2017; Young & Kinner, 2017) and other universal health supports even though many prisoners are very likely to have an existing disability upon their entry into prison.

Poor medical treatment in prison is commonly reported by prisoners and ex-prisoners and Ruby's description of being given two paracetamol tablets (Figure 19) for every presentation of a health condition is not unusual (see for example Murphy, 2002; Olsson, 2005, pp. 246-247).<sup>106</sup> Ruby took this photograph to help her to talk about poor medical care inside the AWP.

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<sup>105</sup> The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a new social insurance scheme that is meant to provide equitable, sustainable individualised and self-determined support for people with a disability in Australia.

<sup>106</sup> The exception is when it comes to the use of psychotropic medication to manage prisoners as discussed in Chapter 5 (see for example, Pinnuck, 1998; Auerhahn & Leonard, 2000; Faith, 2011).



**FIGURE 19: DON'T GET SICK IN JAIL, RUBY**

I called this picture *Don't get sick in jail* because Panadol [paracetamol] is the cure all in jail. If you've got toothache, Panadol, if you're dying from cancer, Panadol. You have to request a nurse just to get a couple of Panadol tablets. If you got sick, you have to put a request in for the doctor, that could take a day, then the triage nurse gets to decide if you are sick enough to see the doctor. That could be four days down the track. The medical system in prison is an absolute joke. There are people who need appointments with specialists, well somehow their appointments get forgotten. There's people in there who've got cancer, they need to see their specialist, but the people who keep the diary somehow forget. It's frustrating. Panadol is the cure all and thankfully, I didn't get sick.

Ruby went on to explain that she had a daily prescription of anti-inflammatory medication to manage an existing injury. Some days she felt well enough to share it with other women, knowing that it could take some time before they could access an appointment with the prison nurse. Ruby provided further insight into how women supported each other in claiming their right to health care, describing how a woman had fallen through rotting floorboards, injuring her ankle leaving her unable to walk. Initially given two paracetamol tablets and told 'it will be all right', the women rallied together and pressured prison staff,

insisting that the injury needed to be seen by a doctor. It was found that the injury was indeed serious and needed immediate treatment. This solidarity exhibited by the women goes against the argument (Sobel, 1982; Easteal, 1994) that women's prisons completely dictate the lives of the people held behind their walls. Even at the risk of punishment or further sanctions, prisoners can and do exhibit solidarity, agency and resistance.

Trent also commented on his inability to access basic health and social support while he was held in Yatala Labour Prison (YLP):



**FIGURE 20: NOTHING BUT THE LIGHT FROM MY CELL WINDOW, TRENT**

When I was in Yatala it felt that there was nothing to help me apart from the light that shone into my cell window at night. The whole time I was there I saw a doctor and a social worker just once.

Well after her release into the community, Joy still experiences crippling pain which she attributes to the stress of imprisonment and lengthy wait to see a prison doctor. Joy posits that her health was compromised by medical staff who trivialised the symptoms she complained of, therefore misdiagnosing the cause of her pain. Eventually, Joy was transferred to a civilian hospital for medical treatment. She spent the duration of her stay in handcuffs under the watchful eye of a uniformed G4S guard.<sup>107</sup> Joy remembers hospital staff visibly recoiling when they saw her shackled to a hospital gurney. The only time that Joy's handcuffs were removed was to shower or use the bathroom. After an experience like this, it is little wonder that that women are reluctant to access health care—this is confirmed by Peak (2017), a health professional employed by the AWP.

Gidget was admitted to the same civilian hospital for five days; this is how she remembers the experience:

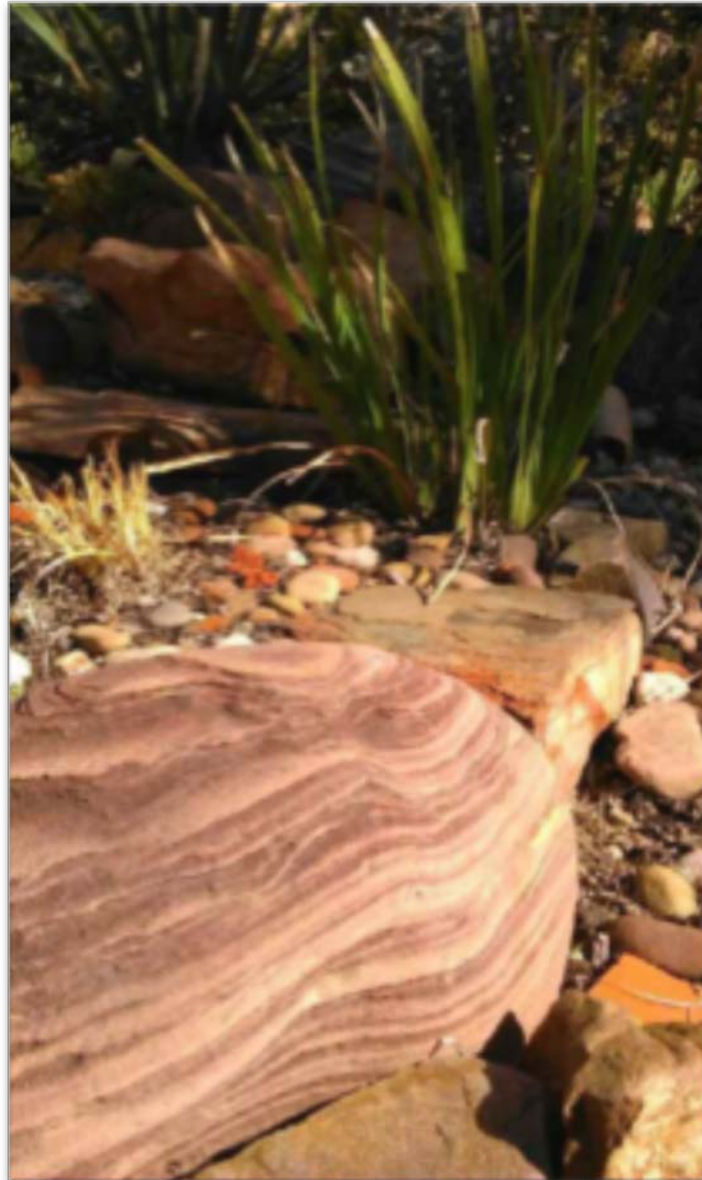
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<sup>107</sup> G4S is a global security company with over half a million employees. In South Australia G4S provides home detention monitoring, prisoner movement and in-court management to the Department of Correctional Services and is responsible for the entire operation, management and maintenance of the state's only private prison situated at Mount Gambier.

I went to hospital with pneumonia and had to have a male G4S officer. I was handcuffed to him, he even stood in the toilet with me, because I couldn't be left alone. I had my wrists and ankles handcuffed and was then handcuffed to the bed all the time when I had pneumonia. I asked 'could I have a female officer?', but they said no there's none on duty. A couple of times I asked, 'can't you just cuff me to the rail', he said 'no, because you might choke yourself'.

Because of the relatively low numbers of women prisoners, prison medical staff are unavailable outside of business hours, leading to Ruby's observation that, 'if you are sick on the weekend you are in trouble'. Rather than transferring women to hospital, minor matters are often dealt with by transferring them to the neighbouring YLP for treatment. This was Ruby's experience, where late one evening she fainted, hitting her head as she fell. Taken to YLP for observation, she described having to use the toilet in full view of male prisoners and staff while she was menstruating. Even though the practice of treating women there was common, there was no privacy, nor did they stock feminine hygiene products. To compensate, Ruby was offered a pair of 'old man's pants' as an alternative to sanitary napkins. Fortunately, a female prison officer on duty provided Ruby with some of her own personal hygiene products.

Contrary to the public's understanding, a custodial sentence did not provide avenues for rehabilitation from the issues that had led the women into prison, nor did their incarceration encourage any form of self-confidence or self-esteem. Female participants reported that 'confidential' complaints were never kept confidential for long and that reporting a problem to one officer meant that soon every officer was aware of complaints. Often this led to retaliatory treatment, where even the smallest infraction could lead to strip-searching or a loss of privileges. For Georgia, fear that retribution would impede her ability to be granted home detention meant that she learned to suffer in silence:



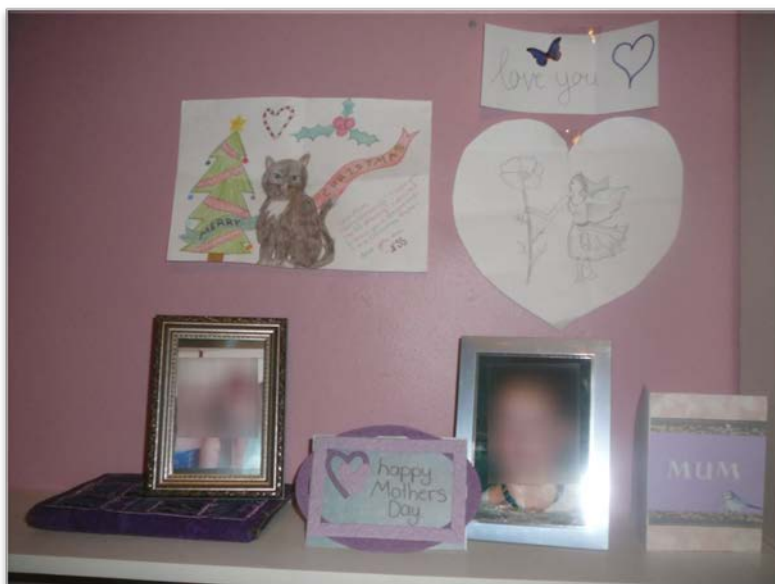
**FIGURE 21: MY ROCK ON THE OUTSIDE, GEORGIA**

My partner was my rock on the outside when I was in prison. It really helped, especially in the tough times. It was so hard that I had addiction problems, but I could not access any drug counselling in prison. I had a counsellor before going in, but nobody on the inside. Sometimes things weren't right, but it was so difficult to make a confidential complaint. So you end up not complaining. I was so close to Home Detention that I gave up, I didn't want to be breached. You are shoehorned into being placid and not sticking up for your rights, to go along with the flow and just suffer. When you are feeling down and out, they make it worse, they put you down and make you feel like you are not worth anything. I was lucky to talk to my partner over the phone about it, to express my feelings. He would put me back on track and say, 'look Georgia, it's only a few more weeks, hang in there'.

Georgia's comments demonstrate the importance of friends and family outside the prison. Participants recognised and discussed the value of family support and the sometimes devastating impact of imprisonment on the prisoners' relatives.

## Punishing prisoners' families

Ruby went to extraordinary lengths to submit the following photograph. Initially taken on her mobile phone, she had a family member use a software program to blur any identifying features. Taken of a space in her bedroom dedicated to her daughter, Ruby was adamant that this photograph be included because it is so important to her story.



**FIGURE 22: BEING A MUM, RUBY**

This photo shows all that I have left of my daughter because I went to jail. Just a few cards and drawings and some lovely photos. Because I went to jail, she is not speaking to me, although we have just begun to write letters. She said in a letter that sometimes she wants to pick up the phone and talk to me, but she is not ready yet. I won't push her, I have to wait until she is ready. She only hears the side of the story that people who go to prison are all bad, she doesn't hear how much I love her. She doesn't understand addiction, she is too young to understand. Had I not gone to jail I would still have that relationship.

Ruby's data shows the potential for families to fall apart when a parent goes to prison. Ruby's criminal proceedings were closely followed by the press in South Australia. Her daughter, like the children of most imprisoned mothers, inevitably experienced shame and stigma at school at an age when her peers became aware of her mother's crime—it is little wonder that her daughter did not want to speak with her, let alone visit her in prison. With her privilege as a white, employed woman and the ongoing support of her parents it is likely that Ruby will regain contact with her daughter in the future. For others without such social capital, the outcome is rarely as promising.

Conversely, Trent's partner kept their family intact while he was incarcerated. This was a remarkable accomplishment on her part, given that she did so without practical help or

emotional support through what would have been a stressful time. It was his partner and his children that kept Trent focussed on getting out.



**FIGURE 23: TUNNEL VISION WHEN I WAS IN JAIL, TRENT**

What got me through prison was knowing that my family was there for me. Visits in jail aren't long but they were all that kept me going. They came to see me twice every weekend, even when I was at Cadell. I was lucky, I saw heaps of people's relationships break down when I was in there.

I wish corrections could make prison visits a lot easier, especially for children. My children were nervous enough about coming prison to see me, they were separated from mum at times by big doors and that really scared them, they often came in for a visit to see me and they'd be crying and upset.

My partner could have used some support while I was in prison. It was probably tough for her when I was away and then when I came home. She was always supporting me but didn't get any support herself.

The tenacity and support provided by Trent's partner cannot be underestimated. Every single weekend, she made the 450km round trip to Cadell Training Centre, staying in the local camping ground to visit Trent with two young children in tow. Trent is adamant that seeing his partner and children is what kept him going during his sentence. He was quick to acknowledge this privilege—he noticed that some men had no visitors at all. He saw how this situation seemed to harden them, crushing their resolve to get out of prison and denying them of hope. The cost of running a car and the inconvenience of staying at a campsite every weekend means that while Trent was supported, his partner and children would have missed many of the 'normal' weekend activities that young families participate in such as sport, social events and weekend 'down time' spent at home.

Unlike Trent, Robert had no visits or phone calls with his children while he was in prison. Before his imprisonment, Robert had regular contact with them despite being separated from their mother but, she would not allow Robert to phone his children from prison saying that it would upset them to know where he was calling from. He told me that:



The time I spent in prison I didn't see or speak to my kids. I did the wrong thing, but it was really hard to be cut off from them. When I was living in the unknown I didn't ever know if they were unwell, it was the day to day stuff that I missed.

Trent, Robert and Ruby found some comfort in knowing that their children were looked after while they were in prison. For most women, this is a different story. Many women were the head of a sole-parent household prior to their imprisonment. If there is no other parent children tend to be cared for either informally by a friend or family member or, more often than not, are taken into the care of the state.<sup>108</sup> This situation creates difficulty for women post-release as they attempt to negotiate post-release obligations while trying to reconnect and regain custody of their children.

As an adult in prison, Stella experienced the full force of the child protection system. Stella gave birth to one of her children in handcuffs, at that stage—over twenty years ago—she could have her child stay with her in prison. However, Stella had to fight for this in court, suffering the indignity of wearing handcuffs and a prison uniform at each and every court appearance. Adding to her indignity, the media followed her case and would be waiting at the prison gates, jostling to get a glimpse of her as she returned from a day in court. Stella remembered how her son thrived having the care and support of a community of women while she had him with her.<sup>109</sup> Even though she eventually won the right to have her child with her, Stella remembered:

It wasn't a great win though. Because I had won they isolated me in the infirmary, it was just me and the baby. So, the great resource that I had which was the other women, they took that away because in their eyes, I had won. I had created a battle and they want to get you back at me you know.

Not long after, Stella tested positive for using marijuana. Her punishment? She could no longer have her child live with her. She was given just 24 hours to find him a home, yet every time she came up with a potential carer she was told by child protection authorities that the candidate was 'not good enough'. Just one day later, Stella's son was forcibly removed from her and placed into foster care. She told me:

I was brought to my knees that day

When she got out of prison for the final time, Stella fought for, and won custody of her son, but maintains that the experience had a lasting impact on him:

When he was three he would wake up with nightmares screaming, he had night terrors and later he suffered depression for years as a teenager. I am sure that was from when he was taken. You know, they all love using the attachment theory, but only when it suits

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<sup>108</sup> Aboriginal grandparents often care for their grandchildren while their children are imprisoned. Aboriginal grandmothers have set up 'Grannies Groups' where they collectively support each other.

<sup>109</sup> The area that was once the infirmary in the AWP has now been modified to hold more prisoners and women are unable to have their young children with them.

them.<sup>110</sup> <sup>111</sup> One thing that I would like to impart on policy by being in this project is that removing a child from a mother should be the last resort, regardless of what the woman has done, the baby shouldn't be punished by breaking that bond because that will have a long-term effect on that person's life.

Kate also spoke of the impact her imprisonment had on her family:



FIGURE 24: FAMILY, KATE

My mum and all of my family were suffering when I was in there, they came from a long way away, every month to see me. My mum said she blamed herself for decisions she made in my childhood. She was sad for a very long time.

## If we tell you to squat and cough, you will do it

As discussed in the previous chapter, strip-searching of prisoners is a regular and routine occurrence in prisons. Even though men do get strip-searched, neither Robert, Trent nor David brought up the subject in their data; however, it would be fair to say that they may have felt uncomfortable telling a middle-aged woman like me about their body being violated. In contrast, four of the women candidly spoke about strip-searching, three submitted photographs to represent strip-searching with two of the images included here, beginning with Ruby's photograph of a Barbie doll:

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<sup>110</sup> Attachment theory posits that a strong emotional bond between a child and at least one primary caregiver is critical for a child's development (Bowlby, 1998).

<sup>111</sup> What Stella is saying here is confirmed by the *Bringing Them Home* report and the links between the Stolen Generations and deaths in custody. South Australia—considered progressive at the time Stella was in the AWP because it had a Mothers and Babies unit—now is the only state in Australia that does not have one; this space is now used to accommodate prisoners. Currently in SA, women prisoners have their babies removed within a few hours of birth. Recently, Juliette McIntyre submitted a report to the SA Minister for Corrections providing a cost-benefit analysis of keeping babies and infants with their mother in prison, arguing that keeping children with their mother is an 'early and effective intervention', would lead to lower rates of recidivism and would uphold the rights of the child (McIntyre, 2017, p. 4). For more see, <http://search.ror.unisa.edu.au/media/researcharchive/open/9916119902101831/53142519590001831>



**FIGURE 25: DIGNITY, RUBY**

There is no dignity in prison. They call you by your last name. They strip-search you at the drop of a hat. I was not a violent prisoner, nor did I use drugs, but I was strip-searched many times when I was in there.

Ruby has a valid point. Given that the rationale for strip-searching is to prevent the introduction of contraband into prisons, and given its visibly low strike rate, it is hard to fathom why alternatives to strip-searching cannot be implemented.

Kate was remanded in custody and, with a lengthy trial she attended court many times directly from prison. She was strip-searched each time she left for court and returned to the prison. Additionally, she was randomly strip-searched as a part of her daily movements throughout her custodial sentence. Kate explained how strip-searching sections of the prison at one time led to mass traumatising, creating a docile, frightened and—in her case—compliant prison population.



**FIGURE 26: CONTROL, KATE**

These trees have been planted in a rigid row, so this photo represents control in prison. I was strip-searched so many times when I was in prison. Being strip-searched showed me when I first got there that these people had so much power and I had so little control, they could turn around and say to you 'strip-search' and you would have to do it.

Regularly they would have these raids on areas of the prison, you were given no notice, we would have to go there en-masse, and all be searched. Afterwards everybody would go into themselves, nobody talked about it. After a while you sort of hardened yourself to it, you sort of went into a numb state to cope, it was just degrading. Underneath you felt ashamed and angry, thinking 'how could they do this to me'.

I learned not to complain as I knew they could strip-search me or put me into isolation.

While prison staff are one of the potential sources of contraband entering prisons, they do not have to endure strip-searches, but instead are the ones carrying them out. Kate told me that while some officers appeared to enjoy the sense of power that strip-searching prisoners gave them, others tried to strip-search in a 'dignified manner', suggesting that they too had to numb themselves to carry out searches in the course of their daily work.

Through personal experience and her volunteer work, Stella, knows firsthand how strip-searching further traumatises already traumatised women. Here, she sums up what she believes are the reasons why strip-searching is so prevalent in prisons and the damage that regular, routine strip-searching creates. Stella argues that:

I think that people are unaware of how often strip-searching happens in prison, including here in Adelaide. There doesn't need to be 'reasonable suspicion', it happens every day. I know women who don't go to the hospital or doctor or refuse to have their family visit them because of the strip-searching. So many women in prison have been sexually abused, experienced domestic violence or some sort of trauma and what strip-searching does is, it makes them re-live it. It humiliates them over and over and over again. They rarely find drugs or contraband, so what is its purpose? To keep telling you that you are a piece of shit and we can do anything we want with you. You are a piece of meat and if we tell you to

squat and cough, you will do it, if you don't do it, they will force you to do it—that is more physical power and violence. I mean they can just come and pull you out of bed and strip-search you. They own you, make no mistake.

One of the problems with the normalising of procedures such as strip-searching adults in prisons is how easily the practice can spill over into the community and other 'secure' institutions.<sup>112</sup> Strip-searches of varying degrees are frequently carried out in the streets and outside music festivals by police if there are 'reasonable grounds' of possessing illicit substances (McVeigh, Tilley, & McCormack, 2015). Such 'reasonable grounds' are open to racial profiling, interpretations of risk and ageism. In the name of 'security', strip-searches are increasingly carried out in airports, where it was recently disclosed that women were being disproportionately targeted for strip-searches (Millward, 2012). Strip-searching regularly occurs in immigration detention centres (Butler, 2015; Burton, McGarrity & Williams, 2012), especially those situated offshore where public scrutiny is almost impossible, and workers are forbidden from speaking out.

In the observations and images highlighted so far, participants confirm the critical analysis suggested in the previous chapter—namely, that prisons are sites of social violence and oppression. Their insights come from strongly situated, thoroughly embodied knowledge. The participants enhance this critical analysis with their first-hand accounts of prison experience, but they also extend that critique in their conceptualisations of time and its importance to understanding lived experiences of incarceration.

### Prison is a waste of time

The passage of time is not ordinarily associated with violence, but for some participants, time was experienced as a instrument of violence. Even before entering custody, the processes of the criminal justice system where 'waiting' is not an aberration but 'business as usual' amplifies the concept of 'doing time'. Writing about time and punishment, Kenny (2014, para 4) proposes that, 'time, being invisible, is a handy and effective tool to use as, behind the language of procedure and bureaucracy, it is easy to forget its corrosive properties'. Time then, becomes a magnified concept in prison. While everything runs to a timetable in prison, the ticking clock of a prison sentence can be excruciatingly slow. While most of us on the outside wish we had more time, inside prison, time becomes an enemy. Gidget described time in prison in this way:

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<sup>112</sup> See footnote 92, page 62 for the most recent statistics on strip-searching in youth detention centres in Australia.



**FIGURE 27: TIMELESS, GIDGET**

This picture depicts time. Underneath that clock, the whole city is moving like little ants and the one thing that is constant is the clicking of that clock, it never stops, it keeps going and never ends. Even if the clock stops, runs out of batteries or no one winds it up, time still passes. In the beginning I cried every day for 6 months thinking 3 years, 3 years, but you know what, when I stopped crying after 6 months, I thought, I've only got 2 ½ years now and if all else fails and something goes wrong, time is still going to pass. Tomorrow is another day and time is going to pass again.

While boredom is a problem for all prisoners, in women's prisons boredom is amplified. Although there is little written on theorising imprisonment and boredom in any substantial way—this is something that prisoners know too well, with boredom keeping company with frustration, agitation, anger, violence and depression (Barbalet, 1999).

Women prisoners in South Australia have limited opportunities for work and training, far fewer than their male counterparts (Corrections SA, 2015). Days without purpose can

contribute to prison violence where a lack of meaningful activities can be ‘soul destroying, associated with suicide, addiction and aggression’ (Liebling, 2011, p. 540). Kate described boredom and its potential effects saying:

In prison you stagnate, there is no one there to give you motivation to better yourself. You can just sit in your cell and do nothing, hang around have a cigarette. You can take advantage of the few services available, but nobody is helping you to say you are worthwhile person, it’s not happening. Women are just put there, nothing was done. Like for instance, I’d been there a long time and we had a three-week course on how to manage our feelings. Even so, not everybody turned up to that, so how are we going to change? You can just sit there and get stagnant and be passive through your jail time, but the institution itself is not geared to help you.

The prison management tactic of creating the passive, docile bodies that Kate describes, while useful to manage the prison population takes on additional contours when people leave prison. Imprisonment conditions people to exist rather than thrive, yet to survive and succeed post-release requires being organised, pro-active and to possess a level of confidence, qualities eroded through imprisonment.

Boredom and the absence of meaningful activity have material, embodied consequences.



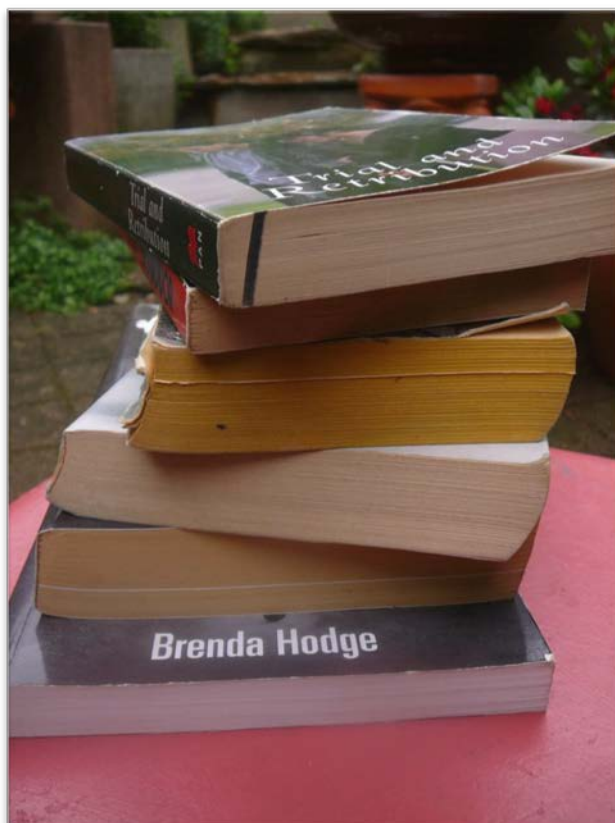
**FIGURE 28: MONEY, RUBY**

This photo represents a couple of things. I went to jail because I stole a lot of money, but also, since I have been to jail I have learned the true value of money. You can only earn \$12 - \$30 a week if you can get work in prison. People outside can top that up to a maximum of \$25 per week, if they can afford it. With that you have to buy your shampoo and conditioner, soaps, any food treats and tobacco. I am a heavy smoker, which got much worse when I went to prison, so most of my money went on tobacco. I have heard that they want to stop smoking in prisons, but we know that smoking and boredom go hand in hand, so there needs to be something to replace it. I would have gone loony if I had to give up smoking, it’s a legal product after all.

Ruby’s smoking increased when she entered prison, first through stress and later, boredom. She told me, ‘*smoking is all that some people have*’. Ruby’s observation is supported by Helen Keane’s discussion of the pleasures and ‘temporal otherness’ that smoking can afford women—in that smoking creates, ‘another time outside ordinary

duration'...helping women meet their desire for...'a different kind of time' (2002, pp. 89-109).

Ruby, whose employment prior to her imprisonment had required a reasonable level of literacy skills, was prevented from building on these skills in prison because her capabilities were higher than the level offered. However, she chose to participate in education in order to access a computer to write letters to her family. She had hoped that perhaps she could help other women while she was in the education centre, but was told in no uncertain terms that this was against the rules.



**FIGURE 29: BOREDOM, RUBY**

This pile of books represents boredom. All you can do in prison is read. Jail is the most boring place I have ever been. Apart from 3 hours, 3 days per week when I was in education, there is nothing to do. I wish women were offered courses, training or more study, think outside the box—teach us something useful for on the outside. There is no rehabilitation for women in prison.

Gidget also talked about how basic the education on offer was in the AWP:

I went to education and asked them what I could do while I was in there. They gave me a test to do to find out what level I was on. He [the education officer] came back and just threw the test back at me, saying 'you are way above what we can offer'. He laughed and said, 'we've got nothing to offer you'.

Like Gidget, Jennifer reflected:



The only education available is basic.

Trent's account reiterates the basics of prison education:

There is education in Yatala, I took advantage of everything I could. I went to the library every day and read. I went to education and all they had to offer me was Windows 95,<sup>113</sup> with Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Even though they were basic, I did them, because for a moment they took me away from the jail and I felt like a normal person sitting at a computer.

Former prisoner and retired professor, Stephen Richards, who studied his first degree via correspondence while in a federal prison in the US remembers 'celebrating' his graduation in solitary confinement, saying 'prisons don't like educated people' (Laursen, 2017).<sup>114</sup>

This is a denial of human diversity that raises doubts about the usefulness of an approach that posits there exists a 'typical' prisoner—as the twelve participants in this research demonstrate, diversity is what they have in common. Assuming that prisoners are uneducated or stupid serves to excuse the violence of prison by positioning prisoners as 'less human'—and therefore as beings with 'less' need for human rights, thus, adding another layer of violence—the bigotry of low expectations. Gidget, Trent, Jennifer and Ruby all tried to pursue options to prepare themselves for returning to the community but were denied the opportunity. It has been documented that generally, prisoners have low levels of formal education.<sup>115</sup> However, solely drawing on this research indicator ignores the informal learning that people do outside of educational institutions. In concert with these assumptions are correctional policies that are program focussed—programs which aim to create compliant, 'normalised' prisoners with a short-term vision of basic literacy and numeracy (Warr, 2016) rather than an education that promotes critical thinking and a love of learning.

By holding on to this idea, correctional departments effectively deny the provision of anything but basic education, thus preventing prisoners from diverting their boredom into something useful to prepare them for their release. Jennifer commented on this, when she wrote:

...literature and technical availability to allow understanding of advances in the outside community is denied, making it so much more difficult for integration upon release.

Deer reminds us that there has long been an absence of ways to creatively use time inside prison. She clearly remembered lack of access to even pencils and paper, saying:

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<sup>113</sup> Support for Windows 95 by Microsoft ended in 2001, 10 years before Trent entered prison.

<sup>114</sup> Richards, founder of the *New School of Criminal Criminology* is adamant that this stint in solitary confinement was in 'retaliation for completing his degree' (Laursen, 2017).

<sup>115</sup> The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013, 2015) reports that almost one third of people entering prison did not complete year 10 and almost one in five had not completed Year 8. However, two in ten indigenous prisoners and three in ten non-indigenous prisoners had completed years 11 or 12.

What I would like to see is art classes or poetry classes provided because these women were very talented. There was nothing, no art materials or anything. If they were given an opportunity to be creative, I bet you they would get into it. It would show their worth, give them something to be proud of. Many of the women I met in prison were really intelligent people. They should be allowed to get a degree while they are in there, get the universities to go in, or allow women to do external studies via a computer. Let them use their time.

When Deer says 'let them *use their time*' she is implying that prisoners are *forced* to waste their time, and that this is experienced as a form of violence. Deer, who had many years to reflect on her experience, was able to articulate the destructive nature of the prison environment. Accompanying a photograph of the bars on children's play equipment, she said:

When I went into prison, it was a bloody fruitless place to be, nothing to learn. I learned nothing but how ridiculous the prison system is. It was just punishment, you know, get to your cells at this time, lockdown. There was no rehabilitation. You are treated like a herd, no dignity, no first names, dis-respectful treatment to keep you in your place.

It breeds contempt in and out of prison. It doesn't teach, it doesn't do anything for people. Even the screws in there, it taught them nothing either, it didn't teach them to respect anybody, it gave them a false sense of power, paid for by the government. Prison is a punitive system that won't allow any form of rehabilitation. It's a waste of time and taxpayers' money.

Here, Deer provides a number of reasons why a prison sentence does not create compliant citizens but is, instead, one of the major contributors to the revolving door of imprisonment. For Deer, prison was a *waste of time*.

## Flowers in the dustbin

While most participants did not directly address their collective identity in terms of class, race, or along other lines of intersectional oppression, the women did express gendered solidarity in various ways. Many of the women used images of flowers to represent both the diversity and beauty of criminalised women. The experience of prison is male-dominated and heavily gendered, with women prisoners sometimes described as 'doubly deviant'—that is, non-conforming (or 'deviant') in terms of their criminality or offending, but also gender-nonconforming, in that criminality is coded 'masculine' (Davis & Gent, 2001). It is meaningful, then, that a number of female participants used flowers—a thoroughly 'feminine' realm of imagery—to represent women.

Because of their proportionately low numbers, women prisoners are usually all held in a maximum-security prison to facilitate the imprisonment of the few who committed violent crimes.<sup>116</sup> Ruby created this image depicting three types of red flowers, geraniums,

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<sup>116</sup> In South Australia men can work their way through different prisons beginning at the Adelaide Remand Centre, then YLP, Mobilong or Cadell. Women, however stay in the one place throughout the majority of their sentence, although at times of overcrowding some are transferred to small 'female' sections of the men's

gerberas and salvias to represent the practice of prisoner classification. Despite so many differences such as age, race, culture, ability and sexuality, women prisoners are most likely to be treated as a homogenous group in a prison system designed around hyper-masculine ideals.



**FIGURE 30: THE FLOWERS, RUBY**

There are three different types of red flowers here and while they all look the same, they all need different care. Different amounts of water, different fertiliser, different sunshine. If they don't do well in one spot, mum moves them around till she finds a spot where they thrive. So what this means is that while people in prison may look the same, they shouldn't be treated exactly the same. Women are all lumped into the same prison, violent, non-violent, drug dealers and drug users, high risk and low risk. I had never known any violent people before, I do now. Now that I am out it is a bit the same in that I am just seen as ex-prisoner, not a non-violent, ex-prisoner who caused no trouble.

Even though the prison environment pits prisoners against each other, having taken time to reflect on their experience, many of the women participants remembered what brought them together, rather than their differences. Stella explained:

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Port Augusta Prison or Mt Gambier Prison. Two of the male participants—Robert and Trent—specifically referred to being moved around in a negative way, such as Trent referring to movement between prisons as being 'pawns in their system'.



**FIGURE 31: WOMEN DO JAIL TOGETHER, STELLA**

Men do jail blinkered. They don't talk about their feelings much. Women, we help each other through, we talk about stuff. I have had some of the funniest times of my life in prison. That might sound weird, but you get through with humour. You learn to control your environment and not think about the outside world. That's why it is very hard when you get out. They think you can flick a switch and get back into life on the outside, but you can't.

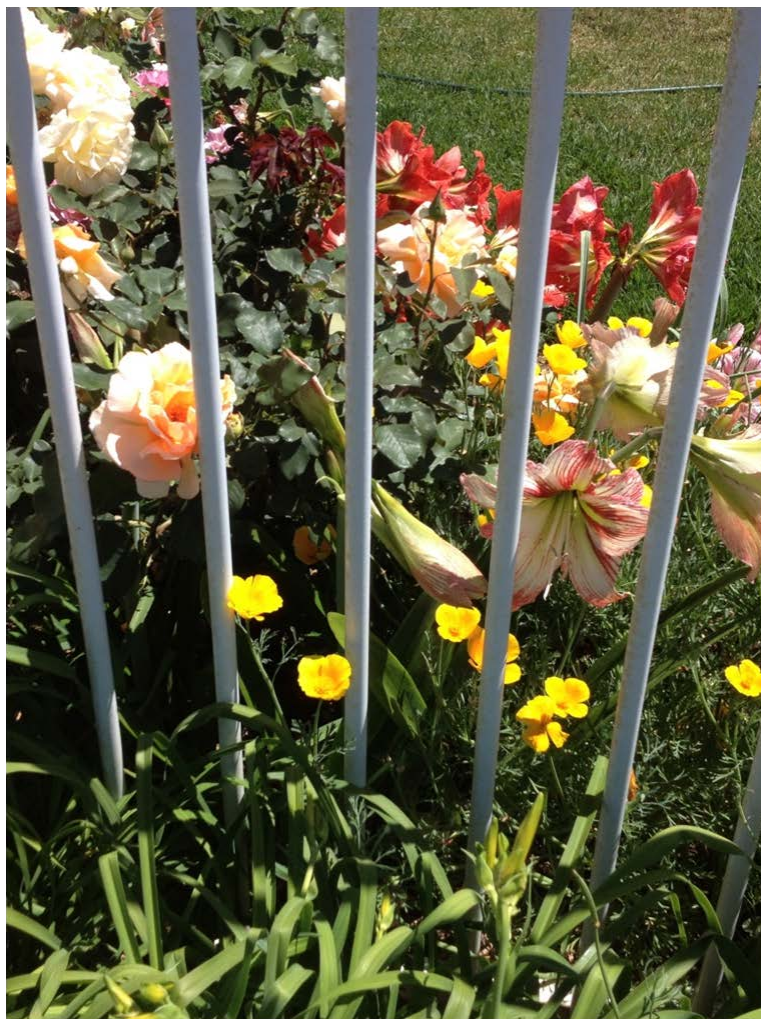
Attempts at collective agency are actively resisted by prison officers and management. For example, Gidget told a story about sunflowers:

We found some sunflower seeds and planted them outside our window, some of the girls thought that they wouldn't grow, but they did. They were starting to flower, they were beautiful, and we loved looking at them. They lasted just over a week. I got up in the morning and they (prison staff) had whipper snipped (cut) them all down. So, they let them grow, they let them flower, and they cut them down. We had found one little thing that had brought us some pleasure and peace. They didn't like that, so they took it away. I said to the officers, 'where is the initiative to do anything and be a person'. And they said, 'well you don't have initiative in prison, you do as you are told when you are bloody told and that's it, go and grow yourself some food in the veggie patch to feed yourself'.

We heard earlier in this chapter from Gidget about what eventually happened to the vegetable garden; however what prison staff failed to recognise was that by planting, growing and enjoying sunflowers the women were feeding themselves, but rather than feeding their physical needs, they grew the sunflowers to help feed a void in their emotional needs—needs that are denied in prison.

Deer and Gidget also used images of flowers to represent women in prison. Rather than draw on any of the symbolic meanings that links flowers as representing women's bodies or sexuality, both did so explicitly to make the claim that despite being locked up in cages, women are still capable of being beautiful. For both of them, this beauty was exhibited through solidarity, sisterhood and the need to affirm femininity in the face of the 'masculine' gendered and violent space of the prison. Like Stella, Deer explained how older women prisoners took her under their wing because she was young. Being a woman of colour meant that for her, it was the Aboriginal women who protected her in prison. As

Deer points out, prison had become such a central part of their lives that they had become adept at adjusting to the cycle of imprisonment.



**FIGURE 32: BEAUTY IN PRISON, DEER**

This photo represents the women I met in prison. I met some wonderful women in there. They were very supportive of each other. I particularly got on well with the Aboriginal women, they were very protective of me because I was a newby. I saw that for the Aboriginal women especially, prison had become such a part of their life. They were in and out of prison, it was like they were placed into a revolving door with no exit.

Deer's experience is not unusual as the shared experience of incarceration for once places all people—no matter what their culture or background is—on somewhat equal terms. Gidget submitted a number of photographs of flowers to represent women. One was of several different coloured roses in a garden bed. She said:

I took this photograph because the roses are different colours, I thought, 'you know what, it doesn't matter what colour you are or where you come from or where you are going we are all in prison facing the same thing'.

To accompany her photograph of a red rose called Beauty Behind Bars, Gidget went on to say:

When you are incarcerated you adjust to the system with the help of other women because that is all there is—no addiction or mental health counselling. There are only two social workers, poor health care, no strategies in managing a budget. You come out with less skills than you went in, you know.

I asked Gidget what women in prison need the most. She told me:

Just like these roses, we need some sunshine and water, that's is all that's needed. It's the smallest things that they can give people in jail to help them be better people when they are released. The things they need are more education to help them readjust when they are released...women especially need help on release, they walk out there's no support groups, there's no family support groups, there's no drug and alcohol counselling, no financial counselling. I didn't know how to manage money, I was a drug addict. After I got out it took me two years to find two or three tools to help me manage in the real world.

## Conclusion

The final photograph in this chapter comes from Kate, who explained that the image and its title conceptualises the notion that people who are 'free' in the community have much more in common with people in prison than they might first think. Through her imprisonment, Kate learned that many criminalised women have become criminalised due to social problems they face and because they have few, if any, resources to make changes in their lives and families.



**FIGURE 33: NOT BLACK AND WHITE, KATE**

My thinking has changed about people in jail, and I think that society should be changing their thinking too, not just seeing them as bad people who are not to be trusted. When I went to prison and I got to know the people around me I could see that they had good qualities, but they'd had bad experiences and they were coloured by those experiences, they were just people really.

A lot of people leave jail and they've got nobody, they might be in some house but a lot of them don't have family, they don't have access to their children. So many things would make them want to go back to taking drugs. A lot of people in jail had addictions, but they were un-

well more than bad, they had problems, they needed help. They were just put there. Nothing was done to help people change.

Throughout this chapter participants provided snapshots of their prison experience. They showed how easily even the most basic of human rights can be ignored, violated and trivialised in prison. The situations they describe show the futility of thinking that prisons are 'reforming' prisoners into 'good' citizens. How could it ever be possible that a person could learn to be a contributing member of the community, when they are held in a space that is so divisive and steeped in violence? Surely the best place to become community minded is in the community. Getting out of prison for many, then, is not as thrilling as we are led to believe and instead can escalate fear and anxiety. Although some prisoners have people on the outside eagerly awaiting their release, many do not. Sally Graham reflected on this when she wrote about the day she left AWP:

...for a moment I stood alone on Grand Junction Road. Sixteen months of doing time lay behind me. I was released from prison with a small parcel of belongings and a cheque for forty dollars or so. I had nowhere to cash that cheque, but I did have family. Many who get out have no one. They have nowhere to go (Graham, 2007, p. 57).

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how lived experience of prison can enhance critical analytical knowledge about imprisonment and violence. For the most part, participants' images and explanations confirm the critique of prison as a site of violence. Their accounts also add to this critique by identifying how being forced to waste time can be experienced as violence. While this idea arises as a topic for future research rather than as an element of the current thesis, it carries connotations of critique that might be considered alongside the place of the protestant work ethic (Weber & Kalberg, 2012) and its neoliberal progeny in a range of critical contexts including but not limited to social work. In the following chapter I explore 'work' in the Prison Industrial Complex to consider its neoliberal imperatives, arguing that exiting prison does not necessarily entail loosening the grasp of the prison experience and its 'correcting' technologies.

## Chapter 7: The neoliberal Prison Industrial Complex

At its heart, the desistance approach is male-centric, individualistic and ignores the interlocking structural contexts of class, race and gender. Bree Carlton and Eileen Baldry, in *Women Exiting Prison* (2013, p. 65)

### Introduction

So far in this thesis the participants and I have shown that the criminal justice system codes social problems as individualised crime and responds to it with systemic violence. In Chapter 5, I detailed the violence of imprisonment and its connections to criminology. Within that chapter, I presented a critique of the capacity for human rights to act as any kind of safeguard for prisoners—a critique affirmed by the participants in Chapter 6. In this chapter I turn my attention away from criminology and the experience of imprisonment towards the neoliberal Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) as a workplace for correctional services staff, including social workers. Here I argue that imprisonment and the institutions that support it exist beyond the prison gates as the PIC. The PIC has many facets, the most important of which, for present purposes, is its apparently ‘therapeutic’ aspect, and its co-option of social work as a cog in the PIC machine. In this way, the PIC’s reach extends not just to former prisoners, but to workers, too.

In this chapter I begin by considering the breadth and depth of the PIC and follow by considering the place of people who work within it. Here I argue that people who work within the PIC are, like prisoners, subject to neoliberal ideologies and the individualising discourses and practices of ‘reforming’ or ‘rehabilitating’ individuals, usually with a therapeutic model and in concert with surveillance and monitoring. Therapeutic models, I will argue, are a big business—creating another arm of the PIC, the ‘treatment industrial complex’. Such therapeutic models are politically convenient. If the participant/ex-prisoner is ‘successful’ in completing the program of therapy, they are likely to have internalised the program message that locates blame for systemic failure within themselves. Conversely, if the participant/ex-prisoner is ‘unsuccessful’ in completing the program, individualising discourse blames the participant, not the program. Social workers who deliver these programs have a parallel experience delivering therapeutic models, where ‘success’ from an organisational view is for the worker to achieve program completions. In this situation, horizontal oppression is actuated, as it leads workers to focus on the end point. Yet, ‘good’ social work outcomes are dependant on the process and relationship, where trust and respect are reciprocal. As a result, the pursuit of human rights takes a back seat to



compliance measures, data entry and an individualising ‘intervention’ framework. I will argue that ‘therapeutic’ social work is largely inadequate as it requires acceptance of the status quo and a fundamentally conservative approach to social injustice. I conclude with a brief discussion of an alternative to imprisonment—home detention and argue that such ‘alternatives’, support the PIC and are most likely to be available to people with the privilege of supportive networks and stable accommodation.

## The Prison Industrial Complex

As indicated in Chapter 4, the promise of capitalism to provide ‘good lives’ was not evident in the experiences of the participants. But, as members of the working classes their contribution to propping up capitalism through their imprisonment is a situation seldom understood, even by prisoners themselves. This is the ‘magic’ of the PIC (Davis, 1998), rarely do people consider or even notice its reach; the social costs of profiting from prisoners or its hidden agenda of racism, classism and sexism. This is probably why eleven of the twelve participants made no mention of the PIC. Stella, was the exception, providing a blunt appraisal gleaned from international scholars and activists. Stella told me:

I’ve heard Angela Davis, Gina Dent and the Critical Resistance people from the United States share their knowledge about the prison industrial complex and they sneaky ways that the establishment try to get us to think about reform. Now I know about the multimillion dollar corporations that are involved in private prisons and how they are getting into immigrant detention work too—it’s fucked.

Prisoners are, of course, an essential component of the PIC. They are not just the passive subjects of labour (that is, those who are guarded, those who are searched, those who are ‘trained’ and ‘corrected’) but are also agents of labour. While the popular misconception that everything is ‘laid on’ for prisoners remains strong—and is often reiterated in media reports and public commentary about prisons and prisoners—the truth is rather different as was discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

As we saw in the previous chapter, prisoners labour under conditions materially similar to slavery (see for example, Davis, 2003; Alexander 2010; Calathes, 2017). Where work is available, it tends to be unrewarding, both personally and financially. Moreover, prisoners have little choice concerning how their earnings may be spent, exacerbating their material deprivation.<sup>117</sup> In fact, as labourers in the PIC, prisoners are not afforded the subjectivity of neo-liberal subjects, flawed though that subjectivity may be. Their capacity to consume and to make consumer choices is severely and deliberately limited, and perhaps this (even

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<sup>117</sup> See for example Chapter 6, pages 136-7, regarding Robert’s cold feet and Feeney’s ill-fitting shoes.

more than physical confinement) constitutes the nature of neoliberal punishment. Thus, prisoners are constituted as flawed subjects almost by definition. It is not surprising, then, that 'preparing' prisoners for re-entry into the wider community is an anxious and inefficient project.

Driven by a global economy, the PIC is not just the profit driven running of prisons, or the exploitation of prisoner labour, but describes:

the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems and includes the media's perpetuation of stereotypes, tough on crime policies and powerful prison guard unions (Critical Resistance, 2004)

The 'prison system' is a multi-billion-dollar worldwide industry, where prisoners and former prisoners are reduced to commodities as a source of profit (Wright, 2000, p. 15; Calathes, 2017). The PIC is so entrenched, that the prison industry holds tradeshows attracting exhibitors hoping to sell anything and everything from 'commisary food...restraint chairs...security fences to "prison-safe" e-cigarettes' (Markowitz, 2016). Soaring prison numbers are a gold mine for entrepreneurs, where the construction of prison facilities, the supply of goods and services to prisons and the pool of cheap labour without the costs or distractions of worker benefits or union organising providing a bonanza of 'growth' opportunities (Gilmore, 2007; Calathes, 2017). Prisoners, and by extension their families and communities, ultimately suffer as prisons, state run or privately owned, and their associated businesses increase profits through cost cutting measures like offering reduced services, poor quality food and medical care.

The growth of the PIC is made possible in ways that may at first seem unrelated to prison growth. Being homeless means that everyday living is done in public, under the full scrutiny of the police (Critical Resistance, 2004). The lack of free, non-punishing drug treatment centres and mental health facilities means that the default response to these social problems becomes incarceration (Davis, 2003; Kilroy, 2012; Calathes, 2017). As I discussed in Chapter 3, welfare systems are designed to generate violations—intentional or not—resulting in the criminalisation of welfare recipients. The school-to-prison pipeline propels 'at risk' students into the criminal justice system through the under-resourcing of public schools, overcrowded classrooms, poor treatment of students with special needs and over-worked staff. Harsh disciplinary measures and zero tolerance policies discriminate against children from poor families and children of colour (Elias, 2013; Snapp, Hoenig, Fields, & Russell, 2015; Meiners, 2011, 2016; Davis, 2012, p. 69; Aljazeera, 2015), all within the neoliberal climate of meritocracy and individual responsibility for

learning. The message of meritocracy is often used to promote a 'classless society',<sup>118</sup> conjuring up the notion of 'fairness', egalitarianism and the 'ability' to make good choices. It is important to consider how the PIC creates and feeds upon criminalising disadvantage and inequity. One example of the extension of the PIC is immigration detention, where people who have fled war zones, state persecution and abuse, economic and natural disasters, are criminalised, locked up by the same corporations that own and operate for-profit private prisons (Trueman, 2012). The neoliberal market-driven global economy ensures large numbers of people are unsafe or cannot survive in their mother country (Green, 2011). However, when people cross borders seeking work or freedom from persecution they are criminalised (Welch & Schuster, 2005), coming under 'racial social control' policies and practices (Green, 2011, p. 370) enacted by first world countries whose governments aim to placate their electorates by creating 'secure borders'. Labelling people seeking asylum as 'illegal' or as 'queue jumpers' is emotive language used to create a dehumanised 'other'. When people are dehumanised in this way, seen as 'human waste' (Bauman, 2004) or the 'detritus of contemporary capitalism' (Davis, 2003, p. 16), this places them at great risk of human rights abuses. Out of public sight, immigration detention centres, like prisons, create the same conditions for hyper-surveillance, poor mental health (McLoughlin & Warin, 2008), violence, abuse and oppressive 'management' regimes such as strip-searching, while the siting of immigration detention centres offshore reduces public scrutiny (Nethery, Rafferty-Brown, & Taylor, 2010).

Neoliberalism-along with racism, classism and sexism, is embedded in the PIC. Neoliberalism, and its uniquely Australian relative, 'economic rationalism'<sup>119</sup> is a 'reincarnation of 19<sup>th</sup> century "laissez-faire" liberalism' which favoured the market over government regulation (McCluskey, 2003, p. 784; Mullaly, 2007, p. 94). According to Henry Giroux, 'neoliberalism is the most dangerous ideology of the current historical moment' (2002, p. 428), where the market defines and shapes social destiny. Putting neoliberalism into a perspective familiar to community development social workers, Cox and Nilsen (2014) conceptualise neoliberalism as a top-down social movement. By doing so, they believe that this can help people to challenge the neoliberal paradigm

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<sup>118</sup> See for example the speech delivered in 1991 by John Major as leader of Britain's Conservative Party.

<sup>119</sup> In Australia, economic rationalism is a term most attributed to the ideology and political practice of former Labor Treasurer and later, Prime Minister, Paul Keating. Economic rationalism was Keating's 'extreme version' of Thatcherism and Reaganism, where, within a month of winning the federal election in 1983, Keynesian economics became a thing of the past; control of economic decisions were left in the hands of banks and financial markets and tariffs were slashed in the hope that a competitive, global marketplace would boost the Australian economy. This led to the 'recession we had to have', a massive rise in interest rates and a correspondingly large number of people losing their jobs. This created a 'slippery slope', leading to privatisation, corporatisation and a wholesale attack on welfare policies and welfare recipients.

'intellectually and politically—to grasp that “the way things are” has been consciously produced, not only in the here-and-now but also across historical time and across different spatial scales' (2014, p. 61).

Neoliberalism privileges profitmaking over the interests of society, while deploying the myth of trickle-down economics. It is the most 'dominant form of obligations based ideology', an ideology that decimates social citizenship (McKeever, 2012, pp. 467-8). Neoliberalism is underpinned by the belief that we are rational economic actors, making little or no acknowledgement of the structural barriers held in place by the market. Neoliberalism normalises dominant institutions—like prisons—and relations of power through a 'public pedagogy' that creates market-driven subjects, modes of consciousness, and ways of understanding that promote accommodation, acquiescence and passivity. (Giroux, 2014, p. 26). Put simply, 'the prison industrial complex underwrites the social problems it purports to solve' (Davis & Dent, 2001, p. 1236). Although some participants indicated that they had an awareness of neoliberalism's influence before their imprisonment, the women's contributions in particular show a refusal to become compliant, neoliberal subjects post-release. It is within this neoliberal framework of the PIC that social workers and other prison workers ply their trade.

### Working in the PIC: screws, social workers, and prisoners

Prison work is one of the few remaining opportunities for working-class people to attain stable, full-time employment, especially since globalisation created mass unemployment across traditional, blue-collar manufacturing industries in South Australia.<sup>120</sup> However, despite the financial benefits of prison work, Griffin (2001) suggests that there is little social status in being a correctional officer; they are often seen by the broader community as bullies or thugs or, if they show a modicum of care for prisoners, as soft or bleeding hearted. Whether they are referred to as screws, hacks, turnkeys, '4B2's' (Hampton, 1998, p. 38), or newjacks (Conover, 2001), correctional officers are at the frontline of the PIC, at the interface of prison and punishment. Along with police, correctional officers are the only blue collar, predominantly working-class groups that are represented in large numbers as paid employees in the criminal justice system.

Erving Goffman's (1961) concept of the total institution—where people live and work within the confines of a system that comprehensively moulds them into conformity—applies to

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<sup>120</sup> Although it can be tempting to focus on private prisons as purveyors of the PIC, South Australia has just one private prison. The remaining eight are owned and run by the state, with their workers considered public servants, eligible for membership in the *Public Service Association of SA*.

correctional officers as well as prisoners. As Crawley (2006, p. xiii) reminds us, many correctional officers 'spend more of their lives in prison than many of their charges'. It would be reasonable to surmise that correctional officers themselves become institutionalised but, because they hold a level of power over prisoners, this sets the scene for horizontal oppression, eradicating any prospect for class solidarity. This is maintained, reinforced and exaggerated through the violent prison environment and supplemented by union action. The function of horizontal oppression to divide and conquer by pitting one section of the working-class against another is often thought of in terms of race (see for example, Kuhn, 2009; Ferguson, Lavalette, & Mooney, 2002, p. 105), but in this case, it is grounded in class.

Guy Standing (2011) coined the term precariat to describe a new social class who lack predictability or security in employment. Standing argues that members of the precariat class exist in a state of constant insecurity suffused with inadequate opportunities to earn, the casualisation of their work, disregard for workers health and safety and little opportunity for professional development. This is probably why the recruitment spiel below sounds so appealing to prospective correctional services officers in South Australia:

Think you've seen it all? Careers in Corrections will show you more. More exciting, more challenging, more interesting and rewarding work than you'd have imagined. Working for DCS gives you the chance to develop a meaningful career. One where your contribution always counts; where everything you do can have a positive effect on the lives of others. Both personally and professionally the learning curve is steep, but the rewards are great. Every day is different with new problems to solve, or skills to learn. And when you work in a safe, secure, team-focused environment you can always count on backup and support. (Government of South Australia: Department for Correctional Services, 2016)

While the language used by the Department of Corrections conceptualises at least some prison work as 'rehabilitative', the reality is far from that. Susan King's (2006) research compared how 44 South Australian prison employees<sup>121</sup> experienced their work alongside the discourse used by Department of Corrections that defines the role of a correctional officer. Rather than experiencing their work as described in the recruitment advertising above, most participants spoke of their work in ways that rarely matched the sales pitch (King, 2006). Some described routine boredom, for example:

I find the work mind numbing. Not the work, but the job at times. Sitting around, it's basically supervision, supervision, supervision (King, 2006, Interviewee 13: p. 195)

[Y]our days are repetitious, you come in and do the same thing every day (King, 2016, Interviewee 9: p. 196)

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<sup>121</sup> Of King's 44 participants, 27 were men, 17 were women

Another officer, working in the Adelaide Women's Prison described how pessimism manifests in prison work:

[Y]ou've had a woman crying for the last six hours because she got sentenced to two months and she thought she was going to walk. Those types of feelings...seeing these women lead these lives is so difficult and you take that home. I think it's very difficult for partners and children to understand why sometimes you get really quite pessimistic about the view of the justice system (King, 2006, Interviewee 25: p. 195)

Pessimism in any workplace can be contagious, creating widespread frustration and indifference. The job in this sense loses any 'meaning', thus is an exploitation of labour. Correctional officers in King's study recognised their workplace as a site of violence and risk, describing prison work as:

Worse than a normal working environment because you've got a double jeopardy. You've not just got the risk of the prisoners...but there's also the double jeopardy of, it's a dangerous environment to be in, physically and mentally (King, 2006, Interviewee 14: p. 197)

War zone combat...where you're under perceived threat all the time (King, 2006, Interviewee 8: p. 197)

Prisons are adversarial workplaces where 'professional indifference' wins out over empathy (Endersby, 2004, p. 119); nightmares, burn out and poor mental health are common. Despite prison work not living up to the promises, not all correctional officers have the option to leave. The fear of unemployment encourages many to 'stick it out' where, like some prisoners, some employees 'mentally disconnect' to survive. This is evidenced by this interviewee in King's research, who recognised the security of performing prison work:

When I started off my only idea of this place was that I talked to a few people that worked out here and they said it was a safe, economic job, as long as you do your job you'll never get sacked. And I was only looking for job security because I'm local, got a wife and two kids. (King, 2006, Interviewee 11: p. 236)

Even though there is substantial academic literature and newspaper reports about correctional officers' violence towards prisoners<sup>122</sup> none of King's participants spoke about their use of violence as a 'tactic' to 'manage' prisoners. This is hardly surprising. As King points out, her interview data is likely distorted by the fact that correctional officers would be at risk of losing their jobs if they expressed views unacceptable in maintaining the company line. It would be fair to assume then that the evidence of correctional officers'

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<sup>122</sup> See for example, Conover, (2001) and Carlton, (2006, 2009).

stories in King's research is perhaps a sanitised version of the realities of how correctional officers interact with prisoners.<sup>123</sup>

In South Australia, like much of the world (Conover, 2001; Crawley, 2006; Stern, 2006), correctional officers are supported by a strong and powerful union (Endersby, 2004). To deal with the conflict, correctional officers resort to one of the only options available to them to demonstrate their discontent; industrial action. In recounting his eleven years as a correctional officer in South Australia, John Endersby explains that due to hierarchal power struggles and prison politics, correctional officers' unions *need* to be militant (Endersby, 2004, pp. 95-105). While legal, and an important element of trade union practices, agitation through strike action has implications that extend beyond the impacts on individual prisoners whose individual rights are jeopardised when prisons go into 'lockdown' during strike action (Crawley, 2006, p. 3; Endersby, 2004).

During a lockdown, prisoners are held in their cells for the duration, forgoing hot meals, exercise, appointments with outside 'professionals', court appearances and family visits as a result. Here is where the human rights model really fails as the rights of prisoners are forfeited for the rights of correctional officers, creating an 'us and them' environment, escalating the potential for violence. As Kauffman explains (1988, pp. 90-108), even a fragile solidarity among prisoners heightens a corresponding code of solidarity between correctional officers. Doubly concerning though, is how union action agitating for increases in staff numbers for their personal safety—usually due to incidents related to overcrowding—ultimately results in the expansion of the PIC (Arria, 2017).

Prisoners are not blind to the damage that prison work does to correctional officers' world view in terms of their perception of others and their own demeanour. In the Australian study, *Women Prisoners*, Blanche Hampton was told by one of her research participants, 'France' that prison guards:

fail to see the human side of prisoners...they are dulled by their misery, lost in easy power games where they only know how to apply discipline by using violence, hatred, injustice, domination and personal resentment...this is as destructive to their development as it is to the prisoners (Hampton, 1998, p. 195)

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<sup>123</sup> Examples of correctional officers' violence and abuses of power in South Australian prisons are scattered throughout Mark Halsey and Simone Deegan's (2015a) book, *Young Offenders: Crime, prison and struggles for desistance*. See for example pages, 43 & 97.

## Neoliberal social work

The failings of the welfare state are the embodiment of the 'problems' faced by social workers, especially those who reject dominant ideologies and/or choose to work in alliance with service users (Ferguson, 2008; Hyslop, 2011; Wallace & Pease, 2011; Turbett, 2014). This begins within the neoliberal university (Giroux, 2013) where widening participation policies prop up profit-driven education that produces debt choked workers at the expense of critical thinkers who question the status quo. Once employed within social services, neoliberalism has a direct effect on social workers who feel demoralised as their skills are devalued, where, especially since the end of the twentieth century, most social work is delivered within a business model (Harris, 2003). With a yoke of education debt around their necks, social workers have little choice than to become compliant agents of social control. Their ability to form relationships with service users is compromised and the liberation that social workers have the potential to provide is diminished (Wallace & Pease, 2011, p. 136; Golightly, 2017), reduced to short term interventions, surveillance and social control. Even grass-roots, community based social work has taken a battering, becoming corporatized with a focus on meeting key performance indicators (Banks, 2011, p. 180) and results-based accountability measures.

Increasingly, social workers report feeling alienated (Ferguson & Lavalette, 2004), angry that their work has been destabilised. Constrained to providing band aid solutions and to scramble for meagre resources, neoliberalism successfully thwarts opportunities to tackle the roots of oppression in order to create social change (Hyslop, 2011; 2016). A profession with a strong remit for seeking social justice, social work under neo-liberalism has become increasingly depoliticised and risk focussed, at direct odds with the pursuit of social justice (Golightly, 2017; Pollack & Rossiter, 2010). Although some social workers report using covert means to carry out radical, activist work in settings unsupportive of radical practice (Greenslade, McAuliffe, & Chenoweth, 2015), this is usually done in piecemeal fashion, where the beneficiaries are individuals, lucky enough to get a 'good/radical' worker.

Even though many social workers work specifically with people who have been in prison, the scope of the PIC is broader than we first may think, when taking into account working with people experiencing, for example, addiction, poor health, homelessness, domestic violence or in child protection settings. However, the sharp end of this work is within Community Corrections. Designed to divert 'low-risk' people away from prison, a non-custodial court sanction can be served under the supervision of a Community Corrections



worker.<sup>124</sup> Eligible prisoners can also apply to complete the final component of their custodial sentence under Community Corrections supervision. A Community Corrections Order requires reporting in regularly, not leaving the state without permission and not committing further crime. Additional ordered conditions may include; mandatory attendance at a rehabilitation program, undergoing random urine testing for drug use and breathalyser tests for alcohol consumption, performing unpaid community work, adhering to a curfew and/or not associating with certain people, and abstinence from frequenting licensed premises.

For probation and parole officers, often with social work qualifications, the irony of the term criminal 'justice' is not lost on them as their daily work exposes them to the inequities and social isolation experienced by the people they work with (Telfer, 2003). Walker and Beaumont's (1981) classic text, *Probation: Critical Theory and Socialist Practice* speaks to the role of social workers in the criminal justice system. They described the tensions, contradictions and ethical dilemmas that social workers encounter in the probation service given that the role is part of the 'state apparatus of social control' (p. 90); a troubling relationship for some who acknowledge that they benefit from working in an industry that feeds upon the surveillance and punishment of marginalised people. Their work can seem far removed from the values and purpose of social work and the pursuit of social justice.

When an individualising framework is deployed in social work research, it can only ever result in individualising outcomes. One Australian example is Chris Trotter's 'pro-social modelling' for use with mandated 'clients'. Trotter's research suggests that when social workers in mandated or correctional settings modelled pro-social behaviour, their clients were less likely to commit further crime (Trotter, 2006). Consisting of three main practices; the modelling and rewarding of pro-social behaviour and challenging of anti-social behaviour, Trotter argued that workers trained to model pro-social behaviour with their clients can have an impact in reducing recidivism. While Trotter himself points out that using these approaches underpins good social work practice anyway, he believes that pro-social modelling can be taught and used effectively with positive results.

There are two main problems with pro-social modelling. In the decade since Trotter first undertook his research, the caseloads of Community Corrections workers (and all other

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<sup>124</sup> In South Australia, a significant number of Community Corrections workers have a social work degree, although each Community Corrections office also employs workers without formal qualifications—often previously employed by the department as a prison officer or in administration—on a lower pay scale to supervise the people on community service orders who are deemed most likely to be compliant. Only degree-holding social work staff can write reports for parole or pre-sentencing matters.

social workers) have increased, along with the administrative tasks they are required to perform. Further, as previously indicated, not all workers who supervise 'offenders' in the community have social work qualifications or even a relevant degree. Some are former prison officers or administration staff from within the department who can begin work with just a one-month induction. As Harker and Worrall (2011) argue, the focus of Community Corrections workers has shifted from 'needs-based' to a 'rehabilitative' model. Steve Rogowski (2010, p. 3) points out, what was once the domain of social work—with an overarching goal to seek human rights and social justice—is, because of managerialist practices becoming the work of 'other professionals'. 'Offender management' focussed on compliance has well and truly taken over from the welfare oriented mandate of parole officers to 'advise, assist and befriend' (Telfer, 2003a; Harker & Worrall, 2011). Currently in South Australia, a Community Corrections case worker with degree qualifications will have, on average, a full-time case-load of between 35 and 50 people, the number being worked out on a points formula that takes into account assessment and sentencing reports, mental health problems, notoriety, gang affiliation and the type of offence committed. With such large caseloads<sup>125</sup> and an increasing focus on complexity and risk, one must question the efficacy of what a Community Corrections officer is able to achieve in terms of pro-social modelling, especially when one of their roles is the recording of breaches of parole conditions.<sup>126</sup>

Secondly, it is difficult to see how pro-social modelling—deployed briefly in an office setting—could mitigate the daily struggles faced by criminalised people, whose poverty, poor health and inadequate housing dictates their everyday needs. In the aftermath of a prison sentence, it would be challenging to feel 'pro-social' after such a dehumanising, violent experience. People leave prisons haunted by traumatic memories of violence and with little learned (and much lost) in terms of surviving in the community.

Furthermore, the case work setting is unlikely to be able to address social isolation, provide a space to compare and normalise experiences with others and is unlikely to create pro-social connections within the community. Of course, some workers can and do 'smuggle in good practice' (Rogowski, 2010, p. 1), despite structural barriers, which probably explains the often-heard comment that it was the worker, not the organisation, that made a difference.<sup>127</sup> It cannot be disputed that there are good people doing good

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<sup>125</sup> In March 2017, there were 67,296 people serving a Community Corrections order in Australia, with 4571 men and 1066 women under a community corrections order in South Australia (ABS, 2017).

<sup>126</sup> Mark Halsey notes that more than half of the people on conditional release plans in South Australia breach their orders (Halsey, 2006).

<sup>127</sup> See for example, '*Social work voices from the inside*' (Cree & Davis, 2007).

work, but they too are shackled by the system they work within. As will be discussed in Chapter 9, some participants provided evidence of a notable example of a ‘good worker making a difference’—an exceptional example, one that has had a significant influence on some participants lives and my own social work practice.

## Exiting prison and entering the Treatment Industrial Complex

Leaving prison does not mean making a clean exit from the PIC. Even though prison construction, ‘managing’ prisoners, the exploitation of prisoners’ labour and the industries that service prisons are the obvious products of the PIC, the ‘prisoner re-entry industry’ (Clear, 2010, p. 585; Corcoran & Fox, 2013) has become an integral arm of the PIC. At a time when funding for communities is repetitively reduced and blamed on budgetary restraints, there is little hesitation in blindly funding ‘evidence based’ cognitive behavioural programs that are seen as a ‘fast fix’, deployed within a suite of risk management approaches.

‘Therapies’ addressing the purported rehabilitation of offenders do vary, but that variety is rarely if ever presented to prisoners as a range of options for personal development in prison. Instead, they are subject to ‘one size fits all’ programs that typically aim to address the moral or behavioural deficiencies of offenders. One such post-release program, often delivered by social workers to ex-prisoners in South Australia is Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT). Best known by its abbreviation, MRT is a trademarked cognitive based behavioural treatment program devised by Gregory Little and Kenneth Robinson (1997) who both worked in correctional settings in the United States. South Australia was an early importer of MRT, deploying its use throughout the Drug Court,<sup>128</sup> an intervention that operates under the jurisdiction of the Adelaide Magistrates Court.

In South Australia, the 12-week MRT program is delivered at the beginning of the Drug Court sanction in tandem with other surveillance and monitoring strategies.<sup>129</sup> According

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<sup>128</sup> Drug Court was an initiative introduced by the Government of SA in June 2000 and was copied from the model used in the United States since the mid-1980s. Eligibility to participate is based on the participant pleading guilty to their most serious offences, a willingness to comply with the case management plan, be an adult and live in Adelaide’s metropolitan area,

<http://www.courts.sa.gov.au/OurCourts/MagistratesCourt/InterventionPrograms/Pages/Drug-Court.aspx>

<sup>129</sup> There are three phases of the 12-month Drug Court program in Adelaide. Each phase is built around the following activities. (paraphrased from Adelaide Magistrates Court website), available at

<http://www.courts.sa.gov.au/OurCourts/MagistratesCourt/InterventionPrograms/Pages/Drug-Court.aspx>

Phase 1 –Three months duration; fortnightly intensive judicial supervision, mandatory home detention, attendance at treatment programs which include individual counselling and group programs especially designed to address the nexus between offending and drug use. (MRT and Staying Quit). Participants are drug tested three times a week.

Phase 2 – Six months duration; monthly court appearances, bail conditions are reduced to night curfew, treatment programs continues. Participants are drug tested twice a week.

to Armstrong (2003), MRT draws on a patchwork of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Jungian ideas around personality, and notions of moral development taken from Kohlberg and Piaget's theories (Armstrong, 2003, p. 670). The program takes participants through a series of morality levels with the use of a work book, has homework activities and is delivered within a group counselling setting. There has been criticism of the design and 'evidence base' that underpins MRT, which is grounded on the premise that the individual 'creates their own prison' and is therefore fully responsible for their situation.

The MRT workbook, *How to Escape your Prison* (Little & Robinson, 1997), claims that 'when people follow the rules, they have less problems in life' (p. 2), and that, 'you can choose to be happy' (p. 7). It is littered with odd metaphorical statements such as, 'Your life is like a garden. You decide how well it is tended. You decide what "fruits" come from it. You decide whether you will ignore problems or work on them' (p. 9). The workbook is supplemented with odd, disturbing photographs and drawings, that appear to be threats if one chooses not to climb out of the 'false belief box' and up the freedom ladder, including; a gallows (p. 15) and an isolation cell (p. 29). The focus is relentlessly individualising, with almost no acknowledgment of collective struggles or identities.<sup>130</sup> Program participants are brought into moralising discourse as the bearers of a rationality guiding individualised choices, and as people with responsibility for the conditions and circumstances of their lives. There is little focus on managing the circumstances surrounding addiction. Following on with the prison metaphor, over the course of 30 sessions, participants climb up the 16 steps of the MRT 'freedom ladder' until they reach the highest level, called grace, suggesting that relapse is a fall from grace. With rhetoric sounding much like that used in Scientology, the underlying moral-religious connotations of 'falling from grace' neatly blames the individual for the structural issues that targeted them as bodies to be warehoused in prison.

The MRT program claims that the 'real' prison is the participants' own personality, implying that being 'criminal' comes down to personal choice. Essentially, MRT takes the approach that people who problematically use drugs or enter prison are morally and intellectually

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Phase 3 - Three months duration; monthly court appearances, night bail conditions continue. Participants are randomly drug tested.

<sup>130</sup> Women who have participated in MRT have told me of their discomfort in being one of just two or three female participants in the group and of hearing sexist contributions provided by male participants, and of those responses going unchallenged by workers. Because of the gender imbalance in MRT groups, women do not speak about their own experiences of violence or abuse that often underpins their drug use. This gender blindness of program delivery makes no compensation for the fact that women have gone from an almost all female environment into one that is overwhelmingly dominated by males.

inferior, ignoring the causal pathways of social stratification (Behrens, 2009), exposure to violence or experiences of trauma. In the South Australian context, it would be plausible to suggest that the intensive surveillance and monitoring that accompanies MRT has at least as much impact in preventing (short term) recidivism as completing the MRT program itself. Behrens questions the contradictory notion that ‘offenders can be fixed’ with MRT and then returned to their ‘previous unchanged environment’ (Behrens, 2009, p. 101). It also seems inconsistent that while the overarching policy around drug use in Australia since 1985 (Australian Government, 2015) is that of harm minimisation, approaches like this require abstinence, where lapses are punished.<sup>131</sup>

But what do program graduates think about MRT? There appears to be little evidence from former participants in MRT ‘research’ about its potential as a treatment because data used to support the use of MRT is quantitative, tends to be from a workers point of view and does not seek participant perspectives.<sup>132</sup> However, Jerimiah Bourgeois (2013) sheds some light on what it is like to have ones ‘morals reconciled’, describing MRT as a ‘pseudo-program’ provided by correctional authorities to tick the box saying that evidence based practice is being used to rehabilitate prisoners.<sup>133</sup> For Bourgeois, the message transmitted by MRT programs is much like ‘classical criminology meets Horatio Alger’<sup>134</sup> with the aim to convince prisoners that the American Dream of rags to riches is possible with hard work and determination (Moore, 2004). To quote Bourgeois (2013, p. 156), ‘the premise behind this therapy is that there is some elementary defect in prisoners that thirteen weeks of banal advice and reproach will mend’. Given the violence and abuse happening in adult and juvenile detention centres in Australia (Yaxley, 2016) it seems farcical at best to think that people in, or who have been held in prison are not aware of the irony in having to participate in programs like MRT.

Treatment therapies like MRT are big business. The capitalist underpinnings of treatment regimens like MRT must be considered when thinking about alternatives to prison. They are driven by profit and neoliberal ideologies. Having such programs firmly in place means that, if prison populations do fall, ‘programs’ like MRT will be there to catch the ‘problematic population’ in a net of treatment—and for a price. Further, when participants

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<sup>131</sup> According to Doug Sellman (2009), lapses and relapses are normal and expected phases in addressing the cycle of addiction.

<sup>132</sup> Research seeking qualitative responses from MRT participants would make for a fascinating topic for further research.

<sup>133</sup> Bourgeois participated in the MRT program while held in a US prison.

<sup>134</sup> Horatio Alger was an American author who wrote for an audience of young working-class men. The basis of his books was ‘rags to riches’ stories, where perseverance and hard work were the key to success in realising the ‘American Dream’. One of Alger’s most well-known titles was *Ragged Dick*, published in 1868.

fail to meet the hyper-surveillance requirements accompanying programs like MRT, their failure is recorded as a breach of parole conditions, the participant is ejected from the program and can be returned to custody, even if they had made some progress up the 'freedom ladder'.

Such 'therapeutic' work, often performed by social workers, undermines the values, goals and aspirations of (radical) social work as it consolidates the 'control' aspect of social work (Hyslop, 2016), reducing social workers to roles of gatekeepers, mediators and purveyors of state surveillance. Social work 'interventions' in this sense imply that it is the worker who is the expert and only through their guidance can change occur (Turbett, 2014, p. 46; McLaughlin, 2009). Attempting to create compliant citizens accepting of their oppression as self-inflicted is an injustice and leaves no space for the person to express their own story or to explore the role of social inequality (Turbitt, 2014, p. 47).

### Parole, home detention, and the PIC

The PIC extends well beyond the architecture of the prison, shaping adjuncts and alternatives to prison, such as parole (or conditional release) and home detention. Early release from prison rarely provides a sense of true freedom: indeed, participants in this project reiterated that in some ways, they can never leave prison. Instead, the experience of incarceration—even if it occurred some time ago—continues to inform their day-to-day lives. For many, the experience of release is equally or almost as traumatic as incarceration. Conditional release in South Australia has been described as an 'angst-ridden process to be endured rather than something to be actively embraced' (Halsey, 2006, p. 152). Particularly for women, release is experienced as a 'precarious' scramble for survival (Carlton & Baldry, 2013, p. 70), where former prisoners report a mismatch between blanket administrative conditions applied by disconnected professionals to people with varying individual needs (Halsey, 2006; Carlton & Baldry, 2013). Halsey's participants<sup>135</sup> spoke of being mandated to attend programs that did not meet their needs with little consideration of their appropriateness or fit for purpose. It is evident from Halsey's longitudinal research that a significant number of people are choosing to remain in prison for the duration of their sentence rather than seeking conditional release.

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<sup>135</sup> Mark Halsey has conducted a longitudinal study of young men who were first held in juvenile detention and have since progressed into adult prisons in South Australia. He has conducted follow up interviews with many of his participants for well over a decade and has also interviewed their significant others, thus providing a comprehensive examination of the cycle of release and returning to prison for young men in South Australia.

Many people serving custodial sentences are released onto home detention. Home detention via an electronic monitoring device or a 'home D' bracelet (usually worn on the ankle) is an alternative version of custody and has been used in Australia for around 25 years. Sometimes home detention is used at the 'front end', while a person is awaiting sentencing, as a means of early release from prison and sometimes as an alternative to prison altogether (Gibbs & King, 2003; George, 2006). Ultimately, the use of electronic monitoring has expanded the number of people under supervision by the state without being reflected in 'in-custody' statistics. Typically, prisoners who meet the eligibility requirements of conditional release are white, male, middle-aged, convicted of non-violent or 'white-collar' crimes, have reasonable levels of education and are likely to have employment opportunities (George, 2006).

While home detention is potentially more humane (and costs less) than a custodial sentence, typically it is women who take on the role of 'sponsor/jailer' with its associated accountabilities and costs, simultaneously agreeing to their own (increased) surveillance (George, 2006). Used in this way, home detention has broadened the reach of the PIC by co-opting a person's support network to become agents of the state, acting on its behalf to regulate the movements and behaviour of their loved-one. Family life can be severely disrupted when the person is in prison and when they are released—families need support as does their criminalised family member. As Comfort (2017) argues, the level of work families contribute in these situations is underestimated and undervalued.

Home detention reinforces class divisions, where social circumstances means that some people will never be able to secure a home detention option as they do not have suitable housing, while for others, prison time can be served in 'comfortable' circumstances. Home detention orders have the potential to expand the PIC by creating sprawling suburbs of mass incarceration and surveillance. Although conditional release can be a 'privilege', it is not without its contradictions as participants will explain in the following chapter.

## Conclusion

I began this chapter by explaining the functions of the PIC and described how neoliberalism is implicated in the growth of the PIC. I went on to explore how prison officers themselves become institutionalised and how social workers are prevented from doing 'good work', held back by neoliberal, managerialist approaches and are thus implicated in the failure to reform or rehabilitate. I looked critically at early release options and uncovered the traps associated with the reliance on treatment therapies in that they

fail to take into account structural forces in the pursuit of rehabilitation. As I explained, home detention as an option has the potential to not only turn a home into a prison, but can turn communities into an alternative prison landscape, much like that described by Bourque (1988) in the introduction to Chapter 5. In the following chapter, the participants provide their accounts of the difficulties they experienced upon their release from prison.



## Chapter 8: Outsiders: Participants' accounts of release

Jail only temporarily replaces existing outside problems with the ones of prison. When you're released to face your old problems, you have even fewer resources than before in terms of housing, friends, or sense of self, with the added stigma of being an ex-prisoner to complete your sense of isolation. What is surprising is how those who don't return to prison, or die in the post-release period, survive and pick up the pieces of their lives. Where there are post-release successes, they are more in spite of institutional experiences than because of them. Post-release for ex-inmates is unending. There can never be a time when it is completely in the past. The best we can hope for is to remain post-release and never become inmates again. Former prisoner and academic, Blanche Hampton in, *Women and Prisons* (1993, pp. 159-160).

### Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 7 I argued that, in the context of the neoliberal Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), the ideals of reforming prisoners and prison reform is largely futile because a reformed prison is still a prison. The focus on individuals means that rarely is there any more than a cursory acknowledgement of social stratification which, I have argued, lies at the heart of both historical and contemporary penal systems. Attempts to address social stratification tend to be at best incremental and come from a position of assisting people adjust and survive, rather than within a framework of flourishing. As we saw in Chapter 6, participants in this project, with their uniquely valuable knowledge of prison as lived experience, confirm that the prison is a violent response to socially constituted pain and distress. In the previous chapter, the reach of the PIC was discussed in relation to mandated programs, conditional release, and home detention. I argued there that leaving prison does not mean exiting the PIC.

In this chapter, the participants respond to the notion that prison prepares them for release as they describe their experiences of life immediately after prison. Using their accounts, I will demonstrate that for participants in this project (and perhaps for ex-prisoners more generally), prison failed to prepare them for release. This is not a matter of mere omission, or failing to meet an especially high standard—it is worse than that. Participants' accounts show that release is experienced as an additional challenge whose difficulties are directly consequential to imprisonment. The hurdles that prisoners encounter at release are many and varied, and depend more or less on the extent of the persons institutionalisation while incarcerated, and on the type and level of support offered them on release. The issues identified by participants include life and death matters: in fact, post-release mortality is a key theme. Beyond survival, participants identify housing needs, difficulties establishing or

re-establishing important relationships, and various forms of stigmatisation as particularly trenchant issues. They begin by describing how being institutionalised manifested for them post-release. Sometimes and for some participants institutionalisation amounted to a number of relatively small or simple things but for others, especially the participants who had a custodial sentence longer than a couple of years, or for those with multiple sentences, being institutionalised led to self-doubt, fear and difficulties (re)connecting with mainstream society.

## The revolving door: Prisons, institutionalisation and recidivism

The possibility that release from prison will not be permanent is a theme both in academic scholarship and in first-hand accounts of imprisonment. Recidivism in its simplest form is committing further crime after being caught and punished for a previous offence, however, recidivism is formally measured as a return to custody of people released from prison. Across Australia, close to half of all people currently in prison have previously served a custodial sentence, many people return to prison within two years of release (ABS, 2017). In public policy and other scholarship concerning recidivism, the 'problem' is not so much the failure of prisons to rehabilitate as the intractable failure of prisoners to reform themselves (or to 'learn their lesson'). However, participants' perspectives on recidivism differ markedly from the criminological and policy scholarship that addresses it. For those with lived experience of prison, the problem of recidivism is profoundly personal and complex and speaks more directly to the failure of prisons to furnish prisoners with the skills and resources they need to survive beyond release.

Kate attested to the revolving door of imprisonment, saying:

There was a lot of recidivism, I used to see people come in and go out all the time, it is obvious that jail wasn't working.

Prison officers also know that prison does not work. Many former prisoners speak of being asked 'when will you be back?' as they leave the prison gates,<sup>136</sup> much like Stella's experience:

You get these messages all the time that you are just a piece of shit and you are going to return, the screws will have bets on, 'oh she'll be back in'. So, when I went back in, I hear 'oh Harry, you won the bet'.

In a longitudinal, South Australian study of young men's repeat cycles of incarceration, Mark Halsey identified that along with the lack of safe housing, 'risk' taking, drug addiction and the trauma associated with personal and family tragedy, the main problem for his

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<sup>136</sup> See for example, Hampton (1993), Maruna (2001)

participants upon release was their inability to satisfy the bureaucratic ‘shortcomings’ of competing, overlapping, poorly planned and coordinated post-release conditions (Halsey, 2007, p. 1219). Women’s release experiences are similar to men’s, but are complicated further by (sexist) stigma, social isolation, their attempts to regain custody of their children, and poverty.

Participants described institutionalisation—or the effects of imprisonment on their sense of self and ability to undertake daily life outside prison—in different ways. Many of the themes participants identified in Chapter 6, including a heightened sense of the passage of time, the continuing effects of material deprivation, health concerns (particularly addictions), and relationships with family and friends, reappear here. ‘Institutionalisation’ was represented abstractly by some participants, but others took a relatively literal, architectural approach.<sup>137</sup> Gidget took this photograph from her kitchen door:



**FIGURE 34: OPEN SPACE, GIDGET**

I took this photo because over the three years I was in jail, anytime I tried to look at the sky I was restricted by bars and razor wire, fencing, the sound of keys, there was always something. When I came out I could stand on my veranda and look at the world and nature I could see there was nothing holding me back. The only thing holding me back was my ability to do it. I hadn’t even been able to go to the bathroom without telling someone for so long. When I look at that view I think I could just get on an aeroplane and fly away if I wanted to.

It was frightening to begin with. I doubted myself because I had spent so much time and so long where every move I made had to be approved, watched and directed. I didn’t have any confidence, I doubted that I could do anything on my own. It took me a long time to realise that I had to think for myself because someone had thought for me for so long. When I got out, people would say have you done this, have you done that? It became overwhelming because I hadn’t had to deal with these things for years, just paying bills was a massive

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<sup>137</sup> Gidget used a similarly architectural photograph of a clock tower (Chapter 6, Figure 27, p. 146) to talk about the passage of time in prison.

accomplishment, you know? Now I've got a bank account and I've got a mobile phone and I've got the internet and I hadn't had any of these things for so long.

Gidget is describing how being institutionalised played out in her post-release experience. She reminds us of the importance for workers, families and allies who support released prisoners to understand that even the simplest of taken-for-granted tasks can be arduous for a newly released prisoner. Finding suitable housing, using public transport, attending to health matters, getting a bank account and paying bills requires up to date information and being organised while existing on a minimum income and enduring the stigma of ex-prisoner.

Robert described being institutionalised in a different way, using this image of a train to help him explain:



**FIGURE 35: THE TRAIN, ROBERT**

Trains run to a timetable. It is like that in prison. You have to rely on the rules, the guards and other people that work there to get you through your time. But when you have to rely on other people to make your decisions it takes away your autonomy. It was hard to transition from not being told what to do, to be told when to do everything. I hadn't had that for a long time. When I got out, especially for the first month I was always so conscious of the time, it was hard to get out of those habits of having to eat sleep and move only at specified times. It is a massive transition, there is not a person in prison who wouldn't struggle with coming out.

Gidget and Robert both highlight the way that having other people make their decisions compounded or constituted an element of their institutionalisation. What's interesting about that—among other things—is that the exercise of choice is supposed to be fundamental to

the neoliberal subject. The PIC thus deprives prisoners of the exact mode of being that needs to be practised in order to function in a neoliberal society.

Feeling overwhelmed at the time of release was not unusual for the women participants. Both Kate and Deer, despite having never met, and being released from prison more than a decade apart, submitted surprisingly similar images and narratives to describe how they saw themselves upon their release. Apart from being women who had spent time in prison, they had little in common: different crimes, committed in different decades with different sentence lengths and vastly different social circumstances once they were released. Kate told me:



**FIGURE 36: STRIPPED BARE, KATE**

That bare tree in the background was me when I was released. When you go to jail you lose the way that society sees you, you lose your reputation, your qualifications—things that made you. You felt a lot of shame about yourself. It has to do with the inner person. You certainly were stripped bare of your right to assert yourself. I learned to never assert myself from the time I went in there till the time I got out.

Similarly, Deer said:



**FIGURE 37 ME, AFTER PRISON, DEER**

I walked out of prison, with nothing, feeling just as barren as that picture. The little tree in the picture, with the hole next to it was me. I had no home to go to. I had shrivelled to nothing and it left me with nothing new, nothing learnt, less of myself than when I went in. When I got out I ended up having to live with a drug dealer, because I had nowhere else to go. For many women, when they leave prison their sense of self-worth is pretty shit really.

As Deer explains, her life got a lot worse after she left prison. Her heroin addiction dictated her daily routine until, according to Deer, she hit 'rock-bottom'. Finally, almost a year after her release, she checked herself in to a publicly funded residential drug rehabilitation centre, which, unconstrained by a waiting list, accepted her into their program immediately.<sup>138</sup> This, she says was her turning point. After six months in rehab, she transitioned to halfway (assisted) accommodation and a year later entered public housing, where she still lives today. For the next six years she regularly attended Narcotics Anonymous meetings until she finally felt confident that she could continue her drug-free life without formal support. There were no short-term interventions present in Deer's story. For her it was immediate access and long-term support over different rehabilitative settings

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<sup>138</sup> This is highly unusual and would not happen today, in a publicly funded rehabilitation service. The same residential rehab centre accessed by Deer all those years ago is still operational—one of the very few in South Australia that is not privately run (these private options are expensive and are therefore out of the question for anyone on welfare). However, entry requirements are much stricter now. People have to be first triaged by a central agency and judged to be 'bad enough' to need residential rehab, then they are placed on a waiting list to stay in a short-term detox centre for around a fortnight where they are medically assisted through their physical cravings and then go on to another waiting list which is at least 3 months in duration before they can enter residential rehab. Relapses see them having to return to the end of the queue to restart the process over again.

of her own choosing that saw her successfully end her drug dependency. It was only once she had dealt with her addiction that she could look towards achieving personal goals.

Many participants revisited their heightened sense of the passage of time and the impact of this on their post-release lives. Georgia spoke about the impact of time when she was on home detention. Her good behaviour enabled her to book pass outs to go shopping and attend appointments, but the time allowed was tightly constrained. She described how anxiety provoking this was, especially as she relied on public transport.<sup>139</sup> This left her in a difficult position—relying upon the timeliness of public transport while fearing being unable to comply with the time constraints of pass outs. Instead of enjoying a break away from her home/prison, she was forever anxious and continually looking at her watch.

Stella's testimony not only described being institutionalised but also her sense of guilt in that she was 'free' while her sisters were still locked in prison.



**FIGURE 38: THE PRISON CLOCK STILL TICKS AT HOME, STELLA**

I can remember sitting at the kitchen table after I had been released and looking at the clock and thinking 'oh it's eleven o'clock, the women will be sitting down to lunch around now'—who doesn't?

The whole time my brain was working to the timetable of the prison. I couldn't sleep because it was too quiet. There was no one whistling, no jangling keys, or walking around, it was just a total culture shock. I was feeling guilty for feeling that way. Here am I with my kids and those women are stuck in there. Yet I'm not feeling comfortable in my own skin.

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<sup>139</sup> A recent survey confirmed what most of us who use public transport in Adelaide already know; that public transport here is, infrequent and unreliable. See, Nankervis, (2016).

Stella communicates the feeling of being an ‘outsider’—in several senses of the word. She highlights the complexity of traversing two profoundly different worlds (prison and release) as one person. Each world demands very different ways of being, but neither is safe.

## Dying on the outside

The impact of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (discussed in Chapter 5) means that any death in custody is investigated.<sup>140</sup> But prison-related mortality, like the PIC itself, extends beyond the prison walls. Social isolation compounded by the trauma of the prison experience sees women and men have extremely high mortality rates in the days, weeks, months and years after their release from prison. The South Australian women’s ex-prisoner community group *Seeds of Affinity*, dedicated their publication, *Captive Minds* (2014), to the 42 women they knew who had died since their release from prison in South Australia.<sup>141</sup> Since 2014, other post-release deaths have occurred but rarely do these deaths attract the same level of media attention as the criminalised person does when they enter prison. For example, in 2015, when finally ‘free’ Jacqueline Davies took her own life, it did not make news headlines.<sup>142</sup> Getting out of prison did not relieve Jacqueline of the pain of her imprisonment. That pain stayed with her until she found a way to escape a life plagued by mental ill-health. Jacqueline was failed by a system that relied on imprisonment to respond to her mental health. Just as it was for Jacqueline, the experience of trauma continues to mar the possibility of ex-prisoners surviving and flourishing after their release from prison.

This situation is not unique to South Australia. In the late 1990s, Susanne Davies and Sandy Cook set out to understand why so many women were dying within weeks after their release from prison in Victoria (Davies & Cook, 1998; 2000). Despite there being a significant number of post-release deaths, they found that the situation would have continued to be ignored if not for the voices of allies—activists, welfare agencies and community workers (Davies & Cook, 1998, p. 15). Acknowledging the high mortality rate of men released from prison, they wanted to uncover reasons why the rate was three times higher again for women,<sup>143</sup> numbers which had been dismissed, minimised as a ‘consequence of private prisons’ or simply been attributed to drug addiction or suicide

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<sup>140</sup> This does not necessarily mean that police or custodial officers are held accountable for their actions—as we saw in Chapter 5, this is not the case.

<sup>141</sup> This number is conservative and is limited to the anecdotal knowledge of the women who make up *Seeds of Affinity*; in South Australia official records of post release deaths are not kept.

<sup>142</sup> The case of Jacqueline Davies is discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>143</sup> Because no official records are kept, estimates of post-release mortality vary between studies.



(Davies & Cook, 1998, p. 16). What they did find was that women's post-release deaths were tightly bound up in their in-prison experiences.

Later, two Victorian academics, Marie Segrave and Bree Carlton, aimed to build on Davies and Cook's research with their *Surviving Outside* (2011) project. Their proposal hoped to triangulate correctional services data, with information from the Victorian State Coroner alongside interviews with women released from prison (Carlton & Segrave, 2011; Segrave & Carlton, 2011). They were met by organisational opposition from Victoria's Correctional Services department, who informed them that understanding the reasons behind women's post-release deaths was 'not aligned' to the department's research agenda. Segrave and Carlton (2011) argue that preventing scrutiny of the operations of correctional institutions is based on an agenda which, discounts 'gender, class and race', aims to generate 'data' rather than producing knowledge ensuring that policies remain focussed on 'individual offender responsibility' resulting in a 'discourse of choice' (pp. 48-49). In this context, the understanding of participants in the current project that situates punishment as much broader than just the prison experience is profoundly important.

Many released prisoners have no choice but to return to the same—or worse—social conditions and issues that they were facing before prison. Complicating that is how they lose their sense of being valued in or by the community, especially if they do not meet the socially constructed ideal of a 'reformed' woman/prisoner. In a Canadian study, Susan Strega and her colleagues investigated media representations of the high rate of deaths of street sex workers, many of whom were former prisoners and/or First Nations women. They found that the media ignored, minimised and/or trivialised their murders on the basis of their race, class and because they were sex workers (Strega, et al., 2014). This is a broad global issue, not limited to a single jurisdiction, happening wherever prisons are used as punishment. During her interview, Deer spoke directly about post-release deaths of former prisoners, while Gidget could think of four women she met in prison who had died post-release, saying:

Two lost their lives because of domestic violence because they had to go back to their violent partner when they first got out of jail into an environment that hadn't changed while they were gone. The other two, it was self-inflicted (drug overdose) because they could not cope. One I know in particular, she really did scream because she was struggling, but there was no help available...she was basically seen as 'well because you've been a criminal and this is a way of life for you, a way of life that you know'

Stella made the issue of post-release deaths visible by submitting these two photographs (Figure 38). One was taken of an existing photograph and the other of a newspaper clipping that reported the violent, and as yet unsolved murder of one of her friend, Carlene:



FIGURE 39: MY FRIEND CARLENE, STELLA

That was my friend Carlene. She was a victim of the system, the system failed her in every area. She was a real sweet person who wouldn't hurt a fly. She first went to prison for shop lifting. If she had money and been paid a decent wage she wouldn't have been in prison. She got lots of little sentences, but they got longer and longer and they all began to add up. Then, she just got comfortable in prison and then she wasn't comfortable out here. She just didn't fit. She was brutally murdered, and they never found the person who did it. She's like a throw away, like she wasn't worth anything, like she didn't matter. People marched in the streets when Jill Meagher<sup>144</sup> got murdered and Carlene gets this newspaper article, where they call her a prostitute and a heroin user, not anything else...if she had not been so isolated she may still be walking the earth now, with her head held high.

It is important that both of these images are included here because the image on the left, showing Carlene bathed in sunshine and smiling, contrasts so intensely against the 'mug shot' style of image produced in the newspaper article. It reminds us that Carlene was a woman who deserves to be remembered as a mother, daughter and a friend, rather than dehumanised as a criminalised woman defined solely through her drug use, sex work and violent death. For Stella, the death of her friend was devastating. She explained that on the day that she was murdered, Carlene had visited Stella in prison. In a non-contact visit, Carlene and Stella placed their hands on the glass that separated them while Carlene

<sup>144</sup> Jill Meagher was a well-respected woman who worked for the ABC in Melbourne. She was brutally raped and murdered as she walked home from a night out with friends. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-03-26/convicted-killer-adrian-bayley-found-guilty-of-three-more-rapes/6341718>

tearfully told Stella that she could not cope anymore with the isolation and loneliness. She wanted to commit another crime to go back to prison. The last words that Stella remembers saying to Carlene were, 'Hang in there, I'll be out soon, we can live together, it will be OK'. The next night, Stella was devastated when she saw Carlene's murder reported on the evening news. Many years later, Stella is still traumatised by Carlene's death and angry that there was no holistic, meaningful, post-release support for women.

## Moving house

As the participants' accounts show, institutionalisation and survival post-prison are clearly linked to housing needs. When your home has been a prison, moving house marks an abrupt and profound change. The scarcity of post-release housing means that people are unable to access parole or early release onto home detention, resulting in them remaining in prison longer than necessary. As well as being socially damaging, at approximately AUD\$266 per day to hold a person in a South Australian prison (Thomas, 2015), the lack of housing creates an unnecessary financial expense that could be alleviated with the provision of decent, affordable housing options. Deer, who currently works helping released prisoners find housing was well aware of the difference between her experiences twenty years ago compared to the current situation. She took this photograph of an old house to help her explain:



**FIGURE 40: MY HOME, DEER**

Housing has become unattainable for a lot of people, there are no cheap rentals anymore. People are sleeping in their cars it's just bloody awful to see.

In an Australian study of people's experiences of homelessness and social exclusion on their release from prison, Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone and Peeters (2006) found that, in the first year after their release, women (especially) and men were most likely to return to prison if they could not access resources such as housing or addiction treatment—usually the very same social issues that they experienced prior to their incarceration. They argue that sole reliance on individual families or communities for post-release support guarantees high rates of return to prison, and that released prisoners must be supported with extensive and meaningful—to ex-prisoners—state funded infrastructure.

Post-release housing is usually available for 12 months, then people are expected to find their own private rental accommodation. Usually, post-release housing is provided in tandem with a support worker who 'case manages' the person, with one of their tasks being to assist them move on to longer term, private rental housing. 'Affordable' accommodation options are rare in Australia, with the waiting list for public housing being many years. The rent alone for a basic, two-bedroom property costs around \$500AU per fortnight in South Australia,<sup>145</sup> yet unemployment benefits are less than \$500AU per fortnight. Although men in South Australia have more accommodation choices, such as access to boarding houses, most women do not have this option. Instead, women risk returning to violent partners, or find themselves embroiled as dependants in other troubled relationships.

## Relationships

Women are rarely alone in prison. Daily routines mean that everyone wakes, eats and sleeps at the same time. Even though a prison foists a loss of privacy over the people it holds, women tend to tease out a sense of comfort from the presence of other women, hence their release can come with feelings of loss and guilt.<sup>146</sup> Because women in prison rely so much on each other for support, leaving creates a set of mixed emotions; joy, excitement, trepidation and fear. Anyone who has lived in a foreign country knows how difficult it can be to leave one set of familiar relationships and attempt to make, or remake connections with fundamentally 'different' people.

Stella remembers getting out of prison and being able to move into a house her mother had organised for her in preparation for her release; she had even paid two months' rent in

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<sup>145</sup> Although renting in South Australia is cheaper than most mainland states in Australia, South Australia has some of the highest household electricity costs in the world (Owen & Booth, 2017).

<sup>146</sup> See Figure 37.

advance. There was much excitement as her mother was able to reunite Stella with two of her children while a group of friends helped her move in. Stella remembers:

...after everyone had gone, it was quiet and my little 4 year old that I hadn't been around in months, he came up and hugged me, I was like a rock I couldn't feel anything, nothing. I loved him dearly but I didn't know how to relate to him anymore. A day or two later they found me overdosed with a needle in my arm in my bedroom, nearly dead, then FAYS<sup>147</sup> came in and took the kids, well once they took the kids I went on a path of self-destruction...that's when I ended up in prison again...so in just 6 days I was back in prison for breaching my parole by using drugs...I did another 2 years before I got out again.

Overwhelmed by the outside world and unable to relate to her children, Stella wishes she was given more emotional and practical support to prepare her for her return to the community. Stella's friends and family thought that getting out of prison was enough and that everything else would just fall into place; that somehow, the threat of returning to prison would prevent breaches of parole conditions and would set her on a pathway to success. Stella's testimony indicates that this is an unfounded and yet, prevalent assumption.

Ruby, who submitted a photograph of a small statue that represented her family, has not struggled with re-entry to the extent that many others do. Ruby described the support her family provided, structurally and emotionally, throughout her experience. Ruby's mother visited her in prison every weekend and her family provided the stable accommodation necessary to meet home detention requirements. Their family connections have enabled her to get a job, and her parents are a conduit to begin reconnecting with her daughter. Because her criminal activity supported her problem gambling, Ruby had long-term access to one of the few in-prison, non-corrections social services available to women, continuing to access that support from the same worker since her release—one of the rare through-care supports available. Ruby's experience contrasts with Gidget's fraught and poorly coordinated release.

Gidget was released from prison the day before Christmas Eve. With her partner still incarcerated and well aware of the risk of reconnecting with her old acquaintances, Gidget vividly remembers a worker picking her up from the prison and dropping her off to an empty house with no money and no family support. She asked the worker what she should do, she had no one to turn to—she felt scared. She was advised to ring Lifeline,<sup>148</sup> which she tried many times, without her call ever being answered. Despite her isolation during a

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<sup>147</sup> FAYS [Family and Youth Services] was the name of the government agency tasked to deal with child protection at the time

<sup>148</sup> Lifeline is a national charity, staffed almost entirely by volunteers that provides a 24-hour crisis call centre to support people with suicidal thoughts, anxiety, depression, loneliness, abuse and trauma.

time when the rest of the community appeared to be connecting with family and friends, Gidget survived this time alone and drug free. This was a huge achievement for Gidget and is a testament to her tenacity and her resolve. While Gidget acknowledges her privilege in accessing post-release housing, her experience shows that a house may not be enough, and that social support and community connections are necessary to survive post-release life.

## Indelible stigma

People who leave prison attract a lot of stigma because of the socially constructed stereotype of the violent ex-con as someone to be feared and not trusted. Former women prisoners in particular internalise the (gendered, classed, racialised) stigma of having been in prison. One of the difficulties post-release is having to manage that stigma—for some it starts with something as simple as mustering up the courage to catch public transport. For participants in this project, police harassment, employment discrimination, and the ‘permanent record’ associated with imprisonment were particularly important issues.

Being challenged by the police in public—even if there were no grounds and nothing illegal detected—directly undermines attempts at managing stigma, creating feelings of shame or humiliation. Gidget and David reported being harassed by the police after their release. More than once Gidget was approached by police and had her possessions searched during her first year out of prison. One time, Gidget remembers standing at a crowded bus stop and having the police stop and question her. When she asked why they singled her out they said that there had been a spate of thefts of prescription drugs in the area and Gidget, who was known to have misused prescription medication before prison, seemed a likely candidate. Acting upon suspicion alone, the police tipped the contents of her bag onto the ground looking for incriminating evidence. They found nothing and left, but for Gidget, the shame of having her bag searched in front of the people on the street did little for her self-esteem. Gidget remembers thinking, albeit fleetingly, that she might as well return to using drugs, especially as she was being accused of using them anyway.

David provided a photograph describing a similar experience:



**FIGURE 41: THE POLICE, DAVID**

I purposely blurred the corner of this photo to make it look like that I was hiding from the police. It represents how I felt on parole, I didn't want to stand out to the police, because I was still classified as a prisoner. One day just recently I was with a friend who was known to the police and even though we weren't doing anything wrong, our bags were emptied and searched. Because I was on parole I was too afraid to say anything as I knew that one slip up could see me back in prison.

## They just saw me as someone who had a criminal history: stigma and discrimination at work

In Chapter 7, I argued that the PIC finds ways to profit from prisoners even as it stigmatises and constrains their opportunities to work. Again, the lack of meaningful work in prisons—and especially in women's prisons—bleeds into release experiences, where being unemployed increases the risk of returning to prison. However, in our risk-focussed society, criminal record checks tend to be an expectation of employment, while in South Australia, unemployment and underemployment rates, especially in blue-collar, manufacturing industries is high.

Despite this, David, who presented as confident and well-spoken did not struggle to find work post-release and was working throughout his participation in this project. Prior to his imprisonment he had worked in the insurance industry, never having done any physical labour. The final stint of his custodial sentence was spent at Mobilong, a large campus-style men's prison, on the outskirts of Murray Bridge, which has various work options on offer. David was assigned to the section that pulled apart old televisions to repatriate recyclable metals. Even though it was tedious and dusty work, he enjoyed having something to do to help pass the time and earn extra money to pay for his tobacco. I asked David why he had been able to find work so soon after his release. David told me:

I was lucky, the job I have now didn't ask if I had a criminal record, just what I did the year before. I told them I was working with some mates in a recycling plant near Murray Bridge—I didn't tell them that the recycling plant was in Mobilong jail!

Ruby acknowledged how privileged she had been to have been promised work by a small business owner and family friend before her release. This is rare and reflects a broad continuum of social and practical support. To accompany a photograph of a fork lift, she said:



**FIGURE 42: WORK, RUBY**

I wanted to use this photo to show the incredible support I have had from my employer since my release from prison. Through the course of that work I have gotten a forklift licence. It was the best fun, I loved doing it and it has boosted my self-confidence.

I wish I could have learned a new skill like this when I was in prison. The only thing I could do was to work in textiles or do kitchen work, the other choice was education. The education was really, really basic. In the men's prisons they have different programs courses, training and work options. These should be available for women. Something that isn't just women's work, teach something useful, think outside the box.

Unlike David and Ruby, Kate is unemployed. Kate took this photograph outside of her local Centrelink office (Figure 43).<sup>149</sup> Four years after successfully completing parole without incident, Kate cannot seem to shake off the embodied experience of prison. She has given up on the prospect of finding paid employment, adamant that what she finds most beneficial from working are the connections she makes with other people. Being long-term unemployed means Kate better understands others who struggle to find work; no longer does she think of the unemployed as the undeserving poor:

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<sup>149</sup> The main function of Centrelink is to disburse welfare payments and is run by the Australian Government's Department of Human Services





**FIGURE 43: ON THE DOLE, KATE**

Before I went to prison I worked for 30 years in my job and was never unemployed. Once I was judgemental of people on the dole but now I am on the dole I know what it is like. I've applied for many different jobs, I was happy to work as a dishwasher, in a snack bar, or cleaning, I didn't care what really, I just wanted to do something get some money and feel like I am back in the world again. Centrelink acknowledge that I have impediments in getting work, but they do nothing to change that. Because of my age and because of my record, going to Centrelink seems to be a waste of time—that they are going through the motions and just ticking boxes.

For her next image, Kate photographed her writing on a piece of scrap paper, calling it *Note for the World*. It said:

Despite confessing to my crime, feeling remorseful, going to prison and making financial restitution to my victims, society will not accept me for who I am. I can't get work because I've got a police record.

Talking about that image, Kate told me that:

When I got out of prison I thought I would be able to get a job, I was quite optimistic. But time and time again there were rejections because I had to show my police record. People would not accept me. No one saw me for what I was they just saw me as someone who had a criminal history and they weren't going to trust me.

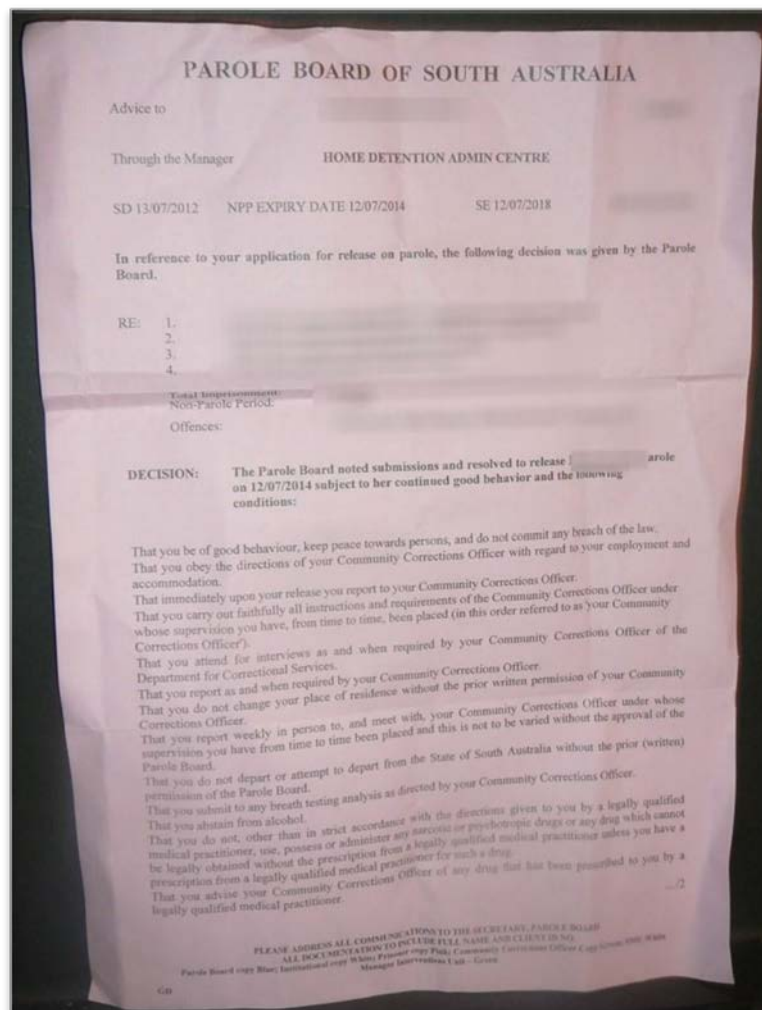
I did some volunteer work with intellectually disabled people. The lady who ran the organisation was happy with my work and wanted to employ me, even though she knew I had a criminal record, but, once the people higher up found out, they wouldn't have me. They didn't know me, they didn't see me working everyday with the clients, and they didn't see me enjoying myself and us getting on. Every job I had before prison, I made friends there, I miss that. It is using your skills and having to think, it's stimulating.

The importance of meaningful work is connected for Kate and other participants to relationships as much as financial security. Former prisoners find themselves in a tight and vicious circle: work, earnings, and the capacity for even a modest social life are connected, and thwarted by the stigmatising experience of prison and a criminal record.

## Stigma and the Therapeutic Industrial Complex

The class-based stigmatisation effected by the PIC is arguably matched by the ableist stigmatisation of the Therapeutic Industrial Complex. When a person is marked by disability—particularly when that disability falls under the rubric of mental illness or substance abuse—another hurdle is created. As discussed in Chapter 7, supposedly therapeutic programs are often a mandated element of release. However, as participants' experience shows, programs and their timing are not always consistent with ex-prisoners' needs.

Ruby was released early onto home detention where she stayed with her parents for the duration. She completed home detention without breaching any of the multiple conditions attached to her exit from the prison, and was eventually paroled. The work that went into the image she created called *Parole*, (in which any identifying information was removed using computer software) indicates how important this contribution to the project was for her.



#### FIGURE 44: PAROLE, RUBY

I was glad to be given parole at first but there are more conditions than there were on Home Detention. You don't get any brownie points for good behaviour while you are on Home Detention. It is like they are two departments that don't speak to each other.

Ruby went on to discuss what she saw as problematic in having to attend therapeutic interventions, where purely by her attendance she will be labelled as something or someone she is not:

I was honest and mentioned that before I went to prison I was drinking a lot because I was so stressed at what might happen. I didn't miss alcohol in prison, but now I have to attend substance abuse counselling, yet I don't have a problem with alcohol.

They don't even know me, but they have given me this label, I don't need any more labels. You can be sure when someone looks at my file in years to come they will assume that I had a huge problem because I was mandated to attend. It makes me wonder about the people who really need the counselling and may be missing out because I have to go. It is a standard thing and again, they are lumping everyone in the same basket. We are all different people and we should all be treated differently

Ruby's account demonstrates how the therapeutic industrial complex positions prisoners and ex-prisoners as 'faulty'. To use an archaic but apt expression, they are 'tarred with the same brush' and treated as all of a piece. Such treatment is fundamentally divergent from the kind of subjectivity associated with neoliberalism—the supposedly unique individual making choices. It is easy to see the problem here: prisons exploit and profit from prisoners as they deny them the very qualities and practices that define what it means to be human.

#### Conclusion

In this chapter the project participants encapsulated the difficulties, barriers, hurdles and pain they experienced when they got out of prison. Some participants, notably Stella and Robert, had returned to prison after relatively short periods of release, however, nine others—Joy, Feeney, Gidget, Georgia, Ruby, Deer, Kate, David and Trent—had experienced just one custodial sentence as an adult. In other words, the majority of participants in the project were non-recidivists and, as such can be constituted as mostly 'successful' prison leavers. Each of them was released to uniquely different circumstances and managed to successfully navigate significant challenges. Nevertheless, every participant experienced release as deeply challenging. In different ways, participants described seeing for themselves how people returned to prison, sometimes within a matter of days or weeks after their release. Perhaps seeing so many people regularly returning to prison normalises the experience so that returning is an expected part of their identity and lives as a former prisoner. Trent used this image of a road sign to explain his observations.



**FIGURE 45: FORWARDS, BACKWARDS, TRENT**

I can get out of jail and move forward in my life or I can just go back to way things were. Going forward is going to be a harder road but it is going to be much more rewarding. The thought of going back to prison is scary, but it isn't that, it is the potential loss of my family and the effect it can have on them. What's hard is, and what makes it easy to slip back into that life again, is there's so many doors that are closed, blocking ways for you to move forward—getting work is very hard. If you are on Home Detention, sometimes they don't even want you to work. There are a lot of struggles, especially if you've lost your family. When you are released you have nothing, you don't even have \$10. You are sent out into the world and expected to survive. I'm happy that I've been able to make these changes and take these steps and I get how a lot of people don't. I see a lot of people go to prison they go backwards and forwards and spend most of their adult lives in prison, you know they have a life in jail. I understand that a lot more now.

As Trent points out, he has come to realise how important it was for his successful re-entry into the community that his partner had stayed committed to their family. Therefore, for people who have exhausted all of their family support, if they ever had any, it means that there is one less anchor for them to remain attached to in the community. When this is added to the many other difficulties—high levels of surveillance, limited financial and

practical resources, the debts they often face once released, the difficulty in getting housing, a job, custody of their children, meeting post-release obligations and just feeling like they belong—even experienced by people who have survived, it is hardly surprising that so many people return to prison.

In the following chapter, participants provide a counter narrative to the struggles they faced leaving and staying out of prison. They show who helped them, what mattered, and for some, how they overcame addiction, isolation and, as a result, flourished.

## Chapter 9: How the light gets in: Experiencing freedom, sustaining hope<sup>150</sup>

You gotta dream big. Why dream if you don't dream big? Stella, participant.

### Introduction

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that incarceration is best understood as a violent response to social problems that cannot be resolved without wholesale structural change. Nevertheless, in the absence of such change, my contention is that learning from those with lived experience concerning how to survive incarceration may be helpful. In this chapter, I highlight participants' most directly instructional contributions to this project, presenting their insights alongside relevant scholarship in social work and its cognate disciplines. Social work is (or should be) uniquely placed to identify what resources and practices can be mobilised to help prisoners and ex-prisoners flourish. On the whole, what participants say about surviving—and even thriving—post-prison is consistent with academic literature in social work, but there are some departures, too. As the evidence presented in this thesis so far suggests, participants emphasise the value of personalised support, whether from family and friends or workers, adequate health and counselling services, and the importance of meaningful activity in helping establish or re-establish a sense of belonging and worth. Consistent with scholarship on well-being, participants also repeatedly express gratitude, particularly in relation to the pleasure inherent in 'simple things'—nature, families, animals. Relationships with companion animals were especially important for women participants: again, this parallels relevant sociological and other academic literature.

Less predictable responses concerned the visual and other metaphors participants used to share their knowledge—especially their deployment of motifs of travel and transformation. These included references to directions, intersections, journeys, and routes. Moving into a 'straight' life often meant leaving important but damaging relationships, objects, or practices behind: in this sense the participants demonstrate their expertise and facility around loss and grief. Above all, however, participants stressed the value of care and

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<sup>150</sup> These words are lines from the Leonard Cohen song Anthem, first released in 1992 on his album, *The Future*. The verse reads;  
*Forget your perfect offering.*  
*There is a crack, a crack, in everything.*  
*That's how the light gets in.*

connection. Many recognised their own capacity to connect with others whose circumstances might be similar to their own past experience, and this recognition both complicates and criticises neoliberal, consumerist society and the place of the prison within it. I end this chapter by considering how the insights and expertise of the participants is being put into practice at a local support and advocacy group for women with lived experience of prison.

## Finding out what works

The participants in this project met with me several times over a relatively long period. For people leaving prison, and even those whose experience of incarceration occurred some years in the past, life often continues precariously. Almost by definition, then, the participants in this project were unusual in that most were successfully negotiating post-prison life. It seemed important, then, to ask them what they would say to people with no lived experience of prison, including policy-makers and social workers, about what has ‘worked’ for them. In their answers, not one participant described prison as a useful, enriching, or rehabilitative experience, yet many have made use of their experience in one way or another. This chapter details how participants addressed the people who would view their photographs most directly, and how they identified the factors underpinning their success. Their responses were generous, reflecting participants’ apparent confidence in being able to talk about anything they wanted to. Rather than being kept ‘on track’ by a researcher with a specific agenda, this project welcomed *any* data produced by participants as being important. Participants embraced this approach, sometimes in surprising and beautiful ways. There are no discussions about personal deficits here. Instead, these are stories of strength, focusing on hopes, dreams and aspirations. These stories of personal growth and collective flourishing are unusual. Within them, participants are telling us ‘what works’: personalised support; important, sometimes multiple relationships; letting go of addictions and other damaging attachments; and meaningful activity as a means to experience belonging.

## Everyone needs support

The participants in this study all accessed—at one point or another—a lot of support from a range of people and organisations. For Deer it was a residential rehabilitation centre and later the peer-driven Narcotics Anonymous. Trent, Georgia and Feeney both singled out supportive partners. Feeney said:

It was really hard for my partner when I was in prison. Not only did he miss me, I had always run the house, paying bills and banking for instance, so he found it really hard. I am happy that he still accepts me, because we lost a lot when I went to prison. Going through such a hard time has actually strengthened us. Our relationship nearly didn't survive, but in the end, it did. He is really a good egg.

Several participants acknowledged that they benefited from the support of a number of people rather than one individual. Ruby's strong support base was integral to her post-release success. To accompany a computer screen shot of a cartoon representation of over fifty people, Ruby told me:

This image represents everyone who has supported me. Not just my family, but counsellors, friends, anyone who has an impact on my life after prison. It is getting to be quite a crowd of people. It is everyone that has helped me make myself a better person.

David represented this 'team effort' quite literally:



**FIGURE 46: OUT AND ABOUT AT THE FOOTY, DAVID**

When I saw the team huddles at the breaks I noticed how it wasn't just the players, there were coaches, runners, referees, and fans. It reminded me how everyone needs support. It isn't just those guys out on the field, there are a lot of people in the background.

Every step we walk, we need someone there to support us. I had a fantastic support worker at OARS, I don't know where I would be now without her guidance.

David's recognition that *everyone* needs support is important, not least because it eloquently refuses the idea that only 'weak' people—only people who can't cope, or who embody some personal deficit—need support.



## Letting go

Several participants discussed having to detach themselves from damaging addictions and/or other relationships in order to avoid returning to prison. Their success in making and maintaining the break clearly constitutes a form of valuable expertise. As Trent mentioned in the previous chapter, he knew that he had a lot to lose if he were to return to prison and, if he were to successfully stay out of prison, he needed to make changes in his life around his drug use. However, giving up drugs can be a difficult and isolating experience—an almost impossible task without breaking away from the drug using ‘community’ and therefore the social contact that comes with that. He described quitting drugs as like losing a friend:

Except for my loved ones, every associate, good friend, everyone I’ve ever known I’ve had to just erase from my life. Drugs, I’ve had to leave behind. They were like one of my best friends, they were a really close friend for me. It’s a friend that I’ve had to let go.

Trent accessed counselling and support around his addiction and mental health only *after* these problems had led him to come into prison. He is the only participant in this project to report such positive assistance while incarcerated—even though this assistance was limited.<sup>151</sup> In prison he spoke with a doctor for the first time about his mental health which encouraged him to seek further support post-release.

The final time Stella left prison she was determined to do things differently—she had learned a lot from her previous release experiences. Prior to her release date, she accessed weekend passes to prepare her to reconnect with her children. She entered the methadone program and had a prescribing doctor in place. Like Trent, she realised that she would not be able to stay out of prison unless she isolated herself from her old connections. She moved away from where she had lived previously, securing housing in a quiet, remote suburb, fought for and won the custody of her children and began to heal herself.

Stella realised that being on methadone can be a prison in itself—‘liquid handcuffs’—and began weaning herself off methadone on her own. I asked how she managed to do this. She employed a few simple techniques. First, Stella told me to never underrate how having a bath can help you overcome cravings. Then she explained another strategy that she still follows today:

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<sup>151</sup> See Chapter 6, Figure 20, page 136.

I realised that I've got an addictive personality, I can't drink, I can't smoke, I can't do anything, so I decided to go running. I run 20 kilometres a day now. Instead of being addicted to things that get me in trouble, I have channelled my addictive personality into running. Running deals with my anxiety. What I've learnt about myself is that I am a highly-strung person, I have a lot of anxiety.

Stella may not have realised how sound her self-designed self-help program was in helping manage her anxiety and addiction. In a feminist, qualitative study exploring the benefits of distance running for women, Leedy (2009) found that distance running provided a raft of benefits, benefits which were more than just physical fitness. Leedy's participants ran to feel self-empowered, to promote their sense of well-being, put their problems into perspective, as a therapeutic activity—which included managing addiction—and to promote self-discipline and the rewards associated with having a sense of accomplishment. One of Leedy's participants, 'Theresa' summarised her experience of using distance running to take charge of her mental health by saying:

I talked to a priest, a psychic, a marriage counsellor, a therapist. I talked to my doctor about the use of antidepressants...but the thing that I keep coming back to, the most important, is my running (Leedy, 2009, p. 91).

For Stella, running keeps her grounded, gives her time to think and to put things in perspective.

A number of participants, including Gidget and Joy as well as Stella and Trent, identified swapping out damaging habits for more productive and acceptable pursuits. I met with Gidget in her home. It was a neat, simple flat, overflowing with an abundance of healthy houseplants, obtained for free from cuttings gathered in her neighbourhood. For Gidget, being able to beautify her personal space and the sense of achievement that she felt from doing it well had become incredibly satisfying for her. Regeneration was a motif for several participants, as will be discussed later. For others, finding meaning and pleasure in life meant appreciating small or 'simple' things.

## Simple things

The participants used their involvement in this project as a vehicle to say thank you to the people who had stuck by them while they were in prison. They also talked a lot about learning what is important—and by extension, rejecting what is not important. Enjoying 'the simple things' was commonplace in their images and narratives; digging deeper I can see that what they appreciated was not so simple. This appreciation was built on being able to (re)connect with others and the gratitude they felt towards their support networks.



**FIGURE 47: STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES, TRENT**

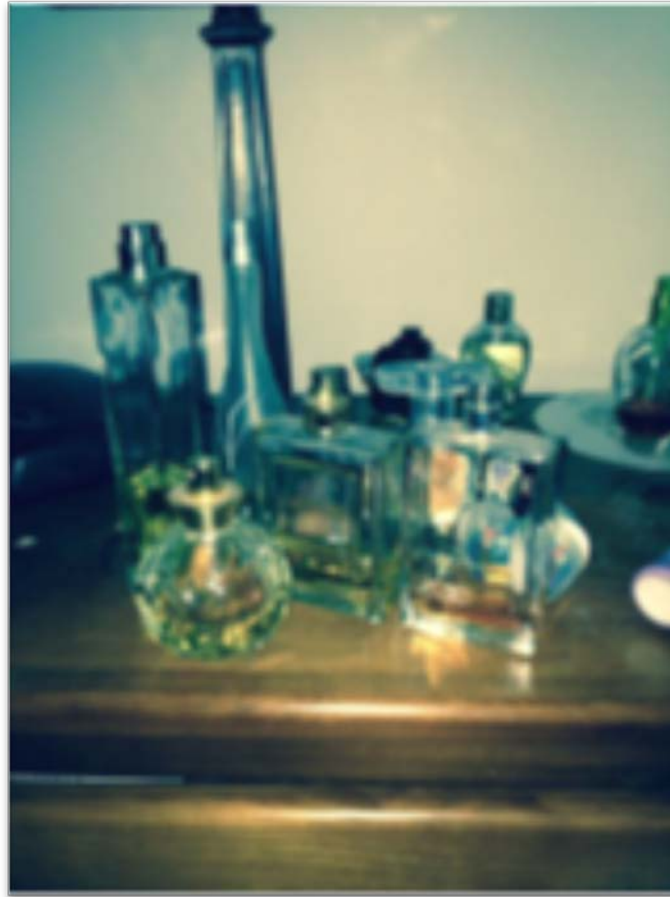
This picture shows that the simplest things in life can bring you the most joy and the most happiness. The simple things in life for me are my children and my family, a hug in the morning, the pictures they draw and the funny things they say. Hearing 'I love you dad' is great.

I now understand the simplicity of things. I'm amazed at how good I feel now with exercise, eating well, having a hobby and having my children. I feel so much better, and I never knew that. I wish I'd known that 10 years ago. Better late than never I suppose.

It's unfortunate that society shows us that what we want is a nice car or nice stuff. You don't need any of that stuff to enjoy your family or enjoy your life.

Trent's last sentence offers a direct critique of capitalism, consumerism and the alienation that they create. This was an important theme in many participants' accounts, and will be revisited later in this chapter.

For some participants, however, 'the simple things' did include material things. Alongside the following image of perfume bottles on her dressing table, Feeney said:



**FIGURE 48: I MISSED THE SIMPLE THINGS, FEENEY**

I really appreciate the simple things in life now. I missed having perfume in prison because I loved it so much, even when I was a kid. When I was in prison I found that my sense of smell was heightened, and it was easy to smell perfume or aftershave on officers, but we weren't allowed to wear it. Once my partner sent me in a pair of slippers. He had sprayed them with perfume because he knew I would like that, but I wasn't allowed to have them.

Similarly, Gidget submitted a photograph of toiletries and could see the humorous side in finally, after four years in prison, going a little overboard with the freedom she had to purchase whatever it is that she wanted. She told me:

When I was in prison I couldn't have any nice creams or soaps. I was aging, I would look at myself every day and think I need creams for this or that but I couldn't have them. One Christmas a church donated some toiletries and little vials of perfume. The vials of perfume were taken out, we weren't allowed to have them. Sometimes we would rub pieces of lavender bushes over us to smell nice. When you get up every day and don't have clean underwear or don't have nice soap or don't have a comb that is just yours, they are little things that really affect you. You think the big things matter, but it's the little things that you go without that you really notice. When I got out I wanted to buy everything, I had cupboards overflowing, I would go into a chemist and try on every tester they had. I was almost giddy with excitement.

Gidget and Feeney both identify their inability to buy or consume products as something they missed—something they now value more highly. But many more participants expressed gratitude for nature—and, especially, being (literally and figuratively) outside.

## Outside

Kate was living around a 90-minute drive out of the CBD. In five minutes she could find an open space like the one depicted below. In her testimony, this view of freedom reminded her of how, when she was in prison she could imagine—for a minute—that she was free:



**FIGURE 49: ENJOYING FREEDOM, KATE**

Coming to live here everything is so beautiful, even trains and cars going by I'd think wow, I'm seeing more and more—I have learned to appreciate the small things. For a while, when I was in prison, I had to live in this very enclosed area. It was a quadrangle and all you could see was a square of sky. There was a birch tree with seats under it, so I used to lie down on these seats and block out the buildings with my hands and imagine I was in a park somewhere, I imagined I was surrounded by more birch trees. Sometimes I would see other women doing it too and I would think 'I know what you are doing'.

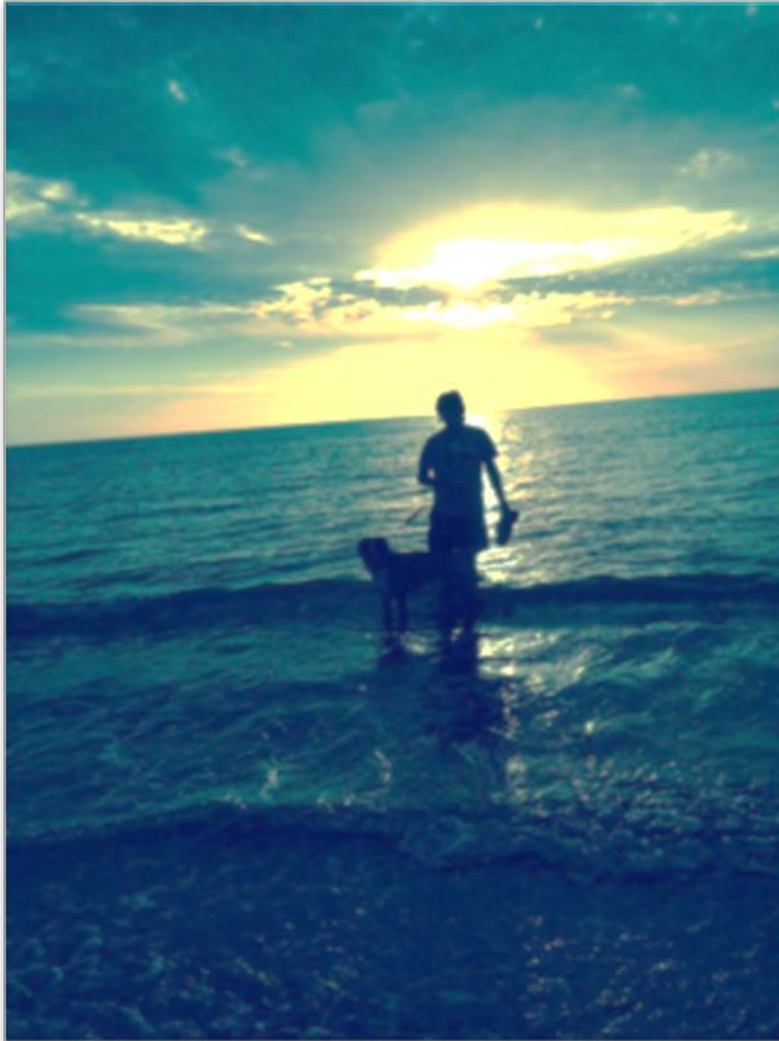
Georgia also chose to reflect on what she thought was important to her. She too found happiness in the simple things. For her it was sunsets, the beach and appreciating nature.



**FIGURE 50: THE SIMPLE THINGS IN LIFE, GEORGIA**

Being an addict for so long I forgot how to enjoy the simple things in life. The simple things are nature, what is already here. I love the beach with its beautiful sunset, to hear the waves and to walk in the sand. I now see beautiful flowers, hear birds and the beautiful noise they make. The simple things that were always there had been totally blocked out. I didn't hear, and I didn't see, addiction had made me deaf and blind. I love being able to watch the sunset, it's different every night. It is just taking note of the small things.

The beach figured as a sign for Feeney, too.



**FIGURE 51: FREEDOM, FEENEY**

This was the first time I had been to the beach since I got out. Just getting there and putting your feet in the water and being with my partner and my dog was amazing, being back together was great.

The simplicity of being in a park resonated with Gidget who said:



**FIGURE 52: BLISSFUL NATURE, GIDGET**

When I took this photo, I was in a park, I was laying on my back. I looked up and it felt so blissful, I was at peace. To be honest, it was because I could see a tree and there were no bars. A tree in its natural beauty and I could find it if I wanted to. To me it just depicted nature, I could hear the birds, everything about it oozed bliss for me. No matter what else is happening, if I can look up at a tree like that it puts everything else into perspective and I feel at peace.

Since I've been out of prison I've really appreciated nature, I have a lot of pot plants now. The feeling of pride I get watching something grow and that I've done it myself is amazing. I enjoy the little personal touches that I'm allowed to have now. Before I couldn't even have a flower in a vase in my cell. Now I can have all these small things that you take for granted. It can be really hard getting out when you haven't had to think on your own for so long. I feel proud of where I am now, 2 years on parole without a breach.

Stella's sense of freedom also comes from being outdoors, but in a way that is quite different from other participants. Every morning while most of us are still in bed Stella sees the sun rise while she is running. Stella submitted a photograph of a sunrise, telling me that:

Sunrises are very important to me. These are my mornings and they are something I have learned to cherish. What those sunrises mean to me is that it is very important for me now to use every day to make up for the time I was in prison and to be a rock for my kids.

Stella's commitment to be there for her children is echoed in a different register by David, who said:

Since I spent time in prison I have realised how much I missed my family and the support a family can be. I am reconnecting with them now after being estranged from them for so long.

In these ways, participants demonstrated how appreciating the natural world, and the people close to them, is rewarding. Care for others, however, is not limited to human animals.

## They're not judgemental

One of the unexpected themes found in the participants' contributions was the importance seven of the women placed on their relationship with companion animals. Gidget, who was released from prison straight into an isolating environment and circumstances describes how getting a kitten gave her more than just company.



**FIGURE 53: MY DARLING, GIDGET**

When I got out of prison I was on my own. I had no real friend support because my only friends and social networks were involved in areas that I weren't allowed to associate with any more. I was really worried about my mental state being on my own for so long. It took me while to get a cat because I didn't know how I'd handle the responsibility. Then when I got her she taught me commitment, loyalty and she taught me to love again because I hadn't had that for so long.

I had just spent years in a place where I couldn't even smile at the wrong person, it could come back at me. Now I've got this wonderful animal who is expressing love for nothing, you know, just for a meal. It doesn't matter what I do, she still loves me the next day.

Gidget's narrative concurs with previous research which shows the post-release impact of surviving prison. In prison, women learn to desensitise as a coping method because they soon find that showing emotions can make you a target for other prisoners and correctional officers (Kilroy, 2013, p. 287), putting you at risk of a stint in segregation or being medicated (Faith, 2006; 2011; Pinnuck, 1998). Regaining the ability to trust through a companion animal is relatively safe way of redeveloping sensitivity.

Although she only wanted a dog (pictured), Kate also brought home a cat because the two were inseparable in the animal shelter where she now volunteers. Empathic to their plight



as being unwanted, Kate speaks of the unconditional love she gets from being with her dog.



**FIGURE 54: MY BEST FRIEND, KATE**

I feel so close to my dog because he has come from a shelter. That makes me feel like he has been in an institution too, he was abandoned. It is nice to give him freedom, to live in a nice home. He is very affectionate, he welcomes you every time with a tail wagging and eyes bright. The thing about animals is they are not judgemental, they don't know what you've done. They live in the minute and are very entertaining because of that. I really enjoy taking him for a walk every day, because it is lovely to see him running free and enjoying every moment of it. He gets me out which is really good for me.

For Kate, her dog is her friend and her inspiration to get regular exercise. She revels in seeing him enjoy freedom; Kate's dog embodies what it is to be free.

Stella, who dedicates many hours every week to criminalised women, also volunteers for an organisation which aims to rehouse 'risky and at risk' companion animals. Often, they have been severely mistreated or have what would be considered 'behavioural problems' that might prevent them from being adopted and lead to their being euthanised. Stella takes these dogs into her home, 'transforming' their behaviour, beginning by getting to know each one individually, seeing their strengths and working on their ability to socialise with other dogs and humans. It is through this work that she has been able to articulate her own dreams:

I have my own dogs and I foster and rehabilitate dogs for SA Dog Rescue. I take the dogs with me when I run—you try and stop them from coming! I get the difficult ones that have been dumped, usually because of their behavioural issues. They are full of pent up energy. Running drains that very

quickly. I love finding out the nature of each different dog, finding out who they really are without all that pent-up stuff and baggage—when you run 4 hours you get to that point very quickly.

Rehabilitating dogs has taught me so much about myself. It doesn't matter what you were 20 years ago to a dog, what matters is the energy that you are projecting to that dog at that very minute. I would have 50 dogs if I could. One day I would love to open up a dog rescue centre and hire and teach other women ex-prisoners to rehabilitate dogs, because you can't rehabilitate a dog until you are balanced yourself.

Stella devotes her time and energy to these dogs in recognition of what dogs have done for her. As she explained, at a time when her physical health was in jeopardy, it was the unconditional love of dogs that helped her to begin to see the beauty in the simple things in life. Stella told me:

After I had gotten sick my dogs taught me how to live again. They taught me how to appreciate the grass and the sun the sky, a bit of mud on the ground, just the simple stuff. I thought I was going to die, I was so sick. My dogs were with me the whole time. Now when I take them out and feel the grass under my feet and feel the sun on my skin, I think, 'wow I'm alive'. If I can save a dog's life, it means the world to me because they saved my life. I want to make the world a better place.

Feeney, Georgia and Joy all had dogs before going to prison. Each of them feels privileged that their dogs were properly taken care of while they were incarcerated. They were lucky as many people lose their companion animals when they go to prison—as was Ruby's experience—adding to their distress. Georgia and Feeney found their separation difficult and speak to the need to value human/non-human relationships. Not only did they miss their companion animals, but they also recognised the impact that their imprisonment had on their dogs. Their grief at being separated from their companion animals was very real, despite it rarely being recognised or acknowledged (Thomas, 2014).



**FIGURE 55: MY DOG COSTA, FEENEY**

I just love my dog to bits, he went through it all with me. Before I went to prison I was in a really depressed state, not knowing what was going to happen. I withdrew from the world and isolated myself. He was just always there for me. I would cry all the time and he would come and put his head in my lap. He could sense how I was feeling. I don't know what I would have done without him. When I went to prison I used to wonder what Costa was thinking, perhaps he thought I was dead. I got to come home for a few hours a month before I was released. He was so excited, but then I had to go again. It must have gotten so confusing for him. I mean I could see my partner when he came to visit, but not my dog. I missed him terribly.

For Georgia, having no children meant that her relationship with her dog played a significant role in the construction of her identity. Georgia recognised the importance of being loved 'non-judgementally'. As Fook (2014) points out, many women have embedded and significant relationships with their companion animals, considering them as family members and friends—rarely does a woman report 'owning' a pet (p. 25). The fact that when a person is taken into custody, no consideration is given to their pets, is an important issue which needs to be addressed.



**FIGURE 56: MY DOG, GEORGIA**

He's my everything. He just warms your heart and makes you think everything is OK, no judgement whatsoever. Seeing him for the first time after two years, he was just so excited, just as I was. I used to talk to him over the phone from prison. He didn't eat for months after I went away, he just laid by my bedroom door waiting for me.

I'd like to have women who are close to their animals to have an animal day, so they could come in and spend some time every few months, so you've got that bonding time, like they do for kids. I feel that animals are just as important as kids in my life.

Georgia is speaking to the concept of disenfranchised grief, where a person's grief is not socially recognised as important (Doka, 1989). Like Gidget, Joy was released to isolation, living by herself in post-release housing. Joy believes that if it wasn't for her dog, and the associated caring responsibilities, she may not have been so successful in staying out of

prison. Joy also credits her dog with helping her manage her cravings to use drugs, saying that when she feels that way she puts her dog on a lead and they head out for a walk.



**FIGURE 57: SHE'S GOT MY BACK, JOY**

I was really lucky that I had someone to look after my dog while I was in prison, so when I got out I still had her. Now that am out I feel like she has got my back, she's looking out for me and protecting me. She is my best mate, especially when I was on Home Detention. I don't know what I would do without her. I had to spend a lot of time on my own and was totally isolated. I was allowed some time to walk her every day. If I didn't have her I wouldn't have felt like doing anything. Life would have been crap without her. She makes me feel safe and has helped me survive.

There has been a growing interest in social work research and practice about the relationship between humans and companion animals see for example (Risley-Curtis, 2010; Fook, 2014; Taylor, Fraser, Signal, & Prentice, 2016). Compared to people who do not have pets, people who live with companion animals tend to be more active, have better mental and physical health and usually feel a greater sense of security from having them around (Fitzgerald, 2007). For women who leave prison, and especially for those who have experienced violent and abusive relationships, not trusting others becomes a safety mechanism (Jarldorn, 2011), a way to protect themselves from further abuse. Having a bond with a companion animal can facilitate women's ability to trust and love (Fook, 2014). Fook points out that social work researchers must 'keep up with the challenge of researching what is important in people's everyday lives' (Fook, 2014, p. 29) and as Fook

and others (Taylor, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2007) have found, the human/companion animal relationship is important to many women.

Having ex-prisoners volunteer in animal shelters may be useful in providing ways to build social connections and to forge reciprocal supportive relationships, but this must be considered with a note of caution. Despite the potential for pleasure by volunteering at an animal shelter, it is also an environment that can be emotionally and physically demanding, where workers and volunteers experience high rates of compassion fatigue, burnout and isolation (Taylor, 2013). Further, the associated costs of keeping a companion animal are high, and owning any pet can prevent entry into the rental housing market, effectively excluding people living in poverty from the benefits of companion animals.

Challenging the cultural assumption of human superiority, relationships between women and their companion animals can be powerful and hold as much, if not more, meaning as their relationships with intimate partners (Risley-Curtis, 2010). Research has found that the bond between humans and companion animals can be inimitable in enhancing the quality of people's lives (Labrecque & Walsh, 2011) and as Stella and Kate have demonstrated, humans can also enhance the quality of the lives of companion animals. These reciprocal 'caring' relationships are rewarded with an unconditional alliance, which for some ex-prisoners may be the only positive, reciprocal relationship they have.

### Metaphors of change: journeys, directions, transformation

The use of a road sign as a metaphor was repeated in a number of participants' images. Gidget's photograph of a busy intersection is, in itself a reference to intersectionality. She told a similar story to Kate, but knew that her freedom was tenuous and still at risk:



**FIGURE 58: CROSSROADS, GIDGET**

This is my interpretation of where I might go in my life. I can stand in the middle of the road and wait till a car hits me or I can choose to get in a lane, and walk forward and go with the flow and see where it takes me. I can always turn around and go up another lane and try another way but, if I stand in the middle of that road and keep stagnating, I am eventually going to get hit.

When I first got out of prison I think I'd taken the road uphill. Now I feel I've gotten onto a flat open road and the tolls have been paid. I haven't gone back to jail for one breach, nothing for 2 years, I have one more year left.

Sometimes I think sometimes the police really want to catch me doing something wrong. I hope that gets better, but I really don't think it will. I'm hoping with time, if I can just prove to them I'm on the right track, they'll stop. Even if I'm seen at a coffee shop with someone who is a known criminal they can grab me. They say they are doing it to keep me on the ball, to make sure I'm doing the right thing, but...

Gidget has every right to be proud of her achievement in staying out of prison. A three-year parole period is a long time to be kept under such close surveillance. Despite many occasions when she could have lost her resolve, Gidget has held firm. However, the oppression of poor physical health may prevent her from fully flourishing.

Ruby's image of a road sign has a special significance for me, showing how even a simple image can resonate with others. I drive past this sign every day on my way to university. Seeing it places me in a good frame of mind to work on this project, and creates a sense of connection with Ruby, as I know that she too passes this sign regularly. Perhaps it reminds her of participation in this project:



**FIGURE 59: DIRECTIONS, RUBY**

This photo of a sign represents that now that I am out of jail there are all sorts of directions that I can take and as far as I can see, they are all good directions.

These directions have only been possible because of the support I have had. I have a job now. I was so very privileged to be given a job by a family friend who was willing to take a chance on me. With my crime, I wasn't going to get a job very easily, but he has given me a chance, which in turn has given me a lot of confidence. Addiction led me to steal money. That is not what I do now. Now when people ask me what I do, I can tell them.

I now speak in public about my experience, so that gets to help others. I am hoping to be able to move out on my own when I have finished parole and I have met someone, so things are looking much better.

David said he hopes to one day enter university, but at the time of the project was content with his continuing abstinence, having employment and being free:





**FIGURE 60: THE TRAIN TRACKS, DAVID**

This photo represents what it felt like to get out of jail. When you are in there you wonder if it is ever going to end. My life had wavered all over the place before I went to prison, but now it is coming back into a straight line, I feel like I have direction now, that I don't need to be radical and that I have more sense. While I don't know where the train tracks are going to take me or where it will end, you always have to start somewhere. My message is give people who have made a mistake a chance, give them a go. They may be an ex-prisoner, but they are also human.

Trent knows that he is doing exceptionally well and described what his life felt like now for him with this beautifully composed image:



**FIGURE 61: LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL, TRENT**

I suppose this picture means that there is light at the end of the tunnel. It is of a very dirty, gritty, graffiti written on tunnel. It says that no matter how bad things are from where you start there is light at the end of the tunnel and that when you are in that tunnel the light is worth looking for. And the light at the end of the tunnel is a positive thing, it's not dark you feel like you can open yourself up to so many possibilities and I feel like my life is so much brighter because of it [the possibilities opened up since addressing my issues].

I only got out 9 months ago, but my life seems so much better now than it ever has been, My family life is great I feel like I've got direction in life now; drugs and that are always going to be an issue for me, you know what they say you are always an addict it's not ever going to go away, but I'm willing to take that challenge. Up til now I don't think I've ever had so much in life that is good and had not realised that it can push away my addictions.

## Transformation and new directions

Many participants talked about some form of personal transformation. Some participants (including Trent and Kate in particular) described their whole life—their very being—as transformed. Trent submitted this photograph of a newly completed train bridge near his home to help him explain the dramatic changes in his life:



**FIGURE 62: THE BRIDGE, TRENT**

It is a bridge that you cross, it is a choice that you make, and I suppose that the supports that I have made it easier, but it's been a long journey and a tough one as well. This site looked very different two years ago, before the bridge was built, there was nothing, then there was a construction site. So, it really represents me and my journey. This photo is about how a landscape can change so quickly, into something permanent and forever. It has a lot of meaning for me.

I have had to leave behind a lot of things on the other side of that bridge. I think a lot of hurt and emotional stress that I've never dealt with before, I did eventually deal with in the mental health counselling.

He summed up the meaning of his bridge photograph by saying:

It's a complete transformation of who I am. It's not just transitioning from prison to now, it's about transitioning my entire life, not just something new.

Kate could see a transformation in herself, coming to realise that she had changed as a result of the prison experience:



**FIGURE 63: AT THE CROSSROADS: NOT THE SAME PERSON, KATE**

The person I was before I went to prison is not the same, from the prison and court experience. In some ways, it's having gone through that experience and being an ex-prisoner, there's no shaking that off. Mind you I was psychologically disturbed before I went to prison, so in some ways the experience of jail was positive for me as it showed me that I could cope with quite difficult things, so it gave me some confidence. I am a kinder person, because of that experience. When I see people who have mucked up, I feel compassion for them.

Like Trent, Kate sees herself as a different person. Trent and Kate also took the notion of self-reflection literally, discussing the changes they saw in themselves:



**FIGURE 64: SHADOW OF MY FORMER SELF, TRENT**

I am trying to represent myself in this photo.<sup>152</sup> I have changed so much since I was incarcerated that I don't recognise myself. My family sees so much change in me and so do I. I like what I see now, my mindset has changed. I think that it is realising that what you've got in life and enjoying it for what it is, is pretty special.

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<sup>152</sup> Trent used a software program, manipulate this image into its current form.

Although Trent used his shadow to talk about changes in himself, Kate created this image to talk about the effects of stigmatisation and the 'disconnect' between her own sense of identity and how others see her:



**FIGURE 65: SELF-PORTRAIT: WAVING, KATE**

I am waving at all of you in the world and showing that I am a friendly person and I only want a chance. I am in a beautiful environment where I took that photo, so it made me feel happy, but you know it's just me. I'd never do what I did again, and I wish people would accept me. It happened so long ago, and people change.

It is hard to live like that, I liken it to racism, and it is a form of prejudice. It is very hard to be a subject of it, before you were fine, you had a good job you were well respected and next, you are never to be forgiven.

For some participants, the key change was not a transformation of self, but a change in attitude or self-value. Stella, who channelled her addictive proclivities from drugs to fitness, did not see herself as transformed. She still understands herself as 'different', but instead of letting her feelings of difference undermine her, she now finds strength and value in that difference.



**FIGURE 66: LEARNING TO VALUE MYSELF, STELLA**

This is a photo of a painting that was given to me by a woman I met. She said that the picture is of me, valuing myself. I've included it because it is so important. I really value being different now, but when I was young I hated it. I would think, 'why can't I be like other women'? That's when I started putting needles in my arm. I used to think I'll never be like them, but now I wouldn't be like them for all the money in the world. What I once disliked about myself so much is exactly what I love about myself now.

I now value the fact that I am different, that I can think outside the box. I value the life that I have, that I am blessed. I value the connection that I have to mother-nature, I value the simple things. I don't care about money. Money and stuff doesn't interest me at all. My strength. That is the other thing I value about me, my incredible mental strength. What I have realised since going to university and getting good grades is, that once I make a decision, consider it done. I have the strength to change the world.

Some participants used imagery of vegetation to illustrate how they recognised and valued their own capacity to change and regenerate. Transformation, for these participants, is represented as organic and gradual rather than as completely life-changing.



**FIGURE 67: NEW BEGINNINGS, RUBY**

There are a 100 little flower buds on that bush, they resemble new beginnings. New beginnings might be in my new job, with new friends or using new skills. I feel positive for the future. It is the beginning of my new life. All I ask is that you take me as I am. The person who did my crime was not the real me, I was driven by my addiction. I don't have that addiction anymore. I regret what I did and I am glad I got caught. It would be hard to trust me, but give me a chance. I will earn that trust and show you that I am trustworthy and who I say I am, I am. I have to allow people to learn to trust me.

Stella provided this photograph that told a similar story:





**FIGURE 68: AFTER THE BUSHFIRE, STELLA**

A bushfire came through here recently, yet only 5 days ago we had substantial rain and look at the green grass that has come up. You can see all the black bits in there. That represents me 20 years ago, at the point where I was when they took my baby away from me in prison and tried to take my other kids away from me too. Now what is there is probably much better than what was there before. Now, that green grass is me.

Deer, another participant who had been out of prison for a long time, used a photograph of flowers to represent surviving tough circumstances and finding ways to grow:



**FIGURE 69: THE WOMEN, DEER**

I wish that the women I met in prison had the opportunity to be like these flowers. It's almost as if the colour they were in prison is an off yellow rather than a bright yellow like in this picture. It's just that their self-esteem is so beaten, either by parents, reinforced by boyfriends and then by the system.

I wanted to use this picture to say that anything is possible, they can even grow in cracks of the cement. I was just one of the lucky ones that ended up like a seed, falling in one of the right places. I didn't believe that this was my lot in life, but they were lessons I needed to learn.

My drug use, my time in prison and so forth was my lot in life, but I knew there was something more. That picture to me shows that every woman in prison can blossom in spite of adversity.

**Critical connections: We can see through the bullshit, we don't need things, we need connections**

Throughout their testimonies, eight of the women and two of the men discussed at length their rejection of consumerism and 'mainstream' culture. Gidget cannot bring herself to throw anything away that may have another use. She explained that:

Since I've been out, I'll cook something and when the container is empty and I go to throw the container in the bin, I think 'hang on, I can use that', like an empty coffee jar. In prison, things have 4, 5, 6 different uses, you are so limited that the few things you have you learn to value them.

Feeney and Georgia spoke of immediately heading to the beach, an activity that costs nothing. David contributed an image of his local library, while Gidget spoke about the wealth of resources available in her library, something neither of them had accessed before going to prison. The participants supported by their family through the prison and release experience had learned to value their family connections; parents, children, partners and siblings. Ruby said she now understands the value of money; Kate loves being out in nature, as do Stella, Gidget, Georgia, Feeney and Deer. Deer expanded on the problematic nature of consumer culture when she talked about how housing has become unaffordable, questioned 'throwaway' lifestyles, and was proud of her library of second-hand books.

Post-release, the experience of having already lived on the margins of society before prison and then being treated as human detritus while in prison seemed to create a resolve amongst participants to reject, refuse, or criticise the mainstream. So, what does this mean? In our capitalist society success is most often measured by growth, profits and material affluence. Consuming to excess promises—but never delivers—happiness because what it does create is a desire for, and an envy of, an unachievable lifestyle which prevents people from ever reaching a feeling of contentment, or even living in the moment. It is a goal where the goal posts are always moving. When people are led to believe that once we have everything, things will magically fall into place it prevents them from living in the moment or feeling generous towards others. This rejection of consumerism can be seen as a new form of deviance. We are sold the idea that to fit in with society we must consume, purchase and upgrade to the newest model; to seek the product that is bigger (television or house), thinner (phone or body), or fatter (wallet or bank account).

When I asked Georgia why she had stopped noticing the small things, she told me:

I think it is important that from a young age kids are made aware of natural beauty. Watch the sunset with your kids, teach them to not take things around them for granted. We become materialistic because of the messages that are thrown at us all the time, for girls especially. I always had ideals that by the time I was 30 I would have kids and a white picket fence. When I turned 30 I realised that I didn't have all these things, they weren't there. You then get down on yourself about why.

Stella was one of the final participants to complete each step in this project. By this time, I had seen a strong pattern of a rejection of consumerism, and asked what she thought that might mean. Stella told me that it was their way of 'rejecting the mainstream', the same

mainstream that she and other participants had been rejected by, the mainstream which had cast them aside, treating them as disposable. She told me, ‘the way I see it, it is a concrete way that we (ex-prisoners) can articulate that we can see through the bullshit. We don’t need things, we need connections’. What I noticed in the participants’ testimonies is that their physical removal by society as a way of dealing with its social issues had, in effect, given the participants an opportunity to stand back and appraise contemporary society. Imprisonment gave them time to see through the empty claims that consumer culture makes and to soundly reject such claims. This does not mean that people need to go to prison to see these things. On the contrary, what it does show is that forced social isolation enabled them to see the failings of capitalism.

### Collective understandings of self and society

Stella, who loves to get up early to run, submitted this photograph, telling me:



**FIGURE 70: THE SUN AND THE MOON, STELLA**

I love this photo where the sun is coming up, but you can still see the moon. It is just a magic time of day, it only lasts for about 20-30 minutes. I get up in the morning while it is still dark, and I run, sometimes for hours. That time of day is very special to me. I feel like I am the only one around, like I have the whole planet to myself, just me, the dogs and nature. It makes you feel like you are a part of mother-nature, you don’t feel like an individual anymore. I kind of feel ‘in sync’, everything just comes really easily, nothing can interrupt that time, if I don’t get that time I feel off. If I don’t go because I am not well, or my knee is sore I feel off all that day. It’s almost like running is my drug now.

While Kate has been unable to secure paid work, she nevertheless understands and values meaningful activity and the sense of belonging it can provide:

I volunteer at an animal shelter now. It is great because I love animals but also it is working, and I enjoy it. It makes a difference and I feel good about it, that's all I wanted. I just want to have a job where I can get back into society, were I can just sit with people around the table and have a chat and have connections with work mates, work is so much more than money.

David, who had no family connections in South Australia found another way to feel connected. He took a photograph (see Figure 46, p. 196) during the half-time break at a local Australian Rules football match. His narrative speaks to the importance of feeling connected to the community and that in terms of connections, the more the better

This was exciting for me, the first time I had been to the football for three years. I liked that it was ok to yell and scream, everyone was doing it. There was a sense of community spirit, even amongst opposing team supporters. It was a nice feeling.

Trent reported that he now feels a part of the community when he takes his children to sport on a Saturday, where he is also making new friends. Robert had a similar experience, finding a sense of community when he takes his children to play football.



**FIGURE 71: KID'S SPORT, ROBERT**

That photo is really important to me. After being without contact with my kids for so long being with them is fantastic. It is important to see them in their element, sport is my connection with them. I really enjoy seeing them participate in sport. Being at a kids' sporting event makes you feel a part of the community.

That male participants, used team sports to represent community connection speaks to the 'masculine hegemony' (Connell, 1987; 1995) of sport. The concept of hegemonic masculinity builds on Antonio Gramsci's (1992) theorising of cultural hegemony, which takes into account how gender, social class and power relations create an 'idealised' society, one where women are 'feminine' and men are 'masculine'. The ways that men and

masculinity are represented and reproduced in sport (and in prisons/criminology) promote risk-taking and violence and responding to injury and pain 'like a man'.

That's where the light enters you<sup>153</sup>

Alongside participants' photographs and narratives, many conversations took place with participants throughout the project. An overwhelmingly common theme in these conversations was the unique insight the participants held because of their lived experience, yet frustration at this knowledge being overlooked, ignored and seen as secondary to 'professional' knowledge. This contrasts with the fact that this group—who are doing exceptionally well—were either using their lived experience to help others, were themselves being supported by an ex-prisoner or clearly articulated that they wanted to use their knowledge to support others. Two participants were participating in a program that trained them in public speaking, so they could talk about their problem gambling and how that led them to prison.<sup>154</sup> Doing so built their self-confidence, while at the same time, educated the public and workers to understand the nuances of gambling addiction. Because of what she had learned in prison, Gidget dreamed of setting up transition accommodation specifically for women to help them navigate the jolt between prison walls and the community. Trent and Robert expressed the desire to work with young men to reduce the possibility of them going to prison, with Robert telling me that:

Doing the project with you has brought it all together and has made me realise that my passion is to do youth work. The project actually highlighted what I want out of life.

Stella and Kate saw a direct correlation between holding humans and animals in cages and were both working actively towards better outcomes for abandoned animals. Deer had completed two degrees and was employed to work with former prisoners, while Stella and Georgia were studying to earn qualifications to formalise the work they already do as volunteers. Five participants were members of *Seeds of Affinity*, a community group that supports women leaving prison. Based on a model of mutual aid (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005), they help others while simultaneously benefitting from the experience. Stella is the stand out in this regard, having dedicated the last decade of her post-release life to

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<sup>153</sup> These words are taken from a poem titled 'Childhood Friends', written by Rumi (1995, p. 142), a 13<sup>th</sup> Century Persian poet. The final verse of the poem reads:

*Let a teacher wave away the flies and put a plaster on the wound.*

*Don't turn your head. Keep looking at the bandaged place.*

*That's where the light enters you.*

*And don't believe for a moment that you're healing yourself.*

<sup>154</sup> This program is called *Consumer Voice*. Similar initiatives such as the *Positive Speakers Bureau* where people who are HIV+ or have Hepatitis C are trained to tell their story in public with the aim to humanise positive diagnosed people by doing so they help reduce fear, myths, stigma and discrimination.

support criminalised women. Speaking about this work, and the encouragement of her former parole officer to undertake it,<sup>155</sup> Stella told me:

I think she (parole officer) knew that if I could just find a purpose, a way of giving back and validating my experience that I would find my own way... [This work] gave me that. It gave me a platform to reclaim my dignity and I want to pay that forward to other women.

People who want to ‘pay it forward’ by drawing on their lived experience to help others experiencing similar situations are sometimes described as a ‘wounded healer’, a term attributed to Carl Jung and with links to Greek mythology (Jung & Storr, 1983). Lived experience in the form of peer support is recognised as important, especially in mental health and addiction treatment. Donald Cressey (1955) documented this within the male prison community; similarly Beth Ritchie (2001) heard from the women in her study that they wanted to be helped by formerly incarcerated women, while many studies on men by men report similar testimonies.<sup>156</sup> This peer support has been formally and successfully put into practice across many countries (Seppings, 2015) however, this work tends to be fraught with piecemeal, minimal funding—often tied to ‘gag clauses’ (Gray, 2013) and seen as ‘outside’ of mainstream support services. Such funding models prop up the PIC and its oppressive policies and practices, because in order to maintain their authenticity with service users, community-based, peer-led support services make advocacy central to their work. Therefore, mainstream non-government support services can become silent, complicit, but fully-funded service providers.

Why then is this the case? Why do ex-prisoners articulate their desire to give back? There are a number of possibilities. For some it may be a way to re-join society, especially as it is almost impossible for them to reconcile or make amends with the (individual) victim of their crime. However, some participants were convicted of what would be considered victimless crimes (such as the use of illicit drugs) so it may be more about reconciling with the wider community. Perhaps it is that participants felt that it would help make them feel worthy of (self) forgiveness, or an effective way to fend off prejudice and of managing the stigma of being an ex-prisoner—to re-write the narrative on their own terms (Maruna, 2001). It could also be a way to mitigate the frustration that imprisonment seemed to be wasted months and years of their lives. Giving back can be personally rewarding and is central to the

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<sup>155</sup> This will be explained in more detail over the coming pages.

<sup>156</sup> See for example, (Maruna, 2001; LeBel, 2007; Halsey & Deegan, 2012; Lebel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015). The notion of ex-prisoners helping other ex-prisoners specifically in terms of gaining academic qualifications in the field of criminology is actively pursued by the group called, *The New School of Convict Criminology*, which has members from around the globe. In his PhD research into the work of *The New School of Convict Criminology*, Grant Tietjen found that members attest, ‘the PhD cuts a lot of stigma’ (Tietjen, 2013).

motivations of many community volunteers. Such rewards encompass a broad range of benefits: making a difference; gaining self-confidence; developing skills; improving the chance of gaining paid employment; and creating social connections with the broader community. These personal benefits are sought by many of us who enter social work, who see the process as more than getting a degree to secure employment, often describing it as a 'calling'.

A recent US study (Lebel, Richie, & Maruna, 2015) of formally employed ex-prisoners working with newly released ex-prisoners found that the work was beneficial for both the 'professional ex' and the service user. I would argue that both the driver and the passenger benefit, especially if this focus is about reclaiming a sense of solidarity and belonging. Yet in risk averse, neo-liberal Australia, criminal history checks remain a formidable barrier to completing study and finding work in the human services.

It was Gidget who best articulated how her lived experience could be of benefit to others, alongside her realisation that this experience would not be valued:

I met someone recently who said I'd be great at social work, but you've got a criminal record, so you can't because of your past. To me, that is a life skill because I have been to prison for a bad thing, but I learnt so much, yet nothing of it can be used. What was the point? What did the community gain from putting me in jail? Nothing.

### Did prison successfully 'reform' these participants?

In the eyes and minds of a neo-liberal conservative, these success stories might seem to support the neo-liberal ideology that prison works. After all, participants spoke about and demonstrated how people can and do change. Much of what they said speaks to their 'inner strength', 'determination' and 'persistence'; the same individual traits championed by the neoliberal state. Participants for the most part are 'successful' along several fronts, and from several perspectives. But that (neoliberal) logic is deeply flawed; only exceptional people survive, and only the most exceptional flourish. Crediting the success of participants to the prison experience would be a misattribution.

It is important to understand participants' testimonies in context. At the broadest statistical level, prisons do not work. Recidivism rates are very high—one of the strongest indicators that a person will go to prison is that they are a former prisoner. The financial and human costs are also high—to the prisoner, their family and the community. The damage imprisonment does to a person's health and well-being is recognised internationally (Lloyd et al, 2017), while mortality amongst prisoners and former prisoners is significantly higher than for people who have never been to prison (Davies & Cook, 1998).



The participants' testimonies of material and emotional deprivation in prison primed them for the gratitude they expressed for the 'small things', such as family, companion animals, natural open spaces, toiletries and perfume. For some participants, that same deprivation helped them find space to re-evaluate relationships. They left behind connections—both interpersonal and geographical—that they knew held them close to the criminal justice system. They realised the value of the supportive relationships in their lives and of forging new ones.

Participants travelled different pathways to get where they were at the time of this research, but there were striking similarities in how they negotiated those paths. They (eventually) accessed support that was useful to them. They had a roof over their heads. They made connections with others, found meaningful work or study and could see direction in their lives. Whether gained as a consequence of participating in this project or experienced elsewhere, having their knowledge sought and validated, was a sharp difference to the expectation of silence subjected upon them through the stigma of being an ex-prisoner.

The unique knowledge conveyed by participants informs us then of what actually 'works' and is all the more reason why their skills and knowledge should be put to use. One of the ways this experiential knowledge is being utilised is in the community group, *Seeds of Affinity*, where experiential knowledge informs everything, and offers something of a partial antidote to the brutalising violence of prison.

### Putting expertise to work

*Seeds of Affinity: Pathways for Women*, is a South Australian, grass-roots, volunteer run community group for criminalised women<sup>157</sup>, co-founded by Stella and her former parole officer, Anna, who recognised that, even when women stop using drugs, reconnect with their children and/or complete parole obligations that they are often socially isolated and incredibly lonely. Social isolation is a recognised risk factor in relapse (Keane, 2002; Hari, 2015) and something that Stella's parole officer had seen countless times since graduating as a social worker almost 40 years ago. She knew that her mandated, frontline work was not enough to keep women out of prison; time and time again she heard from her female parolees that they felt alone in the community and missed the women in prison—some articulating that they wanted to go back inside. Often, she attempted connecting them with community centres, which claimed to be 'inclusive' or with NGOs funded to support women

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<sup>157</sup> For more see <https://www.seedsofaffinity.org.au/>

with 'complex' needs but, her parolees continually reported service provision failures, where they felt unwelcome, judged and stigmatised. It was at a time when Anna was feeling alienated and contemplating early retirement that the idea for Seeds of Affinity was born.<sup>158</sup> Although not affiliated with any religion, the group shares a space with other community groups in a church in Adelaide's western suburbs.

Running for over a decade, the core work of the group is twofold. First are the bi-weekly shared lunches, and second is their human rights and advocacy work. The group is largely self-funded through creating and selling toiletries, baked goods and public speaking opportunities. Volunteers and allies from the community provide practical support and connections. Recently, the group began its own community radio program—*Radio Seeds* (Anderson & Bedford, 2017), where the women plan and present a monthly radio show about issues important to them. Much like this Photovoice project, Radio Seeds gives criminalised women a voice.

As well as advocacy work in the community, Seeds of Affinity seeks to uphold the human rights and dignity of women in prison—their lived experience means they know what is needed. For example, in South Australia, women who enter prison do not have access to toiletries until they get money in their prison account which can sometimes take weeks. The prison does not supply toiletries at all. Members work together to create and donate a basic toiletries package for women who enter the Adelaide Women's Prison. The package includes a note which reads:

Dear Sista,

We are sending you these toiletries to help you get through your first days in prison.

They are made and donated by us here at Seeds of Affinity. We are a not for profit group run by women with lived prison experience.

This pack has been packed and delivered by women who have sat where you are right now and have made it out the other side.

When you get out we would love to see you down at Semaphore on any Tuesday or Friday. We work very hard to support women when they are in prison and when they get out.

Stay strong and know that you are not alone.

Women of Seeds of Affinity.

What underpins the success of this group is the relationship between Stella and her former social worker. A human connection between two women who pooled their strengths and

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<sup>158</sup> This information was shared publicly via presentation at the Flinders University *Social Work & Community Development in The 21st Century Forum*, November 3, 2016.

skills for the benefit of any women ex-prisoner brave enough to walk through their door. The group's overarching philosophy is, 'leave no woman behind'; there is no waiting list, and no end-point. For an annual membership of AUD\$5, criminalised women are entitled to a free lunch twice a week, access to resources, non-judgemental support in a nurturing, caring environment and many social, educational and personal development opportunities. This approach recognises that each ex-prisoner and worker are unique—this is not a model that can just be 'rolled out' as it is built upon an exceptional relationship, reliant on reciprocal respect and trust.

Five participants in this project were members of this community group. Stella was a founding member, Georgia, Feeney and Joy had been members for around a year, while the fifth, Jennifer, was attending on day release. She said:

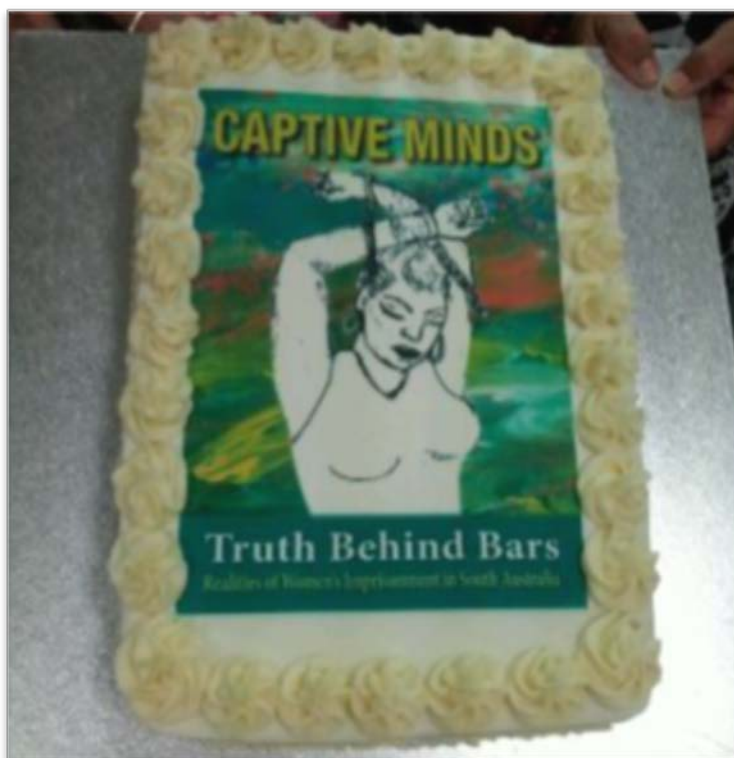


**FIGURE 72: SEEDS OF AFFINITY, JENNIFER**

I am so thankful for this church who have given our group a permanent home. I get so much from being a member of Seeds of Affinity. It gives me what I miss and is helping me ease back into the community.

Day release is an incredibly important step in preparing people for release from prison. For Jennifer, whose long sentence meant that much had changed since she entered prison, day release was helping prepare her to transition into the community.

One Seeds of Affinity project was the creation of the book *Captive Minds* (2014). The book is a compilation of poetry, art and stories by criminalised women, combined with facts about women's experience in the criminal justice system in South Australia. The image in the photograph below, submitted by Stella, is of the cake used to celebrate the launch of the book. She used it to talk about what 'Seeds' means to her:



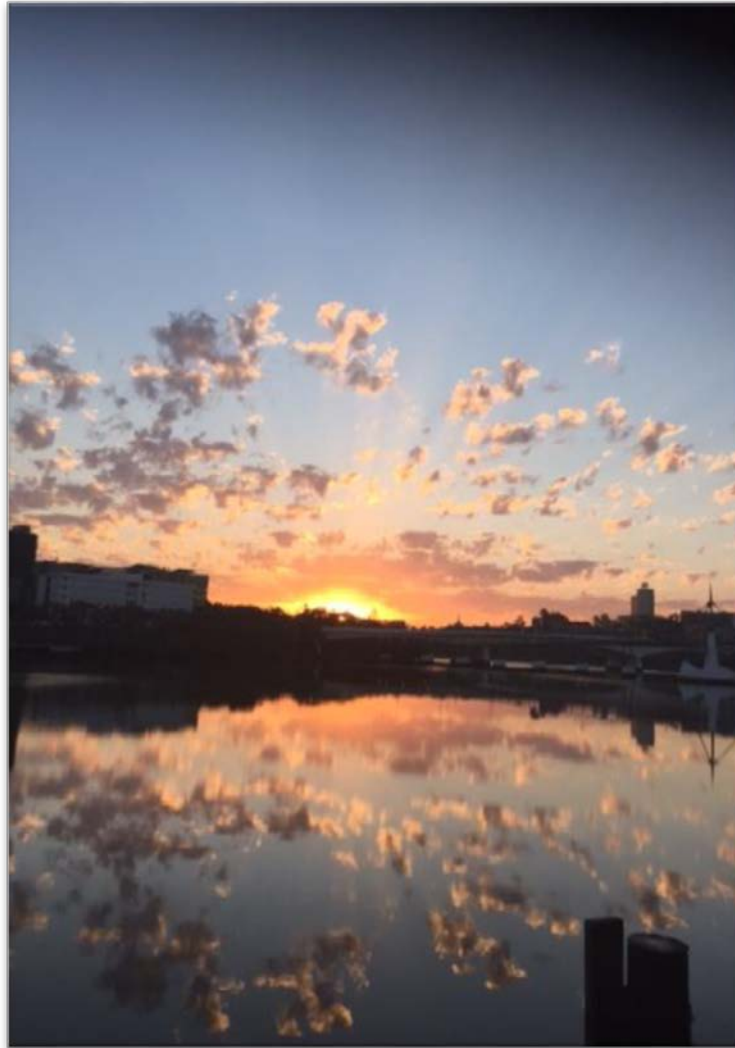
**FIGURE 73: SEEDS OF AFFINITY, STELLA**

The first time I went to prison I was very young. I was looked after by other women in prison, if I hadn't been looked after by them I might not have survived. I want to pay that forward to other women.

Just one person believing in you can be enough of a resource and that is what Anna did with me. She believed in me, in my strengths and that made me think, wow, maybe I'm not a failure. She's always reminding me of the positives. At first it was hard, I mean I didn't really know who I was, but I would never want to disappoint her after all the work she had done for me. That was what drove me until I was able to have my own identity and my own drive and my own vision.

It took just that one person. So, I say to people 'give a woman a go and see what happens'.

Apart from participating in the South Australian community, Stella, Anna and other Seeds members attend conferences together to network and learn from other women's post-release support organisation. Stella submitted this image to describe the benefits of attending these conferences and connecting with other ex-prisoners and researchers from Australia and around the world.



**FIGURE 74: THE BRISBANE RIVER, STELLA**

This photo is special because it was taken when I went out for a run on the first morning of the Sisters Inside Conference in Brisbane. Going to that conference provides a sense of belonging and a validation of your experience. They make a big point of making us women with lived experience the experts. They use our knowledge to teach the workers. It is empowering and creates solidarity. From the minute you get off the plane you feel like family.

The social capital and the benefits that accompany being a Seeds of Affinity member are obvious. As every community development worker knows, the best work in the community is done while sharing food. In this space women feel safe to talk about problems and more often than not, another woman will have been

through it herself and therefore provide useful knowledge, that is both realistic and seen as legitimate. Women are fed a healthy meal, have some fun, build connections and often develop the courage to try something new.

## Conclusion

As indicated in Chapter 4, the participants in this project are a diverse, exceptional group, unrepresentative of the assumed typical former prisoner. Participants were, in most cases, doing extraordinarily well post-release, and they knew it. Their stories do not support the success of imprisonment, but have been possible due to external support, acknowledged privilege and internal strengths that, like light, found a way through the cracks.

In the following, final chapter I summarise the project, the literature review, research method and new knowledge offered by participants. I offer recommendations for radical social work practice, research and offer a commentary on prison abolition and decarceration strategies aimed at halting the growth of the PIC.

## Chapter 10: Decarceration thinking and the implications for radical social work

We should not be looking for prison like substitutes for the prison, such as house arrest safeguarded by electronic surveillance bracelets. Rather, positing decarceration as our overarching strategy, we would try to envision a continuum of alternatives to imprisonment – demilitarization of schools, revitalization of education at all levels, a health system that provides free physical and mental care to all, and a justice system based on reparation and reconciliation rather than retribution and vengeance. Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003, p. 107).

### Introduction

Throughout this thesis the twelve participants have shared their experiences of incarceration and release. Their ideas have shaped this work, while in turn, the work has validated their experiences and respected their knowledge as expertise. Participants' keen desire to share their thoughts and experiences, sometimes very emotionally, was in a way a testament to their unmet need to be listened to. I heard such a broad range of testimonies because the participants and I, were not constrained by positivist research methods seeking to find a simple answer to a single question. At first glance, this may appear to be a haphazard approach, but it mirrors the reality of the lives of ex-prisoners. Respecting each participant's stories and texts on their own grounds rather than ranking them in some order or hierarchy resists the temptation to shoehorn people into 'neat' categories. It follows, then, that programs and policies cannot be 'rolled out' across social service organisations and in prisons with the expectation of 'success', without taking into consideration that every person, and their situation, is unique. Therapeutic, mandated 'treatment' programs, (like the Moral Reconciliation Therapy program discussed in Chapter 7), individualise responsibility for social stratification, treat participants as a homogenous group that ignores, rather than embraces, their complexities. Not one participant suggested that participating in a mandated program or intervention was the reason for successfully staying out of prison; instead, it was relationships and connections, with family, community, a specific worker or group that helped them find their own pathways. In this, the final chapter, I summarise the experiences of the twelve participants from the perspective of 'what works' and offer alternative ways of thinking about the place of the prison as a response to social problems. I explain how this research contributed—albeit in a small way—to the project of prison abolition and argue that radical social work should look to social movements to inform their practice.

## Valuing participant expertise

The people that completed all three steps in this project are exemplars of people who are succeeding since their release from prison. By compiling their stories and hearing their voices in context we learned from them ‘what works’, throughout the previous chapter. Returning to the participants research question, *‘If you had fifteen minutes with a policy maker or politician, what would you want to tell them about your experience?’*, their images, narratives and perspectives have shown the various ways that former prisoners can be supported upon release. Conversely, participants recounted stories of other prisoners and former prisoners that had not overcome or survived the struggle as they had done, thus contrasting their own experience with that of others.

Gidget knew the risks for women returning to violent and abusive relationships post-release. One of the most telling contributions to the project were Kate and Deer’s visual representations of their ‘post-release’ selves as dead and withered trees. Deer told us how accessing various long-term, free and comprehensive approaches for addiction are vital. Trent also spoke of accessing meaningful support for his mental health and problem gambling. Many participants articulated the perils of post-release, most tellingly was Stella’s account of the brutal and tragic death of her friend who felt so isolated and alone in the ‘free’ world that she just wanted to go back to prison. David showed that having stable housing and holistic support from a worker, provided a foundation for him to reconnect with his family and to think about the future. Robert and Trent had learned to value the time spent with their children, while Trent reaped the benefits of having a partner who prioritised his health and wellbeing over and above her own. David, Trent and Ruby found employment that they enjoyed, while Kate, Feeney, Georgia, Stella and Ruby had the support of their family during and post-imprisonment. Despite participants commenting on the limited education opportunities in prison, Stella, Georgia and Deer had entered university post-release. Stella, who credits much of her success to the support of her former parole officer, has herself become central to the successful lives of other criminalised women through her work with Seeds of Affinity. As participants indicated in various ways, supportive and non-judgemental connections and relationships—with humans and animals—that were central to their sense of place in the world.

Although the participants in this project demonstrated solidarity, moments of optimism, examples of courage, compassion and empathy, this does not mean that they are not scarred by the prison experience. What their experiences demonstrate is that sometimes, some people can, in the face of even the strongest barriers, exert a human spirit, strength



and resilience that is impossible to measure. Perhaps their stories are so powerful simply because they stand alongside a monolith of experiences of pain, darkness and despair. Most participants in this project were able to overcome the violence of incarceration, many people never do.

Participants' data demonstrates that prisons are indeed violent spaces and that while this violence can manifest interpersonally, it is the state sanctioned, institutionalised violence that permeates the prison, deeply affecting the people who spend their days inside them. Collective punishment, strip-searching, infantilising treatment, sub-standard medical support and boredom all make up the daily, unrelenting, punishing regime—a regime often devoid of the human rights intended to protect them. What then might be an alternative, radical approach?

## Decarceration and prison abolition

Arriving at this point in my research, I began to think about how I might reimagine a society that does not turn to prisons as a solution to social problems. In doing so, I found an undeniable link between the arguments for prison abolition and the arguments that underpin the ideologies of radical social work. I also came to realise that intersectional feminism can both enhance radical social work practice and supports the abolition of prisons (Davis & Gent, 2001). Therefore, I argue that the combination of prison abolitionism, intersectional feminism and the project of radical social work constitute a strong theoretically informed position whose elements complement each other in the pursuit of liberation, and equality.

Radical social work aims to expose the effects of capitalism. Rather than 'helping' people 'cope' with the oppressive features of society, radical social work starts from the position that collectively, people can act to instigate transformation (Harms-Smith, 2015). Rather than looking up to people in power for direction, radical social workers look to the people closest to the issue—communities who are fighting for change (Curry-Stevens, 2006). Ian Hyslop agrees, arguing that, 'the future of social work requires an alliance with wider social movements' (2011, p. 405), while Angela Davis (2016) insists that social movements be 'intersectional' in order to incorporate diversity and to strengthen their cause.

Radical social work, feminism and prison abolition are all social movements seeking radical change. Scott (2015, p. 40) posits that the theory of abolitionism 'prioritises the political values of freedom, liberty, equality, solidarity, non-hierarchical relationships and human emancipation'. Patricia Collins (2013) elaborates on how intersectionality consists

of intellectual activism (the work of Angela Davis is an outstanding example), is used as an analytical strategy and, importantly, as critical praxis to carry out social justice work. For radical social workers, David Gil (2013) sets out the principles of radical practice as:

- the rejection of political neutrality and an affirmation of social justice and human liberation;
- affirmation of the values of equality, liberty, cooperation, human worth and dignity, free from domination and exploitation;
- being able to transcend past 'professional approaches' that individualise social problems;
- raising critical consciousness through dialogue;
- advocating for human rights;
- confronting obstacles to fulfilment; and
- the need to participate in political action and movement building (Gil, 2013, pp. 111-115).

The similarities between intersectional feminism, radical social work and prison abolition are clearly present throughout radical social work principles and approaches. In the following section I describe what prison abolition is, and discuss some of the tensions of abolition work.

Even though the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) can sometimes work to make entire communities economically dependent on prison creation and expansion, resistance through community solidarity and struggle is growing. Around the world, including in Australia, a ground-swell of community-based groups and social movements are seeking to 'decentre' the use of prisons as punishment (Kilroy, et al, 2013). Beth Richie (2002) explains that this anti-prison activist and resistance work is overwhelmingly performed via grassroots mobilisation and in community building. Richie defines community building broadly to include acts such as visiting imprisoned family or prison visits as a volunteer, helping raise children whose parents are imprisoned, being an ally or standing with released prisoners and incarcerated women supporting each other (Richie, 2002, p. 148).

Prison abolition work requires building alliances between the outside and the inside (Lawson & Meiners, 2014). Such alliances are present in groups like *Critical Resistance*, in the USA, the *Empty Cages Collective* in the UK, *People Against Prisons Aotearoa* in New Zealand and here in Australia, *Sisters Inside* and *Flat Out*.<sup>159</sup> Common amongst these

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<sup>159</sup> These organisations are small sample of the hundreds of independent anti-prison groups forming across the globe.

groups is a deep understanding of institutionalised oppression in the forms of sexism, classism and racism within the prison system and the operations of the PIC. Each of these groups operate from an intersectional perspective, recognise the expertise that comes with lived prison experience, and hold the belief that current and former prisoner voices are integral in shaping their work. As neoliberalism pushes against ‘community’ in favour of individual responsibility, the growth of grass-roots groups like these are a sustained effort to challenge neo-liberal ideologies present in the PIC. In effect community organising can resist and challenge the PIC.

Prison abolitionists look carefully for, and aim to dismantle the functions of the PIC. They argue that the ‘prison industry’ drives incarceration because prison industries have ‘a clear stake in the continued growth of prison populations’ (Davis, 2003, p. 16). For Calathes, prison growth is ‘correctional Keynesianism’ (2017, p. 11). The PIC is propped up by ‘a collective refusal to think compassionately about schools, health care and immigration’ (Hartnett, 2010, p. 3; Davis, 2003; Meiners, 2011) and the rise in ‘punishing democracies’, where funding for prisons and military endeavours are privileged over the provision of quality social services. These approaches are supported by the free market economy and the unproblematic-sounding notion of ‘small government’ (Chang & Thompkins, 2002, p. 49), which sees a greater reliance on charity and religion to deliver services, and the moralistic assumptions that accompany religious and charity models.

Despite their ‘ineffectiveness’ (Ruggiero, 2010, p. 99) in that prisons fail to ‘rehabilitate’, ‘reform’, ‘correct’ or ‘deter’, prisons continue to be privileged as the *only* solution (Kilroy, et al, 2013), leaving little opportunity for alternatives to be investigated. As discussed in Chapter 5, imprisonment itself is a violent response to crime, perpetuating a cycle of violence where, in effect, there has been a shift away from capital punishment to capitalist punishment. Ryan and Sim (2007, p. 108) locate the reluctance to consider prison abolition within neoliberal discourse, arguing that, ‘it is important to acknowledge the need to deconstruct this crude neo-liberal caricature that seeks to place prison abolition alongside other unmentionable aspirations such as social equality’. Calathes, however is more forceful in his conviction that prison growth is a racially motivated function of capitalism:

...the purpose of punishment is to maintain capital accumulation on behalf of the capitalist class and to maintain white privilege through the exploitation and punishment of black people (2017, p. 13).

Because a certain amount of crime will always occur in a capitalist society, instead of glorifying who decides upon punishment, it is more important to consider the capitalist

system's ability in creating fertile ground for crime (Linebaugh, 1976). Contrary to the myth of 'trickledown economics', capitalism does not provide liberation from suffering but, 'is what makes people suffer in the first place' (von Werlhof, 2007, p. 21). Understanding the power that capitalism, patriarchy and domination have in creating oppression and suppressing solidarity is central to abolitionist thinking (Davis, 2003; 2012; 2016; Scott, 2015). Globalisation has brought such concepts to the fore, encouraging abolitionists to 'consider the need for anti-capitalist economic models as a pre-requisite for a world without prisons' (Sudbury, 2004, p. 27). Prisons are 'intimately connected to global capitalism' (Sudbury, 2005, p. xii), so using a theoretical framework that encapsulates prison abolition, radical social work and intersectional feminism, each of which deploy a resounding critique of capitalism, are essential in reimagining such a world.

Writing about how patriarchy and capitalism cooperate to prevent radical challenges to the status quo, leading to incremental, piecemeal reform, Haug (2000) argues:

Doesn't utopia have to do with wishes, visions, that is, with irrationality and, if this is true, do reasonable plans, suggestions, and criticism not suffice when we are dealing with societal changes, especially in the case of women? The answer seems to me as certain as the interconnection between feminism and utopia: the situation of women today is so muddled and patriarchy is so solid, so alive and well, that improvements in the here and now do not suffice. We have to look back and devise something new, and then from this different perspective, we will be able to make suggestions for today and tomorrow. (Haug, 2000, p. 53)

For Haug, the project of feminism is already a 'political utopia' that seeks the abolition of domination and oppression. One example of domination and oppression was the invasion and colonisation of Australia. The belief in the dominance of white Anglo perspectives meant that Westminster Law replaced Aboriginal ('Dreaming') Law. Colonisers made no effort to understand First Nations Peoples connection to country, communal lives or their model of collective land ownership. While South Australia was designed with a utopian vision in mind (Lonie, 1978), it was a utopia that privileged white, male, middle class domination; therefore the subordination of First Nation's Peoples, women and the working-classes was inevitable. Imagine if, instead of transporting the capitalist class system to South Australia, the peoples, practices and culture of First Nations Australians had been embraced; that Dreaming Law replaced Westminster Law, or if the nuclear family model had been swapped for extended kinship arrangements. This may have offered a closer realisation of utopia.

In challenging the current social order, abolitionists and radical social workers are similarly deemed naïve, utopian and unrealistic. If he were alive today, Saul Alinsky (1972) would remind us that this is the language of the 'haves' used to maintain their hold on power over

the 'have nots'. It is necessary to approach social problems differently if we really want a different outcome to what we experience now. Richard Quinney summed up this idea when he wrote, 'abolition of the prison is an integral and seamless part of enlightenment and human liberation' (2006, p. 275). Liberation is, in its simplest form, freedom from oppression.

Abolitionists are often asked, if there are no prisons, what should be done about violent crimes, and especially, what about violence against women?; surely abolition goes against feminist ideas?, It may seem counter-intuitive that a significant number of abolitionists are feminists.<sup>160</sup> Since the recognition in legislation that domestic violence is a criminal act that can and does result in imprisonment, there has been little change in the pattern of gendered violence, where in Australia in 2015, 80 women were killed at the hands of a male partner or ex-partner in Australia (Davey, Evershed, & Moore, 2015). Intimate partner violence does happen in all classes of the community, but the impacts are much harder to deal with if the victim is poor, as they are less likely to have access to alternative housing arrangements and other social capital.

Historically, calls to end violence against women have measured success through police intervention and prison sentences in what can be described as 'carceral feminism'. According to Victoria Law (2014), carceral feminism is 'an approach that sees increased policing, prosecution and imprisonment as the primary solution to violence against women' (para, 3), an approach which effectively ignores how 'race, class, gender identity, and immigration status leave certain women more vulnerable to violence and that greater criminalization often places these same women at risk of state violence' (para, 4). As a result, grassroots groups have begun to provide alternative, community-based responses to perpetrators of violence but insist that these alternatives must be in combination with widespread policy and funding support and a commitment within the community for radical social change.

Criminalised women are often excluded from domestic and family violence and other social support services, even though there is a strong correlation between criminalised women and experiences of violence (Flat Out, 2015). Involving the criminal justice system in domestic/family violence matters can have unintended consequences for criminalised women as highlighted in a submission to the *Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence*, by Flat Out, a community based organisation in Victoria, Australia. The submission documented how calling the police for help did little to keep criminalised

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<sup>160</sup> For a specific discussion on feminism and abolition, see (Lawston & Meiners, 2014)

women safe. Instead they are often met with discrimination; their fears are not taken seriously, they are at risk of arrest for outstanding matters and/or they are threatened with the loss of their children through child protection interventions. In effect, seeking 'help' often makes the situation worse. Sending perpetrators of violence against women to prisons that are ultimately violent masculine spaces is unlikely to resolve gender-based violence. Indeed, carceral feminism has itself contributed to the growth of the PIC (Law, 2014). Further, sexual assault—in the form of strip-searching and violent, abusive, neglectful and harmful treatment is normalised in adult and youth prisons across the world every single day.

Often the ideal of prison abolition is misrepresented, however, this makes it harder to discuss or even think about the possibilities of alternative strategies (Kilroy, 2009, p. 2). Social workers O'Brien and Ortega (2015) challenge 'mainstream' feminists to take a different approach to mass incarceration, asking them to interrogate their own assumptions around harm within a context that considers all aspects of crime, punishments and prisons. Prison abolition is based upon human rights and a shared humanity, rather than purely focussing on revenge and retribution.

Transformative justice is an approach proposed by abolitionists, where solutions are sought, created and enacted within the community. As Lawson and Meiners propose, transformative justice requires a commitment to 'collective liberation' (2014, p. 14) and a rejection of the unequal social structures that dominate our existence. Germaine to this project is their suggestion that participatory action research with criminalised women can 'support transformative justice' (Lawson & Meiners, 2014, p. 17) because it refuses to begin from the starting point that frames imprisonment as a result of individual deficiencies. Willison and O'Brien (2017, p. 44) agree, arguing that social work research with criminalised women can, in itself, be transformative with the use of feminist based participatory action research.

Abolitionists understand the role the PIC plays in structuring our world and seek social change by freeing the oppressed from the inequalities that feed mass incarceration. While some abolitionists are themselves ex-prisoners (Bourque, 1988; Davis, 2003) and others have had their families and communities decimated by imprisonment (Gilmore, 2007; Schenwar, 2014), many have worked in prisons and seen the futility of a system that creates more harm than good (Faith, 2011; Lamont Hill, 2013; Carlton & Russell, 2015; LeBaron & Roberts, 2010; Christie, 2007a; Hartnett, 2010; Meiners, 2010). Abolitionists question the morals of delivering 'pain, to whom and for what' (Ruggiero, 2010, p. 6), while

Ryan and Sim (2007) argue that the caricatures of abolitionist thinkers and the people who promote those caricatures, have 'distracted attention away from the richness and subtlety in abolitionist thinking' (p. 696).

Abolitionists know that abolition is a long-term goal where the operations of the PIC must be confronted from every possible angle. While the goal of total abolition may never be fully realised, it is important to understand that employing abolitionist thinking will help to move towards a more 'fair, just and humane society' (Lamont Hill, 2013, p. 19) that is more interested in social rather than criminal justice. Yet such transformative work is not without its tensions.

There are ongoing dilemmas in the dream of abolition and the reality of incarceration (Kilroy, 2009, p. 1). While undertaking work that aims to abolish prisons, abolitionists cannot and do not ignore the plight of people who are suffering in prisons at this current moment. To do so would be like seeking equality for people with a disability while ignoring their immediate needs for support. One of the tensions involved in the work of the abolition movement is that proponents are often cautioned for seeking reform, which as explained in Chapter 5 can, intentionally or not, lead to both prison expansion and discriminatory, punitive practices (Faith, 2000; Shaylor, 2009; Baldry, et al, 2015; Ruggiero, 2015).. Because abolitionists promote human rights and seek to alleviate immediate oppressive prison conditions, are abolitionists just reformists under a different guise? Arguing for abolition and seeking prisoners' rights can certainly be a balancing act (Lawston & Meiners, 2014), requiring 'non-reformist reforms' (Faith, 2000, p. 164) and solidarity with prisoners (Sudbury, 2015, p. 18). Baldry et al. (2015) propose that abolition and reform are not 'mutually exclusive strategies' (p. 173); rather, abolition is both a strategy and an end goal.

## Non-violent, transformative social justice

Paulo Freire (1970) argued that everyday oppression is violence, therefore addressing oppression can only be through non-violent means. Yet as governments have moved closer to the political right, placing power in the hands of 'hardline economic and social conservative white men' (Palmer, 2014, p. 60), non-violent values and approaches are increasingly deemed 'naïve, old fashioned, bleeding heart and black armband' (Palmer, 2014, p. 60), sounding much like the criticisms levelled at social workers (Ferguson, 2007), radical or not. Nonviolent, transformative resistance is possible through multiple avenues, including teaching (Freire, 1970) research (Belknap, 2015) and the sharing of emancipatory

ideas (The Abolitionist, 2015). Using nonviolence is neither passive nor submissive; instead, nonviolent approaches are precisely what is required to break the cycle of violence. Abolitionists recognise that we live in structurally violent societies that prevent many people from reaching their full potential. Writing about the impact that structural violence has on human relations, Gil (1996, p. 78) argues that the human propensity for violence is taken for granted, yet our ability to be non-violent is overlooked. Responding to violence with more violence can and does cause irreparable harm, perpetuating a cycle of violence—any gains made using violent approaches leave bitterness and hatred in their wake.

The goals of the abolition movement and the radical social work movement walk a very similar path. Radical social workers who believe in non-violent responses use similar language and arguments to those used by abolitionists. Both movements argue that injustice and structural violence are central to the oppression experienced by people who are not members of dominant groups (Ferguson, Lavalette, Michael, & Mooney, 2002; Mullaly, 2007; Gil, 2013; Lawston & Meiners, 2014; Davis, 2003; Shaylor, 2009).

Abolitionists and radical social workers concur that structural oppression directly benefits dominant groups, and agree that ‘reform’ or tinkering around the edges is not enough (Reisch & Andrews, 2002; Mullaly, 2007; Lawston & Meiners, 2014; Ferguson et al, 2002; Shaylor, 2009). Like abolitionists, social worker David Gil (2013, pp. 93-94) writes of the importance of an immediate reduction in ‘deprivation and suffering’ as interim goals, while working towards ‘long-term goals of liberation’. Community organisers Herzing and Paglen (2006) ask that abolitionists think further than the cages in prisons and consider how poverty and racism are an abstract of a prison that maintain unequal levels of power throughout the community. Debbie Kilroy neatly sums up this idea, saying ‘only through eradicating the foundations of structural inequality can its institutional manifestations be eroded and the underlying roots of violence in incarceration be tackled’ (2009, p. 2).

There is no single, linear approach to the project of abolition—tearing down prison walls without broad community support in place is unlikely to succeed. Transformative justice requires power be returned to communities, along with acknowledgement that the people who are closest to the issue are best placed to resolve those issues. Structurally, we can challenge and organise against prison expansion, the construction of new prisons and the privatisation of prisons. We must reject calls for ‘gender responsive’ prison regimes (Shaylor, 2009) and demand the immediate closure of youth prisons. More social and emergency housing and non-punishing mental health treatment options must be offered to



reduce the number of people remanded in custody. The funding currently poured into the PIC needs to be diverted into health, education and meaningful social support. These actions can be supported through social policy, where for example drug use and sex work is decriminalised. Civil rights campaigns can support decarceration strategies. One example from the US is the campaign which aims to ‘ban the box’<sup>161</sup> on employment applications. Campaigners argue that employers should not be allowed to request a job applicant’s criminal history record prior to interviewing the candidate. Academics can support decarceration and promote abolition by drawing attention to the financial and human costs of prisons through their teaching and research. One aim of this thesis is to make social workers aware of the ways their work—intentionally or not—contributes to the growth of the PIC, and, because knowledge is power, this new knowledge may lead to informed action and activism within the radical social work movement.

## Research into praxis

This research project provided a powerful example of the potential in using Photovoice as a research method. It is a method that engages participants and the community and meets Finley’s (2002) recommendation that research should ‘traverse the walls of academia’. Few people hear, see or think about the realities of prison—the violence that permeates every facet of the system, the collateral damage experienced by families, the cost to the community or their futility in solving crime. Taking this research out of the university space and into the public was a way of creating awareness and dialogue in the community about who is most likely to be affected by the PIC as the primary mechanism of social control.

A fundamental step in this project was putting this research into action. Creating a connection between the participants and the people who engaged with their material, helped to alleviate their own ‘distorted beliefs’, or ‘false consciousness’ (Freire, 1970; 1985; Eyerman, 1981). The notion of the ‘deviant other’ is challenged when we begin to get to know their thoughts, history, dreams and aspirations and realise that we have very much in common. Take for example some of the feedback from the 2015 *Returning the Gaze* exhibition at the Adelaide Fringe Festival, where visitors took time to engage with the participants’ photographs and stories:

The use of photographs alongside the stories gave an insight into a world most of us might know very little about. Many of them moved me to tears.

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<sup>161</sup> According to Avery and Hernandez (2017), the ‘ban the box’ initiative has been adopted by over 150 cities and counties in the United States. The authors report that at a recent forum in California, business owners shared the personal satisfaction and benefits of hiring people with a criminal history, with one participant saying, ‘I’ve seen how a job makes all the difference’.

This system does not help the disadvantaged either before entering the system or leaving it. Every human being deserves to be treated with respect no matter what. The system is lacking in humanity. To walk free knowing that one has a chance, self-respect intact and head held high would be a wonderful thing

Informative and highlights the emergency and need for change. This goes for the people who lost all of their support networks and were released from prison ill equipped for re-entry and living everyday life. Their stories of strength and the commitment of partners and family were moving.

Eye opening. Touching. Honest. Some of the images would be beautiful even if we didn't get the story attached to them, for example some of the pet photos. Overall the messages and images confirm for me that the people who know the most about prisons and the criminal justice system are prisoners and ex-prisoners themselves.

The exhibition made me aware of people in my own life who I now feel I can understand more in-depth, and be more compassionate towards. Hopefully, I can also be an aid to those experiencing isolation and social exclusion within society.

Great exhibition and excellent linking of stories to photographs, especially those taken by women. Found the stories moving and confronting. I did not realise how little support was provided to women in prison or on their release. I have a great admiration for the strengths and courage of these women. This really highlights that it is so easy to be incarcerated when you are not a bad person yet have so much taken from you because of it. It wouldn't take much from any of us to be in their places would it?

The dignity and human rights of prisoners escapes the minds of society. This exhibition brings insight to the need for prisoners to remain in society for rehabilitation and treatment.

This is such a powerful affirmation of humanity. It just brings home to me how much we all really have in common, that there is not an 'us and them', but a 'we'.

Holding exhibitions of the participants' research was a valuable means of validating their contribution to the project. At the *Returning the Gaze* exhibition, some participants came alone, but others came with family members, their partner or friends. Watching them interact with their own and other participants' work supported the goals of this project and was a new experience for participants and their guests. One powerful example was seeing Kate and her sister crying together as they looked at Kate's contributions. Kate told me 'seeing all these stories together has really helped [my sister] to understand what I went through'.

The Fringe exhibition media release caught the eye of Sophie Quick, a journalist, from Australia's *Big Issue* magazine.<sup>162</sup> In this two page spread (see Figure 75), Sophie interviewed Trent and me, about the project and included four of Trent's photographs.<sup>163</sup> The resultant magazine article took ideas about the realities of post-release experiences to an even wider audience.

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<sup>162</sup> *The Big Issue* in Australia has a circulation of around 30,000 copies per fortnightly edition. The *Big Issue* is sold by people who have no home; half of the money made from sales goes directly to them.

<sup>163</sup> See Appendix J.



FIGURE 75: THE BIG ISSUE ARTICLE, SOPHIE QUICK

Participants reported benefiting from contributing to ‘prison research’ on their own terms. Via SMS, email and personal communication most participants reflected on their participation. For example:

**Gidget:** Thank you Michele. From participating in this project, I have actually learned more about what I’m capable of.

**Trent:** Hi Michele, I was very happy to see the work you have done with our photographs and stories. The interest you have shown without judgement is so rare to see in a person. So, thank you for getting our messages out there for the public to maybe get a better understanding of ex-prisoners—that we did bad things, but we are not all bad people. Thank you for involving me, it has been a pleasure.

**Georgia:** Thank you oh so much for your time and this wonderful opportunity using Photovoice as a means of expressing our experiences and our thoughts about being in prison and since our release. It was a fun way to show what life means to us now and I truly hope that we have contributed in a helpful way. I am really excited to come along to the exhibition.

Finally, I met my initial goal of the project which was for participants to inform politicians about their experiences.<sup>164</sup> In the middle of 2016, I met with South Australia’s newly appointed Minister for Corrections, the Honourable Peter Malinauskas<sup>165</sup> to talk about my research. I took twenty of the photographs with me, ensuring that each participant was represented. While I am hopeful that it will make some positive impact, I think that changing policy is, in the most, part driven by public opinion (Roberts, et al, 2003), so

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<sup>164</sup> Other politicians have seen exhibitions of this work, including former Greens senator, Penny Wright and Labor MP, Nat Cook.

<sup>165</sup> The trouble though, with informing ministers and building relationships with them is how they can unexpectedly be ‘shuffled’ into a seemingly unrelated portfolio (the Honourable Peter Malinauskas was, with little warning, shifted to the health portfolio in September 2017) or, that their party is bundled out of government in an election—South Australians will be heading to the polls in March, 2018. Most political commentators believe that there will be a change of government.

informing the public has been the primary vehicle to make such changes. South Australia is in a prime position to make radical changes to correctional approaches, especially as it appears that the Minister agrees that we cannot keep pouring money into a system that is so deeply riddled with failures.

## Recommendations for future research

Although the post-release experience has not been easy for the participants in this study, it would be fair to argue that for First Nations Australians, it would be harder still. Even though the four people who identified as First Nations were more than enthusiastic to participate in the project at the outset, their withdrawal potentially signals that their experience is far different to those of a white-western background. Therefore, while some of the explanations provided by the 12 participants of prison and release may be resonate with First Nations Peoples, I cannot and do not claim that what these participants deemed as important are relevant for women and men of colour. It would be valuable therefore for a First Nations researcher to use Photovoice to compare and contrast the differences and similarities in their findings. I am confident in arguing, though, that the implementation of white bourgeoisie customs and expectations, in terms of education, research and social services has, and continues to be, culturally inappropriate for most First Nations Peoples. This is the first participatory action research (PAR) project I have undertaken and, I have learned some valuable approaches for both research and community development. Knowing what I do now, I hope that I may have the opportunity to conduct another PAR project in the future. For social workers who want to be agents for radical change, Photovoice and other PAR projects can be appropriate, although care needs to be taken that such research is socially conscious and that researchers are prepared to give back to the community rather than treating the project as a route to publications and promotion. I have especially enjoyed the way that action research has enabled me to build alliances and create networks within the community while at the same time ensuring that the material has been seen by many people, whose feedback has helped inform my conclusions in this project.<sup>166</sup>

On a broader level, it would be transformative to test out abolitionist ideas in South Australia. This state seems forever on the verge of expanding—or building—prisons. Diverting funding away from prison expansion and into community led, transformative

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<sup>166</sup> See Appendices J and K for an account of the ways this work has been shared with the public.

approaches would demonstrate the benefits of ‘decentring the prison’ (Kilroy et al, 2013)—success would be marked by other jurisdictions electing to follow the same path.

## Conclusion

I began this research wanting to know more about the experiences, needs and aspirations of ex-prisoners after their release. Since then I have come to better understand how social structures and systemic patterns operating before, within and beyond prisons combine with gender, racial and class oppression to unfairly target certain sections of the population. I wanted to know how social workers could end the violence of incarceration, prevent breaches of human rights and the undignified and damaging treatment of prisoners. I wanted to know how I could best work with people released from prison in order to see them flourish rather than just survive. I have explored these objectives through hearing the words and seeing the photographs created by the participants and learning about the organising strategies and arguments of the prison abolition movement. From this learning I have recognised the potential of radical social work to contribute to these goals, because at its core, radical social work holds a commitment to good practice, resistance to political oppression, working alongside service users in solidarity and participating in collective action for social change. Ultimately this can be done by challenging unjust welfare provision and austerity measures, rejecting individualising deficit-based frameworks favoured by neoliberalism, advocating for radical social change and working towards a society that does not resort to prisons to solve social problems.

Negative representations of who or what constitutes an ex-prisoner dominate the public landscape. This project demonstrates the strength of people using images to help them tell their own story. Collectively participants challenged the widely held assumption that ex-prisoners are ‘the problem’, an assumption that obstructs possibilities for the community to come together to resolve social problems.

Along with participants benefiting individually from the project and being given a platform to inform the public about the realities of the prison and release experience, this has been an enriching experience for me. Much more than getting ‘good data’ for my PhD, I am deeply connected to the research and the days, weeks and months that I have spent writing up my findings has been a journey of discovery and learning. The thrill of being the thirteenth participant in a project using a creative, arts-based method cannot be underestimated. For social workers who are often alienated from their work and the people

they work with, exploring the possibilities of participatory, arts-based methodologies can be rewarding.

The use of photographs and accompanying narratives provided opportunities for critical reflection as the public begin to see those who have been to prison as fully-human people, rather than solely via the lens of criminality. Photovoice has the potential to go beyond the walls of academia by generating research findings that the community are interested in learning more about. Having ex-prisoners speak for themselves using photography as a medium was empowering for participants as their knowledge was validated and they educated the community. Their images and narratives encouraged me to stretch my thinking, to reconsider my own assumptions and research questions far more broadly than if I had relied on an interview alone. Rather than being researched 'on', where personal deficits are named, diagnosed and unpacked within the popular public discourse, participants became researchers and had control over the data they produced. As researchers, participants chose the topics they wanted to discuss and by doing so have generated new knowledge.

Researchers' photographs and voices were seen and heard as they participated in an internationally recognised arts festival while their work raised the critical consciousness of the people who have viewed their material. Collectively, they communicated their experiences of prison and release and, in doing so, challenged the stereotype of the criminalised 'other', while contributing to the debate about the problematic functions of the criminal justice system. I have learned as much from the twelve participants as I did from pouring over books and articles day in and day out and have been privileged to be able to contribute in a small way to their struggle for freedom. Writing about the critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, Audre Lorde (1984) suggested that 'revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us' (p. 123). Initially I was challenged by what I learned when doing this research; like most people, I had been socialised to believe that the presence of prisons was just 'the way things are'. However, the compelling arguments created by scholars and activists across the world made the arguments for prison abolition irrefutable, thus changing my thinking. I plan to continue to challenge and question my inner oppressor as I explore the possibilities that being a radical social worker offers.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Participant poetry

Two pieces of poetry were submitted to accompany participant data. The first by Deer, *At This Time*, followed her set of nine photographs and her story (see Jarldorn & Deer, 2017). The second, was provided by Feeney and was written by her when she was in prison. Feeney explained that she wrote poetry for women as birthday gifts, when they were leaving prison to say goodbye, and just for a bit of fun. Called, *The Vegemite Poem*, this piece, while ostensibly for fun, speaks to deprivations in prison.

### **At This Time: By Deer**

At this time my life was barely together  
It always seemed like perpetual bad weather  
Forever raining, forever storming  
I could not move without warning

A life not chosen but thrust upon me  
By parents who struggled to be free  
From their own memories, demons and ghouls  
They tried so hard but remained such fools

I left my home as such a neonate  
And entered the world not knowing my fate  
I strode down many lanes of danger  
Looking for the one true loving stranger

One day I found what I thought  
Would be my saviour and always bought  
My sanity, oh how expensive it was  
Yet kept me alive until the next shot

Then one day I sat on my bed  
Knowing that I was not right in the head  
I prepared my daily dose of singular bliss  
And indulged my veins with never enough of this

A sudden knock on my door there came  
I was thinking it was a friend the same  
When opened it was revealed  
People unknown to me with intent concealed

The home that they removed me from  
Looked like it had been hit by a bomb  
It was my life it was my place  
Even though it seemed such a disgrace

They took me to a place known to me  
Only through others and what I'd read  
They stripped me of all I'd known  
And pushed me into a room all alone

I sat there and knew what I'd become  
A lost soul like the rest, just a sum  
An unregimented unit of the whole  
Of too many people with lost souls

All the beautiful women that I met  
In this caged place just seemed to set  
A picture of many who had suffered  
A life lived full totally unbuffered



Women with children, families and partners  
Missed loved ones with a passion unharnessed  
They had worked in jobs socially unaccepted  
And were put down and incessantly rejected

The distance in there between us all  
Was done by others, this was their call

The chemist shop that I desired  
Was also in this place when I required

Tough to get what I thought I wanted  
Was a process that made me hunted  
By those in charge who stood above  
And when discovered they became so rough

And when they were done with their punishment  
I held my head high and walked from that prison  
Still nothing resolved and nothing forgiven  
Just another soul even less life driven

So to all you women locked away  
Remember you are loved with fervour beyond your stay  
And think of yourselves as humans beautiful  
Who got lost in life, yet are full of fortitude

## **The Vegemite Poem: Feeney**

Sorry I'm not a big believer lord  
In this place because of fraud

Lost my faith at Catholic School  
The nuns you sent were bloody cruel

But if you want to make it right  
Send me a jar of vegemite

It's all the little things we miss  
If you can, a bottle of red would be bliss

You better make the vegemite a crate  
As I'll have to share, thanks that would be great

It's just the little things we seek  
As they say, it puts a rose in every cheek

## Appendix B: Ethics Documents: Initial approval notice and final modification notice

**From:** [Human Research Ethics](#)  
**To:** [jarl0002@flinders.edu.au](mailto:jarl0002@flinders.edu.au); [Heather Fraser](#); [Heather Brook](#)  
**Subject:** 6255 SBREC - Final Ethics Approval (4 October 2013)  
**Date:** Friday, 4 October 2013 12:30:00 PM

---

Dear Michele,

The Chair of the [Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee \(SBREC\)](#) at Flinders University considered your response to conditional approval out of session and your project has now been granted final ethics approval. Your ethics final approval notice can be found below.

---

### FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	6255		
Project Title:	Returning the gaze: Ex-offenders use Photovoice to inform policy and practice about life after prison		
Principal Researcher:	Ms Michele Jaridom		
Email:	jarl0002@flinders.edu.au		
Address:	Women's Studies		
Approval Date:	3 October 2013	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	1 March 2016

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

---

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

#### 1. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.
- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of

**From:** Human Research Ethics  
**To:** "[jarl0002@flinders.edu.au](mailto:jarl0002@flinders.edu.au)"; Heather Fraser; Heather Brook  
**Subject:** 6255 SBREC modification No.5 approval notice (9 December 2016)  
**Date:** Friday, 9 December 2016 9:53:00 AM  
**Importance:** High

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Dear Michele,

The Chairperson of the [Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee \(SBREC\)](#) at Flinders University has reviewed and approved the modification request that was submitted for project 6255. A modification ethics approval notice can be found below.

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## MODIFICATION (No.5) APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	<input type="text" value="6255"/>		
Project Title:	<input type="text" value="Radically rethinking imprisonment: Using Photovoice with ex-prisoners in South Australia"/>		
Principal Researcher:	<input type="text" value="Ms Michele Jarldom"/>		
Email:	<input type="text" value="jarl0002@flinders.edu.au"/>		
Modification Approval Date:	<input type="text" value="9 December 2016"/>	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	<input type="text" value="31 December 2017"/>

I am pleased to inform you that the modification request submitted for project 6255 on the 5 December 2016 has been reviewed and approved by the SBREC Chairperson. Please see below for a list of the approved modifications. Any additional information that may be required from you will be listed in the second table shown below called 'Additional Information Required'.

Approved Modifications	
Extension of ethics approval expiry date	X
Project title change	
Personnel change	
Research objectives change	
Research method change	
Participants – addition +/- change	
Consent process change	
Recruitment process change	
Research tools change	
Document / Information Changes	
Other (if yes, please specify)	

## Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

### Participant Information Sheet

**Researcher:** Ms Michele Jarldorn, Flinders University, South Australia

**Project title:** Returning the gaze: Ex-prisoners use Photovoice to inform policy and practice about life after prison.

**Who is doing this research?** My name is Michele Jarldorn and I am a qualified social worker. I was employed by OARS after I graduated from university. I worked in the Gambling Support Service (GSS), where I provided counselling and advocacy for people in Yatala Labour Prison, Adelaide Women's Prison, the Adelaide Pre-release Centre, in the OARS Community Transitions city offices at Morphett Street and via outreach in people's homes. I have now returned to university and am doing further studies in social work. I am very interested in working with people post-release from prison.

Along with working closely with prisoners and former prisoners, GSS funding allowed me to work with peoples' parents, partners and children. This was a unique opportunity to see the depth of difficulties for people when they leave prison. During the time I worked with people who had been in prison, I noticed that no-one asked them what sort of assistance or support they would like to receive and how they would like to be treated once they were released into the community.

**What are the aims of this project?** This project aims to develop a greater understanding of the barriers and gateways to successfully staying out of prison. Unlike a lot of other research, that interviews workers or service providers, I want to hear about your personal goals and experiences post-release from prison. I am hoping that the research will also be used to get support from policy makers and service providers in the area of post-release services. I also hope that once this research project is completed that I will be able to use what I learn to teach future social workers about the needs and hopes of people after leaving prison.

**Will I be asked to talk about illegal activities?** I will not be asking you to disclose any information about any criminal activity, nor the circumstances of your incarceration. I am legally obligated to report my concerns if you disclose any *current* illegal activities or possible risks of harm to children, others or yourself.

**Who can participate?** I would like to recruit participants who are clients of OARS Community Transitions that have spent time in prison.

**What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?** In the first step of the project, you will be asked to spend up to an hour with me so that I can explain the project in more

detail. This will include showing you how to take photos with the disposable camera and I will also show you some examples of other photo research projects.

In the next step you will be provided with a 24 exposure, single-use camera and be asked to document your experiences, by taking photos over the next fortnight. I will then contact you to arrange a time to come and collect the camera and will then have the photographs developed.

In the third part of the project we will meet to discuss what the photos you took mean to you. In this part of the project I will ask that you give permission for me to audio-tape the interview. I expect that this step of the research will take no longer than 90 minutes of your time. Of course this length of time is up to you and the interview can be as short as you like without any repercussions. You will be given a copy of the photographs you took in an album to keep. Some of your photographs will be published in the completed research project. Later, I will type up what we spoke about in the interview and then delete the voice recording. As I will be doing this myself, this will help keep your identity confidential.

**What if I decide I don't want to continue in the project?** You can pull out of the research at any time and do not have to give a reason for doing so. No matter if you decide to participate, decline to participate or pull out from participating in the project at any stage, this will not in any way affect the services you receive from OARS or any other service provider.

**Where will we meet?** The initial interviews can be conducted wherever you like, but our second interview—the one that will be taped—will be held at OARS Sturt Street premises. By doing this, your worker and other service users will not know if you participated in the project, because only admin workers use the Sturt Street premises. If you would prefer, a location of your choice can be negotiated for the taped interview stage, however this needs to be in a quiet location without possible interruptions to facilitate audio-taping.

**What if I get upset?** If at any time you become upset by any of the issues we talk about, you can ask me to stop the interview or to change what it is that we talk about. If you have become upset after the interview you could use the list of organisations that provide an array of free services, including a list of specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers. This list will be included in the information pack you will be given when we first meet. If this list does not cover what you need, feel free to contact me for further information.

**How can I make a complaint if I am not happy with how I was treated during the project?** You will be provided with a letter of introduction from my university supervisors and from the management of OARS. These letters will provide contact numbers of my supervisors and of the Research Ethics Committee here at Flinders University. Before we begin any research work together I will provide you with details on how to use the OARS Community Transitions complaints process if you have a grievance about how I have conducted myself, or treated you in our interviews.

**How will my identity be kept private?** You will be allowed to ask me to turn off the tape at any time during the interview. Your personal details will be kept confidential at every

stage of the project. Your name and any time date or event that may identify you will be changed. I (Michele) will personally type up your interviews, which will also help to keep your personal details private. You will be given the opportunity to use a name of your choice in the project, meaning that if you ever read any of the published research from this project, you will know if it is your story that I am writing about. Your signed consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my supervisor's office at the University.

**What will this research be used for?** This research will form the foundation of my PhD. As part of the research process, I will be presenting this research to policy makers, service providers and frontline workers to inform them of your experiences and the sorts of services you would like to access to assist you as you return to the community once you have been released from prison. The only funding I will receive from this project is to pay participants for their time, and to cover the cost of the cameras, film developing and photo albums. It is hoped that along with my completed thesis—which is a large document (80-90,000 words) that is required by the university—further presentations to service providers and journal articles will be developed from this research.

**What will I get for participating in this project?** To recognise your commitment of time and knowledge in this project I will provide you with a Coles/Myer shopping voucher at each of the three stages of the project, along with bus tickets to get you to our meetings. Additionally, I will provide snacks and drinks when we meet and after our taped interview, you will be presented with an album of your photographs.

**How is OARS involved in this study?** OARS Community Transitions has not provided any direct funding for this project, rather they have agreed to help me recruit participants and will allow me to use their interview rooms in their Sturt Street offices.

**How do I say I want to participate?** If you would like to participate in this research project please contact me (Michele) on 0000 000 000. All you need to do is send an SMS with your first name and I will call as soon as possible. I will be happy to answer any further questions that you may have when we talk on the phone. I look forward to meeting you and working together in this project.

## Appendix D: Letter of Introduction: Seeds of Affinity



Dear Seeds of Affinity Member

The purpose of this letter is to introduce you to Michele Jarldorn who is undertaking a research project about your experiences in the community once you left prison. Michele is a qualified social worker and worked for OARS when she graduated. Michele would like to invite you to become part of the project if you are interested.

Participating in the research will entail you meeting initially with Michele to talk about your experiences and for her to explain what you will be agreeing to do. You will then be given a disposable camera to take photos. Michele will get the photos developed and then meet with you again so you can explain what the pictures mean to you.

Your identity will be kept confidential in the project. You will choose your own name and anything that you say that might identify you will be changed. For example if you choose the name 'Sarah' and say you grew up in Modbury, she will write that Sarah [not her real name] grew up in Adelaide's northern suburbs. By choosing your own name, you will know that when she writes about 'Sarah' it is your story she is referring to.

Michele will use the findings from the research to promote a greater understanding of your experiences amongst workers and policy makers. To do this, an exhibition has been organised as an event in the 2015 Adelaide Fringe Festival, where she will be seeking feedback from people who attend as part of her data. After the exhibition, Seeds of Affinity will be provided with some of the photos and will be provided with any written work, including the completed thesis, which are published throughout the project.

Seeds of Affinity have not provided any funding for the project, just a way for Michele to make contact with you if you are willing to participate. Funding has been granted from a Flinders University Research Grant for PhD students and Michele receives a scholarship to allow her to study full time.

Please be assured that Michele will treat you, your photographs and stories with the utmost respect at all times. The board envisages that you will find participating in this project enjoyable, but if you don't, you can pull out of the project at any time without having to provide a reason. Doing so will not affect your relationship with Seeds of Affinity or any other services that you may use.

If you want to know more about the project, please collect an information sheet at our next meeting, and text your first name to Michele on the number provided. She will call you back as soon as possible.



## Appendix E: Participant Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH (by interview)

Returning the gaze: Ex-prisoners use Photovoice to inform policy and practice about life after prison.

I .....

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Information Sheet for the research project on the experiences and hopes of people who have been released from prison.

1. I have read the information provided, or have had someone I know and trust read it to me.
2. I understand what I will be asked to do during the research project.
3. I understand that whether I participate or not, or decide to withdraw from participating after agreeing to participate, this will have no effect on any service or treatment that is being provided to me.
4. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. I understand that the researcher is a mandated notifier and is bound by the law to report any concerns about possible physical and or emotional harm to children, myself or others.
6. I understand that I will not be asked to talk about any illegal or criminal activity as a part of this project.
7. I have had the issues of other people's privacy in regard to the photographs I take clearly explained to me.
8. I understand that while the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified in any way and all of my individual information will remain confidential.
9. I agree to an audio-recording of my interview, which will then be typed up by the researcher.
10. I agree to have one or more of the photographs I take in this research project to be published in a PhD thesis, journal articles or other publications.
11. I agree to have one or more of the photographs I take during this research project to be shown at a public event to present the findings of the research project.

- 12. I understand that during the taped interview I may ask that the recording may be stopped at any time.
- 13. I understand that I am free to decline to answer any particular questions without having to explain why.
- 14. I understand that at any time during the interview, or at any other stage during the project, I may withdraw from the session or whole project without any disadvantage. If I decide to withdraw at any time this will in no way affect the amount or quality of services I receive from OARS or any other service provider I may access now or in the future.
- 15. I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research project.

**Participant's signature.....Date.....**

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

**Researcher's name.....**

**Researcher's signature.....Date.....**

*NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.*

## Appendix F: Photovoice Handbook



Returning the gaze: Ex-prisoners use Photovoice to inform policy and practice about life after prison

**Photovoice researcher manual**

### What is Photovoice ?

Photovoice is a research method which aims to give people whose opinions are rarely asked for or heard a voice in policy making and service design.

Photovoice is called participatory action research, which means that you as the participant are acknowledged as the expert in your own life.

One of the most important aspects of Photovoice is that it is used to help policy makers to understand your experiences.

Importantly, your ideas and examples will direct how this research project begins to understand the hopes, dreams and experiences of people once they are released from prison.

Please read through this booklet before you set out to take photos. I look forward to seeing the images you come up with.



## Some things to consider before you start

### Important:

Please do not take any photographs of any criminal or illegal activity as I am bound by the rules of the Flinders University Research Ethics Committee to report it.

Please remember that I cannot use a photograph of your face or of anyone who is close to you. I must keep your identity private at all times in this project.

There are ways around this though. Perhaps you could take a photo of people you know but from behind or at different angles so their faces cannot be seen like the photos on the right. There are more examples of this throughout the booklet.



## Photographing in public

Be creative. There are lots of ways of taking a [self portrait](#)-see the photo at the bottom of the page

You can take photos at a sporting event or on a city street as these are deemed public places, but please remember to respect other [peoples](#) privacy.

Don't worry too much about the quality of photos you take. What is important is that you take photos of things, events, places that might make people think or represent your experiences.

Once the photos have been developed we will meet to talk about what the photos mean to you.



## How to use the camera

Hold the camera with both hands to keep the camera steady.

Put your hands around the camera, to avoid your fingers covering the lens.

Good light will help to get a good photo. Whenever possible, take pictures in well lit areas.

Use the flash inside, in dark areas or at night

Don't take photos any closer than 1 metre from the camera.



## Try something different

Most of the photos in this booklet are all from other Photovoice projects.

They are of everyday things but look interesting because of the unusual angles the participants have taken their photos from.

Turn the camera in different ways rather than just straight across.

Try getting down low to take a photo like the one of the bridge, or looking up into light like the photo at the top of the page.



Try something different, continued.

The photo of the 2 men and the splashing water wasn't posed. The photographer saw something and snapped the photo, not knowing how it would turn out.

The photo of the sandals in front of the city skyline was done by the photographer lying on the ground to achieve an unusual angle and clever placement of the shoes.

Try to think about different ways of looking at every day things. Looking up at a tree trunk looks better than standing in front of it.

Pictures posed with one person in the middle facing directly at the camera can be boring. Try moving the camera so that the main subject of the photo is off to one side like the photo in the bottom, right corner of this page.



*"In prison, those things withheld from and denied to the prisoner become precisely what he wants most of all."*

*— Eldridge Cleaver*

For more information about any aspect of this research project please contact Ms Michele Jarldorn

School of Social and Policy Studies,  
Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences,  
Flinders University  
Bedford Park  
South Australia.

Email: [michele.jarldorn@flinders.edu.au](mailto:michele.jarldorn@flinders.edu.au)  
Phone:



## Appendix G: Fringe Media release



Media release: 2015 Adelaide Fringe, *Returning the Gaze*

Ex-prisoners use photography to highlight their experiences of life after prison.

A vast array of perspectives and memories have been created by a small group of ex-prisoners in South Australia. Each were given a single use, disposable camera and were asked to use it to create images that depicted aspects of their release from prison into the community. The guiding question was, 'if you could get fifteen minutes with a policy maker or politician, what would you want to tell them about your experience'?

*Returning the Gaze* sees a flip of the usual surveillance of ex-prisoners and provides them a space to reflect upon the barriers and opportunities after spending time in prison, the good and the bad times as they return to the community.

The pictures and stories speak of the lingering pains of incarceration, limited opportunities for reform, loss of dignity and denial of humanity. The narratives provided a combination of sadness, loss and remorse, yet stories of hopes and dreams were also present. After living in a prison, sometimes for years, where people are stripped of self-determination and personal agency, release can provide challenges that can at times seem insurmountable.

A set of complex emotions combined with isolation and lack of resources can make staying out of prison seem an impossibility. To survive release and be a successful community member, ex-prisoners have to very quickly relearn how to be independent and autonomous.

You can also be a part of this research. When you attend this event you will be asked to provide feedback [anonymously] on what you thought of some of the themes shown in the exhibition and to comment on particular aspects that resonated with you. Your feedback will become part of the data analysed in the project and will be presented as findings in the completed thesis. Michele will be on hand throughout the entire exhibition to talk you through the works on display if you would like to know more.

This exhibition is part of PhD research project conducted by Michele Jarldorn from Flinders University. The project aims to challenge some of the negative stereotypes of ex-prisoners and is a step towards a more inclusive community that accepts prisoners back into the community once their punishment is complete.

Where and when?: Flinders University, Victoria Square Campus, Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday February 18<sup>th</sup>, 9 am -5 pm.

How much?: The event is free

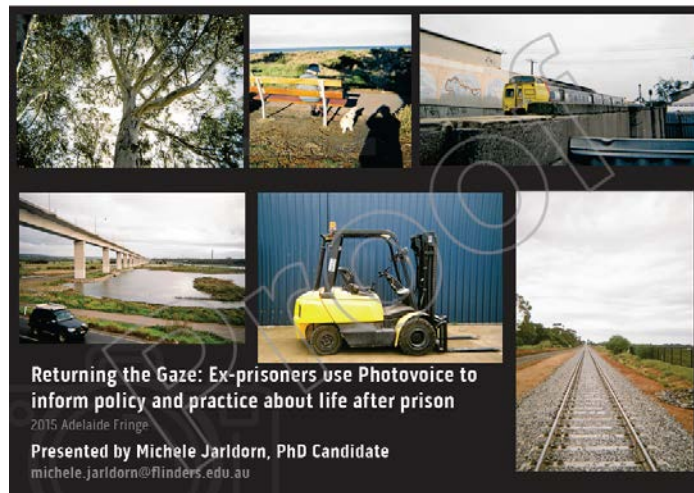
Contact details: [michele.jarldorn@flinders.edu.au](mailto:michele.jarldorn@flinders.edu.au)

Phone: xxxx xxx xxx

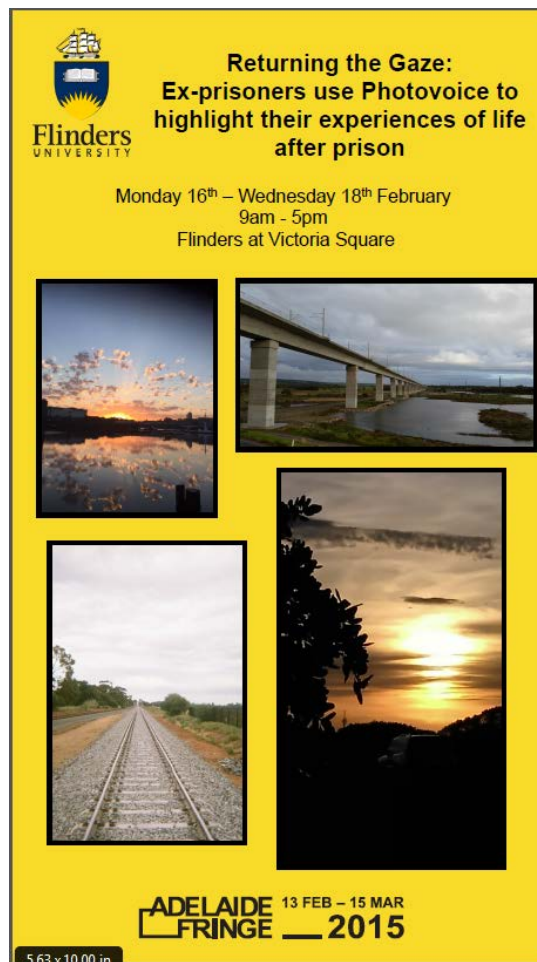
Web page: <http://www.flinders.edu.au/people/michele.jarldorn>

# Appendix H: Fringe promotional material

## Postcard



## Exhibition signage





## Appendix I: Fringe Visitor Feedback Form

Thank you for attending the exhibition, *Returning the Gaze*, as part of the 2015 Adelaide Fringe.

**Part of this research is to find out what you, the public, thought about the images and stories portrayed here today. Could you spare a few minutes of your time to provide some feedback?**

In the box below could you please write any comments you have about the exhibition? It may be about one or more of the particular photographs or stories that resonated with you. Perhaps you learned something about the post-release experiences of prisoners that you had not considered before? Maybe you want to make a suggestion about what sort of supports ex-prisoners should be made available upon their release?

Your feedback will be completely anonymous. While I have asked for your age and gender you may skip that section and head straight to the comments box if you prefer.

If you have any further questions about the research, please feel free to contact me via email on [michele.jarldorn@flinders.edu.au](mailto:michele.jarldorn@flinders.edu.au)

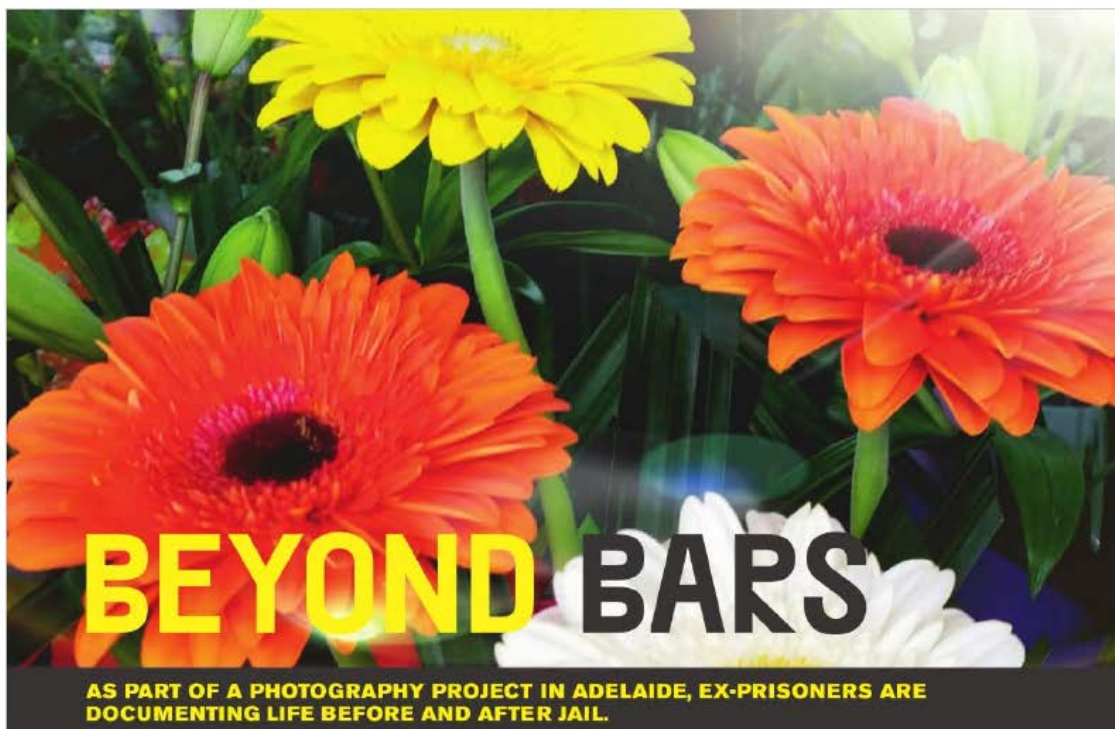
When you are finished, please place your form in the box provided.

**Gender:** (please use any term you wish to describe your gender)

.....

**Age:** (please circle)                      under 20      21-35      36-50                      51-65                      66  
and over

Eg: I though the exhibition was...



A COUPLE OF years ago, the genealogy website [ancestry.com.au](http://ancestry.com.au) ran a special promotion around Australia Day to attract new customers: 'Search for your convict ancestors FREE...' It listed some notable Australians who claim convict ancestry, including chef Maggie Beer and cricketer Rod Marsh.

The lives of the first Australian convicts are fascinating to many people. Proving ancestry can even spark a kind of rugged pride. In the popular version of Australia's history, the convicts' crimes were often petty, the punishment was harsh and there were often extenuating circumstances – not least the squalor of industrialising Britain.

But there is much less affection for, and interest in, people serving time in Australian prisons today. Most Australians have never been inside a correctional facility. Jail is a black hole – a place where governments promise they'll send drunk drivers and paedophiles for ever-longer sentences as proof they are 'tough on crime'. What happens to the

people in there and, especially, what happens to them after they've served their sentences, is seldom discussed.

But these issues merit consideration. Prison populations in Australia swelled almost 10% between 2013 and 2014, reoffending rates are high (three in five prisoners have served sentences before), and the Indigenous Australian incarceration rate is truly alarming. Indigenous people account for just 2% of the Australian population; 27% of the prisoner population.

Trent [not his real name] is now an apprentice tiler in Adelaide, but he used to have a drug problem and recently completed a prison sentence for theft. He believes Australia's prisons are largely counterproductive.

"There's not really much rehabilitation in prison," he says. "It's really a place to house people who have done the wrong thing and that's it... It's pretty sad. In the time that I was there, I saw a number of people who were released on parole and back in prison within two or three weeks...

because [prison] is all they know."

Trent is one of 12 ex-prisoners from South Australia who have been working on a photography project called *Returning the Gaze*. The participants were each given a disposable camera which, over a series of months, they used to depict aspects of their life after prison.

The project is run by Flinders University social work researcher Michele Jarldorn and is based on a research method called 'photovoice', which has its roots in documentary photography. Jarldorn says the idea was to get a sense from ex-prisoners about the challenges of daily life after prison.

"The main thing...has been to let [ex-prisoners] have a voice because so often the loudest voice is the voice of authority," Jarldorn says. "This is not to minimise victims of crimes' experiences or their needs. It's about recognising that some of the people who end up in prison have had some pretty crappy treatment."

Hundreds of photographs were produced by the participants over a period

of several months, some of which were displayed at an Adelaide Fringe Festival exhibition earlier this year. Jarldorn says many of the responses showed a great deal of self-reflection.

"Even though it was originally framed as a project about recidivism, and about what happens outside of prison, nearly all of the participants elected to talk about what led them to prison and create a photograph that did that."

In a caption that accompanies Trent's photograph, 'Long Term' (below), he writes: "This...is about not being able to see the signs for myself, like my emotional state of mind, my addictions and the early warning signs... I was selfish then."

Trent chose to use not only the supplied camera but also his mobile phone. Photography – and altering his photographs with digital effects – has now become a hobby. Among his favourites is the image of a tunnel (below).

"[My kids] were the light at the end of the tunnel for me," he explains. In his caption, Trent focuses on prisoners' families: "I wish Corrections could make prison visits a lot easier, especially for

children. My children were nervous enough about coming to prison to see me, they were separated from [their] mum at times by big doors and that really scared them... My partner could have used some support while I was in prison."

Many of his photographs concern family. 'Smelling the Roses' (left) is about appreciating simple things after prison. His caption reads: "I'm amazed at how good I feel now with exercise, eating well, having a hobby and having my children... I wish I'd known that 10 years ago."

Many other participants used the project to show how the indignities of prison life can give ordinary objects an ongoing, painful resonance, Jarldorn says. "One woman took a photograph of a whole bunch of keys and talked about how now just the sound of keys jangling puts her on edge and makes her cringe... Another guy put a picture of his old ugg boots [to show] how cold he was in prison and how hard it was to just request a pair of socks."

Another recurring theme from the project was that freedom can be overwhelming after the regimented



nature of prison life. Prior to his time in prison, Trent lived a chaotic life. He was kicked out of home as a teenager and moved into a cycle of drugs and crime. "You've got people who have had no routine in their life and when they get to prison that's actually one thing you sort of thrive on," he says. "I couldn't wait to get out, but when I *did* get out, I had trouble with a lot of things, like someone asking me what I wanted for dinner... My anxiety took over and I'd shut down – because for the past year or so, I'd had no choices."

*Returning the Gaze* calls stereotypes about prisoners and ex-prisoners into question. In many ways, people who have recently served time are not so dissimilar to those first convicts. "We've done bad things," Trent likes to say, "but we're not all bad people."

by **Sophie Quick**

» For more information about *Returning the Gaze*, contact Michele Jarldorn, [jarl0002@uni.flinders.edu.au](mailto:jarl0002@uni.flinders.edu.au).

## Appendix K: Photovoice exhibitions

Adelaide Fringe Festival, February 2015

Seeds of Affinity High Tea, October 2015

Para Hills East Neighbourhood Watch, May 2016

Salisbury North Neighbourhood Watch, July 2016

Adelaide Soroptimists AGM, August 2016

Is Prison Obsolete? Sisters Inside Conference, Brisbane, QLD, October 2016

Southern Vales Zonta Club, November 2016

Southern Domestic Violence Service Fundraiser, April 2017

SOAD9226, Social Work with Groups and Communities, May 2015, July 2016, February, July & September 2017

Forthcoming: SOAD9226; February, April, July & September, 2018

## Appendix L: Publications embedded in this thesis

Jarldorn, M., & Deer. (2017). Participatory action research with ex-prisoners: Using Photovoice and one woman's story told through poetry. *Action Research*, Online First.

### **Abstract**

This paper provides an unexpected and extraordinary example of research data from a Photovoice project conducted with ex-prisoners in South Australia. It focusses on the contribution made by one of the participants who chose the pseudonym 'Deer'. Deer joins me as a co-author, her voice shines in this paper, albeit through a pseudonym she chose for the project. Photovoice, a qualitative research method, uses a feminist framework and typically produces rich thick accounts of lives and experiences that cannot be adequately captured by quantitative research. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research data collection each have merits, but qualitative approaches tend to engage the researcher, participant and later the reader on a more personal level. Moreover, unexpected findings are more likely to arise when researchers ask participants to express what they believe is important to their experience. This paper provides such an example, where the unexpected gift of poetry adds a deeper dimension to research findings.

Jarldorn, M. (2016a). Picturing creative approaches to social work research: Using photography to promote social change. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 28(4), 5-16.

### **Abstract**

**INTRODUCTION:** This article argues for the benefits of employing the arts-based method known as photovoice. Drawn from a social work PhD project with 12 South Australian ex-prisoners, this research aimed to better understand their post-release experiences within the context of a rising prison population and high recidivism rates.

**METHODS:** Participants were given a single-use camera and the research question *if you had 15 minutes with a policy maker or politician, what would you want to tell them about your experience?* Later, the participants' narratives were combined with the photographs and used to create an art exhibition with the rationale that images are more likely to resonate with people than words alone.

**FINDINGS:** Using photovoice in this way has the potential to create new knowledge through the process of participants constructing and retelling accounts of their experiences via the medium of photography.

**CONCLUSION:** I propose that the process of turning research into praxis through participatory action-based methods such as photovoice can be a positive, empowering experience for the participants and researchers

Jarldorn, M. (2016). What can Ruby do with a camera? Ex-prisoners use Photovoice to reverse the rules of surveillance. *Qualitative Social Work*, 15(2), 209-230.

### **Abstract**

This article provides an account of the possibilities of using Photovoice as a research method that can empower participants by foregrounding the data produced by Ruby (a pseudonym) to highlight women's unique experiences of imprisonment and release. Designed using an anti-oppressive, critical social work perspective, this project aims to gain a greater understanding of the post-release experiences of ex-prisoners in South Australia. Participants were posed with the research question 'if you were able to spend 15 minutes with a politician or policy maker, what would you want to tell them about your experiences?' Through her lens, Ruby returns the gaze of surveillance, commenting on the disempowerment women experience in prison and their attempts at reclaiming their rights and dignity. Ruby's data discredit some of the pervasive myths surrounding criminalised women, while calling for fair medical treatment and equal opportunities for women to prepare for their release. This article concludes that the solidarity built between women in prison helps them to tolerate undignified spaces and that their freedom is tempered with an enduring concern for those left behind.

Jarldorn, M. (2015). Capturing captivity: Photo project gives prisoners a voice. *Bulletin (Law Society of South Australia)*, 37(8), 36-37.

### **Abstract**

Traditionally, human rights work is understood to operate within a legal framework, where legal professionals use their technical skills to advocate for human rights. Yet as Jim Ife recommends, empowering people to seek their own rights, or claiming "rights from below" strengthens communities, as it locates people's lived experience as central to the

community development process. While input from service users is becoming recognised as central to the design and implementation of social policy (such as the NDIS), people in conflict with the law are rarely given an opportunity to inform correctional policy and procedures. Twelve South Australian ex-prisoners (nine women and three men) participated in a Photovoice project to discuss the practices and procedures that helped and hindered their experiences of imprisonment and release.

Jarldorn, M. (accepted for publication). *Photovoice for Social Workers: Method, Practicalities and Possibilities for Social Change*. Springer International Publishing AG: Switzerland

### **Abstract**

The overarching aim of this book is to provide inspiration for social workers in particular and also other workers in the human services to explore creative ways to engage with communities. Although the language is simple, the information is based on strong theoretical foundations and grounded in ethical principles. It is intended to be a resource for workers already in practice as well as for students and academics who may teach the principles of action research. The format is easy to read, offers practical guidelines, case studies as well as templates for readers to use in their own projects.

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