



# MONASH University

## **Imprisoned primary carer fathers in Victoria and their experiences of arrest and imprisonment**

*By*

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## **Publications during enrolment**

### **Peer-reviewed journal articles**

Bartlett, TS & Eriksson, A 2018, 'How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space', *Punishment and Society*, vol. 0, no. 0. Online Access: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1462474518757092?journalCode=puna>

Bartlett, T, Flynn, C & Trotter, C 2018, "'They didn't even let me say goodbye". A study of primary carer fathers arrested in Victoria, Australia', *Child Care in Practice*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 115-130.

Bartlett, TS forthcoming, 'Supporting incarcerated fathers: An exploration of research and practice in Australia', *Probation Journal*.

Bartlett, TS & Trotter, C forthcoming, 'Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia', *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*.

### **Reports**

Trotter, CJ, Flynn, CA, Sheehan, RJ & Bartlett, TS 2018, 'Evaluating children's visiting programs: Prison In-Visits and Supported Children's Transport Programs', Corrections Victoria, Victoria.

### **Commentary**

Bartlett, TS 2018, *Imprisoned primary carer fathers and their children: An international perspective*, Sylff, Tokyo, viewed 12<sup>th</sup> November 2018, [https://www.sylff.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SRA-short-article\\_Tess-Bartlett.pdf](https://www.sylff.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SRA-short-article_Tess-Bartlett.pdf)

## **Thesis including published works declaration**

I, *Tess Samantha Bartlett*, hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes four original papers published or accepted for publication in peer reviewed journals. The core theme of the thesis is the experiences of imprisoned men, who are not only a father, but were primary carers of their children before incarceration. The research focuses on the point of arrest and their experiences during imprisonment. The ideas, development, and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the student, working within the Department of Social Work under the supervision of Dr Catherine Flynn, Associate Professor Anna Eriksson, and Professor Christopher Trotter.

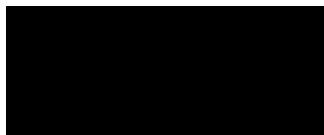
(The inclusion of co-authors reflects the fact that the work came from active collaboration between researchers and acknowledges input into team-based research.)

In the case of Chapters Two, Five, Six, and Seven my contribution to the work involved the following:

<b>Thesis Chapter</b>	<b>Publication Title</b>	<b>Status</b> (published, in press, accepted or returned for revision, submitted)	<b>Nature and % of student contribution</b>	<b>Co-author name(s)</b> <b>Nature and % of Co-author's contribution*</b>
2	Supporting incarcerated fathers: An exploration of research and practice in Australia	Accepted	100% concept, reviewed literature, prepared and revised manuscript	
5	They didn't even let me say goodbye'. A study of primary carer fathers arrested in Victoria, Australia	Published	60%. Concept, reviewed literature, prepared and revised data collection, conducted analysis, prepared and revised manuscript	1) Dr Catherine Flynn, input into manuscript 25% 2) Prof. Christopher Trotter, input into manuscript 15%
6	How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space	Published	75%. Concept, reviewed literature, prepared and revised data collection, conducted analysis, prepared and revised manuscript	1) Assoc. Prof. Anna Eriksson, input into manuscript 25%
7	Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia	Accepted and returned for revisions	75% Concept, reviewed literature, prepared and revised data collection, conducted analysis, prepared and revised manuscript	1) Prof Christopher Trotter, input into manuscript 25%

I have renumbered sections of submitted or published papers in order to generate a consistent presentation within the thesis.

**Student signature:**



**Date:**

15<sup>th</sup> November 2018

The undersigned hereby certify that the above declaration correctly reflects the nature and extent of the student's and co-authors' contributions to this work. In instances where I am not the responsible author I have consulted with the responsible author to agree on the respective contributions of the authors.

**Main Supervisor signature:**



**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018

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## Abstract

It is well established that the majority of prisoners are men and further that around half of these men are fathers of dependent children (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2017; Glaze & Kaeble 2014). Yet there has been little formal attention paid to the parenting status of these men, despite knowledge about the impact of parental incarceration on children being well established (see, for example, Brown, Dibb, Shenton & Elson 2001; Dennison & Smallbone 2015). This thesis inclusive of published works (containing four publications) provides new insights into the experiences of 39 imprisoned primary carer fathers whose child/ren at the point of their father's arrest or imprisonment either required a new carer to take over their care in their home, needed to move to a new house to live with another carer, or who were left with no carer. In particular, it addresses their experiences of arrest and imprisonment in Victoria. This thesis highlights notable gaps in research, theory, and practice by: examining how incarcerated primary carer fathers experience planning processes for their children at the time of arrest and the factors that facilitate or hinder the planning process; providing new insights into fathering and conflicting constructions of masculinity that exist within the prison as seen in "frontstage" and "backstage" selves and *how fathers perform* fathering within the liminal prison space; and by examining the current state of fathering programs and supports in prison in Victoria.

This thesis draws on data gathered for an Australian Research Council funded study conducted in Victoria and New South Wales that examined how dependent children were responded to when their primary carer was imprisoned. It focuses specifically on data collected via structured interviews with primary carer fathers in Victoria between May 2012 and October 2013; these men were drawn from maximum-, medium-, and minimum- security classifications across three prison settings. Qualitative data were analysed using NVivo10 and NVivo 11; a different approach to analysis was adopted for each of the three findings articles.

This thesis highlights current gaps in knowledge and in current responses to fathers and their children. Findings indicate that in over three-quarters of arrests ( $n = 27$ , 80%), both in the home and the community, fathers report that the police were aware of their primary carer status regardless of whether children were present or not. Despite this awareness, results depict an absence of any discussion about children between police and fathers during the arrest process. Once inside the prison, findings indicate that visiting spaces in Victoria are not conducive to fathering as they are liminal spaces where it is difficult for men to consider their identity as anything but a prisoner within them. Lastly, findings indicate that there is a distinct lack of support for fathers in prison, acting as a barrier towards maintaining father-child relationships where 79% of the fathers were never offered any fathering support services or programs whilst in prison. Only four fathers had accessed any fathering programs and these programs did not provide any face-to-face contact between fathers and their children. Drawing on key ideas of masculinity, identity, and the self, the study findings highlight a range of needs: for adult criminal justice services to see men as fathers; for child sensitive guidelines at arrest; for visiting spaces to focus on connecting fathers and children; and for prison-based programs to make family a central facet of the prison experience.

# Contents

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Copyright notice</i> .....	<i>iii</i>
<i>Publications during enrolment</i> .....	<i>iv</i>
<i>Thesis including published works declaration</i> .....	<i>v</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	<i>viii</i>
<i>Abstract</i> .....	<i>x</i>
<i>Contents</i> .....	<i>xii</i>
<i>List of tables</i> .....	<i>xv</i>
<i>List of acronyms and abbreviations</i> .....	<i>xvi</i>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Significance of this study .....	8
1.2 Adopting a reflexive gaze: Researcher position .....	10
1.3 Key terms .....	12
1.4 Thesis overview .....	13
1.4.1 Thesis including published works .....	14
1.4.2 Thesis structure .....	14
2.0 Preamble to Chapter Two .....	17
<b>Chapter Two (Article 1): “Supporting incarcerated fathers: An exploration of research and practice in Australia”</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology Part I and II</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<b>Part I: Study methodology</b> .....	<b>49</b>
3.1 Research context .....	49
3.1.1 ARC project aims .....	49
3.1.2 ARC project primary and secondary data .....	50
3.1.3 ARC sample and participants .....	51
3.2 Current study .....	55
3.2.1 Recruitment .....	55
3.2.2 Study sample .....	56

3.2.3 Study data collection .....	56
<b>3.3 Research ethics .....</b>	<b>57</b>
3.3.1 Ethical concerns specific to prison environments .....	58
<b>3.4 Methodology .....</b>	<b>60</b>
3.4.1 Exploratory research.....	60
3.4.2 Trustworthiness .....	61
<b>3.5 Limitations.....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>3.6 Conceptualising the data: Theoretical framework .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>3.7 Data analysis.....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.7.1 Qualitative content analysis (Chapter Five: Article 2):.....	64
3.7.2 Qualitative thematic analysis (Chapter Six: Article 3):.....	65
3.7.3 Qualitative content analysis (Chapter Seven: Article 4): .....	66
<b>3.8 Summary and conclusion .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b><i>Part II: A reflexive approach to prison research .....</i></b>	<b><i>68</i></b>
3.9 Self-awareness and researcher biases .....	69
3.10 Navigating prison structures, systems, and safety .....	71
3.11 Managing relationships in prisons .....	74
3.12 Gender and researching in male prisons .....	76
3.13 Summary and conclusion .....	78
3.14 Chapter Three conclusion .....	79
<b><i>Chapter Four: Conceptual framework.....</i></b>	<b><i>80</i></b>
4.2 Introduction.....	80
4.3 The self - ‘frontstage prisoner identity’ and ‘backstage fathering self’.....	81
4.4 Masculinity: Prison masculinities and fatherhood .....	83
4.5 Identity: Fathering identity and fathering programs in prison .....	86
5.0 Preamble to Chapter Five .....	90
<b><i>Chapter Five (Article 2): “‘They didn’t even let me say goodbye’. A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers’ care planning for children at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia”.....</i></b>	<b><i>91</i></b>
6.0 Preamble to Chapter Six .....	120

<b><i>Chapter Six (Article 3): “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space”</i></b>	<b>121</b>
7.0 Preamble to Chapter Seven	153
<b><i>Chapter Seven (Article 4): “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia”</i></b>	<b>154</b>
<b><i>Chapter Eight: Integrated discussion and conclusion</i></b>	<b>180</b>
8.1 Study overview	180
8.2 Interaction of internal and external processes	182
8.2.1 Internal processes: masculinity, identity, and the self	183
8.3 External processes: Overlooked and unsupported at arrest and imprisonment	185
8.3.1 External processes: Arrest	186
8.3.2 External processes: Imprisonment	190
8.4 Methods	198
8.4.1 Reflexivity and prison research: Methodology	200
8.4.2 Reflexivity in prison research: Overlooked in academia	202
<b><i>References</i></b>	<b>206</b>
<b><i>Appendix I: (Article for Sylff) “Imprisoned primary carer fathers and their children: An international perspective”</i></b>	<b>225</b>
<b><i>Appendix II: Interview schedule for parents (Interview 1)</i></b>	<b>232</b>
<b><i>Appendix III: Ethics approval letter</i></b>	<b>259</b>
<b><i>Appendix IV: Pre- interview screening questions</i></b>	<b>263</b>
<b><i>Appendix V: Participant information sheet</i></b>	<b>264</b>
<b><i>Appendix VI: Consent form – prisoners</i></b>	<b>267</b>
<b><i>Appendix VII: Interview recap</i></b>	<b>269</b>

## List of tables

Please note that tables and figures included in published works are not included in this list.

<i>Table 1 Participating prisons.....</i>	<i>53</i>
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## **List of acronyms and abbreviations**

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARC	Australian Research Council
BJS	Bureau of Justice Statistics
CJRC	Criminal Justice Research Consortium
COIF	Children of Incarcerated Fathers
COIP	Children of Incarcerated Parents
CP	Child Protection
CV	Corrections Victoria
DHS	Department of Human Services (now DHHS)
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DHHS Protocol	Protecting Children Protocol between Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police
DOJ	Department of Justice (now DoJR)
DoJR	Department of Justice and Regulation
EFP	Educational Fathering Programs
FIM	Family Integration Mentors
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committees



IACP	International Association of Chiefs of Police
IWW	Invisible Walls Wales
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-government organisations
NHMRC	The National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research
NI	Northern Ireland
NSW	New South Wales
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCC	Research Coordinating Committees
SHINE	SHINE for Kids
SOG	Special Operations Group
SYLFF	Royoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund
TA	Thematic analysis
VACRO	Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
VIC	Victoria
VO	Victorian Ombudsman
VP	Victoria Police

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Victoria's prison system is in crisis. In a 2015 report outlining the state of imprisonment in Victoria, Victorian Ombudsman (VO) Deborah Glass asked "What is the correctional system doing to rehabilitate offenders – to improve public safety and reduce the number of repeat offenders? Plainly, not enough" (VO 2015, p. 2).

The numbers of prisoners in Victoria are climbing. In the last decade, Victoria's prison population has almost doubled (Farnsworth 2018), with a 25.8% increase between 2012 to 2014 (VO 2015). In 2017, there was further expansion of the prison system, with the opening of a new 1,000 capacity private prison; it was noted by the VO in 2015 that this is estimated to be at capacity by 2019 (VO 2015). Not only are imprisonment rates climbing, the costs of keeping people in prison are too. It now costs around \$130,000 a year to house someone in prison in Victoria (Farnsworth 2018) and 44.1% of those in prison (44.4% of men) return to prison within two years of release (VO 2015). In the 2015 report, the Ombudsman goes on to declare that corrections must make rehabilitation and reintegration a priority, given that imprisonment for almost every person is temporary (VO 2015). In reality, however, rising prison numbers have seen a reduction in access to programs and services for people in prison. This study draws attention to the need for further focus on rehabilitation, as failure to do so has serious consequences for incarcerated fathers and their children.

It is well established that over 90% of prisoners are men (Glaze & Kaeble 2014; Corrections Victoria (CV) 2018c). In Victoria alone, as of 31 July 2018 there were 7,232 men in prison, compared to 604 women (CV 2018c), and it is widely estimated that around 50% of incarcerated men are parents (Australian Institute Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2015; Glaze & Maruschak 2008). Despite this, it is only in recent times that any attention has been paid to the parenting status of these men. With regard to incarcerated parents more generally, in Australia the exact number of these parents, and children of incarcerated parents (COIP), is unknown, as

data of this type is not routinely collected. The US, however, does offer some more reliable information, albeit now dated. In 2007, national survey data indicated that 63% of federal inmates and 52% of state inmates were parents (744,200 fathers and 65,600 mothers), with an estimated 1.7 million minor children affected (Glaze & Maruschak 2008). In 2011, a NZ study found that of the 269 prisoners interviewed (out of 368), there were 861 children between them; a number supported by the National Health Committee which estimated there were 20,000 COIP in NZ on any given day (Gordon 2011). Within an Australian context, a 2005 New South Wales (NSW) study estimated that approximately 38,000 children under 16 had experienced parental incarceration each year (Quilty 2005). Yet these data only provide an indication of a broader issue.

When looking at paternal incarceration specifically, Australian data capture snapshots of information. An AIHW report from 2015, drawing on data primarily from the National Prisoner Health Data Collection, indicated that 46% of the 1,011 male “prison entrants”<sup>1</sup> had at least one dependent child prior to imprisonment (AIHW 2015, p. 8), while Queensland data from 2013 estimated that in any given year some 0.8% of children in that State would be affected by paternal incarceration and around 4% in their lifetime (Dennison, Stewart & Freiberg 2013). For Indigenous children the rate was much higher, with these children being nine times more likely to experience their father’s incarceration in any year and four times more likely in their lifetime (Dennison et al. 2013).

Within Victoria, where this study is based, there are very little formal data. In 2014, when the current study was undertaken, CV statistics obtained by the Criminal Justice Research Consortium (CJRC) (Trotter et al. 2015) indicate that around 11% of the 5,706 men (ABS 2014)

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<sup>1</sup>A prison entrant was defined as a person 18 years or over entering full-time custody on remand or on a sentence (AIHW 2015).

received into prison from 2013 to 2014, were primary carers of children prior to imprisonment. Here primary carer is used to define fathers whose child/ren at the point of their father's arrest or imprisonment either required a new carer to take over their care in their home, needed to move to a new house to live with another carer, or who were left with no carer. In 2014, this was approximately 630 men and today, given that there are currently around 7,232 men in prison in Victoria (CV 2018c), as noted above, this number would be around 795 primary carer fathers.<sup>2</sup> Yet as there has been little attention given to this group there remains a gap in research, theory, and practice with regard to primary carer fathers in prison. Previous studies that explore the experiences of parents at arrest and imprisonment tend to focus on fathers' experiences of arrest and/or imprisonment (Dennison, Smallbone & Occhipinti 2017), mothers' experiences of arrest (Lilburn 2001), sentencing (Minson 2017), or imprisonment (Baldwin & Epstein 2017), or use gender neutral terms such as "parent" (Nieto 2002). This makes it difficult to differentiate between the impact of paternal or maternal arrest and/or imprisonment on children. Whilst these studies provide significant information regarding the impact of parental arrest/imprisonment on children, they are not specific to primary carer fathers. This gap in research and practice formed a significant backdrop to this study.

This study therefore focuses on the experiences of imprisoned primary carer fathers in Victoria, Australia, and aims to provide new insights into this group's experiences of arrest and imprisonment. These are fathers whose child/ren either required a new carer to take over their care in their home, needed to move to a new house to live with another carer, or who were left with no carer. It explores primary carer fathers' experiences through a lens of masculinity, identity, and the self and argues that primary carer fathers, as carers, continue to be largely

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<sup>2</sup> These numbers are based on 2018 data that was available at the time of writing. The same numbers are used in Chapter Eight, the Integrated Discussion and Conclusion. Chapter's Five, Six and Seven include lower numbers as they utilised statistics that were available when the articles were submitted/published.

overlooked throughout the criminal justice process. In doing so, it brings primary carer fathers to the centre of discussions around primary care and the criminal justice system by questioning the gendered assumptions that exist with regard to primary carers and children, as fathers are, typically, not assumed to be primary caregivers of children. Due to the lack of knowledge relating to incarcerated primary carer fathers outlined above, this study draws on data relating to arrested and incarcerated fathers and parents more generally to provide significant context. By examining an extreme case sample (Patton 2002) of primary carer fathers, this study clearly highlights the problems and gaps that exist for these men at the point of arrest and imprisonment whilst simultaneously highlighting the paucity of knowledge relating to incarcerated fathers more generally.

While several key studies focus on children of prisoners (Condry 2011, 2016; Flynn & Butler 2018), there are only a very small number that have explored the impact of parental *arrest* on children (Dallaire & Wilson 2010; Phillips & Zhao 2010) and the nature of arrest processes when arresting parents (Neville 2010; Nieto 2002). While not specific to fathers, that research indicates that for children, witnessing an arrest can be traumatic and is a predictor of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms (Phillips & Zhao 2010). Furthermore, being exposed to parental arrest has been linked with a number of effects for children including (but not limited to) separation anxiety, hyper-vigilance, irritability, and loss of sleep (The Yale Child Study Center 2011). However, this research typically fails to differentiate between multiple traumatic events on children, such as imprisonment *and* arrest (Dallaire & Wilson 2010; Simmons 2000). The US International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) developed a Model Policy in response to the impacts of parental arrests on children which directly addresses the needs of children at the point of arrest and the time following this (IACP 2014). In Australia, there are very little data relating to arrest and guidelines are open to considerable interpretation. The Victoria Police (2017) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (2012) have a joint protocol for dealing with children in need of protection, noting the need for police

to consider a report to Child Protection (CP) where a parent is incapacitated (which can include being in custody), yet these guidelines offer no further advice for police regarding this issue (Bartlett, Flynn & Trotter 2018). This study explores the care planning processes that take place when a primary carer father is arrested in Victoria and the factors that help or hinder this process.

As well as examining the point of arrest, this study explores primary carer fathers' experiences of imprisonment, focusing firstly on how fathers construct and perform masculinity within the prison environment and secondly on the current state of fathering programs in prisons in Victoria. As noted previously, there is a paucity of knowledge relating to *primary carer* fathers in prison. Yet some attention has been paid to imprisoned fathers more generally, with studies examining issues such as: prison visiting and fatherhood (Dennison, Smallbone, Stewart, Freiberg & Teague 2014; Moran 2017; Pierce 2015); fatherhood, generativity, and intergenerational offending (Halsey & Deegan 2012); fatherhood and identity within the prison (Chui 2016; Clarke et al. 2005; Meek 2011); the consequences of paternal incarceration (Roettger & Swisher 2013; Turney & Wildeman 2013); and challenges facing Indigenous fathers in Australia (Dennison & Smallbone 2015). Similar to arrest, research of this type tends to focus on parents (more generally) or use gender neutral terms that makes identifying primary carers challenging.

Studies have shown that COIP, more generally, are consistently shown to experience a range of challenges. These include: problems at school (Tomaino, Ryan, Markotic & Gladwell 2005); depression, anxiety, sadness, nightmares, and sleeping problems (Johnston & Gabel 1995; Scharff Smith 2014); health problems (Wright & Seymour 2000); and stigma (Brown et al. 2001). Studies examining children of incarcerated fathers (COIF) specifically show that father absence, due to incarceration, impacts children in a variety of psychological and behavioural ways (see Walker & McCarthy 2005; Waller & Swisher 2006; Wildeman 2010; Sharp, Marcus-Mendoza, Bentley, Simpson & Love 1998). There is also a tendency when reporting on COIP to emphasise the statistics that are negative. For example, the

intergenerational cycle of offending is touted as being a main priority and one commonly cited statistic is that COIP are six times more likely than other children to end up in prison (Gordon 2011). However, the tendency to focus on the high rate of intergenerational offending needs to be treated with caution as there is very little to base this on (Raimon, Lee & Genty 2009). What this means is that scarce attention is paid to what actually influences these negative outcomes, such as the removal of the parent or witnessing an arrest, which could then cause antisocial behaviour (Murray & Farrington 2005). Nor is there emphasis placed on factors that may serve to prevent negative consequences (Trice & Brewster 2004). (This is a point that is highlighted in more detail in Appendix I in an article that was written as part of an international trip to the United States (Bartlett 2018) funded by the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF).) This study attempts to interrupt this narrative by drawing attention to research and ideas that sit outside the usual discussion relating to fatherhood and imprisonment.

It is important to note that latest figures indicate around half of men in prison in Victoria are there for violent offences (homicide, assault, sexual offences, robbery, and extortion) (CV 2018a) and for some children, contact with their imprisoned father may not be in their best interests (Nesmith & Ruhland 2008; Tasca 2018). While these figures are crucial in understanding the nature of offending for those in prison, they do not indicate the crossover between “men” in general and “fathers” – or, more specifically, “primary carer fathers” – and it is therefore unclear whether the patterns of offending for men are also reflected in the “father” group. Furthermore, broader research also indicates that contact and ongoing relationships between imprisoned fathers and their children can be valuable for both groups (see May et al 2008; Roettger & Swisher 2013; Scharff Smith & Jakobsen 2014; Trice & Brewster 2004).

For COIP there are benefits to maintaining ties. Research on parental imprisonment more generally indicates that for children, maintaining ties with an incarcerated parent may ease worries (Scharff Smith & Jakobsen 2014), lead to better adjustment for children (Trice & Brewster 2004), and correlates with ongoing involvement post-release (Roettger & Swisher

2013). Furthermore, maintaining connections between incarcerated fathers and children may reduce offending behaviour for fathers post-release (May, Sharma & Stewart 2008) and, conversely, contributes to increased success rates post-release in terms of employment and positive parenting (Visher 2013), as well as desistance from crime (Berg & Huebner 2011; Farrall & Maruna 2004). Lastly, family support for incarcerated fathers allows for a nurturing of an identity that is related to fathering, rather than imprisonment or criminality, thus aiding in the development of an alternative non-criminal identity post-release (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). Yet currently in Victoria there is no formal policy that makes family a required component of prison rehabilitation for male prisoners who are fathers. In 2005, the Department of Justice (DOJ, now the Department of Justice and Regulation (DoJR)) introduced *Better Pathways* with the aim of addressing women's imprisonment and the causes of offending (DOJ 2005). Part of the impetus for of this strategy was the wider impact of women's imprisonment on families and children and that "women offenders are heavily influenced by their responsibilities and concerns for their dependent children" (DOJ 2005, p. 9). What this meant in practice was providing incarcerated women with more support for their families, ensuring that correctional practice was sensitive to women's specific gender needs, maintaining mother-child ties, and an upgrade of the visiting area to include a friendlier environment (DOJ 2005). Such practice seems essential, given the small number of women in prison and the high percentage of these women who are mothers (Trotter et al. 2015). As of yet, there exist no such policy or guidelines for male prisoners who are primary carers of children.

Existing research, therefore, provides insight into the impact of parental arrest and imprisonment on children, with some focus on fathers. Yet there is no formal research that explores incarcerated fathers with primary carer responsibilities prior to entering prison. This thesis, therefore, addresses this gap and explores in more detail the experiences of primary carer fathers in prison thus contributing to the literature on prison masculinities and fathering identity as well as in the area of fathering supports and visiting in prisons.



### *1.1 Significance of this study*

This study is a component of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant (LP100100599) funded study (hereafter referred to as the ARC project). The ARC project was conducted in Victoria and NSW between 2011 and 2014 and examined how dependent children are responded to when their primary carer is imprisoned, with a specific focus on how care is managed at the key points of arrest, incarceration, and release (Trotter et al. 2015). The ARC project was initiated by the Monash CJRC and was led by seven academic chief investigators from Monash University across a range of fields including social work, criminology, nursing, biological science, business, and law.<sup>3</sup>

In conjunction with the Monash CJRC, a range of government and non-government partner organisations partnered on the project including the Victorian DOJ (now DoJR), the Victorian Department of Human Services (now the DHHS), the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO), SHINE for Kids (hereafter referred to as SHINE), Prison Fellowship Australia, and the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (now the Commission for Children and Young People). These partner organisations were a part of the overall development of the project in its early stages: establishing core areas of research focus; giving feedback on methodology; contributing to the definition of key variables; and making financial and in-kind contributions.

There were also six supporting organisations involved in the project that played a key role in recruiting participants (expert professional stakeholders and primary carer parents and

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<sup>3</sup> Chief Investigators on the ARC project included Professor Christopher Trotter, Dr Catherine Flynn (Department of Social Work, Monash University), Associate Professor Bronwyn Naylor (Law Faculty, Monash University), Associate Professor Paul Collier (Monash Business School, Monash University), Dr David Baker (School of Biological Sciences, Monash University), Associate Professor Kay McCauley (Mental Health Nursing, Massey University (formally Monash University), and Dr Anna Eriksson (Criminology, Monash University).

their families) for the ARC project. These included the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services, the New South Wales Department of Community Services, Victoria Police, New South Wales Police, the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (now the Department of Education and Training), and the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities.

Building upon the ARC project, the current study specifically investigates the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers during arrest and imprisonment in Victoria, Australia. This focus was drawn from my own interest in this area and the need to draw attention to this group. The rationale for this study is that currently, in Victoria, the criminal justice system, at the point of arrest and imprisonment, does not adequately support or acknowledge fathers who have had primary carer responsibility prior to imprisonment. As a result, their children's needs are not being met. Overall then the aim of this study is to improve responses and supports for fathers and their children who are impacted by the criminal justice system. In order to do this, there is a need to examine the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers at the point of arrest and imprisonment. This study, including its subsequent articles, is therefore the first step. The central research question explored is: *What are the experiences of imprisoned primary carer fathers in Victoria, Australia, at the point of arrest and imprisonment?* With three subsidiary questions:

1. How do primary carer fathers experience planning processes for their children at the time of arrest and what factors facilitate or hinder the planning process?
2. Is it possible for incarcerated fathers to embody differing expressions of masculinity in prison and if so, how might this be facilitated?
3. How do primary carer fathers experience formal fathering supports and programs from inside the prison?

In the latter question, given the lack of research in this area “experience” comprises a number of elements including access to programs, the nature of support accessed, what and how much support was offered, and what was needed. To answer these questions, this study draws on wider research relating to incarcerated fathers and incarcerated parents to inform and support this discussion. This study represents the first step towards acknowledging the experiences of imprisoned primary carer fathers.

### *1.2 Adopting a reflexive gaze: Researcher position*

My interest in this area of research can be traced back to the very beginning of my undergraduate degree in criminology and psychology followed by my postgraduate studies in criminology (where I undertook an honours degree and following this a masters research degree by thesis) at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, in 2006. During this time, I became increasingly interested in gender and crime (researching homophobic violence for my honours year) and the lived experiences of those in prison.

As a researcher I have always questioned the notion of punishment and imprisonment. Over the course of my studies I began to question why there is a push by politicians for the increased use of imprisonment, when there exists very little by way of support or rehabilitation, and yet there is an expectation that those in prison will exit the prison system rehabilitated and connected to their families and friends. Imprisonment should *be* the punishment, not an added layer of punishment on top of incapacitation. This is a central notion that underpins this thesis. Prisons should be institutions that allow people to be connected with their loved ones outside the prison walls, where they remain active in what they do day to day, where they have access to education and personal development, and where they are given the opportunity to work and give back to society.

As well as this, I have always been drawn to research that is inter-disciplinary. My master's thesis explored penal populism in New Zealand and crossed the fields of criminology, economics, business, sociology, and history – a point highlighted by examiners. While the current study has been conducted within the Department of Social Work in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing, and Health Sciences at Monash University in Australia it does not exclusively represent a social work study or framework. Instead, this study crosses three disciplines, namely, social work, criminology, and sociology. Social work as a discipline is one that includes a variety of theoretical standpoints and encourages a practical research focus (Rubin & Babbie 2017). Sociology is a field that favours “objectivity and empiricism” and is geared largely towards both the development and testing of social theories (Armstrong 2014, p. 758). Criminology as a discipline is one that produces research that is both policy-oriented and focused on the management and control of crime and offenders and that which is more theoretically driven, exploring the root causes of crime (Noaks & Wincup 2004). This study therefore intersects all three disciplines and is both theoretically and practically driven.

The research I have been involved in since completing my master's thesis, both as a student and as a research assistant, has been about families and how they are impacted by imprisonment. From 2012 to 2015, I worked as a research assistant on the ARC project (further details of which can be found in Chapter Three) in which this study is nested. During this time I was responsible for, among other things, interviewing primary carer fathers in Victoria. As the project progressed, I became particularly interested in the construction of masculinity in a “hyper-masculine” prison environment as well as fathering identity and how men experienced being a primary carer father whilst in prison. I started noticing themes arising from incarcerated primary carer fathers: there was very little support for these men in their particular role as fathers at any stage of the criminal justice system; primary carer fathers tended to be largely overlooked by authorities (such as the police and prison staff) and were not questioned about

their children; yet primary carer fathers themselves *did* want to be involved in their children's lives, despite being incarcerated.

These observations brought to mind several initial questions about incarcerated primary carer fathers. Were primary carer fathers not given supports in prison *because* they were fathers and the gendered assumptions that exist with regard to fathering and primary care? Were primary carer fathers in prison more open to fathering from prison than they were being given the opportunity to be? If there were opportunities to learn about fathering and be connected with their children from prison – would they take these? These questions were at the forefront of my mind as I gathered the data for the ARC project and with this came a sense of urgency to be a voice for primary carer fathers: to tell their stories, get their stories heard, and reflect their experiences in a way that was true to them. My researcher position therefore both influenced, and is embedded within, the study's methodology and is outlined in Chapter Three Part II, which discusses the research process through a reflexive lens, thus providing insight into prison research for early career researchers in this area.

### *1.3 Key terms*

*Primary carer:* For the purposes of this research, and as defined in the ARC project, primary carer status is defined by three outcome-focused criteria: child/ren required a new carer (relative, friend, or associate) to take over their care at home; child/ren were required to move to a new house to live with a different carer; or child/ren were left with no carer. If a participant was therefore in any of these situations it would have meant that due to their imprisonment their child/ren would require a new primary carer to take care of them some, or all, of the time.

*Primary carer fathers:* Given that, prior to this study being conducted, there was no available data relating to incarcerated primary carer fathers, when reporting on the findings or making

conclusions the term primary carer fathers is used to differentiate between this group and incarcerated fathers more generally.

*Participants:* Throughout this thesis the word “participants” is used to describe those individuals who participated in the research project and who volunteered to take part in the interview, were eligible, and who completed the interview. In the methodology, some of the participants include mothers, caregivers, and stakeholders as these are the participants who took part in the ARC project. However, in the current study *all* participants are primary carer fathers and these two terms may be used interchangeably.

*Father and parent:* In order to be consistent throughout, this study specifies between fathers and parents more generally. This distinction is an important one, as one of the limitations of studies involving the impact of imprisonment on children is the use of gender-neutral terms such as “parents” when the focus is either exclusively on mothers or fathers. The use of these terms in research only serves to obscure understandings of the, potentially, differing experiences that exist for mothers, fathers, and their children. While there may be similarities in experiences, this study examines primary carer fathers only and so makes this distinction throughout. Where research is about parents or mothers it has been noted as such.

*ARC project:* Throughout this thesis the term ARC project is used to acknowledge the larger ARC Linkage project with which data for the current study was drawn.

*Study:* Any reference to “this study” or the “current study” relates to this dissertation and the sample of 39 primary carer fathers in Victoria.

#### *1.4 Thesis overview*

This study includes eight chapters including four articles that have all been accepted into peer reviewed journals. These are outlined in detail below.

#### *1.4.1 Thesis including published works*

A thesis inclusive of published works is one that reflects “a sustained and cohesive theme” written in a different format to a traditional doctoral thesis (Monash University Graduate Research 2017, para 2). This thesis includes four peer reviewed journal articles submitted for publication: the literature review along with three articles presenting the findings of the study.

#### *1.4.2 Thesis structure*

As noted above, this thesis includes eight chapters in total. This Introduction Chapter contains relevant background to understanding incarcerated fathers and their children, exploring how this group is currently thought about in research and practice. It outlines some of the key terms used in this thesis along with the significance of the study in the field. Lastly, the researcher position is outlined, followed by the thesis overview and structure.

Chapter Two comprises an article which has been accepted into the *Probation Journal* called “Supporting incarcerated fathers: An exploration of research and practice in Australia”. Using a narrative approach (Rother 2007), this article describes and discusses the nature of research and practice relating to supporting incarcerated fathers with an emphasis on prison visiting, supported visits, and fathering units. The article aims to synthesise the limited existing data, whilst contributing to a better understanding of how best to support incarcerated fathers in Victoria.

Chapter Three is presented in two sections. Part I provides the detailed methodology used for this study, describing and justifying the sample, settings, data collection and procedures, ethical considerations, and data analysis processes used. The study methodology is also outlined in summary form in the three findings sections of the articles making up Chapter Five, Six and Seven. Part II of Chapter Three contains a reflexive account of the study methodology. Reflexivity is one method used in qualitative research to ensure trustworthiness of data (Cope

2014). Being “actively” self-aware during the research process alerts the researcher to possible unconscious biases and editing that may arise during data collection and analysis and thus ensures better engagement with the data (Valentine 2008). This chapter is written in first person as it outlines my role and provides a reflexive approach to prison research.

Chapter Four is a conceptual framework for this study. This study brings gender into the centre of the discussion about fathers in prison and this chapter outlines the role gender plays in discussions of fathers in prison. It then describes the main theoretical concepts used to shape the overall discussion and how these interconnect, namely, the self, masculinity, and identity.

Chapter Five is a published peer reviewed journal article. This is called “‘They didn’t even let me say goodbye’. A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers’ care planning for children at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia” and was published in a multi-disciplinary journal *Child Care and Practice*. This article provides new insights into the experiences of primary carer fathers in this study who were arrested ( $n = 34$ ). Key focus points in the article include the primary location of the arrest, the presence, or absence, of children at the point of arrest, police awareness of children, and discussions about suitable care.

Chapter Six is a peer reviewed journal article titled “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space” that was published in *Punishment and Society*, a journal that covers the fields of criminology and penology. Through the lens of identity and the self, this article examines the views of 39 primary carer fathers to explore differing expressions of masculinity adopted within the prison setting and uses the prison visiting room and phone conversations to illustrate. This article provides new insights into fathering and masculinity, as shown in Goffman’s (1956) “frontstage” and “backstage” selves, to explore how fathers actually *perform* fathering within this space. It outlines how this study expands on Goffman’s (1956) framework to contribute original theoretical knowledge to this debate.



Chapter Seven is a peer reviewed journal article, “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia”, which has been accepted into criminology journal *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*. This article examines the current state of fathering programs in prisons in Victoria by analysing the views of 39 imprisoned primary carer fathers. It argues that there is a lack of support for fathers in prison which acts as a barrier towards maintaining father-child relationships. Based on the findings, it offers suggestions as to how best facilitate the connection between incarcerated fathers and their children in Victoria.

The thesis then concludes with Chapter Eight, an integrated discussion and conclusion. This chapter summarises the main research findings and suggests areas for future research. It describes the strengths of this study and considers the contribution to knowledge it has made in the subject area. The study’s limitations are also noted, before outlining the theoretical, research, and practical implications of this work.

The next chapter is a peer-reviewed article based on a review of the literature. It outlines the nature of research and practice relating to supporting incarcerated fathers with an emphasis on prison visiting, supported visits, and fathering units.

## *2.0 Preamble to Chapter Two*

The first publication included in this thesis is a review of the literature relating to supports for incarcerated fathers and their children in Victoria, Australia. As there are limited data relating to supported/visiting for incarcerated fathers, the review also includes an overview of incarcerated fathers and their children. A review of 36 sources, including research articles, reports, evaluations and some government/organisational websites (which are noted as such), have been included dating from 2000 to 2018. This article looks specifically at visiting and supported visiting, which has been used to describe supported visiting programs, family visits, and visiting programs along with the, lesser known, fathering units. Lastly, this article draws on educational fathering programs to draw attention to the limited availability of these services in Victoria, whilst highlighting best practice and how this might be used to inform the development of supported visiting services for incarcerated fathers and their children.

Findings indicate clear gaps in knowledge and data relating to supported/visiting for incarcerated fathers in Victoria, thus highlighting the need for further research in this area. International research on supported visiting and prison fathering units points to the potential for the development of these services in Victoria as an effective long-term strategy for fathers exiting the prison system who aim to reunite with their families post-release. Research also points to the importance of letter writing and telephone conversations for incarcerated fathers and their children (Boswell 2002; Clarke et al. 2005; Mumola 2000) as well as supported letter writing programs such as Read Along Dads/Story Books Dads (Le-Billon n.d.).

This article was accepted for publication in *Probation Journal* in 2018. This is a peer-reviewed Q2 journal in the area of law and is published in association with The Trade Union and Professional Association for Family Court and Probation Staff (ISSN: 02645505 (Online)). The journal was established in 1929 and was chosen as it is considered a national and

international forum for sharing best practice and for its specialisation in potential practitioner readership and development of debate relating to theory and practice of work with offenders.

## **Chapter Two (Article 1): “Supporting incarcerated fathers: An exploration of research and practice in Australia”**

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### **Biographical notes:**

**Tess Bartlett** is a PhD candidate at the Department of Social Work, Monash University. Her research examines the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers in Victoria, Australia.

### **Abstract**

In recent decades the number of incarcerated parents has increased on a global scale. The majority of these prisoners are men, yet there has been very little formal attention concerning the parenting status of these men, despite knowledge about the impact of parental incarceration on children being well established. In Victoria, Australia, some 93% of prisoners are men, and more than half of these are fathers, yet they have also attracted limited scholarly and practitioner attention. This article explores research and practice accounts regarding support for incarcerated fathers and their children, particularly emphasising visiting, supported visiting and fathering units, to build knowledge in Victoria, Australia. To do so it examines 36 publications from 2000 to

2018, addressing a gap in knowledge relating to supporting father-child relationships from prison. It concludes by offering pragmatic solutions for the development of supports that will contribute to the maintenance of these relationships.

### **Keywords**

Fathers, imprisonment, children of prisoners, visiting, programs

## **Introduction**

This review examines research and practice accounts from 2000 to 2018 relating to imprisoned fathers, with an emphasis on visiting, ‘supported visits’<sup>1</sup> and fathering units. The term ‘supported visit’ encapsulates a range of visiting supports and programs (such as family days, family visits and visiting programs). The aim of this article is to synthesise the limited knowledge in this area, contributing to a better understanding of how best to support incarcerated fathers and their children in the current, and future, prison environment in Victoria, Australia.

Due to limited data regarding supported/visits and units for incarcerated fathers in Victoria, this article explores the experiences and needs of incarcerated fathers more generally to provide relevant context, before turning to fathering supports. As well as generic visiting services, diverse fathering supports also exist. These vary in length, aim and practicality, nevertheless they have been grouped into two categories: supported visits (see Hansen, 2017; Pierce, 2015; SHINE for Kids (SHINE), 2017) and fathering units (Butler, Hayes, Devaney and Percy, 2015; Clancy and Maguire, 2017). Educational fathering programs (LaRosa and Rank, 2001; Meek, 2007) are also explored to ascertain how these might inform practice and/or development of other fathering supports in prison. Research and practice accounts of all these supports are explored below.

This article firstly outlines the approach taken in this narrative review, followed by a brief overview of incarcerated fathers and their children which grounds and informs the subsequent discussion. The main body examines data grouped into three themes: prison visiting; supported visits and fathering units; and educational fathering programs. Lastly, the article concludes with a summary of the main issues, suggestions for future research and pragmatic solutions for the development of supports for incarcerated fathers and their children.

## **Method**

### *Narrative review*

This review responds to the following research question:

What does current evidence indicate with regard to supporting father-child relationships during a father's imprisonment?

Given the negligible research concerning father-child supported/visiting and units in Victoria, a narrative approach is taken. This approach describes and discusses the nature of research on a specific topic and is theoretically or contextually driven (Rother, 2007). As research regarding incarcerated fathers has only recently gained traction, and to ensure the widest scope for this review, research from 2000 to 2018 were sought. Data were predominantly drawn from English language publications in western settings including the United States (US), the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand (NZ), Scandinavia and a limited pool from Australia, the study setting. Identified materials were organised into categories based on themes which included 'imprisoned fathers and their children,' 'prison visiting for fathers and their children,' 'supported visits and fathering units' and 'Educational Fathering Programs.' This is an approach supported by the researchers' familiarity with the topic and is in line with traditional

literature reviews that assist in documenting what is known, refining questions and theoretical ideas, whilst highlighting gaps (Jesson, 2007). Following this, key word searches were conducted of databases including Criminal Justice Abstracts, CINCH and ProQuest Criminal Justice to validate references. After arranging the research into themes data were analysed in response to the research question. Data were excluded if they did not relate to the categories above, if they were about mothers exclusively or if they related to ‘parents’ more generally, thus obscuring the potentially differing experiences of mothers and fathers.

Overall, 36 sources are used in this review. Of these, 24 international sources provide data relating to incarcerated fathers and their children, six Australian sources provide data regarding supported/visiting and educational programs for incarcerated fathers, while a further six sources are annual reports or organisation/government websites. All remaining sources provide general context (and may include discussions regarding incarcerated ‘parents’ more generally) and are used to frame the overall discussion. Data are both qualitative and quantitative in nature including survey data, interviews, secondary analysis and standalone case studies; this broad approach is appropriate given the availability of data on this topic (Flynn and McDermott, 2016).

## **Imprisoned fathers and their children**

In Australia, the exact number of incarcerated parents, and children of incarcerated parents (COIP), is unknown, as this data is not collected. The US, however, does offer such data, albeit now dated: In 2007, 63% of federal prisoners and 52% of state prisoners were parents, with an estimated 1.7 million minor children affected (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). This rate is much higher for African American and Latino children (see Western and Pettit, 2010). In 2011, a NZ study found that of the 269 prisoners interviewed, there were 861 children between them; a number supported by the National Health Committee which estimated there were 20,000 COIP

in NZ on any given day (Gordon, 2011). Similarly, in Australia there are only snapshots of information. In 2004, a New South Wales (NSW) study estimated that 14,500 children under 16 had experienced parental incarceration in their lifetime (Quilty, Levy, Howard, Barratt and Butler, 2004). When examining paternal imprisonment, even less is known.

US data indicate that around 50% of imprisoned men are parents (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008), while findings from 2011 show around one in four African American young people born in 1990 had experienced the imprisonment of their father by age 14 (Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011). Similar estimates are seen in Australia with 2015 Australian Institute Health and Welfare (AIHW) data indicating that 46% of the 1011 male ‘prison entrants’<sup>2</sup> had at least one dependent child prior to imprisonment (AIHW, 2015: 8). In Victoria a 2015 study, drawing on unpublished reception data from Corrections Victoria (CV), showed the number of men identifying as parents increased from 2750 in 2009/10 to 3401 in 2013/14; fathers comprised 53% of male receptions in the latter period (Trotter et al., 2015).

In Australia, the historical treatment of Indigenous Australians in the criminal justice system has contributed to the ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners (Cunneen, 2006) who now comprise over a quarter of the Australian prison population yet make up only 2% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2017). This has serious implications for children. A 2013 Queensland study estimated that in any given year some 0.8% of children in that State would be affected by paternal incarceration and around 4% in their lifetime (Dennison, Stewart and Freiberg, 2013). For Indigenous children the rate was much higher. They were nine times more likely to experience their father’s incarceration in any year and four times more likely in their lifetime (Dennison et al., 2013). The implications for children of incarcerated fathers (COIF) are extensive.

Research indicates that father absence due to, and during, incarceration affects children in a number of ways (see Boswell, 2018; Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher and



Mincy, 2012; Murray and Farrington, 2005; Walker and McCarthy, 2005). Paternal incarceration may lead to the loss of consistent father-child interaction (Sharp, Marcus-Mendoza, Bentley, Simpson and Love, 1998) and COIP, more generally, are consistently shown to experience a range of challenges including depression, anxiety and sadness, nightmares and sleeping problems (Johnston and Gabel, 1995; Scharff Smith, 2014). Further, COIP are also more likely to have problems at school (Phillips, Burns, Wagner, Kramer and Robbins, 2002; Tomaino, Ryan, Markotic and Gladwell, 2005), to experience health problems (Wright and Seymour, 2000) and social isolation and/or stigma (Brown, Dibb, Shenton and Elson, 2001).

For some families, ongoing contact can in fact inhibit ongoing success for fathers and children on release if there is family conflict. One US study, which examined *inter alia* the role of family support for incarcerated fathers and how this may affect drug use and crime upon release, found that increased levels of family contact for incarcerated fathers did not always lead to a decrease in crime and drug use on release if there was family conflict (Mowen and Visser, 2015). There are also those fathers who relinquish responsibility or who may be cut off from children due to mental illness, substance abuse, the offence committed, or child protection concerns and, in the latter case, the limitation in contact is seen as the best choice for the child (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008 Tasca, 2018). Nonetheless, fathers who are not in this position typically do try to maintain their fathering role from within the prison (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018). Focusing on supporting both the incarcerated father and their family in the development of pre-release planning and support where appropriate would thus benefit. Currently, families are not a central component of this process.

Despite these challenges, maintaining family ties between incarcerated fathers and their children correlates with ongoing involvement on release (Roettger and Swisher, 2013; Turney and Wildeman, 2013) and contributes to better success rates for fathers in terms of parental employment and positive parenting (Visser, 2013). Furthermore, the amount of family support someone receives in prison influences the likelihood of reoffending (May, Sharma and Stewart,

2008) and, conversely, desistance from crime upon release (Berg and Huebner, 2011; Farrall and Maruna, 2004). Family support allows incarcerated fathers to cultivate a sense of self that is related to fathering, rather than that of a prisoner (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018). The family are therefore an anchoring role in the construction of an alternative, non-criminal, identity (Maruna, 2001) and visiting is central in this process.

### **Prison visiting for fathers and their children**

For parents in prison, visits are a way of maintaining connections with children and families and vary depending on the level of security of the institution and the perceived risk of prisoners. For many incarcerated fathers, frequent visits from their children are rare. US data, based on a 1997 *Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities* (SISCF), indicate that 57% of fathers never received a visit from their children (Mumola, 2000). Similarly, a study of fathering behind bars in England found that only 16 (37%) fathers reported regular monthly face-to-face visits and 20 fathers (47%) reported never receiving visits (Clarke et al., 2005). In Australia, a Queensland study (Dennison, Smallbone, Stewart, Freiberg and Teague, 2014) examining Indigenous fathers in prison found that less than a quarter of the men in their study (22%) had received a visit from any of their children in the past year. Importantly, a reduction in visits may be a choice made by the incarcerated parent, especially if the environment is thought to be risky or hostile (Clarke et al., 2005). It may also be due to the various obstacles confronting families when visiting.

Distance between prisons and the family home is regularly cited as one such obstacle (see Pierce, 2015; Tomaino et al., 2005; Trotter et al., 2015). One study exploring COIP in Denmark, including (among other participants) 33 imprisoned fathers and 13 children, highlighted the financial strain on families travelling long distances to visit fathers (Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014). More recently an, aforementioned, Queensland study highlighted

the high cost of travel and accommodation options for Indigenous families visiting incarcerated fathers (Dennison et al., 2014). Other Australian studies have acknowledged distance, financial hardship and prison accessibility as obstacles when visiting due to the remote location of some prisons (e.g. see Healy, Foley and Walsh, 2000; Tomaino et al., 2005). This point is well founded, yet there remains little by way of support. Despite evidence indicating that visiting allows incarcerated fathers to parent, or remain involved, whilst in prison (Arditti, Smock and Parkman, 2005).

One service that has been touted as a solution to this is video conferencing (or video visits) between prisoners and families. Yet little is known about how families actually experience these. A Queensland study highlighted issues with cost and availability of video visits in remote communities (Dennison et al., 2014); only five (12%) fathers reported accessing this service. A study across NSW and Victoria also highlighted accessibility issues with one of the 151 incarcerated parents accessing this service (Trotter et al., 2015); despite Department of Justice (DOJ) annual reports indicating video visits were utilised over 200 times in NSW from 2014 to 2015 (DOJ, 2015) and the Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (VACRO) also offering this service in Victoria (2015). A NSW study exploring the use of video links for prisoners to ‘appear’ in court concluded that any pressure to mediate or limit prisoners’ interactions to telephone or video link would ultimately result in the reduction of personal visits from family members (McKay, 2016). Evidence of this is seen in the US with the recent reduction in prison visiting corresponding with the rise of video visits (Sims, 2017).

Coinciding with challenges travelling *to* prisons are issues relating to the prison environment and staff behaviour. Participants in a US study, based on interviews with 32 men housed in a minimum security unit at a State correctional facility, noted that tables were situated too closely together, contributing to a lack of privacy and meaningful connection (Pierce, 2015). This is despite the facility offering family programs aimed at reducing reoffending and future pathways to crime for children through familial contact and a ‘within-the-walls’ visiting centre

(Pierce, 2015: 376). Australian research also points to physically unfriendly visiting environments (Healy et al., 2000; Tomaino et al., 2005) and lack of activities for children (Tudball, 2000). When examining incarcerated fathers specifically, Queensland research points to stark prison environments with no toys for children (Dennison et al., 2014). In Victoria, a study exploring how incarcerated fathers performed fathering with 39 primary carer fathers also highlighted the sterile visiting space (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018). As a result, some fathers opted out of visits entirely.

For children, visiting can be particularly challenging and frightening to navigate and children often speak of being bored (Boswell, 2002; Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008). One UK study with 17 COIF found that while children liked visiting they had ‘mixed views’ about the visiting arrangements themselves (Boswell, 2002: 17). Another study in Denmark had similar findings with one child stating ‘There’s nothing to do, nothing. What should we do? We just sit and stare’ (Christianson, 1999 cited in Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014: 149). Although security is a crucial component of the managerial or control functions of a prison system, such bleak environments do little to support children when visiting.

Research also highlights the emotional impact on fathers who feel their children’s pain when visiting (Arditti et al., 2005; Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018). One US study examining 51 incarcerated fathers’ perceptions of fatherhood found fathers attributed the lack of father-child contact with their children’s distress (Arditti et al., 2005). Similar observations were made with primary carer fathers in Victoria (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018). This may be linked, in whole or in part, to the challenges emanating from, at times, hostile attitudes from staff towards family members – a factor highlighted in research with incarcerated fathers (Boswell, 2018) and on prison visiting more generally (see Arditti, 2003; Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014). It is challenges such as these that can inhibit ongoing physical contact (Dennison et al., 2014; Roettger and Swisher, 2013; Visher, 2013) thus compounding the distance, both literally and figuratively, between incarcerated fathers and their children.

One of the principal reasons for decreased contact is the unique reliance on (often estranged) mothers of children when a father is incarcerated (Tasca, 2016). Evidence indicates that COIF primarily live with their mothers (Dallaire, 2007) and the relationship between mothers and fathers is therefore pivotal in ongoing father-child relationships. In some instances, this can lead to more visits with research in the US revealing that COIF living with their mothers were 3.56 times more likely to visit than children living in other arrangements (Tasca, 2018). Conversely, interviews with 185 incarcerated fathers revealed that negative relations between mothers and fathers may also lead to a decrease in contact between incarcerated fathers and their children (Swanson, Lee, Sansone and Tatum, 2013). In NSW, a study exploring fathering and parenting support needs with 64 incarcerated fathers found that due to repartnering (of former partners) or incarceration many of the men lost contact with their children (Fowler, Rossiter, Dawson, Jackson and Power, 2017). In some cases, it is clearly unsafe for some mothers to stay in contact with their partners or ex-partners and issues such as family violence or sexual assault would preclude fathers having contact with their children. Nonetheless, mothers who are caring for children remain a central pathway in the maintenance of father-child ties.

If family conflict exists, maintaining contact can in fact inhibit post-release success for fathers. One US study examining *inter alia* the role of family support for incarcerated fathers and how it effects crime and drug use on release found that if family conflict existed increased family contact did not always lead to a decrease in crime or drug use on release (Mowen and Visser, 2015). This study used a sub-sample of 740 men from the Urban Institute's *Returning Home* dataset and concluded that to improve success upon release a dual emphasis was needed to increase family support while decreasing family conflict (Mowen and Visser, 2015). There are fathers who relinquish responsibility or who are cut off from children due to the offence committed and, in the latter case, the limitation in contact is seen as the best choice for the child (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008; Tasca, 2016, 2018). Yet many fathers who are not in this position

attempt to maintain their fathering role from prison (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018). Focusing on supporting incarcerated fathers *and* their families with pre-release planning and support would thus benefit. Currently, this is not the case.

Despite these ongoing challenges, there are indeed benefits to visiting (May et al., 2008). Visiting gives incarcerated parents and caregivers the opportunity to discuss the past, the present and plan for the future with regard to parenthood (Tasca, 2016). An, aforementioned, UK study found that visiting gave incarcerated fathers the opportunity to provide emotional support and direct communication to their children (Clarke et al., 2005). Similarly, a US study with 51 incarcerated fathers found that receiving visits helped them feel involved in their children's lives despite their imprisonment (Day, Acock, Bahr and Arditti, 2005). For children, continuing contact may ease worries (Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014) and contribute to better adjustment (Trice and Brewster, 2004). Hence, visiting gives caregivers, incarcerated fathers and children the opportunity to recalibrate their experience. One way of assisting with this connection is through supported visits and fathering units.

### **Supported visits and fathering units**

In order to recognise what works and propose solutions it is first essential to explore pre-/existing research on supported visits and how these benefit incarcerated fathers and their children. Following this is an exploration of how fathering units in prisons might support father-child relationships through an examination of two initiatives in the UK: the Families Matter Programme in Northern Ireland (Butler et al., 2015) and Invisible Walls Wales in South Wales (Clancy and Maguire, 2017).

### *Supported visits*

Previous research highlights the importance of supported visits for incarcerated fathers and children (Hansen, 2017; Pierce, 2015; Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014). One example of this is the Fathers in Prison program in Norway. It is a four week program aiming to help prisoners learn ‘new perspectives’ about their behaviour and how it affects their children (Hansen, 2017: 176). It seeks to motivate participants to take responsibility whilst enhancing ‘knowledge, skills, and attitudes,’ thus enabling fathers to perform their fathering role in accordance with child and family expectations (Hansen, 2017: 176). One aspect of the program requires participants to plan and, ultimately, implement a family day (Hansen, 2017). Hansen’s (2017) study, conducted with 16 participants of the program, found that upon completion of the program participants were more concerned with their fathering role and felt conflicted between their fathering role and criminal activity. Although small in size, it underlines the importance of cultivating a fathering identity through family days which, ultimately, aids in the maintenance of family ties upon release.

Family quarters are also offered in some Norwegian prisons where prisoners can stay for around 24 to 48 hours with their families. These are similar in style to family trailer visits offered in the US. These take place inside the prison over the weekend and last between 6 to 24 hours (Pierce, 2015). A small study, mentioned previously, highlighted the advantage of these visits for incarcerated fathers (Pierce, 2015). Around two-thirds of the fathers reported receiving at least one visit from their children and fathers also noted that trailer visits gave them the opportunity to be natural with their children whilst in their fathering role (Pierce, 2015). In this sense, family trailer visits provide fathers with a space that is conducive to hands on fathering.

In Victoria, very little is known about family days, or supported visits, and how these work in practice. Participants in a recent study (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018) highlighted issues relating to provision of knowledge and delivery of this service (also called the Stronger Families

Program/ Residential Visits or Closer Families). Apart from government websites that briefly outline Residential Visits (Victoria State Government, n.d.), no other publicly available data exist. Along with family days, the Prison Invisit's Program, run by SHINE, is a supported visit offered in one adult male prison and one remand prison in Victoria (SHINE, 2017). This takes place within the prison and is a colourful family friendly visiting space with art and creative activities for parents and children. Bartlett and Eriksson (2018) found that none of the 39 incarcerated fathers in Victoria had accessed this service (possibly due to recruitment taking place at correctional facilities not offering the service). Overall, there has been no large scale study examining the effectiveness and/or impact of supported visiting in Victoria leaving a gap in knowledge in this area.

#### *Fathering units or pods*

Hegemonic masculinity and the constructed gender practice that assumes and consequently reinforces men's dominance over women and some men (Miller, 2011) is often used to frame discussions of prison masculinities. Within this context the focus in research is on the 'hyper-masculine' prison environment that exaggerates male socialisation (Mosher, 1998), thus reinforcing conventional masculine ideals such as strength and bravery (Ricciardelli, Maier and Hannah-Moffat, 2015). Yet masculinities are constructed in a range of ways (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018). More recent work in this area has outlined a 'softer' form of masculinity that is far more transitory than earlier discussions suggest (Ricciardelli et al., 2015), evidence of which is seen with incarcerated fathers who are open to adopting a range of 'malleable expressions of masculinity' that are far more adaptable than earlier accounts suggest (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018: 10). One initiative that has attempted to challenge the hyper-masculine narratives inside male prisons is housing fathers together in residential units (Butler et al., 2015; Clancy and Maguire, 2017; Nurse, 2002). Nurse (2002) outlines the motivational impact this



living arrangement had in a study of young offenders as it allowed fathers to use other fathers as a source of strength. Although the masculine prison environment did little to encourage the ‘soft’ or ‘caring’ attributes that often come with fathering, living with other fathers lessened the need to retain a masculine image and young men were able to focus on fatherhood (Nurse, 2002). This type of support challenges traditional gender roles and supports the ongoing connection between fathers and children.

In Northern Ireland (NI), the Families Matter Programme was developed in Maghaberry Prison to assist in maintaining, and developing, father-child relationships (Butler et al., 2015). This 17 week residential program for fathers offered classes and activities run by Barnardo’s NI and other external providers. Fathers resided in separate accommodation than other prisoners and received monthly visits where they were encouraged to integrate learnings (Butler et al., 2015). A review of this program, including interviews with 18 incarcerated fathers, seven family members, and 17 individuals running the program, revealed that fathers felt they had greater awareness about caregiving, were less selfish, more willing to play with their children and more confident in discussing sensitive topics (Butler et al., 2015). It also found that the residential nature of the program contributed to a ‘less stereotypical, more humanised, less macho environment’ thus enabling fathers to be more focused on their families (Butler et al., 2015: 11) which, in turn, cements the fathering identity.

An evaluation of a similar program in South Wales found promising results when exploring known risk factors relating to reoffending (Clancy and Maguire, 2017). Invisible Walls Wales (IWW) is a project funded by Big Fund Lottery and based in HMP Parc. It aims to maintain and improve incarcerated fathers’ relationships with their children and families, to improve quality of life for all participants, to reduce re-offending and reduce the risk of intergenerational offending (Clancy and Maguire, 2017). The IWW project incorporates a number of different elements, one of which is a Family Interventions Unit – the first of its kind to be implemented in a male prison in the UK (Clancy and Maguire, 2017). The project is

unique in that it offers 12 month pre-release support to incarcerated fathers and their families. It is also family focused, rather than individually focused, offering six month post-release support via Family Integration Mentors (FIMs) and partnered community-based organisations (Clancy and Maguire, 2017). While it is too early to note the full impact of this project, the evaluation did find that for fathers exiting IWW the unemployment rate more than halved (64 compared with 131 prior to imprisonment). There was also a reduction in the number of participants in temporary accommodation, and those using substances decreased from 89% prior to imprisonment to 20% on completion of IWW (Clancy and Maguire, 2017). The Family Star Tool and Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire was used to assess possible needs and child wellbeing. Findings showed an improvement in children's 'emotional wellbeing, attention levels, behaviour and peer relationships at home and in school' (Clancy and Maguire, 2017: 5).

Supported visits and fathering units, therefore, offer pre- and post -release support for incarcerated fathers *and* their children. What differentiates these services is, firstly, by housing fathers together. This counteracts the masculine prison environment and provides a space that is more family focused and, ultimately, more conducive to fathering. These initiatives also provide support from a range of professionals and give fathers the opportunity to integrate what they have learned from prison to the community.

## **Educational fathering programs**

Research on educational fathering programs can be used to inform the development and provision of supported/visiting and fathering units in prisons. On a practical level, educational fathering programs (used here as a differentiation from other supported/visiting services) differ in length, number of participants and content (for more, see Block, Brown, Barretti, Walker, Yudt and Fretz, 2014; Meek, 2007). Relationships and facilitator skills are pivotal in the

delivery of these programs (LaRosa and Rank, 2001; Meek, 2007); a factor acknowledged in broader research into effective practice with involuntary clients (see Trotter, Evans and Baidawi, 2017). Results from several UK evaluations of prison fathering programs indicate that content worked when participants were given the opportunity to suggest topics (Meek, 2007; Meek and Baumer, 2016); content was thus tailored to the needs of each group. Men in these programs felt empowered to explore issues of fathering within the group, rather than being instructed on who to be as a parent (Meek, 2007; Meek and Baumer, 2016). When considering this in relation to supported/visiting and fathering units, the importance of having staff who are actively engaged and committed to it operationally is fundamental to its ongoing success; a factor substantiated in the IWW project where the FIMs (who provided case-management) were a central component of its success (Clancy and Maguire, 2017). Utilising the expertise and professional experience of staff is therefore pivotal in the successful delivery of supports that foster father-child relationships from prison.

There are very little data relating to fathering programs in Australia. Available data suggest that while fathering programs may exist in some male prisons, very few men actually take part in these. In Queensland, only two of the 41 Indigenous Australian fathers in Dennison et al.'s (2014) study had attended a parenting program in prison. For these men, taking part in the program gave them new parenting skills, a new confidence in fatherhood and allowed them to remain involved in their children's lives while continuing to support their partner (Dennison et al., 2014). In Victoria, a forthcoming paper that examines supports/services for 39 primary carer fathers incarcerated in Victoria indicates that, overall, three-quarters of the men were never offered/nor did they participate in any parenting programs or support services (Bartlett and Trotter, forthcoming). Given latest estimates show there are around 6644 men currently imprisoned in Victoria (ABS, 2017) and (using a 50% estimate) around 3322 of these are likely to be fathers, there exists a need for the provision of fathering

programs in prison. At present, lack of data and service provision means this group is largely overlooked.

In Victoria, government and organisation websites provide snapshots of information relating to fathering programs, however most information is of low research quality. Annual reports indicate that VACRO ran the VACRO Good Beginnings program in two male prisons in Victoria from approximately 2003 to 2007/2008 (VACRO, 2005, 2008). This program utilised extended/visits as part of the education program and aimed to assist fathers with their parenting skills, improve father-child relationships, and reduce intergenerational offending. Towards the end of the program there was a Dad's Day where children spent the day with their father without another caregiver present (VACRO, 2005). This program therefore combined fathering education with supported visits. Yet no research is available about this program leaving no trace of its potential impact in supporting father-child relationships from prison. The lack of data around fathering programs in prison is further compounded by the brevity of Government websites that provide scant information about program delivery (CV, 2017). What can be broadly deduced is that since 2011, when CV commenced the Inside Parenting program at one male prison, very little has developed in this area. Consequently, there remains little by way of knowledge relating to fathering programs in Victoria and in the last ten years the delivery of these services has deteriorated.

From afar, it may seem that Victoria has made some recent advancements for incarcerated Aboriginal Australian fathers in terms of program delivery. In 2015, a Victorian Ombudsman report noted that another program offered to Aboriginal fathers was Koorie Faces (Victorian Ombudsman, 2015). Yet, once again, no evaluation was done of this program and it was delivered once in three correctional facilities. In 2017, the Government in Victoria announced it was introducing support programs for Aboriginal prisoners to 'rehabilitate Aboriginal prisoners by focusing on cultural strengthening, family violence, healing, parenting and women's programs' (Victoria State Government, 2017: para. 5). However, little is known

about what this means in practice. This only highlights the lack of commitment of correctional services in the delivery of prison programs that support ongoing father-child relationships consequently disregarding evidence that highlights the importance of family in re-entry and the desistance process.

## **Conclusion**

This article explored supported/visiting, fathering units and educational fathering programs in prison to establish the best way of supporting father-child relationships from prison in Victoria, Australia. It did so by examining relevant literature and the challenges and benefits associated with the delivery of these supports.

Findings indicate obvious limitations of data relating to fathering programs/supports in prison. While there is some knowledge about visiting and parenting programs for fathers and children, data is often based on ‘parents’ more generally and fails to separate the experiences and/or frequency of prison visiting. Research on fathering education programs also tend to rely on data from participants who have just completed the program, are not longitudinal in nature and includes participants who are motivated to change, are self-referred or seek out the program and are therefore those who are more likely to benefit. This limits the ability to generalise outcomes of programs to all incarcerated fathers.

Nonetheless, as there are limited data relating to fathering supports, these studies do inform us about the importance of individual agency in self-referred programs and a willingness of participants to *want* to see different outcomes. It also highlights quite clearly the need for more research in the area of fathering supports from within the prison and, in particular, Victoria. Future research would do well to focus on fathering supports across the Victorian prison system to establish the extent to which these services exist, are utilised and are effective. Further, based

on international research, the development of supported/visiting in Victorian prisons has the potential to be an effective long-term strategy for fathers exiting the prison system and reuniting with families post-release.

For incarcerated fathers, visiting spaces do little to nurture the father-child relationship and assist in the promotion of ongoing connection. At present, research points to an agglomeration of issues relating to visiting (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008). Not only are there challenges associated with actually getting to the prison, such as geographical distance (Tomaino et al., 2005) and costs associated with visiting (Dennison et al., 2014), once at the prison families are presented with additional obstacles due to the nature of visiting spaces (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018), poor visiting facilities (Pierce, 2015), and staff attitudes (Dennison et al. 2014; Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014). These only serve to heighten anxieties for children who are faced with leaving the father behind (Arditti et al., 2005). A solution would involve emphasising support for families of incarcerated fathers in getting *to* the prison, while simultaneously providing spaces that allow fathers and children to connect in a way that is familiar and meaningful to them. While video conferencing has been suggested as a possible solution to some of the issues raised thus far, there is a real threat that prison visiting will subside altogether if video visits are the only response to maintaining family connection from prison (Sims, 2017). Given what is known about prison visiting and its benefits this must be acknowledged, and actively opposed, in order to maintain the connection between incarcerated fathers and their children.

Supported family visits are an optimal way of nurturing father-child relationships from prison. In Victoria, in order to identify the impact of these services on incarcerated fathers and their children and how they experience them in practice, further research on extended family visits is needed. International findings draw attention to the potential of such visits in maintaining father-child connections (Butler et al., 2015), as fathers are able to engage with their children (Pierce, 2015) and thus nurture their fathering identity. The implementation of

physical spaces, like family trailer visits (Pierce, 2015), would allow for better quality connection between fathers and children. In Victoria, this would involve expanding existing services, such as Family Days or those run by SHINE (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018), and would shift away from a more punitive approach toward one that fosters engagement and connection between incarcerated fathers and children. The benefits of such efforts are exhibited in past research which shows that nurturing these relationships during incarceration helps maintain connections on release (Roettger and Swisher, 2013; Turney and Wildeman, 2013).

Overall then, successful supports for incarcerated fathers would be those that focus on working within the confines of the prison environment all the while emphasising the importance of design and social infrastructure in the development of such programs. This would mean creating spaces that foster ongoing connection between fathers and their children; anchoring the role of father (Bartlett and Eriksson, 2018; Maruna, 2001) whilst simultaneously utilising the power of identity construction for incarcerated fathers. Doing so may offer a better likelihood of desistance post-release.

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## Notes

1. Throughout the paper supported/visiting is used to cover both general visiting and supported visits
2. A prison entrant was defined as a person 18 years or over entering full-time custody on remand or on a sentence (AIHW, 2015).

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## Chapter Three: Methodology Part I and II

The previous chapter presented a review of the literature relating to fathering supports and programs in prison in Victoria, drawing on research on parental incarceration more generally to add context. This chapter is divided into two sections to present the overall methodology. Part I provides the research context with an overview of the ARC project, along with the methodology and methods used. It outlines and justifies the study sample, design, collection methods and analysis used for this study whilst acknowledging the ethical concerns and limitations. Part I also outlines the exploratory approach taken (Reiter 2013), providing new insights into the views of primary carer fathers whilst simultaneously addressing the gap that exists with regard to this group. It then introduces the masculinity framework used for this study, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four and Six, shedding light on fathering identity and imprisonment by examining how primary carer fathers switch between differing expressions of masculinity in the prison environment.

Part II gives a reflexive account of the research process. It is well established within qualitative social science research that there are challenges to both conducting research and interpreting data (Cope 2014; Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen & Liamputtong 2007). One of these is the researcher's position – their experiences, feelings, biases, and history – which can influence the interpretation of data (Polit & Beck 2014). However, there are techniques and practices used when doing research that build trustworthiness and rigour. Part II uses one of these techniques and includes a self-appraisal of the research process that also draws on reflexive research in sensitive areas and/or prison/social research (Berger 2013). In so doing, it recognises that the researcher *and* the researched are involved in the research process (Poulton 2014; Rossiter, Power, Fowler, Elliot & Dawson 2018). Furthermore, this reflexive account of prison research as a PhD candidate may provide useful guidance and insight for other postgraduate researchers doing research on sensitive topics.

## **Part I: Study methodology**

Part I of this Methodology Chapter provides an outline and justification for the study methodology and methods used, summaries of which are presented in the three findings publications in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. It then outlines the research context by firstly providing an overview of the ARC funded study conducted in Victoria and NSW between 2011 and 2015 and my role and responsibilities in the project. It also outlines the study sample, settings and recruitment, data collection and procedures, ethical issues considered, and data analysis processes used in the study and any study limitations.

### *3.1 Research context*

#### *3.1.1 ARC project aims*

As outlined in the Introduction Chapter, this study was developed from an ARC Linkage Grant (LP100100599) study, funded to examine how dependent children are responded to when their primary carer is imprisoned (Trotter et al. 2015). As noted in the Introduction, little is known about the caring status of parents who are incarcerated and about the care planning processes in place for their children at the point of arrest, sentencing, imprisonment, and release. There is also little formal data collected from statutory bodies about these children. The ARC project aimed to respond to this gap in knowledge relating to care planning for children whose primary carer parents are incarcerated. The study sought to build the body of data in this area by describing current care planning practices and experiences of incarcerated primary carer parents, carers, and children. In doing so, it aimed to provide further development in the field of practice and to develop effective collaborations and interventions across, and within, sectors.

As the primary research assistant for the Victorian part of the program I was responsible for:

- a) Liaising with staff and management in correctional facilities; arranging and administering Victorian data collection
- b) Recruitment of primary carer participants in correctional facilities and carers and children in the community
- c) Data collection in correctional facilities (including interviews)
- d) Data collecting in the community (including gathering primary data via individual interviews and collecting secondary data from existing case records in non-government partner organisations)
- e) Data management
- f) Liaising and reporting to project chief investigators and government/non-government partner organisations
- g) Transcribing interviews and focus groups
- h) Organising Partner Meetings and taking minutes
- i) Qualitative data analysis using QSR NVivo10/11
- j) Quantitative data analysis using SPSS Statistics 20
- k) Generating the final report along with chief investigators and other research assistants on the project
- l) Preparing and delivering conference presentations
- m) Contributing to writing for peer reviewed journal publication

### *3.1.2 ARC project primary and secondary data*

Data were collected from a range of primary and secondary sources, with the majority collected between October 2011 and May 2012, along with follow up data collection between May 2013 and February 2014.

Primary data were collected from 124 expert professional stakeholders across different sectors that had direct contact with children and families of the incarcerated, which included: police, corrections, child protection, magistracy, foster care, and education. As well as this, there was also representation from non-government organisations (NGOs), community, and government interest groups. In Victoria, data were collected in Melbourne as well as in two regional settings. In NSW data collection was limited to two main areas: Sydney and one regional setting. All stakeholder participants took part in a focus group or an individual interview; the second of which was offered to those who were unable to attend a focus group. Interviews were typically used to address geographical distance, or for magistrates, to respond to their limited availability. Overall 21 focus groups were conducted along with 33 individual interviews across both states.

Secondary data were sought from the following sites: Department of Corrections Victoria and Department of Corrective Services NSW; Department of Human Services Victoria (now DHHS); Family and Community Services in NSW; partner organisations (Prison Fellowship; SHINE; VACRO); relevant rights frameworks, policy and legislation. Secondary data from corrections identified the number of prisoners who identified as parents and/or carers at the time of reception. Child protection services data include the number of children subject to child protection intervention with a parent in prison. Lastly, those data from NGOs represent the number of children known to be using their services and any other relevant demographic and family characteristics.

### *3.1.3 ARC sample and participants*

Non-probability sampling was used to recruit professional stakeholders and aimed to provide insight on the experiences of this cohort. A maximum variation sampling strategy was used (Patton 2002) to purposefully select a broad range of professions and areas of practice, thus improving transferability of the findings. This was followed by a supplementary approach of

using snowball sampling, where participants shared information about the study with other colleagues. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection (in interviews and focus groups) and covered: the organisational perspective regarding children of incarcerated parents (i.e. are these children direct “clients”?); the organisational expectations about how to respond to these children; processes for responding to children; experiences of working with this group of children; and suggestions and/or recommendations for improvements. These data were then used to shape the structured interview schedule subsequently used with primary carer parents and families. Once all data were collected from professional stakeholders, researchers on the project identified 13 key themes related to the research topic which were then refined until there were a total of five themes that directly related to the research question. Such a method of identifying and narrowing down themes based on an initial sample is an appropriate method used for exploratory research (Grbich 2007). In my role as main research assistance, I then had primary responsibility for coding the transcripts via NVivo 10 and multiple coding of several transcripts was then conducted by three members of the research team to achieve consensus on the key themes identified.

Primary data were also gathered from incarcerated parents, their children and carers, with data sought at two time points: the initial phase was between October 2011 and May 2012, with a follow up interview conducted approximately six months after the initial interview. One hundred and fifty one incarcerated primary carer parents provided data at the first interview (male  $n = 60$ ; female  $n = 91$ ) across 13 correctional settings ( $n = 5$  in Victoria;  $n = 8$  in NSW) as shown in Table 1. below. Stratified purposive sampling (Patton 2002) was used to select a representation of maximum, medium, and minimum security settings from prisons in Victoria. Prisons were identified in conjunction with the relevant correctional service departments as suitable data collection sites, on the basis of security rating and numbers of known parents. Two correctional settings were purposefully excluded at this point in the process due to the nature of the offences committed by a number of prisoners (specifically child sex offences), which

prevented follow up with families; three of the settings declined due to lack of capacity/operational reasons. The recruitment, sampling, data collection and analysis of incarcerated primary carer parents and, specifically, primary carer fathers are outlined in more detail below.

*Table 1 Participating prisons*

<b>Prison</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Dhurringile (VIC)	9
Loddon (VIC)	14
Port Phillip (VIC)	16
Dame Phyllis Frost Centre (VIC)	25
Tarrengower (VIC)	13
Dilwynia (NSW)	25
Emu Plains (NSW)	17
John Moroney (NSW)	12

Kempsey (NSW)	8
Outer Metro Multi-Purpose (NSW)	4
Silverwater Women's (NSW)	6
Silverwater Men's (NSW)	1
Wellington (NSW)	1
<hr/>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>

All participants had been incarcerated for at least three months at the time of the interview, with a small number of participants ( $n = 15$ ) on remand at the time. Primary carer status was established with potential participants prior to the interviews being conducted; if participants met one of the criteria as outlined in Chapter One, the individual was eligible to participate. The follow up interviews took place approximately six months later; 47% of the original participants took part ( $n = 42$  in Victoria;  $n = 29$  in NSW). Overall 27 carers participated in the interviews ( $n = 18$  in Victoria;  $n = 9$  in NSW) along with five children and two adult children.

In this dissertation, the focus is on the 39 primary carer fathers in Victoria; all other data (primary and secondary) are excluded from the study.

### *3.2 Current study*

This study is based on data gathered in the initial interviews done with 39 primary carer fathers in prison in Victoria between May 2012 and October 2013. In Chapter Five (Article 2), the focus is on the process of arrest and, as such, this chapter includes data from 34 primary carer fathers; excluding five fathers who were not arrested as they were summonsed to court, hospitalised, or handed themselves in to police. Recruitment, the study sample, and data collection methods are outlined below, along with justifications.

#### *3.2.1 Recruitment*

The relationship between prison staff and researchers is crucial in the recruitment phase of the project. Roberts and Indermaur (2008, p. 314) highlight the importance of considering the impact of prison research on staff because “[a]t a fundamental level the cooperation of prison authorities and front-line prison officers is required and recognition given that these individuals are charged with responsibility for order in a dangerous environment”. It is therefore up to the researchers involved to work around the day to day routine of the prison environment so as not to disrupt the security and maintenance of the prison.

Once entry to a prison site was approved a variety of recruitment methods were used to locate participants, namely, flyer display and distribution and communication with prison contact people (including program officers and coordinators, clinical and integration services managers, social workers, project managers and prison officers). This yielded 23 participants. Further targeting was then employed by way of group sessions with prisoner peer educators to generate further discussion and pass on information to other prisoners. Data for this study were ultimately gathered from three settings (Dhurringile  $n=9$ , Loddon  $n=14$ , and Port Phillip  $n=16$ ), covering all security classifications.



### *3.2.2 Study sample*

When comparing study data from 39 primary carer fathers with the Victorian male prison population (ABS 2017) there are some general similarities with both showing the average age of participants (39 years) and average number of children ( $n = 3$ ). There are also some differences, notably, cultural groupings, with more men born in Australia than anticipated (85% in current study compared to 74% in the Victoria prison population) (ABS 2017). There was also a higher than expected number of men identifying as Indigenous: 18% in this study compared to 8.3% in the Victorian male prison population (ABS 2017). This may be indicative of Indigenous family composition in Australia, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households are more likely than Non-Indigenous Australians to have extended family networks, where care for children is shared between several related families and family households are complex and “fluid in their composition” (Lohoar, Butera & Kennedy 2014, p. 3). As noted in Chapter One, unpublished CV data from 2013 to 2014 indicates that around 11% of men received into prison from 2013-2014 were primary carers of their children (Trotter et al. 2015). Yet no published data currently exist that focus on fathers, especially primary carer fathers, in prison in Victoria. While the sample size for this study is relatively small, it contributes knowledge about this often overlooked group.

### *3.2.3 Study data collection*

This study used a multi-method approach to data collection with both qualitative and quantitative data gathered in the same interview. This approach is particularly useful when examining new areas of study and sensitive areas of research (Liamputtong 2007). This study used structured interviews (the schedule can be found in Appendix II) that sought both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach maximised the study’s capacity to capture a holistic view of issues experienced by fathers and allowed for clear cross-case analysis. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with participants. Due to security constraints in

Victorian correctional facilities comprehensive note taking was employed, instead of audio recording, to document the data as the use of some electronic equipment was not permitted. In instances such as this, structured interviews are an important method of data collection as they ensure consistency in questioning and recording of answers (Bryman 2012). However, previous research in correctional facilities indicates that some participants are dissatisfied with structured interviews as they do not allow them to direct responses to their areas of concern (Healy, Foley & Walsh 2000). To address this, the current study's interview schedule included a mixture of open and closed ended questions and focused on key decision making and transition points within the criminal justice system, namely, arrest, sentencing, imprisonment, and release. It also included additional prompts within each question and a final question, "Do you have any further comments or anything you feel we may have missed?" This gave participants the chance to raise issues that may not have been addressed otherwise (Flynn & McDermott 2016).

### *3.3 Research ethics*

Social work research involves attempts to improve the human condition by understanding issues and evaluating behaviour (Flynn & McDermott 2016). This often means focusing on improving the outcomes for those who might be more marginalised or vulnerable (Flynn & McDermott 2016). It is due to this that ethical considerations in research are paramount. The sensitivity and political nature of the research is reflected in the ethical oversight of the ARC project, where a total of nine Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC), or Research Coordinating Committees (RCC), reviewed and approved the project across Victoria and NSW. These consisted of Monash University HREC, Victorian Department of Justice and Regulation (DoJR, formally Department of Justice (DoJ)) and its NSW counterpart Corrective Services, Department of Human Services Victoria (now DHHS) and Family and Community Services in NSW, Police in both states, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Victoria, as well as the Department of Education and Communities in NSW.

In the current study the main ethics committee to have oversight of the project was the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) for the DoJR (refer to Appendix III for the JHREC approval letter).

### *3.3.1 Ethical concerns specific to prison environments*

Given that data were collected in correctional facilities, there are a number of ethical considerations that need to be addressed such as the coercive nature of prisons, the power differential that exists between researcher and participant, consent, and confidentiality. These are outlined below.

#### *3.3.1.1 Consent and confidentiality*

When researching participants in a coercive environment, such as a prison, there are certain elements that must be considered. As noted above, research undertaken in the fields of social work and criminology often involve vulnerable populations (Flynn & McDermott 2016; Noaks & Wincup 2004). The *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (NHMRC) (hereafter referred to as the *National Statement*) published by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC 2015), the guiding authority of procedural ethics, identifies prisoners and prison authorities as being a group in a dependent or unequal relationship. It is crucial, therefore, that the power dynamics that exist between those being interviewed and the researcher are acknowledged along with any potential issues that may arise, particularly with regard to participant consent and confidentiality of information (Flynn & McDermott 2016).

The *National Statement* outlines provisions that ensure this unequal relationship is acknowledged and further that any unrealistic expectations of potential participants are countered, and informed consent is obtained (NHMRC 2015). These were adopted in the ARC project. Prior to beginning the interview, the researcher determined whether the potential participant was a primary carer using the criteria mentioned in Chapter One (a copy of this can

be found in Appendix IV). If the person did not fit the criteria, they were thanked for their time and the interview ceased. If the person fit the eligibility criteria and wanted to participate, the interviewer then read through the participant information sheet (provided in Appendix V) and the participant was given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have or withdraw from the interview. At this point some participants decided that they did not want to continue with the interview, illustrating that people had agency during this process and whether they participated or not. This is a point outlined in the *National Statement* (NHMRC 2015, p. 16) which holds that consent requires the following conditions: "... [it] should be a voluntary choice and should be based on sufficient information and adequate understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation in it". If the participant wished to proceed, the interviewer then read through a consent form (included in Appendix VI) and the participant was told that they could withdraw from the study without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. Reading through the consent form provided a standard process of verbal consent along with written consent. The participant gave their consent to being interviewed by ticking two boxes and signing the form. One box stated they agreed to be interviewed twice by the researcher (once at the time of meeting and secondly for a follow up interview needed for the ARC project) and the second box stated they agreed to be available for the second interview.

### *3.3.1.2 Confidentiality*

Within correctional facilities, location of interviews can be a significant factor when it comes to confidentiality and interviewing of participants (Noaks & Wincup 2004). While location can be somewhat outside of the control of the interviewer, in this study interviews were conducted within prison programs' areas where the conversation was private and no prison staff were present during interviews. The door to interview rooms were predominantly closed, which inhibited staff or other inmates from overhearing any of the interview. The only occasion where the door was not closed was when I was interviewing a participant in a small room in which the furniture was arranged in such a way that I could not be closest to the door. Here, I put my

security first and left the door ajar. However, the design of the building, in which there was a long hallway outside the door, meant there were very few people in close proximity to the room at any given time. Confidentiality was also explained to the potential participant when reading the participant information sheet and the participant was informed about where the information would be stored. No information from the interviews was passed on to prison staff.

### *3.4 Methodology*

This study takes an exploratory approach and therefore aims to provide new insights into incarcerated primary carer fathers in Victoria. One of the main challenges for researchers is to collect and report on data in a way that is credible and trustworthy (Polit & Beck 2014). This can be addressed by adopting a number of practices and methods which are outlined below.

#### *3.4.1 Exploratory research*

The current study takes an exploratory approach to the following research question:

*What are the experiences of imprisoned primary carer fathers in Victoria, Australia, at the point of arrest and imprisonment?*

Exploratory research involves having the ability to approach that being studied with flexibility and an open-mind while at the same time emphasizing the progression of theory from data (Stebbins 2001). By focusing on a given topic and bringing familiarity to it (Rubin & Babbie 2013) researchers adopting an exploratory methodology provide plausible and practical ways of examining and explaining reality (Reiter 2013). In doing so it seeks to provide new, or previously overlooked, explanations by: “actively engaging the researcher in a process of amplifying his or her conceptual tools and allowing him or her to pose new questions and provide new explanations by looking at reality from a new angle” (Reiter 2013, p. 4-5). Hence, the questions being asked and how they are formulated are influenced by my own world view,

experiences, and frameworks, and involves an inquiry into my own interest. In order to produce research that is exploratory in nature, we as researchers need to make sure we consider positionality, limitations, and any biases we may have (Reiter 2017). This involves considering myself within the research context and having a self-reflexive approach at the core of the research process (Reiter 2017). Doing this ensures trustworthiness of data.

### *3.4.2 Trustworthiness*

“[R]esearchers need to increasingly focus on self-knowledge and sensitivity; better understand the role of the self in the creation of knowledge; carefully self-monitor the impact of their biases, beliefs, and personal experiences on their research; and maintain the balance between the personal and the universal” (Berger 2013, p. 2).

One of the main challenges for researchers is endeavouring to meet the highest quality when both conducting on and reporting on research (Cope 2014). In qualitative research, rigour or trustworthiness is achieved by engaging in efforts that build confidence in the validity of data, methods used, and interpretation (Polit & Beck 2014) so that they represent the same meanings presented by research participants (Lietz, Langer & Furman 2006). In qualitative research the researcher/s conducting the research are considered the research instrument and as such must aim to avoid researcher bias (Cope 2014). To accurately reflect the experiences of those who participate means prioritising the voices of participants over the researcher’s voice and strategies taken to minimise bias can help researchers describe qualitative research that is credible (Padgett 1998). In this sense, trustworthiness of data is not something that simply occurs, but is instead the concerted effort of a fixed set of procedures or practices. Some of these strategies include reflexivity, triangulation, peer debriefing, audit trail and member checking (Lietz, 2006).

As it was exploratory in nature, the current study used several techniques, including accepted naturalistic strategies, to ensure trustworthiness of data (Flynn & McDermott 2016). Firstly, the use of structured interviews within the interview setting provided consistency of data. As well as this, reflexive journaling was used (the questions used as prompts can be found in Appendix VII) (Flynn & McDermott 2016). When a researcher is being reflexive, they have awareness of their values, gender, beliefs, previous experience, and background, and how this might impact on the research process. They are adopting a self-appraisal of the research process (Berger 2013). This means considering how research methods might influence them as a researcher, health professional, or parent (Rossiter et al. 2018). Reflexivity is thus “the process of a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researcher’s positionality as well as active acknowledgement and explicitly recognition that this position may affect the research process and outcome” (Berger 2013, p. 2). Using a reflexive journal allowed for any biases or values to be addressed and discussed with other researchers in the project so that they could be managed effectively. Use of such a journal was also a way of maintaining an audit trail; a key method of enhancing credibility (the truth of the data) and dependability (the constancy of the data) (Cope 2014).

Being self-reflective during data analysis also helped to alert me to potential “unconscious editing” that can arise and in doing so allowed for better engagement with the data and in-depth analysis of it (Valentine 2008). Part II of this chapter includes a reflexive account of the research process. As well as a reflexive journal, trustworthiness – specifically reliability and dependability - was also addressed in the clear defining and coding of variables using NVivo 10/11 (outlined in more detail below) (Flynn & McDermott 2016). Additionally, primary data were coded by me and confirmability (that is, the ability of a researcher to demonstrate that the data represents the participant’s responses and not those of the researcher) was established through the utilisation of quotes from the primary data that depicted each theme

I had identified (Cope 2014). These methods were chosen over other methods, such as peer debriefing, due to time limitations in the final stages of the study.

### *3.5 Limitations*

As this project was initially carried out as part of an ARC project there are both limitations and advantages to this. One of the main limitations of this regards the aims of the original study and the methodology used. As noted above, the aims of the ARC project were to explore care planning practices for children whose parents are incarcerated along with experiences of a range of key stakeholders and families. As a result, the current study was restricted to data obtained that related directly to the aims of the ARC project. For example, many of the questions in the interview schedules addressed the ARC project's research question and aims and not those in the current study. If, for example, the interview schedule was created as part of this study I would have focused more on fathering and what it meant to be a father in prison. This relates back to the research question and is more specific than the overall aims of the ARC project. Ultimately, there were a large portion of data, such as that relating to sentencing of primary carer parents and care planning for children, that were not central to the current study aims and so were not included. This study also is relatively small and so care must be taken when examining this in the broader context of fatherhood and imprisonment.

This study does, however, offer the first step towards providing insight and knowledge into the experiences of primary carer fathers at the point of arrest and imprisonment. Therefore, while there are limitations, these are outweighed by having access to data from a unique and hard to reach group that would otherwise have been unattainable for a doctoral study. Access would not have been possible without the research agreements, relationships, resources, or funding generated from the ARC project along with the researchers and partner organisations involved. While research constraints are therefore noted, it remains clear that the ARC project allowed me to conduct research for a PhD study that is unique within an international and



Australian context as there is no other formal data available relating to imprisoned primary carer fathers.

### *3.6 Conceptualising the data: Theoretical framework*

This thesis uses a conceptual framework of masculinity, identity, and the self to analyse the views of incarcerated primary carer fathers at the point of arrest and during their imprisonment. These concepts are described in more detail in Chapter Four, which provides a conceptual framework for this study, and are also outlined in the peer reviewed journal articles presented in Chapter Two, Five, Six, and Seven.

### *3.7 Data analysis*

Once the interviews were complete, qualitative data were analysed using NVivo10 and NVivo11. The data were analysed differently for each article in the study depending on the overall aims and scope of the article. As the data was originally used for a project examining care planning for children when their primary carer parent is imprisoned, this was a way to generate rich data that was focused specifically on fathers and fathering from prison. As each of the papers had a different focus, with one being more theoretically driven, adopting a different approach to data analysis for each article meant that, as far as possible, this was driven by the data, rather than by the researcher's own interests. While there are co-authors for these articles, I was responsible for the coding of data.

#### *3.7.1 Qualitative content analysis (Chapter Five: Article 2): "They didn't even let me say goodbye": A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers' care planning for children at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia"*

Qualitative data included in this article included three interview questions, from the ARC interview schedule, relating specifically to arrest. Once the interviews were complete, data were

coded based on each question via NVivo10. A code is simply a label (or a word or succinct phrase) that encapsulates a central idea in the data (Braun, Clarke & Terry 2015). Data were then coded using content analysis, a qualitative research method that involves two approaches. The first involves coding and categorisation based on the literature (Bryman 2012) and the second involves coding and categories that emerge directly from the data (Flynn & McDermott 2016). In this article, categories were identified directly from the data based on the frequency with which they occurred (Hansen 2006) and included police awareness and location of arrest (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). This approach is consistent with exploratory studies where there is less available data to draw from in which pre-existing codes can be created (Flynn & McDermott 2016).

### *3.7.2 Qualitative thematic analysis (Chapter Six: Article 3): “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space”*

Qualitative data were initially analysed using NVivo10. Each transcript was then analysed individually using thematic analysis (TA) and a summary of each participant was written. Braun et al. (2015, p. 95) identify TA as “a method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterned meanings or ‘themes’ in qualitative data”. Rather than being a methodology, which provides theoretical frameworks for the collection and analysis of data, it is a method that stipulates certain analytical procedures specific to coding and theme development (Braun et al. 2015). One of the main tenets of TA is that it can be done in a number of ways and the approach the researcher takes will be dependent on a number of factors including: the theories that guide its use; whether the approach taken is deductive or inductive; and whether it is coded using semantic (overt) or latent (covert) meaning (Braun et al. 2015).

The theoretical framework that guides this article is masculinity, identity, and the self. As such, deductive analysis was initially used to identify language or phrases that related to differing constructions of masculinities that signalled a softer masculinity than the hyper-

masculine framework used in past research as well as those relating to fathering and identity, such as being a “good dad”, “looking after”, or “caring” for children. This initial “top down” method was driven by the researcher’s theoretical interest and was analyst driven (Braun & Clarke 2006). Inductive, “bottom up”, analysis was then used to identify latent themes that were strongly linked to the data themselves. These are underlying ideas, assumptions, or ideologies that informed the semantic (explicit or surface) content (Braun & Clarke 2006).

### *3.7.3 Qualitative content analysis (Chapter Seven: Article 4): “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia”*

Qualitative data were initially coded by question in NVivo11. Content was then analysed using content analysis (discussed above) followed by inductive analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) where latent themes were identified, such as “being offered” or “accessing”, fathering supports in prison.

### *3.8 Summary and conclusion*

Part I of this Methodology Chapter has provided an outline and justification of the research design and study sample, data collection methods used, and data analysis processes as well as exploring some of the ethical considerations that arise when doing research in correctional facilities. A brief overview of the theoretical framework for this study was also given. The multi-method approach to data collection is aligned with the exploratory nature of the study which seeks to provide new insights into a previously overlooked group (Reiter 2013). Using this method captured the views of fathers and allowed for clear cross-case analysis (Liamputtong 2007). A number of naturalistic techniques, such as the use of a reflexive journal, were used to ensure reliability of data (Flynn & McDermott 2016). Data were analysed differently for each findings chapter and analyses were based on the overall aims and scope of each article. This method allowed for richness of data and was predominantly data driven.

Limitations of the study were identified and are characteristic of prison studies more broadly, such as the use of structured interviews in correctional settings. To remedy this, prompts were used throughout the interview to allow participants to expand on ideas and an open-ended question also added to this. Lastly, while the sample size is somewhat small ( $n = 39$ ), this study is the first of its kind to explore the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers and, therefore, for a doctoral study provides a unique examination of a hidden group.

The next section in this chapter is Part II, which provides a reflexive overview of the study methodology, drawing on my own experience doing prison research, whilst also drawing on reflexive prison and/or sensitive research to contextualise its use. In doing so, it utilises practices outlined in Part I that ensure trustworthiness and research rigidity.

## Part II: A reflexive approach to prison research

“Achieving a position that is sensitive to and takes account of the standpoints of more than one group is a question of research style and method, *as well as* a question of honesty, responsibility and reflection” (Liebling 2001, p. 478).

In Part II of the Methodology Chapter I take a reflexive approach, turning the lens onto myself to offer “self-appraisal” of my own views and the biases, feelings, and observations that arose during the research process (Berger 2013, p. 2). A primary goal of the reflexive process is to monitor these effects in order to enhance credibility (Berger 2013). Jewkes (2012) argues that by the time researchers come to write up their findings they have often forgotten the emotions they experienced during the initial stages of the research. I was fortunate in this regard. After working as a research assistant on the ARC project I had an idea for a reflexive article and proceeded to note down everything that came to mind about the research process and my reflections and experiences of it. This article never eventuated. What did happen, however, was that I enrolled and was accepted into a PhD program.

This chapter, therefore, offers a reflexive account of the research methodology and contains these early reflections along with an adapted version of the reflexive journals used as part of the research process. As noted in Part I of the Methodology Chapter, one way of ensuring trustworthiness of data is to approach the research with a reflexive lens. Part II, therefore, provides a reflexive account, bringing together research on reflexivity in prison research with my own reflexive account of doing prison research. Jewkes (2012, p. 64) notes that, as researchers, failing to divulge our autoethnographic positions and the “emotional responses to what are frequently challenging and highly charged emotional environments” only does a disservice to other scholars and early career researchers who follow these same paths, often with high levels of anxiety. In sharing this account of the research process, therefore, I intend to shed light on some of these emotions in an honest and reflexive way. In doing so, this section

may offer a useful guide for other PhD candidates and early career researchers in what can be expected when doing research in prisons and other sensitive areas.

### *3.9 Self-awareness and researcher biases*

In her work on doing prison research, Liebling (1998) asks: why would some people seek out prisons as a place of research and others turn away? For some (such as myself), there is an innate curiosity that draws us in to work in this area and from the outset we may, consciously or unconsciously, hold allegiances with those inside the prison, be it prisoners, staff, or administration (Liebling 1998). Yet having sympathy towards those we research does not in itself have to be a biased position and may paradoxically have a positive impact on how we research: “The more affective the research, in terms of shared feelings and experiences, the better the fieldwork gets done on the whole” (Liebling 2001, p. 475). Despite this, however, we must take note of our propensity to sympathise with some groups and not others by offering a reflective gaze in order to ensure trustworthiness of data.

Before beginning my role as a research assistant on the ARC project, I was never taught how to conduct interviews within a prison environment. While I took a research method’s course during my criminology honour’s year, we were not told what to expect, how to hold ourselves, or what we might experience when conducting interviews. (On a side note, this to me, signals a need for such material in criminology postgraduate degrees.) For this reason, I learned as I went. I had confidence and professionalism when deep down I felt nervous and, at times, quite uncomfortable. To my surprise, the feelings that arose were not always due to interactions with prisoners.

At one prison I found myself resentful towards the prison officers. At lunch time I sat in the cafeteria at a table by myself and it felt like high school. I overheard conversations from prison guards talking about inmates like they were the “scum of the earth” and I found myself

“siding” with the inmates. On another occasion I was taken to one of the units by a social worker in the prison who was helping me recruit participants and I saw for myself what it would have been like to be someone locked up. There was an overarching sense of masculinity and threat and I felt incredibly vulnerable and apprehensive about being there. I experienced, from afar, what the units felt like and how staff and prisoners could get drawn so easily into the “macho” atmosphere.

It was interesting to witness these thought patterns and to notice a contempt for authority that seemed to be rising within me. This illustrated to me that there are parts of myself as a researcher that I am unable to prevent from occurring, as they are instantaneous. I also noticed that my upbringing, in a family that questioned authority and harsh forms of discipline along with my criminology background, made me suspicious of people working in environments where people were locked up on a daily basis, because to me locking people up made no sense. I realise that this bias does not consider that there are prison staff who *do* want to make a positive change for prisoners. It also does not recognise that people might need and/or choose to work in prisons because the pay is good and the benefits they receive make it worth it.

Rather than see sympathetic disposition or bias as a negative component of the research process, biases can act as an important guide and are in themselves a source of valuable data (Liebling 1998). Certainly, we may have un/intended biases. Yet fundamental to rigorous research is the ability to adopt a reflexive approach to these narratives. Following this, we can work towards having a more distanced approach towards handling data by adopting a “sensitive and diplomatic” approach throughout the data collection and analysis phases (Liebling 2001, p. 475). Initially, I was aware of my propensity to form an allegiance with those being researched. However, on reflection, this honesty meant I was able to gather data and conduct analysis with rigour.

### *3.10 Navigating prison structures, systems, and safety*

Prior to conducting data collection in prisons, researchers will have already submitted proposals and gone through ethics committees explaining how they will manage any potential risks to participants (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007). This is a necessity in research. The risk or safety to researchers doing sensitive research, however, is not always approached with this same stringency (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007). Instead, challenges that arise tend to be dealt with in an ad-hoc fashion. It is for this reason that researchers' accounts of the data collection processes in prisons, including technical barriers encountered, systemic issues, and the general structure or routine of the prison, act as a useful instructional tool for other researchers in the field (Sutton 2011); particularly for those starting out (Jewkes 2012).

There were days when I travelled several hours on public transport out to Port Phillip prison, only to find that I had three to four hours to conduct just two interviews. On arrival at prison reception I told staff who I was and that I was a researcher from Monash University, "here to conduct interviews". I then gave them my phone, put all my personal belongings in a locker, and transferred my papers and a clear pen into a clear plastic bag so all my items could be seen. On arrival, when it was known that I was a staff member and not a family member coming to visit a relative, the attitude toward me seemed to shift. It made me feel, on the one hand, relieved that people were friendly towards me and, on the other, apprehensive about being placed in an allegiance with the staff.

Processing varied from prison to prison and the level of security also differed. At a minimum-security prison, without knowing I was breaking any rules, I walked out to the programs' office with an escort and my phone and computer still in my bag. There was no security and no one asked me if I had a computer or phone. I did not intend to use these, however, upon leaving I felt like a naughty school child who had broken the rules. Such lacklustre



security was then highly contrasted with that of maximum-security prisons where my body was scanned, shoes removed, and time was something I had to let go of.

The daily routine of a prison and the security constraints with regard to getting potential participants to and from the interview room also meant it sometimes took several hours to conduct only a few interviews. In most facilities I left several hours before I was due to be there and even if I only intended to conduct three interviews in a day, I allowed up to ten hours (including the trip there and back) so as to leave time for the interviews to take place. I made sure I was compliant with the timetable of the prison and that I was flexible to their needs, rather than the other way around, as I knew that prisons function on strict rules, routines, and timetables.

Once through the checks, someone arranged for an escort to come and collect me and we walked over to the building where the interviews were to be conducted. The staff who escorted me were usually friendly and asked me about the research I was conducting. I got a mixture of responses. Some staff said that it was a really interesting and a much-needed area of research, while others suggested that I was wasting my time. For the most part, staff that I had direct involvement with were helpful and on a number of occasions these interactions with prison staff assisted in the recruitment process as prison officers had contact with prisoners on a day to day basis in the units and on the grounds and so knew the background to the men's lives.

As noted previously, before working on the ARC project I had very little knowledge about what to expect when conducting an interview in a prison setting. I was unsure as to whether it would be just myself and the participant or whether there would be another person present. Before embarking on this research, I had images in my mind from films and television that depicted men in orange overalls, their hands chained or cuffed, with an officer standing behind them. However, when I came to do the interviews my experience was completely

different. I was surprised to find at the first prison site that it was just me and the participant in a normal office conducting an interview, just two human beings. It makes sense that it would be done this way. However, my preconceived ideas and lack of experience conducting interviews in correctional settings meant that prior to conducting this research I assumed the person I was going to be interviewing was in prison and therefore would be “scary” or threatening in some way. It was due to this incongruity that I became aware of the ideas we as researchers, but also the public and wider community, have of what prison is like and who is confined within its walls.

Before each interview the prison staff liaison emphasised the duress device on the wall to my right and made a point of telling me to “push it up and push it hard” if I ever felt uneasy. Simply telling me that made me uneasy, but I figured there were levels of uneasy and general unease was meant to go unnoticed. I was told during the induction session that I was always to sit closest to the door in case I needed to leave in a hurry. Thankfully that situation never presented itself.

Out of the near to fifty interviews I conducted, there were only a small number of occasions where I did feel uncomfortable, but never once did I feel uneasy. Overall, I was struck by the fact that the majority of men who walked through the door to be interviewed looked like any other man you would see walking down the street. They were just like you or me. Yet labels and sensationalised media constantly remind us that these men are “criminals”, they are “monsters”, or “animals” who have committed a crime and therefore should be punished. Instead, I talked with primary carer fathers who cared deeply for their children and who, crime or no crime, wanted the best for their children.

Given that having “appropriate” security dimensions, such as the use of authority, the provision of safety, and regulation of behaviour, are central to the quality of prison life for prisoners (Liebling, Hulley & Crewe 2012), it was important to work within the prison routines

and be mindful of these security dimensions when entering the prison system. Furthermore, being able to actively take note of how these systems and structures affected me throughout the process allowed for a more reflexive approach to data collection where my own experiences of the systems, even from an “outsider” perspective, allowed me to at least partially acknowledge how these would be experienced on a daily level for the participants I was interviewing.

### *3.11 Managing relationships in prisons*

One of the biggest challenges facing qualitative researchers conducting prison research is gaining entry into the prison and navigating relationships with prisoners, staff, and administration (Patenaude 2004). Access to correctional facilities is often taken for granted, when this is an essential component of prison research (Patenaude 2004). Further, access may be denied simply based on whether management perceives there to be a value for them that outweighs any potential interruptions in the usual prison routine. One way of reducing this divide between academia and social research in prisons is to involve program supervisors and management in the process and to build rapport from the outset (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007; Patenaude 2004). In this study, the success of the recruitment process came down to the relationships built with prison management and with whom I was liaising. This meant building rapport with staff and getting them interested and enthusiastic about taking time out of their, most often, hectic schedules to assist. At times this was easy and at times it was exceptionally hard. There are several points that helped me with recruitment and several that hindered it.

There were several prisons where the process was swift and dates were set. In situations where recruitment of participants was simple, I contacted the prison staff member we were given by prison management via email and with a phone call. This was a program worker, program coordinator, or a social worker within the prison. I then informed them about the research, giving them a thorough overview of what the project was about, who we were looking to interview, and what the best avenues were for doing this.

At other times, the process was more complicated and I came up against barriers. In several prisons I was told that there was no one in the prison who fit the criteria. In these cases, further access to the prisoners ceased. It was also recommended by prison management and staff that if I wanted to recruit more people, I should widen the scope of the research. As this was not ethically a viable option, I took it upon myself to think of new ways to gather participants. The solution was to conduct information sessions inside the prison with resident advisors as well as attend a prisoner representatives' meeting (these were meetings attended by men inside the prison who had typically been in prison for a number of years and who were representatives for prisoners when it came to things such as getting additional items in the prison canteen). At these sessions we (that is, one of the chief investigators, another researcher on the project, and myself) outlined the research and got feedback from prisoners as to how we might recruit additional participants. We were told by some of the men that it was hard to know who in the prison were fathers, as men did not talk about their children in prison. It was important at this point to consider this objectively; as a reflection of the masculine prison environment, where discussions about children are scarce, and not as a barrier to data collection. It was not that men were uninterested, it was simply that it was unknown *who* the fathers were.

The relationships and rapport I built with prison management and other staff up until that point (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007) also meant that I continued recruiting participants for another six months at this one facility. At one point the prison program manager came into the program building and said, "You still here Tess?!" "Are you moving in?" in a joking manner, recognising the amount of time it had taken to recruit participants. While this lengthy data collection was obviously not ideal, it did result in more conversations with staff about the project and the snowballing method led to a further 16 participants taking part in the study.

### *3.12 Gender and researching in male prisons*

As a researcher interested in gender and masculinity, my research today is guided by gender ideologies and frameworks. In writing this thesis I seek to challenge and critique assumptions about men (and women) and in so doing attend to the complex ways that gender is experienced in certain spaces, structures, and institutions (Miller 2012). Feminist scholars (Daly 1998) have noted that what separates feminist criminology from other criminological analyses “is the conceptual understanding of gender that guides our research” (Miller 2012, p. 49). Gender is as much of a starting point as the analyses of crime (Daly 1998). In masculinity research this means approaching the study methodology, as well as the data collection and analysis, with a gendered lens. And yet, it is often with “the benefit of hindsight” that we are able to deepen our understanding “of *what* is influencing our knowledge production and *how* this is occurring” (Mauthner & Doucet 2003, p. 419). In this study, whilst collecting data, I was unaware that I would be using the data to do a PhD three years later, and yet my previous interest in gender and masculinity (as noted in the Introduction Chapter) led to curiosity and insights about gender whilst collecting data. It has been noted in reflexive accounts of criminological research that gender becomes more prominent when there is an incongruence between the researcher and the researched (Poulton 2014). Female researchers in this regard seem to be more aware of their experiences within gendered spaces and of the interactions that take place in them (Gill & Maclean 2002). As a female researcher doing research in a male prison, I was aware of my gender within this space and, as no research can provide a purely objective “truth” (Miller & Glassner 2004), I took note of my gender and how it might impact on the research.

Years ago, I remember a friend of mine telling me about her experience visiting her husband in prison and the looks she got from other incarcerated men. It informed how I imagined I would be perceived as a young woman in a male prison and I had this in my mind before entering the prison. I made sure I wore clothes that made me look as plain as I could, to prevent any undue attention being drawn to me. Some prisoners paid very little attention to

what I was doing. At other times, I sensed a curiosity from both inmates and staff and noticed they were staring. I wondered if this was the norm. Was this just how it was for a female researcher in male prisons?

During one information session we ran at a private prison with a group of resident advisors I had one prisoner say at the end jokingly to someone else in the group, “I was just saying, I don’t think you’ll find it hard getting people to talk to you in here”. To which there was laughter from the other men. At the time I felt quite embarrassed, as the comment was made in the presence of around 15 other prisoners, along with two female colleagues. It made me feel conflicted; it was nice getting a compliment, yet at the same time I felt a sense of unease at the thought of being singled out in a particularly masculine environment. On another occasion I received a letter addressed to my workplace from a prisoner I had never met who got hold of a follow up letter sent to another participant. In it he asked to be part of the research and also if I knew of anyone who would like to be his pen pal. Lastly, he said he thought I was “hot”. (This information was then passed on to our contact at CV.) I expected this to unsettle me. Instead I found myself sympathising with someone who was confined to a prison cell and, from what I could gather, was lonely.

I wondered on numerous occasions if, and how, my gender was impacting on the research. Was the fact that I was a woman making it easier for men to talk openly about their children? Or did it have the opposite effect? Were they simply telling me what they thought I wanted to hear? Or were they being brutally honest? At one point I even wondered if some of the men were simply coming to talk with me because they were bored and they got to talk to a woman for an hour. While the answers to these questions remain unknown (as they were not collected as part of the research), noticing this was evidence that I was being reflexive about my role in the research process and how gender might influence the study methodology. Through writing a reflexive journal and “doing” reflexivity (Mauthner & Doucet 2003), I was able to draw on these insights and use them to guide the initial development of this study. And

yet, as Mauthner and Doucet (2003) so aptly note, it was not until I had done extensive theoretical research *after* data collection that I was able to fully appreciate *how* my curiosity about gender was influencing my initial experience.

### *3.13 Summary and conclusion*

To say that there are no subjective feelings experienced by researchers when doing prison research would be erroneous. For it is impossible to *completely* separate ourselves from the spaces, interactions, and unconscious biases we have. That is why taking a reflexive approach to research involves acknowledging that the researched *and* the researcher are embedded within the same research process (Poulton 2014). Dickson-Swift et al (2007) note that having self-knowledge can open us up to vulnerability when doing research; to our own emotions, mortality, and experiences. One of the last days I spent interviewing I sat in an office looking out the window at the grey walls reaching high into the sky. I saw grey concrete and barbed wire and I suddenly noticed a pink flower blossoming brightly beside the footpath; the only colour littering the bleak atmosphere. It was here, as I looked out the window at the pink flower that I felt an overwhelming sense of sadness and anger. To live, day in and day out, in an environment with so little stimulation seemed like the saddest thing in the world. Tears began rolling down my cheeks as I looked around me and wondered at the dreary grey hopelessness of it all. I felt angry at a system that punishes people by locking them away and forgetting about them while doing very little to assist them in their re-entry back into the societies from which they have come, angry at politicians who felt it was their duty to push for punitive penal policies in the hope that they would gain votes from the so called “public” who they claim want to see people locked up forever, and angry that I was completely powerless to change it. That last thought brought to mind a conversation with a former criminology lecturer who, when I was feeling powerless to change what I perceived to be unfairness in the world reminded me that by conducting this sort of research I was giving a voice to those who might be unable to get their stories heard. It is

this thought that has kept me focused and connected to the bigger picture and what I am here to do.

### *3.14 Chapter Three conclusion*

This chapter has provided an overview of the study methodology broken into Parts I and II. In order to produce a study that is rigorous, the researcher's position, biases, and experiences need to be considered as these may impact on the research (Berger 2013). In order to minimise any effect on the data this study used reflexive methods, such as keeping a reflexive journal, as these are a useful way of recognising and addressing these. By providing, firstly, the study methodology this chapter has outlined and justified its design, sample, data collection and analysis and given an overview of the theoretical framework used in this study. It then offers a reflexive account of the research process to ensure trustworthiness of data (Flynn & McDermott 2016). Having self-awareness and actively doing this as part of the research process reduces the likelihood that biases will occur in analysis as it alerts the researcher to any unconscious biases that may be present (Cope 2014; Valentine 2008). This chapter has therefore given both accounts of the study methodology in order to enhance the study's credibility and rigour.

Chapter Four provides a description and discussion of the key theoretical concepts used for this thesis. It does so by examining research about masculinity, identity and the self, in the context of fatherhood and imprisonment to provide a context for the following three finding's chapters.



## **Chapter Four: Conceptual framework**

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the theoretical framework used in this study emerged from the data itself, as each of the three finding's articles were analysed differently depending on the aims and scope of that particular article. This allowed for a richness of data and meant the results were predominantly data driven. One commonality, however, is a focus on gender as this concept is pivotal when discussing fatherhood and imprisonment and yet, as the following chapter highlights, is largely absent from discussions relating to gender and punishment.

### *4.2 Introduction*

Crime is clearly gendered (Karp 2010). Males make up over 90% of the prison population in most developed countries (ABS 2018; Ministry of Justice (MOJ) 2018; Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) 2018) and yet paradoxically, discussions about gender and male imprisonment, especially with regards to fathers, do not dominate academic discourse (Sloan 2018). Some recent work on prison masculinities and fathers (Maycock & Hunt 2018) is a notable exception. Research on gender and prisons tends towards discussions of women's imprisonment in the context of motherhood (Baldwin 2017) and the vulnerabilities and/or trauma experienced by this group (see Carlton & Segrave 2014; Scraton & Moore 2013; Segrave & Carlton 2010). There are, obviously, ongoing ramifications for this (Sloan 2018) particularly when considering the increasing number of men, and fathers, entering the prison system and those returning home. Therefore, focusing on prison masculinities and fathers is crucial. This study acknowledges this paradox by explicitly exploring the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers. To do this, the study is shaped by three interconnecting theoretical underpinnings: it draws together the self, masculinity, and identity and how these interweave to influence how incarcerated fathers experience arrest and imprisonment.

#### 4.3 The self - 'frontstage prisoner identity' and 'backstage fathering self'

Erving Goffman (1961) in his seminal work, which continues to influence penal scholarship today, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* presents the idea that inmates enter institutions (or asylums) and undergo a “mortification of the self” in which they begin “a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self” (Goffman 1961, p. 14). Within the current study, discussions relating to the self may be conceptualised as being someone’s internal core that is responsible for processing feelings and shaped by their thoughts, emotions, and desires (Cohen 1994). When exploring this concept in relation to fatherhood and imprisonment, consider it the following way: Fathers enter the prison with a concept of the self, created by the social foundations and arrangements around them. Once in prison, they may nurture this private (and oftentimes non- “macho”) self by drawing on specific interpersonal relations, such as the family, to distinguish them from the rest of the inmate population (Jewkes 2002). Although it is well established that hyper masculinity is evident in prisons, there is some thought that there are possibilities for another version of self (as detailed below). This self can be nurtured and may be expressed when in an environment that supports it. Of particular concern to fathering identity this means building the capacity to care for children in prison as this will impact fathers upon release from prison, given that adhering to an alternative identity to that associated with crime and imprisonment may affect recidivism and desistance from crime post-release (Finestone 1967; Maruna 2001).

As well as exploring this notion of the self, this study expands on Goffman’s (1956, 1961) dramaturgical exploration of frontstage and backstage personas to identify what, for the purpose of this research, I have coined a “frontstage prisoner identity” and a “backstage fathering self”. This describes what happens *internally* for primary carer fathers in prison when moving between different spaces and interactions in the prison environment. In prison, Goffman’s frontstage persona can be seen in everyday life where most tasks are performed in the same space with the same people. Prisoners enter these spaces and must “perform” the role

of prisoner. Internally they are drawing on their frontstage prisoner identity when in this space. At the same time, inmates enter the prison with a “presenting culture” (Goffman 1961, p. 12) and a concept of the self that has been made possible by the social foundations and arrangements around them. For fathers, being with children outside of the prison environment is akin to being in a backstage setting and fathers bring with them into the prison setting this backstage fathering self – a more private self, used to distinguish them from the rest of the inmate population.

When examining the notion of space in the prison environment, the concept of liminality is used. Liminality is a concept first introduced by Van Gennep (1960) to describe the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The initiate (that is, the person undergoing the ritual) is first stripped of the social status that he or she possessed before the ritual, inducted into the liminal period of transition, and finally given his or her new status and reassimilated into society (Van Gennep 1960). Moran’s (2013a) research on prison visiting in female Russian prisons identified the visiting space as a liminal space that represents a temporary, transient space for female prisoners. This study explores the idea of liminality using prison visiting and phone conversations as an illustration (further exploration of this idea is presented in a forthcoming article on post-release, fatherhood, and liminality). It argues that contact between fathers and children takes place in a liminal visiting space; an in-between space situated between the inside and the outside world (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018).

Liminal space is traditionally used to describe a transition from one world to the next. In this case, it is a space where there is an expectation to perform fathering and yet it is a space where neither a frontstage prisoner identity nor a backstage fathering self are fully actualised. Instead, in this in-between space fathers are temporarily suspended between the carceral environment and the outside world and are faced with ongoing conflict of performing both prisoner and father. These concepts, along with masculinity, are discussed in depth in Chapter Six (a published peer reviewed journal article) “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space”.

#### *4.4 Masculinity: Prison masculinities and fatherhood*

When discussing prison masculinities, hegemonic masculinity (Miller 2011) and the constructed gender practice that assumes and consequently reinforces men's dominance over women and some men, is often used. The most cited source of the term hegemonic masculinity can be traced to Connell (1987) who describes it as the structural gender practice within society that assumes, and thus allows, men's dominance over women (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Within this framework, fatherhood is defined in relation to the prevailing cultural ideals of masculinities where paid work is central (Collier & Sheldon 2008; Miller 2010). Along with employment, fathering is associated with being a protector, companion to children, moral guide, co-parent, and disciplinarian (Collier 2001; Collier & Sheldon 2008; Miller 2010); and other ways of fathering, such as being involved in childcare and emotional work, are perceived as weakening a sense of self-identity. These ideals of masculinity are particularly evident for new fathers, involved fathers, and stay-at-home-dads, who do not fit within the realm of such ideals (Wall & Arnold 2007). For fathers, the resultant effect is one in which their core identity is more likely connected to something outside the realm of fathering, such as employment, as it is embodied in this masculinity framework (Smart & Neale 1999). Yet, fathers continue to play a significant role in their children's lives.

Within this societal belief system, which removes men from associations of caregiving, it is also assumed that women are fundamentally the primary carers of children. This has influenced research in a number of ways. As noted in Chapter Three (a published peer reviewed article) "'They didn't even let me say goodbye'. A study of imprisoned primary carer father at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia" the use of gender-neutral terms, such as "parent", "families", and "caregivers", in studies of motherhood and fatherhood have obscured understandings of primary caregiving, as the focus is typically on the mother or a combination of mother or fathers (Fletcher, Freeman & Matthey 2011; Nieto 2002). Fathers also continue to be under-researched in a number of areas including: alcohol and drug dependency (McMahon,

Winkel, Luthar & Rounsaville 2005); policy, practice, and health related services (Lee, Bellamy & Guterman 2009); child protection/welfare (Shafer & Bellamy 2016; Scourfield 2006); family-based services (Fleming & King 2010); and, in particular, criminal justice and penal policy (Dennison et al. 2014; Sloan 2018). In terms of practice, there is also a tendency to involve fathers in more punitive services or systems intended to address risks or deficits such as criminal justice or substance abuse treatment rather than in processes of intervention or prevention (Shafer & Bellamy 2016). The resultant effect is one of *uninvolved*, rather than involved, fathering (Brown, Callahan, Strega, Walmsey & Dominelli 2009). This then contradicts evidence which shows that fathers who are engaged and actively involved in their children's lives have a positive impact on the child/ren's emotional, mental, and social wellbeing (Coley & Coltrane 2007). Central to this is the prioritisation of children's needs, as in some cases ongoing contact with their father is not in their best interest.

When applying this to the prison masculinities literature what is evident is that the focus remains centred on the hyper-masculine prison environment (Michalski 2017; Toch 1998) which is structured within a hierarchy of penal subcultures that exaggerates male socialisation (Mosher 1998), thus reinforcing conventional masculine ideals such as strength and bravery (Ricciardelli et al. 2015). This hyper-masculine construct is situated within an overtly aggressive context in which an "authoritative, controlling, heterosexual, independent and violent kind of masculinity" is reinforced (Ricciardelli et al. 2015, p. 495). A man's capacity to survive prison life therefore depends on his ability to negotiate his place within the prison hierarchy, which is based on "excessive displays of manliness", and fostering this public identity allows prisoners to "fit in" (Jewkes 2005, p. 46). Consequently, there is little room for deviation from prescribed norms and conformity is paramount (Jewkes 2002). Masculinities that are, therefore, characterised by more "feminine" traits (such as caring, fathering, and emotional fragility) are largely absent, or hidden, and are thus associated with their backstage fathering self.

Although this hyper-masculine prison environment has been widely accepted as a “truth”, as Seymour (2018, p. 223) notes, “the truth about masculinity, and prison masculinities in particular, is- like all ‘truths’ – considerably more complex and nuanced”. The focus on hyper-masculinity only reinforces gendered expectations that emphasise the need for qualities such as resilience, whilst ensuring that men refrain from showing weakness or any emotions that would suggest they were unable to cope (Sloan 2018). Furthermore, these observable expressions of masculinity that take place within the prison may give the appearance of hyper-masculinity, yet in reality, such excessive focus on these hyper-masculine facets of the prison environment have understated a prisoner’s ability to manage the uncertainties of the prison environment (Ricciardelli et al. 2015). Indeed, research has shown that those who *appear* the least emotionally, physically, and legally vulnerable and are able to manage the uncertainties of prison life are the most empowered in relation to other prisoners (Ricciardelli et al. 2015). That is, while they may not express these vulnerabilities in their frontstage setting, on an individual or more personal level they feel, or are, empowered. Furthermore, as this study argues, masculinities for those in (and out) of prison are constructed in a multitude of ways (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018).

Rather than situating this study within the hyper-masculine prison literature, it adds to research that seeks to acknowledge and explore softer forms of masculinity that exist for men in prison (Buston 2018; Evans & Wallace 2007; Ricciardelli et al. 2015). These forms of masculinity are far more transitory than earlier accounts suggest and sit between an overtly masculine exterior, and a more personal self, which is intentionally preserved and employed. Masculinities of this form occur when male prisoners draw on their emotions and are seen through humour, friendship, and/or playfulness (Jewkes 2015). Expressing these forms of masculinity allow some prisoners to change personas or personalities in order to reclaim the self and articulate different expressions of masculinity within the prison (Bandyopadhyay 2006). Some prisoners show this within homosocial friendships in prison when they form close bonds

with other men (Crewe 2014) and others, such as fathers, demonstrate a softer side when connecting or talking with their children (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). In this sense, there are a range of masculinities male prisoners adopt with relative autonomy, depending on the situation, space, and time.

As Chapter Six “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space” extrapolates in more detail, there are, therefore, alternative displays and/or models of masculinity within the prison environment than the dominating hyper-masculine narrative *and* multiple ways of performing manhood in prison. There may not necessarily be the social room for changing one’s perceived gender in prison however there is indeed room for altering the sort of man one wishes to be (Harris 2011). As noted above, rather than situate this study within the hyper-masculine framework, it contends that there are a range of masculinities that exist for imprisoned men (as they do for all men). These fall outside notions of hyper-masculinity and can be seen when incarcerated primary carer fathers interact with or talk to/about their children. In this sense, incarcerated primary carer fathers choose an expression of masculinity in each moment as a strong expression of self and to manage their frontstage and backstage personas in the prison.

#### *4.5 Identity: Fathering identity and fathering programs in prison*

Social identity research provides some insight into individuals who present with conflicting prisoner and self identities (Barreto & Ellemers 2003). When placed in group situations, people will actively choose how they define themselves. Yet they are more inclined to follow group norms in situations that are controlled by others, even when privately they would do otherwise (Barreto & Ellemers 2003). If, for example, men identify as fathers in a private sphere but are incarcerated, they may selectively focus on the part of their identity that will enable them to be part of the prevailing group. For incarcerated fathers this can mean a pull away from the fathering identity toward the presenting, and masculine, culture of the prison as this enables

engagement and integration into the prevailing inmate culture (Jewkes 2005). Incongruencies emerge when individuals have conflicts between external categorisations (such as being a prisoner) and internal identities (such as being a father) and how they define themselves in relation to others (Barreto & Ellemers 2003). There is, then, an ongoing struggle to maintain a fathering identity or sense of self in prison as they are forced into compliance, insecurity, and a different form of masculinity than they otherwise might choose (Ricciardelli et al. 2015). Prison therefore diminishes fathering identity as fathers opt to endorse a public masculine figure (Jewkes 2005) to fit into the normative pressures of the masculine prison environment, even when privately they are not inclined to be this way. This has long term implications for those returning to the community and may be reflected in the high rates of recidivism with 44.4% of male prisoners returning to prison within two years (VO 2015). Perhaps too this is even more challenging for primary carer fathers looking to reconnect with their children post-release.

Desistance literature and, specifically, secondary desistance helps to inform the discussion of how fathering programs pre- and post-release may assist in the maintenance of father-child relationships. Secondary desistance is a process of change that takes place for previously incarcerated individuals where they no longer identify with the criminal or prisoner identity (Farrall & Maruna 2004). This change may be mediated, for instance, by supporting desistance processes in prison (McNeill 2006). Theories of this type point to subjective change within an individual which, in turn, is reflected in motivational change, signs of generativity (and a concern for others), and a consideration of the future (Maruna 2001). When one is engaging in “generative signs” they are narrating or practicing the experience of generative conduct and are actively exploring ways of caring for themselves and others (Halsey & Harris 2011, p. 77). One way of doing this is through fathering.

Administering fathering supports in prisons that are informed by desistance and generativity involves “observing, interrupting and resisting” assumed gender behaviours and roles (Miller 2010, p. 44). In this context, offender management services become “supporters



of desistance processes” rather than providers of correctional treatment (McNeill 2006, p. 46). Additionally, placing fathering identity at the core of program development involves administering fathering programs that are all-encompassing (Zuckerman & Wright 2010) and focus on cultivating a fathering identity, rather than being purely educational or skills based. Fathering, as a generative sign, is therefore a productive endeavour when incorporated into programs and penal practices as it gives fathers the opportunity to “make good” (McNeill 2006, p. 46).

At its core, this means focusing on cultivating a fathering identity for fathers in prison, and their ability to create an alternative narrative script, as this is central to the process of cognitive change (Berg & Huebner 2011). For it is during this internal process that individuals re-evaluate their own lives (Farrall & Maruna 2004). Connecting with children is one way of doing this as it gives incarcerated fathers the opportunity to foster a sense of self or identity that is related to being a father rather than being a prisoner (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). It also helps to construct an alternative identity to that which is related to crime or punishment as the family serves as an anchor for those leaving prison (Finestone 1967; Maruna 2001) *and* is a key factor in the desistance process upon release (Ronel & Segev 2013).

Yet it is not simply the acquisition of change that is fundamental in fathering programs, it is the corresponding attainment of this narrative script. This involves a shift in moral thinking from “what do I need to do?” to “who do I need to be?” (Pence 1991) and when administered with incarcerated fathers would be, “what sort of father do I need to be?” Currently, rather than promoting desistance, prison encourages deteriorating dispositions with regards to fathering as their capacity to “do” fathering is fundamentally restricted to letter writing, phone calls, and the occasional visit (Halsey & Harris 2011). Chapter Seven (an accepted peer reviewed journal article) “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia” explores parenting programs and supports in detail and highlights that instead of nurturing or developing fatherhood or alternative expressions of masculinity, the prison reduces

opportunities to create internal narrative scripts that are linked to fathering due to its lack of fathering programs. Chapter Six also explores fathers' opportunities to father and create an internal narrative script from within the prison. As these chapters highlight, despite the ongoing pressure to conform to a "tough" masculine code coupled with a cautiousness about expressing alternative masculinities, men may be just as open to exploring, understanding, or changing their private, internal worlds as women (Evans & Wallace 2007). It is therefore pivotal to "give active thought to creating space in which expression of feeling is both normalized and supported" (Evans & Wallace 2007, p. 504); a space that allows fathers to express a version of masculinity that is connected to fathering thus providing an opportunity for the development of an internal narrative that is separate from crime or prison.

Overall then, this study explores the internal conflict that exists for incarcerated fathers as they switch between their two separate selves as illustrated by the frontstage prisoner identity and backstage fathering self. It examines how fathers' conflicting expressions of masculinity are negotiated and performed within the liminal prison space and how fathers experience fathering when interacting in fathering programs, supports, and spaces within the prison.

The next chapter is Chapter Five, a published peer reviewed journal article, entitled "'They didn't even let me say goodbye'. A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia". It examines how incarcerated primary carer fathers experience planning processes for their children at arrest and what factors facilitate or hinder the planning process.

## 5.0 Preamble to Chapter Five

Chapter Four provided a description and overview of the conceptual framework used for this study. This chapter is the second publication included in this thesis. It is a peer reviewed journal article called “‘They didn’t even let me say goodbye’. A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers’ care planning for children at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia” that addresses the first subsidiary research question outlined in Chapter One: *How do primary carer fathers experience planning processes for their children at the time of arrest and what factors facilitate or hinder the planning process?*

This article was published in the peer reviewed journal *Child Care in Practice* in 2018 and was co-authored with Dr Catherine Flynn and Professor Christopher Trotter at Monash University. The Child Care in Practice Group is published by Taylor and Francis (ISSN: 1476-489X (Online)). The journal was launched in 1994 by a group of child care professionals in Northern Ireland and was chosen as it is considered a leading international journal of multidisciplinary child care practice for those working in a range of disciplines, including social work, policing, and probationary services. It publishes four issues annually and within community and home care sits in Q2.

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## **Chapter Five (Article 2): “‘They didn’t even let me say goodbye’. A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers’ care planning for children at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia”**

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Tess Bartlett is a PhD candidate in the Department of Social Work at Monash University researching the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers in Victoria and masculinity. She has worked for around ten years as a teaching associate in criminology and on a number of projects researching families in the criminal justice system.

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## **Abstract**

In Victoria, data indicate that in 2013-14 there were 74,992 adult male arrests, yet little formal attention has been paid to the parenting status of these men, despite knowledge of the impact of parental arrest and incarceration on children being well established. This article addresses a gap in literature by providing new insights into the experiences of arrest of 34 primary carer fathers incarcerated in Victoria. It examines how incarcerated primary carer fathers experience planning processes for their children at the time of arrest and what factors facilitate or hinder the planning process. To do so, the article draws on data gathered for an Australian Research Council funded study conducted in Victoria and NSW between 2011 and 2015. Key issues include: the primary location of paternal arrest; the presence, or absence, of children at the location at which the arrest is made; police awareness of children; and subsequent discussions between police and fathers about suitable care. Qualitative findings depict an absence of any discussion about children between police and fathers during the arrest process. The study highlights the demand for guidelines regarding child sensitive practice when a primary carer father is arrested.

**Keywords:** parenting, policy, risk, criminal justice, fathering, arrest, children of prisoners

## **Introduction**

The current article examines imprisoned primary carer fathers' accounts of their arrest process<sup>i</sup>, with a specific focus on factors which affected how they were able to fulfil their responsibilities to their dependent children. Due to the lack of existing research relating to imprisoned primary carer fathers and arrest, the paper begins with a discussion of research examining parental, and

where possible paternal, imprisonment before moving onto parental arrest, to understand the specific needs of this group; limitations are noted appropriately. Research findings and implications are presented, drawn from one aspect of an ARC study, “The Impact of Incarceration on Children's Care: A Strategic Framework for Good Care Planning, 2011-2014,” which examined responses to children when their primary carer was arrested and imprisoned in Victoria and New South Wales (for details see Trotter, Flynn, Naylor, Collier, Baker, McCauley & Eriksson, 2015).

### ***Parental incarceration and children***

There has been considerable growth noted in prison populations globally (Walmsley, 2016). Subsequent research has investigated and described the impact of parental incarceration on children (see, for example, Brown, Dibb, Shenton & Elson, 2001; Dennison & Smallbone, 2015; Johnston & Gabel, 1995; Nurse, 2002; Wright & Seymour, 2000).

Given that the vast majority of prisoners are men (e.g. see Glaze & Kaeble, 2014; ABS, 2016), with international evidence indicating that around 50% of these men are parents (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008), recent years has seen some research drawing specific attention to fathers in prison. Studies have examined: situated fathering and the visit space in the United Kingdom (UK) (Moran, 2017); fathering identity in prisons in Hong Kong and in England (Chui, 2016; Meek, 2011); challenges and barriers facing incarcerated Indigenous fathers (Dennison, Smallbone, Stewart, Freiberg, & Teague, 2014) and parental involvement for incarcerated fathers in Queensland (Dennison & Smallbone, 2015); and the intergenerational transmission of offending between fathers and children in South Australia (Halsey & Deegan, 2012).

In Australia, the exact number of children affected by paternal imprisonment remains unknown. An Australian Health and Welfare (AIHW) study noted in 2015 that 46% of the 1,011

male “prison entrants”<sup>iii</sup> had at least one dependent child prior to imprisonment (AIHW, 2015, p. 8). Yet only 49% of prison entrants overall (both men and women combined) took part in the study. United States (US) data (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010) indicates there are an estimated 2.7 million dependent children affected by paternal imprisonment, a figure that increased by 77% between 1991 and 2004 (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). In the Australian context there are limited data, but Queensland research estimates that in any given year some 0.8% of children in that state will be affected by paternal incarceration and 4% in their lifetime (Dennison, Stewart, & Freiberg, 2013).

It is clear then that while existing research provides some insight into parental incarceration more generally, there remains a considerable gap in knowledge regarding fathers in direct caring roles, with paternal arrest preceding imprisonment a potentially traumatising time for children.

### ***Parental arrest***

Research examining the processes of and responses to parental arrest is limited. One study, conducted in California, sought to specifically investigate the responses of law enforcement agencies, as well as child welfare organisations, at the point of arrest (Nieto, 2002). Findings indicate that the period following arrest was a time of uncertainty for children with limited communication between families and agencies involved (Nieto, 2002). The effects of children’s exposure to a traumatic event, such as an arrest, have also been noted by The Yale Child Study Center (2011) and include *inter alia*: loss of sleep, separation anxiety, hyper-vigilance, irritability, and withdrawal. Another study in the US examined child exposure to parental criminal activity, arrest, and sentencing, and the relationship to child maladjustment (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). The study found that witnessing parental arrest might be detrimental to children and raised the risk of problem behaviours. Another US study that sought to examine



the relationship between witnessing an arrest and elevated Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (American Psychiatric Association, 2016) symptoms indicated that witnessing a parent's arrest can be particularly traumatic even when other PTSD explanations are taken into account (Phillips & Zhao, 2010). Further, that witnessing an arrest "is a distinct predictor of children's elevated PTS[D] symptoms" (Phillips & Zhao, 2010, p. 1253).

Data also tends to focus predominantly on mothers (see Annie E. Casey Foundation [AECF], 2001; Lilburn, 2001; Nieto, 2002) or relate to the impact of multiple/traumatic events on children, for instance, arrest *and* imprisonment (see Dallaire & Wilson, 2010; Simmons, 2000; Yale Child Study Center, 2011). Nieto's (2002) research provides a clear example of the use of gender neutral terms, as it is about mothers, yet is labelled as being about "parents" thus obscuring understanding of the, perhaps, differing experiences for mothers and fathers. Such research does however, highlight the harmful effects of parental arrest on children, and shows that these events continue to be characterised by disordered and ad hoc practices. Concurrently, data collection about parenting/dependent children is also limited and arguably ad hoc. In Victoria, although data is collected regarding the location of offences (Victoria Police, 2013), the primary care status of offenders at the point of arrest is not routinely collected. The only related data available on this shows that during 2013-14 there were 74,992 adult male arrests (Victoria Police, 2014). We estimate that around 30,000 of these are likely to be parents, although any further detail about parenting or caring status is unknown.

### ***Formal responses to children at parental arrest***

The chaotic nature of arrest procedures was highlighted by caregivers from Dallaire and Wilson's (2010) research and highlights the need for formal responses. Nieto (2002) also found clear gaps in formal responses to children. Less than half (42%) of law enforcement officers stated that they would enquire about the care of child/ren present at the arrest of their parent/s;

when children were not physically present, only 13% of respondents advised they would make enquiries. A subsequent smaller survey of 38 police officers in Michigan made similar findings, with responses indicating a distinct lack of communication and policy regarding children at the point of arrest (Neville, 2010). Earlier research by Lilburn (2001) examining police arrest practices for women and their dependent children in South Australia resulted in similar findings. Police acknowledged that children's care arrangements needed to be made when a mother was taken into custody, yet it was not considered a significant problem. Furthermore, police tended to rely on "common sense" at the point of arrest to make contact with partners, friends, other family members, or welfare services, with an assumption that care was available for these children (Lilburn, 2001). Existing research thus highlights the competing obligations for police when on duty; the obligation to follow police procedures as well as their duty of care to children.

When reflecting on formal responses that have been implemented outside Australia, one can see evidence of several child sensitive arrest procedures in US jurisdictions. Alongside the co-location and/or joint training of child welfare and law enforcement officers in California (Puddefoot & Foster, 2007), the US International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), with funding support from the Department of Justice (DOJ), recently developed a Model Policy aimed to "address the needs of children at the time of, and just following, their parent's arrest" (IACP, 2014, p. ix). In particular, the policy seeks to assist law enforcement agencies and partner organisations in developing measures to safeguard children when a parent is arrested. The policy statement notes that officers will be "trained to identify and respond effectively to a child, present or not present, whose parent is arrested" to help minimize trauma and promote child-safety following arrest (IACP, 2014, p. 8). This policy refers specifically to children of arrested parents, whilst also acknowledging children who are not present at the time of the arrest. The IACP also currently offer no-cost training, technical assistance and resources for law enforcement to mitigate trauma experienced by children who have parents in the criminal justice system (2016). Other child appropriate responses have been initiated in Sweden, where

offenders take part in an interview at the police station that involves questions about care arrangements for children (Mulready-Jones, 2011). Where there are no long-term arrangements for children, there is a duty of the police to inform Children's Services.

In Victoria there has been very little advancement of this sort. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS<sup>iii</sup>) - Child Protection - is responsible for the protection of children under the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic). Under the Act (2005), Police have statutory responsibilities and are classified as protective interveners and have a legal mandate to intervene when a child is in need of protection. The *Victorian Police Manual-Guidelines* (Victoria Police, 2017) requires supervisors to enquire if a person at arrest is a primary carer and if so see if suitable arrangements have been made to care for that child. Police responsibilities are also outlined in the *Protecting Children Protocol between Department of Health and Human Services and Victoria Police* (herein referred to as the *DHHS Protocol*, 2012). The *DHHS Protocol* establishes how the two services work together to meet their respective legislative mandates and to achieve positive outcomes in the best interests of the child/ren. It advises that officers, in their role of protective interveners, *must consider* making a report to Child Protection where it is believed a child is in need of protection in situations including abandonment or parental incapacitation. It is noted that this:

... may include situations where a primary carer of dependent children is in custody and incapable of caring for their child during this period and there is no other suitable person willing or able to care for the child (DHHS, 2012, p. 11).

Importantly, both the *Victoria Police Manual* and the *DHHS Protocol* do not provide any further guidance as to assessing parental incapacitation or carer suitability, with these terms

open to considerable interpretation. Flynn, Naylor and Fernandez Arias (2015) note that officers who are aware of children consider it to be part of their duty of care to make enquiries and ensure their safety, particularly when children are physically present at arrest. Yet these actions seem driven by a sense of individual responsibility, rather than a formal process. Flynn, Bartlett, Fernandez Arias, Evans, and Burgess (2015) also found that gathering of informal knowledge was more likely to occur in rural, rather than metropolitan, areas. Child sensitive responses, however, are highly influenced by the physical presence of children, with one police participant stating, “We naturally assume that if they don’t have custody of the children at the time [at arrest] then it’s, then there’s no issue” (Flynn, Naylor et al., 2015, p. 10). While some jurisdictions are implementing innovative practices, it remains clear that fathers as carers, along with their children, are largely overlooked at the point of arrest. While it is known, generally, that parental incarceration has a negative impact on children, an understanding of the specific implications of paternal incarceration, and more specifically arrest, is absent.

## **Methodology**

Using incarcerated primary carer fathers’ experiences of arrest, this article addresses the following research question:

How do primary care fathers experience planning processes for their children at the time of arrest and what factors facilitate or hinder the planning process?

The study aims to address a gap in research by providing new insights into the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers at the point of arrest. For the purposes of this article, primary carer status is defined by three outcome-focused criteria: their child/ren required a new carer (relative, friend, or associate) to take over their care in their own home; their child/ren were

required to move to a new house to live with a different carer; or their child/ren were left with no carer.

### ***Recruitment***

Data were collected from imprisoned primary carer fathers from May 2012 to October 2013. Stratified purposive sampling (Patton, 2002) was used to select a representation of maximum, medium, and minimum security settings from prisons in Victoria and NSW. Prisons were identified in conjunction with the relevant correctional service departments as suitable data collection sites, on the basis of security rating and numbers of known parents. Two correctional settings were purposefully excluded at this point in the process due to the nature of the offences committed by a number of prisoners (specifically child sex offences), which prevented follow up with families, and three of the settings declined due to lack of capacity/operational reasons. Data was ultimately gathered from three settings (n=9, n=14, and n=16), covering all security classifications.

Once entry was approved, a variety of recruitment methods were used to locate participants, namely flyer display and distribution and communication with prison contact people (including programme officers and coordinators, clinical and integration services managers, social workers, project managers and prison officers). This yielded 23 participants; further targeting was employed by way of group sessions with prisoner peer educators to generate further discussion and pass on information to other prisoners.

### ***Data collection***

This study used a multi-method approach to data collection, where the use of structured interviews sought both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach is particularly useful

when examining new areas of study and sensitive areas of research (Liamputtong, 2007). It maximises the study's capacity to capture a holistic view of issues experienced by fathers, as well as allowing for clear cross-case analysis. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and focused on key decision making and transition points. Due to security constraints within the prison setting, audio recording was not permitted. Comprehensive note taking was instead employed to document the data. Once the interviews were complete, qualitative data were analysed using content analysis via NVivo10. Ethical oversight of the project involved a total of nine Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC) or Research Coordinating Committees (RCC) reviewing and approving the project.<sup>iv</sup>

### *Sample*

For the purposes of this paper, data from the 34 imprisoned primary carer fathers arrested in Victoria are examined.<sup>4</sup> The demographics of the sample group are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Key characteristics of primary carer father participants.**

Mean Age (Years)	Age range (Years)	Australian-born	Indigenous	Participants who report previous imprisonments	Total number of children	Participants' care of children pre-prison	
						Full time	Shared care
39	25-52	29 (85%)	6 (18%)	24 (71%)	86	68 (79%)	18 (21%)

<sup>4</sup> This chapter includes data from 34 primary carer fathers, excluding five fathers who were not arrested as they were summonsed to court, hospitalised, or handed themselves in to police.

This specific sample shows some general similarities with the broader male prison population, with regard to average age and number of children, but also some differences, notably cultural groupings (ABS, 2016). These were not examined further in the study.

### ***Interviews***

Participants were asked three questions relating specifically to arrest, including 1) the circumstances of the arrest (and whether their children were present or not) 2) whether they believed the police officer was aware they were the primary carer of children and 3) whether a discussion about suitable care took place. Data are presented below in response to these three areas.

### **Results**

Initial analysis revealed differences in how men were able to engage in planning for their children, according to the location of arrest, such as whether it was in the home or in the community, the force of the arrest, as well as the likelihood of children being present and subsequent responses to this. Data has therefore been analysed accordingly.

#### ***Presence of children at time of arrest***

All 34 respondents provided data about the circumstances of their arrest. Figures 1 and 2 (on the following pages) show a breakdown of data relating to arrests in the home and in the community respectively.

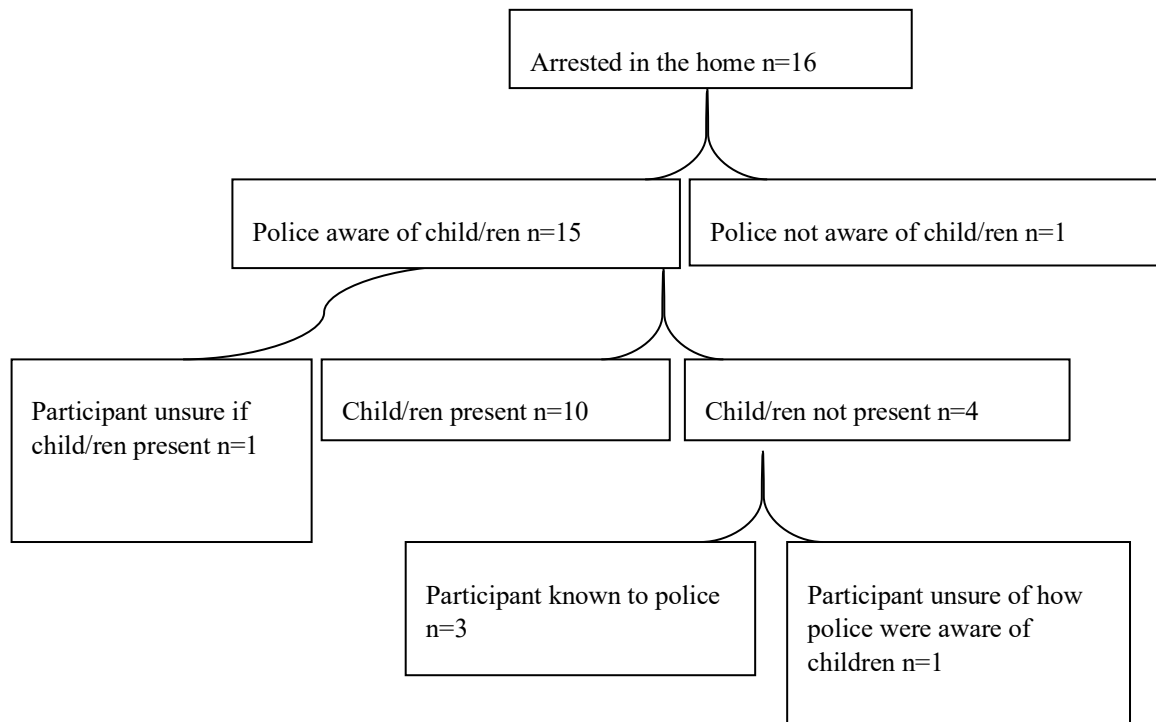


Figure 1. Primary carer fathers arrested in the home and police awareness of dependent child/ren

As indicated in Figure 1 and 2, children were present at almost a third of all arrests ( $n=11$ ) with data showing clear patterns relating to the location of the arrest. As seen in Figure 1 (on the previous page), nearly half of the arrests ( $n=16$ ) took place in the home and children were present at 10 of these arrests. Participants described these processes and circumstances as follows:

*“[I was at] home, children just gone to the shop. Knocked on the door .... They’ve known me for twenty years so they’re pretty pleasant, they don’t handcuff me in front of the kids or anything if they know they’re there.” Craig<sup>v</sup>*

*“[I was] at home and children were present when the police came.” Jack*



*“[I was] at home getting ready to leave at 5.30am and police turned up and arrested me.” Leighton*

As can be seen in Figure 2, in the community, there is a stark contrast, where children were largely absent (n=9/17). This indicates, unsurprisingly, that when arresting a primary carer in the family home, it is likely that children will be present.

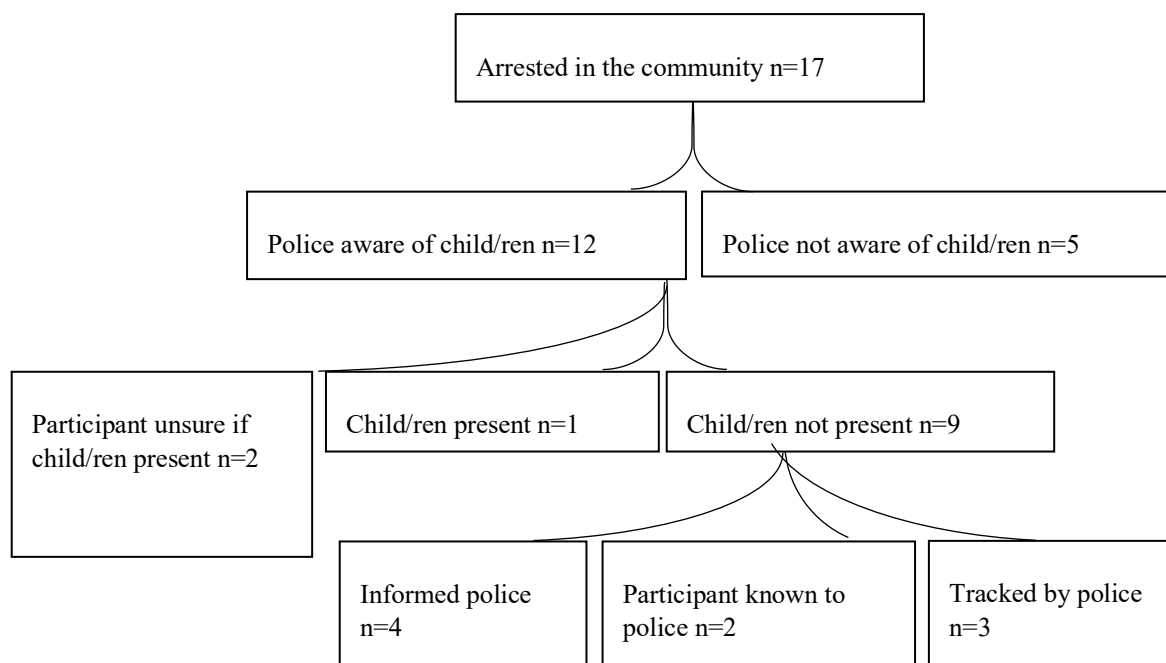


Figure 2. Primary carer fathers arrested in the community and police awareness of dependent child/ren

As is shown in Figure 2, 17 arrests took place in the community and, as described above, children were absent in nine of these cases: they were reported to be either with another parent, a family member, at school, or their presence was unknown or unidentified:

*“I was in the back street of factories and the SOG’s [Special Operations Group] grabbed me and my partner. My kids were with my mum.” Alex*

*“[The arrest] was in the community in [suburb], children were at school at the time.”  
Bob*

*“Children weren’t present. In [suburb], the C.I.U [Crime Investigation Unit] had me on surveillance. Two weeks prior I was arrested and charged with two burgs. Jumped out guns blazing and arrested me, so I’m glad the kids weren’t there with ten guns pointed at me.” Craig*

*“[I was] in [the] city, left kids at home, saw my mates, one thing led to another and it was armed robbery charge.” Nick*

Data illustrate that when making arrests in the community children are less likely to be physically present. As will be discussed below, the presence of children is described by fathers as having some impact on police awareness of these children and some impact on response.

### ***Police awareness***

Participants were asked for their views on whether the police were aware of their primary carer role. Figures 1 and 2 above present data relating to this. In around 80% of cases (27: n=15 arrested in the home and n=12 in the community), participants noted that police were aware of their primary carer status. For those arrested in the family home, all but one participant reported that police were aware of their children due, in large part, to the physical presence of at least one child.

*“Yes, I’d had three raids beforehand, so they were aware of it.” Vin*

*“Yes, they just saw the children.” Garry*

As seen in Figure 2 for those arrests that took place in the community, police were reported to be aware of the participant’s primary carer status in the majority of cases (n=12). Interestingly, this was typically *not* due to the presence of children, but rather because either the participant informed the police of their children (n=4), the participant was known to or had a history with the police (n=2), or they were under surveillance by the police (n=3).

*“Yes, I told them and they wouldn’t give me bail because I wouldn’t give them information. Kids were at their mother’s at the time. Makes no difference to police if your kids are sitting at home alone or what.” Lou*

*“Yes, had been arrested by them before for previous offence, but they didn’t mention children [this time].” Craig*

*“Yes I think that’s what they put out over the radio because they said I kidnapped my partner and child, so they knew.” Alex*

*“Yes, I was under investigation for a while.” Don*

As data indicate, in over three-quarters of arrests, both in the home and the community, fathers report that the police were aware of their primary carer status regardless of whether children are present or not. What can be deduced, therefore, is that police are typically aware of the primary carer status of offenders, however this does not necessarily equate with having an understanding of men’s primary caring role as indicated by the discussion below.

### *Discussions about suitable care*

Participants were asked whether a discussion about suitable care for their dependent children took place at the point of arrest, either initiated by the arresting officer or by the participant. While the majority of participants indicate that police were aware of their dependent children, Figures 1 and 2 reveal that almost all of these men ( $n = 26$ ) report that no subsequent discussion ensued regarding suitable care for their children. As Table 2 shows, this was the case irrespective of children's presence/absence during the arrest.

**Table 2. Incarcerated primary carer fathers' reports of discussions with arresting police officers about children's care arrangements and children's presence**

	Discussion	No Discussion	Total
Child present	3	9	12
Child not present	5	14	19
Child's presence unknown	0	3	3
Total	8	26	34

For those 26 participants who reported that no discussion about suitable care took place with the arresting officer, arrest locations were quite evenly spread between the community ( $n=12$ ) and in the home ( $n=13$ ) (one participant did not state whether his children were present or not). In only eight cases did discussions about suitable care take place and this occurred where the police were aware of the participant's primary carer status, although this was not necessarily due to the child's *physical* presence.

Even in the 12 cases where the child/ren were present (n=10 home, n=1 community), only three participants recalled being asked/had discussions about suitable care and if there was a family member to call.

*“Yes. Asked where was my daughter at the time. I let them know she was with her grandmother.” Lewis*

*“Yes, they asked if I had people that could look after them and care for them (children). Police officer that arrested me asked.” Pete*

*“Yes, asked me if there was anyone to look after them or they would find care.” Lance*

For the remaining eight arrests, no discussion about suitable care took place. These were planned arrests in the home and were characterised by force, multiple police officers, weapons, raids, or were threatening.

*“The children were present. [I] started punching people in the face because they had guns in my face. Guns in two year old daughter’s face. It really affected them, seeing guns in Dad’s face.” Bruce*

*“All my kids were present, they came in very hard because it was an armed robbery ... and had the Special Operations Group (SOG). My kids were terrified ... My 12 year old now hates the police, which is bad because I never wanted him to do that.” Grant*

*“It was unexpected. It was 6.30am – 7.00am. The coppas [sic] came and bashed on the door – about 30 of them. Oldest daughter opened the front door, they came barging in and arrested me.” David*

This suggests that, currently, when arresting an adult for a serious offence in the home, where children are likely to be present, the focus is *only* on the arrest, despite knowledge, or presence, of children.

In the 19 arrests where child/ren were not present (n=4 home, n=15 community), only four fathers engaged with arresting officers in a discussion about suitable care. In these cases, police had been tracking the individual prior to the arrest or the offender was known to the police. In three of these cases it was the participant who informed officers about their children, rather than being a question asked as part of police procedure.

*“Yes, told them to ring me Mrs and to look after the kids until I got bail. So they rang her.” Nick*

*“Yes, I told ‘em.” Pete*

It is clear that when children are not present, discussions involving suitable care are unlikely to take place.

## **Discussion**

Using incarcerated primary carer fathers’ accounts of arrest, the current article aimed to respond to the research question ‘How do primary care fathers experience planning processes for their children at the time of arrest and what factors facilitate or hinder the planning process?’ This was done by identifying: the circumstances of paternal arrest -ascertaining the presence, or absence, of children; determining whether police were aware of a fathers’ primary carer status;

and finally exploring what, if any, discussions about suitable care for children took place. In doing so, the article examined the extent to which fathers' caring responsibilities are taken into consideration during the arresting process, as determined by the circumstances of their arrest. This paper acknowledges there are a number of limitations to the study. Notably, the absence of children's views on the role of primary carer fathers in their lives limits the capacity to completely capture notions of paternal primary care and the direct experience for children. As well as this, the accounts analysed in this study are from imprisoned fathers only and there is an absence of police views regarding the behaviour, or experiences, of arresting officers with those specific cases. At present, while there are some good, albeit ad hoc, child-aware practices in Victoria for police officers, as outlined in Flynn, Naylor et al. (2015), despite this, there are poor, and poorly understood, guidelines in place for dealing with children when arresting a primary carer. A further limitation is that while not all men were arrested in crisis mode, there may have been factors that influenced their perceptions of arresting procedures. For some participants the interviews took place months after their arrest<sup>vi</sup> and there is always the possibility of memory distortion. Consequently, this study is reliant on incarcerated fathers' recall of arrest and results must be viewed as such.

Nearly half of all arrests took place in the family home. Children were present in ten of these, and half were characterised by force, a large number of police, or weapons. Making arrests in the family home could therefore act as a caution for police that children are likely to be present. The finding that children are more likely to be present in the family home corresponds with data from Dallaire and Wilson (2010), which indicate that children living with their parent prior to arrest are more likely to experience an arrest. While primary carer status was not determined in their study, it adds to our argument that, for law enforcement, arresting a parent in the home is likely to involve the presence of children. No research is currently available on the location of (parental) arrests in Victoria, although data is collected regarding the location of the offence (see Victoria Police, 2013). This signifies its level of prioritisation

when, in reality, knowing more about arrest location would allow for better planning of such events and, ultimately, better responses to children.

In around one-half of arrests, children were not physically present despite fathers continuing to have responsibilities for these children. While absent children do not require physical attention during the arrest process, their needs still require consideration in order to diminish the potential impact on these children. This supports findings from Victoria based on data from police officers (Flynn, Naylor, et al., 2015), which established that when children are not physically present, the likelihood of them being considered is minimal. As mentioned previously, the *DHHS Protocol* suggests the need for consideration of primary carer responsibilities at the time of arrest (2012). Our research suggests that this should include the consideration of children, whether they are physically present at arrest, or not. Further, that child sensitive practices are required *regardless* of the arrest location.

A better response would be a planned response, similar to that implemented in Sweden (Mulready-Jones, 2011), with child sensitive procedures, interviews, and care arrangements made regardless of location. It is understood that for serious offences, safety is paramount and arrest protocols must be adhered to. However, child sensitive processes are more than simply procedures for responding well to children who are present at arrest. Based on past research with arrested mothers (Lilburn, 2001), a child sensitive approach would involve giving fathers the opportunity to respond to, and deal with, their children at arrest. This would give fathers the ability to then take part in the planning process for their children. Furthermore, limiting forceful arrests that take place in the presence of children could potentially reduce short, and long term, ‘risks’ for children by reducing the likelihood of trauma that is known to take place at when witnessing parental arrest (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). Flynn, Bartlett, et al. (2015) note that police participants in their study reported greater levels of informal knowledge relating to offenders’ families and children in rural/regional areas. Future research might investigate further whether this knowledge then impacts the level of discussion that takes place between



arresting officers and offenders about suitable care. Currently, there is limited discussion regarding care and even less if the children are not present. “Seeing” children is not enough. Instead, practices could involve protocols similar to those implemented in the US that provide training and resources for dealing with children in traumatic situations (IACP, 2014; Nieto, 2002). In particular, it is moving beyond education towards collaborative practice, such as the Model Policy initiated between child welfare and law enforcement officers in California. Such a policy would assist law enforcement and key child welfare services in developing measures to safeguard children when their parent is arrested.

Despite 27 of the arrested men (around 80%) reporting the police were aware (or made aware) of their children, almost all of these men (n=26) were not asked about suitable care even when their children were physically present. It could be deduced that this is influenced by the apparently gendered views held by police regarding primary care and the assumption that men had a female partner somewhere to care for the child/ren. Although police were not asked about this. It is worth considering the extent to which this finding is also affected by police understandings of their role with regard to children and responding to them at the point of arrest. Future research might explore the extent to which police assumptions regarding gender roles instigate practice, as differing masculine ideas may prompt different responses. While this article focuses specifically on fathers, it raises the question as to whether arrests of primary carer mothers would have been dealt with in the same manner<sup>vii</sup>. It is not enough to simply encourage discussions about suitable care. Responding to children at the point of arrest would thus involve “seeing” men as fathers, and in turn challenge existing ideas that exist regarding the role of the father in society. Rather than discussions being about “mothers” versus “fathers” in the criminal justice system, the focus could instead be on primary carers and centred on children. This would mean a system based on the needs of all involved, rather than a select few.

At present, the lack of attention given to incarcerated primary carer fathers at the point of arrest is demonstrated by the limited formal response mechanisms that exist. The *DHHS*

*Protocol* (2012) includes some direction to police officers for responding to children when parents are “incapacitated” and there is no other suitable person willing and available to care for the child. While it would be reasonably expected that police, in their role as protective interveners, would consider an arrested parent to be “incapacitated” and incapable of caring for his children, the protocol does not outline specific guidance regarding parental arrest. Overall, then, in Victoria, there is currently no policy or guidance around specific child sensitive arrest procedures as are being developed in other jurisdictions. This is despite the growing body of research that witnessing parental arrest can be traumatising for children both in the short, and long, term (Phillips & Zhao, 2010). This paper highlights the demand for such guidelines, with evidence depicting arrest procedures where there is an absence of any routine questioning around children. Even when the existence of children is known, discussions around suitable care are reported to be sparse. The challenge, then, is to consider the caring responsibilities for primary carer fathers at the point of arrest and thus prioritise children.

**Notes:**

- i. For the purposes of this article, arrest is defined according to the Crimes Act (Victoria) 1958.
- ii. A prison entrant was defined as a person 18 years or over entering full-time custody on remand or on a sentence (AIHW, 2015).
- iii. Previously the Department of Human Services (DHS)
- iv. These consisted of Monash University HREC, Victorian Department of Justice and its NSW counterpart Corrective Services, Department of Human Services Victoria and Family and Community Services in NSW, Police in both states, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Victoria, as well as the Department of Education and Communities in NSW.

- v. All names and places have been changed to respect the confidentiality of participants.
- vi. As this study was drawn from a larger ARC linkage project (Trotter et al., 2015) that focused on the impact of *incarceration* on children's care questions asked of participants were focused on care planning for children at the point of arrest, sentencing and imprisonment and time since arrest was not included.
- vii. Trotter et al. (2015) found that across Victoria and New South Wales there was indeed a gendered response across all arrest data for mothers and fathers, where women were significantly more likely to be asked about suitable care by an arresting officer or station sergeant than men.

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## 6.0 Preamble to Chapter Six

Chapter Five provided the second publication included in this thesis “‘They didn’t even let me say goodbye’. A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers’ care planning for children at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia”. This chapter is the third peer reviewed journal article included in this study that addresses the second subsidiary research question outlined in Chapter One: *Is it possible for incarcerated fathers to embody differing expressions of masculinity in prison and if so, how might this be facilitated?*

This article was published in the peer reviewed journal *Punishment and Society* in 2018 and was co-authored with Dr Anna Eriksson at Monash University. *Punishment and Society* is published by Sage Publishing (ISSN: 1741-3095 (Online)). The journal was launched in 1999 and was chosen as it is considered a leading international, interdisciplinary journal that publishes scholarship of the highest quality dealing with punishment, penal institutions, and penology. It publishes five issues annually and has a current impact factor of 1.735 and in law and social sciences is a Q1 journal.

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## **Chapter Six (Article 3): “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space”**

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(Routledge 2016) and 'Contrast in Punishment: An explanation of Anglophone excess and Nordic Exceptionalism', (Routledge 2013) co-authored with John Pratt.

## **Abstract**

Through a lens of identity and the self, this article analyses the views of 39 primary carer fathers incarcerated in Victoria focusing specifically on the points of intersection between fathers and their children. Using the prison visiting room and phone conversations by way of illustration it explores differing expressions of masculinity and seeks to understand the conflict of identity that exists for fathers within these liminal, in-between spaces. We aim to address a gap in research and theory by providing new insights into fathering and conflicting constructions of masculinity within the prison as seen in 'frontstage' and 'backstage' selves and by exploring *how* fathers *perform* fathering within this space. We conclude by summarising the key theoretical and practical implications of our work.

## **Keywords**

Masculinity, liminality, fathering, Goffman, imprisonment, visiting.

## **Introduction**

Through a lens of masculinity, identity, and the self, this article examines a dilemma that exists for fathers in prison. We do so by addressing the following research question:

Is it possible for incarcerated fathers to embody differing expressions of masculinity in prison and if so, how might this be facilitated?

In Australia, the absolute majority of prisoners are men (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2016); yet little formal attention has been paid to the parenting status of this group. An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) study indicates that in 2015, 46% of the 1,011 male ‘prison entrants’ had at least one dependent child prior to imprisonment (AIHW, 2015: 8). However, since only 49% of prison entrants overall (both men and women combined) took part in the study, one could expect that to be an under-estimation. Research undertaken in Queensland on incarcerated fathers (Dennison and Smallbone, 2015; Dennison, Smallbone, Stewart, Freiberg and Teague, 2014) estimates that in any given year some 0.8% of children (n=8,033) in that state will be affected by paternal incarceration and approximately 4% in their lifetime (Dennison, Stewart and Freiberg, 2013). But apart from these two studies, Australian data is largely absent. In the state of Victoria, where this research is located, no data exist that focus exclusively on fathers in prison. Hence, not much is known about fathering in prison, and how men construct and perform masculinity within the prison visiting space.

Previous work on masculinity in prisons has tended to focus on the hyper-masculine prison environment (Mosher, 1998) and a prisoner’s ability to negotiate his place within the prison hierarchy. Similar to Ricciardelli, Maier and Hannah-Moffat (2015), we argue that malleable models of masculinity exist for *all* imprisoned men (as they do for men outside the institution). These expressions of masculinity lie outside traditional notions of masculinity and may be witnessed, for example, within the prison visiting space where fathers interact with their children.

Using Erving Goffman’s (1956) exploration of ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ personas, as shown in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, we argue that fathers’ conflicting expressions of masculinity are negotiated and ‘performed’ within the prison visiting space, despite these two roles being contradictory in nature. We aim to expand on Goffman’s frontstage and backstage persona and how these are adopted within the prison environment to describe what happens within an individual when he moves between different spaces and

interactions. It is within the prison visiting room that fathers are presented with an internal conflict, between their ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ self. In order to address these nuanced masculinities, we argue that prisons need to change the physical structure of visiting spaces in order to facilitate men’s roles as fathers with an eye to desistance.

Research indicates that father absence due to, and during, incarceration can strain financial resources for families and lead to the loss of consistent father and child interaction (Sharp, Marcus-Mendoza, Bentley, Simpson and Love, 1998). Conversely, maintaining father-child bonds during imprisonment strongly correlates with ongoing involvement of the father in a child’s life upon release (Roettger and Swisher, 2013; Turney and Wildeman, 2013). Furthermore, fathers who maintain ties to their families during imprisonment, and assume parenting roles upon release, have higher success rates post-release, with fathers more likely to desist from crime in the first eight months (Visser, Bakken and Gunter, 2013) and engage in positive parenting activities and employment (Visser, 2013). For children, maintaining a relationship with their imprisoned parent, when appropriate, may ease worries (Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014), lead to better adjustment for children (Trice and Brewster, 2004), and may be a major factor in family reunification (Koban, 1983), despite the impact that visiting, and imprisonment in general, may have on the child/ren involved (see Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher and Mincy, 2012; Murray and Farrington, 2005; Wakefield and Wildeman, 2013; Walker and McCarthy, 2005). Therefore, if fathers were better supported in expressing conflicting masculinities in the visiting space it may go some way towards maintaining the ties between father and child that are needed to engage in positive parenting and desistance from crime on release.

The remainder of this article is structured in four sections. Firstly, we provide a theoretical backdrop to our research by bringing together the concepts of masculinity, identity, and the self

for fathers in prison and introduce Goffman's (1956) 'frontstage' and 'backstage' personas, which we regard as a frontstage *prisoner identity* and backstage *fathering self*. We then outline the methodology before moving on to the three key themes that emerged from the interviews: the frontstage identity and the backstage self; differing constructions of masculinities for fathers in prison; and performing fathering in the liminal prison space. We conclude by summarising the key theoretical and practical implications of our work.

### *Performing fatherhood in prison*

There is very little research that focuses on the ability of fathers to perform fathering within the prison environment in the context of identity and/or the self. Meek's (2011) research on possible selves' theory examined incarcerated fathers and fatherhood and indicates that the notion of parenthood remains a key aspect of prisoners' identities, despite separation from family and the prison environment. Another study (Clarke, O'Brien, Day, Godwin, Connolly, Hemmings and Van Leeson, 2005: 238) shows a 'fragmented paternal identity' underneath fathers' accounts of their role as a father within the prison, arguing that sustaining emotional connection and making economic contributions are fundamental to contemporary paternal identity. The latter is supported in the work of Chui (2016) and his discussion of identity theory. However, we are concerned, in particular, with fathers' conflicting expressions of masculinity, seen through a lens of self and identity, and how this is negotiated within the prison visiting space.

Barreto and Ellemers' (2003) research on social identity assists in understanding the internal drive of individuals who present with conflicting self and identity formation. For instance, public displays of internal identities can be modified to avoid a breach of group norms, or to express one's perception of the self differently (Barreto and Ellemers, 2003). Furthermore, when placed in group situations '[people] take an active role in how they define themselves, by choosing whether to endorse an externally assigned categorisation, and by expressing this

choice in their social interaction with others' (Barreto and Ellemers, 2003: 142). Not only are people choosing how to define themselves by expressing choice, they are more inclined to endorse group norms in situations controlled by others, as it creates normative pressures even when, privately, they would not be inclined to do so (Barreto and Ellemers, 2003; Ellemers, Spears and Doosje, 2002). Hence, in the prison, where almost all situations are controlled by others (be they staff or other prisoners), prisoners endorse group norms by way of routine, and because adhering to the norm is the safest option. Importantly, however, prisoners do actively define roles for themselves, such as being a father, even though those roles may not be externally expressed. Such 'hidden' selves help maintain a coherent identity and presence of who they were outside the walls, while immersed in a homogenous and norm-controlling group. Moreover, this maintenance of 'self' can arguably act to prevent some of the most damaging aspects of institutionalization.

In his dramaturgical analysis as presented in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* Goffman (1956: 69) makes a distinction between the 'frontstage' and 'backstage' personas. When an individual is in a frontstage space an activity is carried out in the presence of others and 'some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects, which might discredit the fostered impression, are suppressed' (Goffman 1956: 69). In the prison environment, this can be seen in everyday life where most tasks are performed in the same space with the same people creating, what we coin, a *frontstage prisoner identity*. Based on Goffman's (1956) analysis this frontstage identity is reliant on the setting, and the audience who observe it, and individuals do not begin their performance until they arrive in this setting. Within the prison, individuals are moulded by the institution itself and the people within it (Goffman, 1961). At the same time, Goffman (1956) argues, they finish their frontstage performance when they leave this space.

Conversely, the backstage setting is where the suppressed facts of the individual come to the surface (Goffman 1956). Inmates enter institutions with a 'presenting culture' (Goffman,

1961: 12) and a concept of the self that has been made possible by the social foundations and arrangements around them. The ‘self’ may be conceptualised here as being a person’s internal emotional ‘core,’ which is responsible for coping and processing feelings (Cohen, 1994). The way people relate to, and see, themselves is shaped by their internal thoughts, emotions, and desires. In addition, self-perception is influenced by how others relate to us, and how we perceive ourselves to be seen (Morton and Sonnenberg, 2010). It is in the backstage setting that the performer relaxes and is able to drop their frontstage persona and that which is shown in the frontstage setting is knowingly contradicted. While the front is more formal, ‘reciprocal familiarity’ is determined within the backstage setting (Goffman, 1956: 78). It is also a space where devices, such as phones, are used so that those using them can do so in private. We argue that, for fathers, being with children outside of the prison environment would be akin to being in a backstage setting and fathers bring with them into the prison setting this *backstage fathering self*. At present, in the prison environment, there are very few spaces where a prisoner can step into this backstage space. This article draws attention to this by highlighting the vulnerabilities faced by prisoners as they switch between the ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ self in prison spaces to negotiate differing masculinities.

We explore the issue of space by drawing on liminality; a concept first introduced to describe the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Van Gennep, 1960). We use this to refer to the in-between space in prison visiting rooms where the subject (both prisoner and father) is temporarily suspended between the inside and outside world. This is also a concept addressed further in a forthcoming article on incarcerated fathers and the liminal pre- and post-release space (Bartlett and Johns, forthcoming 2018). The question, then, is whether it is possible for imprisoned fathers to embody differing expressions of masculinity in the prison visiting space, to ensure that it is father and child who intersect rather than simply prisoner and child.



## **Research context and methodology**

The data collected for this research was part of an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded linkage<sup>1</sup> project<sup>2</sup> that sought to describe the current care planning practices and experiences for children when their primary carer is incarcerated, in NSW and Victoria. This article is based on data collected by the lead author from 39 incarcerated primary carer fathers in Victoria between May 2012 and October 2013. A stratified purposive approach to sampling was employed (Patton, 2002) with a representation of maximum-, medium-, and minimum- security prisons. No published data currently exist that focus on fathers, especially primary carer fathers, in prison in Victoria, making it difficult to predict the population or total available sample. Instead, prisons were selected as appropriate data collection sites on the basis of the security rating and approximate numbers of known parents based on unpublished Corrections Victoria data. Several correctional settings were excluded due to the nature of offences committed by a large number of prisoners at these settings (specifically child sex offences), which would prevent follow up with family members (for the ARC funded project). Ultimately, data was gathered from three settings, covering all security classifications. While our sample size is relatively small, it will go some way toward contributing knowledge and understanding to this often overlooked group.

Once entry was approved into the prisons, recruitment took place by way of flyer display and distribution and communication with prison contact people (including program officers and coordinators, clinical and integration services managers, social workers, project managers and prison officers) yielding 23 (of our 39) participants. A more targeted approach was then employed using group information sessions with prisoner peer educators to generate discussion and disseminate knowledge, resulting in a further 16 participants. Fathers were included in the study if they matched the primary carer definition and volunteered to participate. The term ‘primary carer’ has mixed definitions. For the purposes of this research, primary carer status is defined by three criteria: a participant’s child/ren required a new carer (relative, friend, or

associate) to take over their care in their own home; their child/ren were moved to a new house to live with a different carer; or their child/ren were left with no carer. This discussion was not always straightforward as life prior to prison, and relationships with partners and former partners, was complex. Consequently, during the recruitment phase when asked whether they fit the above definition the answer was not strictly 'yes' or 'no' and required further inquiry to determine the level of involvement in their children's lives. For example, one father fit the above definition of primary carer, yet had been in and out of prison every year for 20 years. It seems here, then, that the notion of primary care for fathers in prison may equate with being a good father (Hairston, 2002) and having a direct care role when present, rather than being consistently present in their children's lives.

This study used a multi-method approach to data collection with structured interviews allowing gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach is particularly useful when examining new areas of study and sensitive areas of research (Liamputtong, 2007). It also maximised the study's ability to capture a holistic view of issues experienced by participants, whilst allowing for strong cross-case analysis. Structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with participants and focused on key decision making and transition points within the criminal justice system, namely, arrest, sentencing, imprisonment, and release. Due to security constraints, audio recording was not permitted within the prison setting and comprehensive note taking was used to document data. The sensitivity and political nature of the research is reflected in the ethical oversight of the project, where a total of nine Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC), or Research Coordinating Committees (RCC), reviewed and approved the project across Victoria and NSW.<sup>3</sup>

Qualitative data were analysed using NVivo10. Each transcript was analysed individually and a summary of each participant written. Deductive analysis was initially used to identify language or phrases that related to fathering (more generally), such as being a 'good dad', as well as those relating to identity and the self. This initial 'top down' method was driven

by the researcher's theoretical interest and was analyst driven (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Inductive, 'bottom up', analysis was then used to identify latent themes that were strongly linked to the data themselves. These were underlying ideas, assumptions or ideologies that informed the semantic (explicit or surface) content (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and are discussed in detail below.

When comparing our data with the Victorian male prison population (ABS, 2016) there are some general similarities with regard to average age (39 years) and average number of children (three). There are also some differences, notably, cultural groupings, with more men born in Australia than anticipated (85% in current study and 74% in the Victoria prison population). There was also a higher than expected number of men identifying as Indigenous: 18% in our study compared to 8.2% in the Victorian male prison population (ABS, 2016). This may be indicative of Indigenous family composition in Australia, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households are more likely than non-indigenous Australians to have extended family networks, and where care for children is shared between several related families. While an overrepresentation exists, this was still a small group in the overall sample (n=7) and is unlikely to have impacted on the overall results.

## **Fathering and constructions of masculinity in prison**

As was mentioned earlier, three key themes emerged from this study. Firstly, fathers enter prison with a concept of the self and transform this into an expression of what it means to be a father in the front and back stages of a prison. Secondly, when incarcerated, fathers create their own 'fathering role script' (Clarke et al., 2005: 229) in order to manage a range of models of masculinity that exist in the prison environment. These are not always one, or the other. Lastly, due to the impact of the institution, direct contact visits take place in a liminal space that does not allow for a father's backstage self to be nurtured, nor for fathering to be actively performed.

Similar to that found by Clarke et al. (2005), father's resort to other modes of communication, such as phone contact, as this provides an opportunity for fathers to perform fathering from inside. There is a desire for active engagement with children while incarcerated and the ability to perform fathering outside of a liminal space. Overall then, we argue that fathers construct malleable models of masculinity in the prison space in order to nurture their backstage self while 'performing' a fathering role.

### *The 'frontstage' identity and 'backstage' self*

According to Goffman (1956), the ultimate situation is one where the performer is able to segregate all audiences so that the individuals who witness him in frontstage will not be the same audience as those who witness him in his backstage role. An inability to maintain this control will leave performers, or in this case fathers, in the position of not knowing which 'character' he will have to perform from one moment to the next (Goffman, 1956: 83). In the prison environment in Victoria, such segregation of family and prison is currently impossible for fathers wanting to connect with their children in prison visiting rooms. As a result, fathers enter prison visit centres with both a backstage and frontstage self and are forced to manage multiple masculinities in order to 'perform' a fathering role.

Prior to prison, fathers performed fathering by actively engaging in their children's lives and by being involved in a way that is very 'hands-on' (Day, Lewis, O'Brien, and Lamb, 2005). The concept of the self was thus shown through active participation in their children's lives. Fathers talked about typical day-to-day parenting activities such as school and day care drop offs, making meals, homework, and going to the park and described 'looking after,' 'spending time with' and 'caring' for children. One father said 'do the baby thing!' 'Play with him most of the day' (q), while another said he would give his child 'the biggest hug!'(x) One father was very frank in stating '[I] just do all the shit that normal people do' (y). This concept of the self

is therefore very hands-on, engaged and involved and supports previous research on father involvement (Day et al., 2005). Fathering, therefore, was *actively performed*.

Like Arditti, Smock and Parkman (2005) who found that fatherhood inside was characterised by an inability to perform fathering roles. For fathers in our study, once incarcerated they were stripped of their fathering identity and were, obviously, given less opportunities to actively perform fathering. One father said '[a]s soon as you pass that door man ... [I]t doesn't exist. Forget your kids man ... they don't exist ... [C]ouldn't even find out if my kids were alive let alone okay' (f). Another noted that it was '... really limited by the walls and the distance' (r). Several of the fathers made mention of not being able to do anything 'in here' and of not being able to teach or mentor their children. One father said 'It's pretty hard in here, you want to do as much as you can, but there's only so much you can do' (z) while another echoed this with 'If I had known the ex was going to do the things she's doing I wouldn't have let my daughter be there, but there's not much I can do being in here' (l). Fathers in these instances are expected to be 'in here', taking on their frontstage prisoner identity, when it often directly conflicts with their backstage fathering self.

Yet most prisoners are able to self-manage; maintaining a backstage sense of self that sits beyond the prison persona and can be kept apart and intact, whilst performing the role that is required in prison to be a part of that group. Therefore the prison delineates expressions of self, but does not eradicate it. Previous research (Jewkes, 2002) indicates that men nurture this private—and oftentimes non-'macho'—self by drawing on specific interpersonal relations, such as the family, to maintain a sense of self amongst the rest of the inmate population, in an institution that is designed to blur the lines between self and others. Men interviewed in our study nurtured their backstage fathering self in a protective way by showing they were still 'Dad'. One father said 'I still feel like I'm the boss' (w) and another said 'They listen to me' (b). While others exhibited this private self with the knowledge that they still maintained this identity. 'They know that Dad loves them and cares' (m), 'They know I'm safe ... [T]hey're

loved' (v). In this sense, parenting is seen as a precious fragment of this internal self, kept hidden for preservation.

However, cognitive dissonance emerges when individuals have conflicts between external categorisations (such as being a prisoner) and internal identities (such as being a father) and how they define themselves in relation to others (Barreto and Ellemers, 2003). Without a doubt this is a constant struggle that fathers in prison have to manage. Some do it by successfully preserving their two separate selves, others by withdrawing more or less completely from the 'father' self while inside. Some fathers tell their families not to visit at all as it is too painful and difficult for the prisoner to switch between father and prisoner. Indeed, research has consistently shown that around half of prisoner's report receiving no visits at all from their children (Clarke et al., 2005; Glaze and Maruschak, 2008). In a study of 32 men (26 of these were fathers) incarcerated in a south-western state correctional facility in the US, it was found that 37.5% of inmates had never received a visit from their child/ren and 38.5% of these reported there was no form of contact since their incarceration (Pierce, 2015). This is similar to UK findings that found a large proportion of children, whose fathers were imprisoned at HM Bedford, were unaware of their fathers' imprisonment (Murray, 2007).

Several fathers we interviewed also informed their children they were away on holiday or working, rather than in prison. One father said 'Just informed them [children] that I might be going on holiday' (l), while another said the following: 'Won't let me children come here ... it would ruin them. They think I'm away working, doing some painting' (s). Another father also chose to do this, remarking that 'Four and five year olds don't know where I am – think I'm working. Didn't want them to know about gaol' (m). Another father commented on the 'distress' felt by his daughter when leaving the prison, so in an attempt to avoid that he limits her from visiting. For some fathers then, keeping children away from the prison visiting space entirely is the best option, a finding that adds to research in this area on imprisoned parents more generally (Hairston, 2002; Murray, 2007). For some fathers inside, opting out of visits is way to minimise

emotional pain for both themselves and their children. This seems to be the case particularly in high security prisons, where the physical and social cues do little to support a softer version of masculinity, ensuring that the switch between ‘backstage’ and ‘front stage’ self can be incredibly challenging. The environment in low security prisons is usually more supportive for such shifts, but in Australia at least, these prisons tend to be located hours away from the big cities, meaning that long bus rides and overnight accommodation has to be organised which, for many, is not possible. Hence, family contact is managed over the phone instead. There are indeed practical, social, and emotional reasons for why some fathers chose not to have visits, but all illustrate prisoners attempting to manage their contradictory self-identities.

### *Conflicting constructions of masculinity*

Traditionally, when discussing parenting and imprisonment, the focus has been on mothers (see Flynn, 2014; Burgess, 2016). However, an increasing recognition of gendered practice exists within the prison system, with new theorisations driving towards considering the experiences and needs of fathers (Chui, 2016; Meek, 2011; Moran, 2017). In particular, Miller’s (2011) work on hegemonic masculinity has been used to inform conceptions and practical implications relating to fathers in society and in the criminal justice system. Hegemonic masculinity is defined here as being the structural gender practice that assumes, and thus allows, men’s dominance over women and more feminine men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Within this framework, fatherhood is defined in relation to the prevailing cultural ideals of masculinities where paid work is central and fathering is associated with being a protector, companion to children, moral guide, co-parent, and disciplinarian (Collier, 2001; Miller, 2011), whilst other ways of fathering, such as being involved in childcare and emotional work, are perceived as weakening a sense of constructed self-identity.

Discussions of masculinity within the prison system that stem from within this framework tend to focus on the ‘hyper-masculine’ environment, a construction which is situated within a hierarchy of penal subcultures that exaggerate understandings of male socialization (Mosher, 1998). This framework stresses conventional masculine ideals (such as strength, bravery, and staying true to your word) and is placed within an overtly aggressive context; one in which an ‘authoritative, controlling, heterosexual, independent, and violent kind of masculinity’ is reinforced (Ricciardelli et al., 2015: 495). A prisoner’s capacity to survive prison life depends on his ability to negotiate his place within the prison hierarchy, which is based on ‘excessive displays of manliness,’ and it is the fostering of this public identity that allows a prisoner to ‘fit in’ (Jewkes, 2005: 46). Importantly, it also offers a limited cultural lens, by skimming over factors such as race (Curtis, 2014). Miller’s (2011) often-cited study, for example, included a sample of white, middle class, and partnered men. Masculinities that are characterised by more ‘feminine’ traits (such as caring, fathering, and emotional fragility) are largely absent or hidden (Collier, 2001; Miller, 2011). Yet masculinity is constructed in different ways, depending on social, cultural, racial and political factors and such excessive focus on these hyper-masculine facets of the prison environment have understated a prisoner’s ability to manage prison life.

We propose that what exist instead are a range of models and malleable expressions of masculinity that are more varied than this. Ricciardelli et al. (2015) contend that masculinities within the prison environment, and particularly in the context of fathering, are much more transitory than earlier accounts suggest; those who appear the least emotionally, physically, and legally vulnerable and are able to manage the uncertainties of prison life are the most empowered in relation to other prisoners. In this regard, prisoners adopt a range of masculinities to ensure their survival and to mask any vulnerability while maintaining a status of legitimacy (De Viggiani, 2012). What exists, therefore, is a ‘softer’ version of masculinity that sits between an overtly masculine exterior, and a more personal self, which is intentionally preserved and



employed (Ricciardelli et al., 2015). In an examination of masculinity narratives amongst male prisoners, Evans and Wallace (2007) identify several different groups. One group of relevance to the current article were exposed to extreme levels of hegemonic masculinity during childhood, but found ways to transcend the prison environment to develop a ‘softer and gentler’ code (2007: 484). This code may be witnessed when fathers interact with their children. Therefore, contrary to popular opinion, there is indeed room for altering the sort of person one wishes to be within the prison environment.

Differing constructions of masculinity were witnessed during interviews with fathers in our study. This was evidenced by fathers’ feelings about their children and being separated from them, and their perceptions of how their children were affected by their own imprisonment. One father said ‘I could see how much it hurt them’ (y) and another noted that he was unhappy ‘Just not being there’ (h). Another father said the following:

I feel bad for my son because I’m not there for him. I know he misses me a lot, he tells his mum he misses me ... It definitely affects my son a lot – me being in gaol – but I’ve only got myself to blame and he really does need his dad, you know? (p)

While participants expressed these emotions within the interview setting, where the emphasis was on feelings and love towards their children, we maintain that this represents a father’s backstage self and, as such, remains, for the most part, private, nurtured, and hidden from view.

Rather than choosing the ‘softer’ expression of self (Ricciardelli et al., 2015), we contend that incarcerated fathers adapt and display considerable agency in choosing versions of self and accompanying masculinities across different situations and interactions. Such theorisations highlight the vulnerabilities faced by incarcerated fathers as they switch between differing expressions of the self within the prison as well as how such agency and adaptation with regard to fathering can be supported. Imprisonment, therefore, challenges a father’s sense of self and well-being which, in turn, affects their self-presentation whilst inside (Ricciardelli

et al., 2015). This is due, in part, to the forced separation from family and ongoing uncertainty about contact and maintenance of relationships, combined with a paradoxical need to adopt the frontstage prison identity. As mentioned previously, fathers who maintain regular contact with children while incarcerated have higher success rates post-release (Visher, 2013) and ongoing involvement also correlates with a father's involvement in their children's lives once released (Roettger and Swisher, 2013; Turney and Wildeman, 2013). The creation of a space in prison where fathers and children meet, therefore, is pivotal in allowing for this ongoing connection as the visit room is one space where a conflict of identity and its consequences may be most acutely seen for incarcerated fathers.

### *Performing fathering in the liminal prison space*

For fathers negotiating these internal conflicts within the prison system, this point of intersection with children is central. Visiting spaces vary considerably, depending on the facility, level of security, and perceived risk of prisoner (Moran, 2013b). The emergence of carceral geography has begun to address the issue of space, with its focus on the experience of 'carceral space, both in terms of the individual's movement into and out of that space and their experience within it, as well as the physical manifestation of the penal institution in space' (Moran, 2013b: 175-6). Moran's (2013a) research on visiting in female Russian prisons identified the visiting space as a liminal space that represents a temporary, transient space for female prisoners. Our article adds to this discussion by contending that similar to female prisons the visiting space in male prisons is indeed a liminal – in-between – space for fathers, as they are temporarily suspended between the prison environment and the outside world. In order to address this, the physical space in prisons need to be changed in order to facilitate visits between fathers and children.

The quality of visiting facilities is therefore fundamental, as it is within the visiting spaces that a shift, or conflict, in identity may occur in order to connect with their children. This shift may be natural, necessary, and/or painful. Previous research on prison visiting generally has found it to be consistently poor across a range of settings and jurisdictions and highlights a number of obstacles that impact the quality of visits: the distance between prison and family home (Healy, Foley and Walsh, 2000; Trotter et al., 2015; Pierce, 2015); inconvenient and irregular/infrequent visiting opportunities (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008; Pierce, 2015); insufficient facilities (Arditti et al., 2005; Pierce, 2015); and poor quality visits (Dennison et al., 2013; Pierce, 2015). The hostile attitude of staff toward family members is also well documented (Liebling and Arnold, 2005; Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014; Tomaino, Ryan, Markotic and Gladwell, 2005). These physical and social characteristics of visiting spaces simply create a greater distance between fathers and their children.

These qualities were echoed by fathers in our study, with one participant saying ‘You can’t really play with the kids here too. You have to sit on your seat. It’s very hard, you can’t actually interact with your kids. They’ve got six officers, so, you know ...’ (t) while another father stated the following:

There seem to be more supports and services offered at public run facilities, rather than privately run gaols. Real issue at this place is profit before people; see that at the visit centres – everything’s out of order, can’t be used. The toys at the visit centre are just rubbish. If they had something in there where parents could engage with their kids I think that would be advanced. (r)

As these statements indicate, it is almost impossible for men to provide positive role modelling that is positioned outside of the frontstage prisoner identity within the visiting space. In this sense, it is a space where neither a frontstage prisoner identity nor a backstage fathering self are fully actualised.

Previous research highlights the benefits of family style visits and events (Pierce, 2015; Scharff Smith and Jakobsen, 2014). One example from the US are family trailer visits. These take place in a trailer on the prison grounds each Saturday and Sunday and last between six to 24 hours, giving fathers a greater opportunity to ‘be a dad’ and to ‘act naturally in a very unnatural environment’ (Pierce, 2015: 384). Family visits (also referred to as the Stronger Families Program) were mentioned by fathers in our study. These are a way for children and fathers to connect and play, however limited information on this service in Victoria means length of time and frequency of service is unknown (Castlemaine Community House, 2017). Comments from our study highlighted a fragmented service, where other carers are not allowed to be present making it difficult to organise. One father said ‘... not allowed to have the partner there which makes it difficult – if she’s travelling far she has to make herself scarce for X amount of hours. Would be better if it was kids and partner’ (g). While another stated ‘...it’s impossible ... at women’s prisons [you] get kids in for the day. At men’s prisons you don’t have that’ (k). As these responses indicate, family visits are currently limited in their ability to cultivate connection.

Yet, research shows that men in prison are open to exploring their internal worlds in a space where expression of feeling is normalized and supported (Evans and Wallace, 2007). In our study, men spoke explicitly of needing opportunities and spaces to engage in a fathering role from inside. ‘It would be great if it was like the women’s [prison] in Queensland where they have little cottages where you could have the children. They’d love it I reckon. But I don’t think they’d ever allow it at a men’s prison’ (o). While another father said the following:

But also something for kids. When my daughter used to come in she was happy, happy! When she had to leave she’d be screaming and stuff. So having the primary carer with DHS [Department of Human Services; sic] or whatever to be able to come in and be there with the kids so they aren’t so distressed. Maybe more projects where kids can interact with fathers – specialised days. (e)

These needs, expressed by fathers, to engage with their children and actively take part in their lives assists our understanding of how fathers construct multiple masculinities in prison by highlighting that fathers are indeed open to performing fatherhood in the prison environment when doing so contradictory. This, consequently, may aid in the development of a model for how visiting spaces could ‘work’ in male prisons by creating spaces that allow for this coalescence of roles.

Visiting spaces that do work in male prisons give fathers a space to openly engage with their children (Pierce, 2015). One space that allowed for this was the development of a patio in a US correctional facility as it gave fathers somewhere to go and be with their children (Pierce, 2015). In Australia there has been a recent attempt to address the issues raised thus far with the installment of a playground at Tasmania’s Risdon Prison touted as a way of allowing ‘dads to be dads’ (Fantin, 2016, para 1). In Victoria, there are some initiatives that allow fathers and children to engage, although only one participant in our study had accessed these. For instance, SHINE for Kids offer their Prison Invisit’s Program in one adult male prison (and one remand prison). This includes a colourful family friendly visiting space with art and creative activities that parents and children can work on together (SHINE for Kids, 2017). No participants in our study had been able to access or experience this service.

Along with SHINE for Kids in Victoria, Read Along Dads is another program offered in one correctional setting where fathers read along to a book from inside. The book and recording are then sent to the family so children can hear their dad reading to them (Delahunty, 2017). This is based on Storybook Dads in the UK, offered in over 100 prisons, and helps to maintain the emotional bond between parent and child (Storybook Dads, n.d.). It also allows fathers, and children, to be in their frontstage space, whilst simultaneously nurturing their backstage self and connecting in a way that is familiar. One participant in our study had taken part in this program. As these examples illustrate, spaces that work allow fathers and children to engage in a way that is familiar and routine. Improving the visiting spaces in male prisons is

only one part of the equation, as the movement into and out of the liminal space must also be acknowledged. For fathers this means being in the role of father, despite being in a prison space. The question then is how to facilitate and allow for this shift in identity to safely occur, ensuring that the child meets his/her parent, and not simply a prisoner.

One way that fathers in our study adopted agency and preserved their two separate selves was through phone conversations. These were a way for fathers to be in a typically frontstage space while preserving their backstage self. Phone conversations gave fathers the opportunity to perform fathering in a routine way from inside the prison (Clarke et al., 2005). One father said ‘[I] speak to three year old every night and other kids twice a week’ (g) while another father mentioned speaking with his children on the phone allowed him to talk when he was unable to see them in person: ‘Haven’t seen them in five months ... every week talk to them. Important to talk to them so there is no gap’ (n). Fathers also spoke of being able to take part in decision making over the phone and ‘Just ... being able to listen’ (b).

Not only was it a way of maintaining contact whilst inside, it was also a space where fathers could construct multiple masculinities by disciplining and giving advice to their children. One father said ‘I talk on the phone with [my son] and tell him to sharpen up ... I try to do as much as I can – help with maths ...’ (m). With another father saying:

Trying to continue to remain relevant in their lives, encouraging them to talk to me about their issues and giving them advice ... Do everything possible in communication to show them that even though I’m still in gaol I still have a lot to offer as a father (u).

Although the space encompassing phone conversations in prisons has not typically been seen as a liminal space, this avenue of communication allows fathers to be in the role of father, adopting their backstage self, whilst simultaneously remaining in a frontstage space. In this sense, faced with their conflicting selves, fathers construct a version of masculinity that they can embody in their current environment; one that does not necessarily align with the traditional

backstage self, but which enables them to be a dad in a way that works within the prison space. Conversely, the visiting space does not allow for this coalescence of roles. It is also worth noting here that past research has also drawn attention to letter writing for fathers (Clarke et al., 2005) and the use of art to connect with children. Earlier research conducted by Eriksson in a different State, clearly showed the importance of fathers being able to take part in arts programs, and many of them mentioned in interviews the value of being able to draw and paint cards, and make other gifts to send to their children. Particularly for those who had trouble expressing themselves in words and those who were lacking basic literacy skills, such ways to maintain contact with their children were crucial. Participants in this study also wrote letters and created art for their children and found this to be a useful way of staying connected. Overall then, fathers are stripped of their identity when entering the total institution, yet just like all prisoners are able to seek out alternative ways to maintain their backstage self and construct malleable models of masculinity within the prison environment.

## **Conclusion**

Seen through a lens of self and identity, we examined how fathers' conflicting constructions of masculinity are negotiated within the prison. We also addressed a gap in research by exploring how fathers perform fathering with the liminal spaces of the prison.

Our findings reaffirm previous research on social identity (Barreto and Ellemers, 2003) and show that individuals who are presented with conflicting self and identity formations in prison take an active role in how they present themselves in this context. We have expanded on Goffman's (1959) frontstage and backstage personas to identify what we have called a frontstage prisoner identity and a backstage fathering self. This was done in order to describe what happens *internally*, for fathers in prison, when moving between different spaces and interactions in the prison environment. In the prison, where almost all situations are controlled

by others, prisoners actively define their sense of self, both through an internal backstage process, and a more overt product, which is actively shown to others. Rather than being forced into hyper-masculine, or ‘softer’ masculine, roles we conclude that it is more complex than this. Instead, men in prison construct a range of malleable masculinities within the prison environment to navigate prison life. Specifically, incarcerated men display considerable agency in constructing masculinities, and for fathers this involves navigating conflicting prisoner and fathering roles and managing these in different settings.

Currently, male prison visiting spaces in Victoria are not conducive to fathering as they are indeed liminal spaces (Moran, 2013a) and it is virtually impossible for men to consider their identity as anything but a prisoner within them. While it is expected that these spaces would allow fathering to be performed, our research concludes that they are limited in this capacity. Instead, in this in-between space, fathers are temporarily suspended between the prison environment and the outside world and are faced with ongoing conflict of performing both prisoner and father. What can be seen, therefore, is a situation as identified by Goffman (1956: 83) in which the performer, in this case the prisoner *and* father, is in the position of not knowing which ‘character’ he has to perform.

The challenge, then, is how to merge these differing constructions of masculinity in order to provide a space that fits within the confines of the prison environment, whilst simultaneously allowing for a coalesce of separate selves. Ensuring that social infrastructure plays an important role in maintaining and expressing alternative masculinities within the prison is challenging when security is, obviously, at the forefront of management. Despite this, Evans and Wallace (2007: 504) made the following statement: ‘it seems vital to give active thought to creating space in which expression of feeling is both normalized and supported’. Indeed it is so. Our findings, along with previous research (Arditti et al., 2005; Pierce, 2015) indicate that spaces that work would provide fathers with the opportunity to give advice, provide discipline, listen, and actively engage with children. Presently, fathers are prone to



using phone conversations to do this as it allows them to perform fathering in a routine way (Clarke et al., 2005) that is private. It also allows fathers to remain in the frontstage prison space while nurturing their backstage self. As such, in order to lessen the impact on children with incarcerated fathers (Sharp et al., 1998), whilst allowing for the maintenance of positive family ties (Visser, 2013) and desistance from crime (Visser et al., 2013), prisons would be better placed to recognise this by incorporating dynamics that allow for the preservation of the self and the maintenance of these nuanced masculinities. These hidden selves serve to maintain a coherent identity and presence of who they were outside the prison walls, such as being a father.

We propose that the solution involves addressing the cognitive dissonance that occurs within the visiting room for fathers, as well as the physical space itself. For this to occur, the prison visiting space as it currently exists would be transformed from an in-between–liminal–space, to one that has the ability to connect fathers and children. This could be achieved by applying in some capacity the privacy and ‘reciprocal familiarity’ that is afforded men during phone conversations (Goffman, 1956: 78) to other spaces in prison. By working within the structure of the prison environment, opportunities that foster engagement, and are individualised, can be developed as these would allow for self-preservation. These would be supported spaces, like the trailer visits identified by Pierce (2015), which allow for a better quality connection with children. In order to deliver this to a high number of men, we suggest expanding the scope of already existing programs described above, like SHINE for Kids, the Stronger Families Program, or art programs. The success of Storybook Dad’s in the UK is testament to its need. Expanding these programs and providing these spaces would require the ongoing establishment of trust by the professionals involved (Evans and Wallace, 2007) and would therefore involve a cultural shift with input from prison management, staff, prisoners and families. The benefits of which can be seen in past research which indicates (Roettger and Swisher, 2013; Turney and Wildeman, 2013) that such spaces assist in maintaining family ties upon release. We contend that they would also preserve a durable sense of self for fathers while

incarcerated; making post-release life easier for themselves, as well as those they are returning home to (Scharff Smith, 2014). For those men who define themselves by their role as fathers, above and beyond a criminal identity, this would offer real hope of desistance by supporting, and maintaining, such aspects of their life while inside.

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## Notes

1. Linkage projects aim to promote national/international collaboration and research between key stakeholders.
2. The ARC project was titled ‘The Impact of Incarceration on Children’s Care: A Strategic Framework for Good Care Planning, 2011-2014’ with data sought from multiple primary and secondary sources, see Trotter et al. (2015) for more detail.
3. These consisted of Monash University HREC, Victorian Department of Justice and its NSW counterpart Corrective Services, Department of Human Services Victoria and Family and Community Services in NSW, Police in both states, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Victoria, as well as the Department of Education and Communities in NSW.

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## 7.0 Preamble to Chapter Seven

Chapter Six was the third publication included in this thesis “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space”. It looked at visiting spaces and contact between fathers and children to explore how fathers perform masculinity within different spaces in the prison. This chapter looks at more *formal* interventions and supports for fathers in prison and examines how fathers experience these in Victoria. This chapter is the fourth peer reviewed journal article included in this study that addresses the third subsidiary research question outlined in Chapter One: *How do primary carer fathers experience formal fathering supports and programs from inside the prison?* Given the lack of research in this area “experiences” comprises a number of elements including access to programs, the nature of support accessed, what and how much support was offered, and what was needed.

This article was accepted in the peer reviewed journal *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* in September 2018 and was co-authored with Professor Christopher Trotter at Monash University. This journal is published by Sage Publications (ISSN: 1552-6933 (Online)). The journal was established in 1966 and was chosen as it is considered a leading international and interdisciplinary journal that publishes scholarship emphasising the treatment of offenders and how this relates to theory and practice. It publishes monthly issues and has a current impact factor of 1.452 and in the arts and humanities it is a Q1 journal.

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## **Chapter Seven (Article 4): “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia”**

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## **Abstract**

This article draws from data gathered for an Australian Research Council funded study conducted in Victoria and NSW between 2011 and 2015, which examined how dependent children are responded to when their primary carer is imprisoned. In particular, this article specifically addresses a gap in knowledge by examining the current state of fathering programs in prison in Victoria. To do so, the views of 39 primary carer fathers incarcerated in Victoria are analysed. We argue that there is a distinct lack of support for fathers in prison, acting as a barrier towards maintaining father-child relationships. Findings indicate that 79% of the fathers in this study were never offered any parenting support services or programs. By clearly highlighting the state of fathering programs in prisons in Victoria, this article offers suggestions as to how best to facilitate the connection between incarcerated fathers and their children.

**Keywords:** fathering, imprisonment, programs, children of prisoners, support

## **INTRODUCTION**

This article aims to provide insight into primary carer fathering by exploring formal fathering supports in prison in Victoria, Australia. We do so by exploring the following research question:

How do primary carer fathers experience formal fathering supports and programs from inside the prison?

Given the lack of research in this area ‘experiences’ comprise of subsidiary topics including access to programs, the nature and extent of support offered and accessed, and what was needed.

We have drawn on research relating to formal supports for incarcerated fathers, and incarcerated parents more generally, to inform and support our discussion.

It is well established that the majority of prisoners are men (Glaze & Kaeble, 2014) and around 50% of these men are parents (Australian Institute Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2015; Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). From a Victorian context, in 2014, when the current study was conducted, Corrections Victoria (CV) statistics obtained by the Criminal Justice Research Consortium (Trotter et al., 2015) indicated that around 11% of the 5,706 men (ABS, 2014) at reception into prison (from 2013 to 2014) were primary carers of children prior to imprisonment. This is approximately 630 men.<sup>1</sup> Yet very little attention has been paid to this group.

Research on father-child relationships from a child development perspective (Milligan & Dowie, 1998) has pointed to the distinctly unique connection between fathers and their children. As noted in Tasca (2018), assuming that this relationship has not been a damaging one for the child, this relationship is just as important to a child's development when their father is imprisoned. In fact, the effects of this are even more heightened. Research from a study of 3,000 US children indicates that, depending on how the relationship was before incarceration, the psychological, social, and economic effects of paternal incarceration on children are even stronger than for children dealing with other forms of father absence (Geller, Cooper, Garfinkel, Schwartz-Soicher & Mincy, 2012: 65). Furthermore, there is longstanding international evidence of the negative mental health, behavioural, financial, and educational consequences that follow paternal incarceration for children (Geller et al., 2012; Geller, 2013; Hagan & Foster, 2012). This suggests that incarcerated fathers and their children require even more attention and support (Geller et al., 2012).

Despite evidence highlighting the effects of paternal incarceration on children, formal mechanisms for children of incarcerated parents (COIP) in Victoria are minimal. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 2008* (UNCROC) provides a specific set of

principles outlining the protection of children, including children who are vulnerable due to their circumstances (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 2008). It states that ‘State Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents’ to provide appropriate guidance in the rights of the child (OHCHR, 2008, Article 5). Furthermore, that when a child is separated from one or both of their parents the State shall respect the right of the child to ‘maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the child’s best interest’ (OHCHR, 2008, Article 9). Yet these principles are non-enforceable. As well as this, the *Charter for Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (hereafter referred to as the *Charter*) reinforces the right to the protection of the family as ‘a fundamental group unit of society’ (*Charter 2006* (Vic), s. 17). While these obligations were recognised as relevant in the development of the Mothers and Children Program in a women’s prison in Victoria, where children reside in a unit with their mother (Trotter et al., 2015), there does not seem to be any influence of these legislation on programs or supports for incarcerated fathers and their children. This study draws attention to this oversight by exploring the current state of formal supports offered to incarcerated primary carer fathers in Victoria.

Research on formal fathering supports provide snapshots of data relating to the delivery and effectiveness of a variety of programs, services, and supports (Buston, 2018; LaRosa & Rank, 2001). Formal supports for incarcerated fathers range from those in which no face-to-face contact takes place, such as Storybook Dads in the UK (Storybook Dads, n.d.) and Read Along Dads in Australia, to more immersive programs with entire units dedicated to fathering (Clancy & Maguire, 2017). A more substantial body of literature exists relating to contact between fathers and children by way of visiting, telephone conversations, and letter writing (Bartlett & Eriksson, 2018; Dennison, Smallbone, Stewart, Freiberg & Teague, 2014). Importantly, research relating to maintaining father-child connections from prison does not relate to incarcerated fathers who were primary carers of their children prior to entering prison,

notwithstanding recent research from Victoria (Bartlett & Eriksson, 2018; Bartlett, Flynn & Trotter, 2018). This study aims to address this gap.

The rest of the article is organised as follows: We explore relevant literature, providing an overview of incarcerated fathers and their children to ground the discussion, before moving onto research relating to formal fathering supports drawn from the UK, the US, some Scandinavian countries, and Australia. The methodology used for our study is then provided before moving onto an overview of our findings using the categories identified above. Lastly, we conclude with the implications of our work.

## **Review of the literature**

Below is a review of the literature grouped into categories based on *how* formal support is delivered. These fall under Educational Fathering Programs (EFP), formal fathering/contact support (supported contact and family days), and fathering units. The term ‘supported contact’ incorporates a range of services but should be distinguished from contact such as visiting, telephone contact, and letter writing in which no education, agency, or external organisation is involved. There are clearly overlaps between categories however we have grouped them this way to illustrate the difference in how these are structured and delivered to fathers in prison.

### *1. Educational fathering programs*

Evidence relating to Educational Fathering Programs (EFP) indicates programs range in length, and number of participants, and content differs between prisons (and does not always include face-to-face contact between fathers and children) (Block et al., 2014). In the UK, research illustrates that content works when it is tailored to the needs of the group (Meek, 2007) and relationships and facilitator skills are thus crucial in the successful delivery of these programs

(Buston, 2018). Research from UK and US programs also reveal EFP help support father-child relationships as they: improve attitudes about child rearing (Harrison, 1997; LaRosa & Rank, 2001); improve fathering skills and child care issues for young fathers (Meek, 2007); and are linked to decreased offending post-release (Burraston & Eddy, 2017). Lastly, EFP give fathers the opportunity to discuss parenting and nurture the fathering role in a space that encourages this (Meek & Baumer, 2016).

In an Australian context there is very little formal data on EFP and although some EFP have been delivered (see Rossiter, et al., 2017) very few fathers have accessed these programs (Dennison et al., 2014; Trotter et al., 2015). In Victoria, only a small number of EFP have been adopted in the last five years and most information about the programs is of a low research quality and comes from government or organisation websites (CV, 2017; Victorian Ombudsman, 2015; Victoria State Government, 2017). In the last year (and since the data were collected) anecdotal evidence suggests that three additional fathering programs have commenced (two in private prisons). However, there is no formal evidence of this and publicly available data does not provide this information, meaning the exact number of fathering programs in prisons is unknown. Even though the latest figures indicate around 6,644 men are incarcerated in Victoria (ABS, 2017) and (using the 11% estimation) around 730 of these men were primary carers prior to imprisonment, there appears to be a distinct lack of research and practice about EFP and consequently a lack of in-depth understanding of what works.

## *2. Formal fathering/contact support*

While not the focus of our study, it is worth noting the importance of visiting, letter writing, and telephone contact for incarcerated fathers as for some this is the only form of contact with their children (Clarke et al., 2005; Dennison et al., 2014). Research shows that visiting presents numerous challenges including distance between the prison and the home, poor quality visits



(Bartlett & Eriksson, 2018; Dennison, Stewart & Freiberg, 2013), the high cost of travel, and problems accessing accommodation when visiting (Dennison et al., 2014; Pierce, 2015). These issues may then contribute to the loss of a consistent relationship between father and child/ren (Sharp, Marcus-Mendoza, Bentley, Simpson & Love, 1998; Geller, 2013).

Yet there are indeed benefits to maintaining ties for fathers and children. For fathers, maintaining contact allows them to provide emotional support to their children (Clarke et al., 2005), helps them feel appreciated and closer to their children (Arditti, Smock and Parkman, 2005; Day et al., 2005), and contributes to positive parenting (Visher, 2013), ongoing involvement (Roettger & Swisher, 2013), and reduced reoffending post-release (May et al., 2008). For children, maintaining contact with their father, even through non-contact channels, reminds them that their father continues to think about them (Boswell, 2002). Furthermore, being incarcerated may in fact open up opportunities for more contact between fathers and children who come together during this time (Tasca, 2018). As there exists a body of knowledge relating to these forms of contact, we now turn our attention to other forms of supported contact for incarcerated fathers and their children.

One UK supported contact program for fathers is Storybook Dads (Storybook Dads, n.d.). This service is offered throughout the UK and involves a father reading along to a book and recording his voice. The book and CD are then sent to the child who can read along to the book while listening to their father's voice. In Victoria, Read Along Dads (based on Storybook Dads) is delivered in one correctional facility (Delahunty, 2017). As well as Read Along Dads, SHINE for Kids (SHINE, 2017) offer the Invisit's Program. This is a colourful visiting space inside the prison that is family friendly with art and creative activities for parents and children. Despite these services being offered, lack of data conceals any potential benefits for incarcerated fathers and their children.

Previous research points to the importance of family days/extended visits in supporting the maintenance of father-child relationships from prison (Hansen, 2017). In Norway, the ‘Fathers in Prison’ program utilises family days and data indicate that those who completed the program felt a conflict between their criminal and fathering identity (Hansen, 2017). Family quarters are also offered in some Norwegian prisons where inmates and families stay for short periods (usually 24 to 48 hours). In the US, a similar initiative was adopted in some male prisons with family trailer visits that last between 6 to 24 hours (Pierce, 2015). These visits allow fathers and children to connect and be “natural ... in a very unnatural environment” (Pierce, 2015, p. 384). In Victoria, lack of formal data means very little is known about family days and how these work in practice.

### *3. Fathering Units*

One initiative outside Australia that has attempted to challenge the masculinity narratives inside male prisons is fathering units. These residential units, such as those implemented as part of the Families Matter program in Northern Ireland (Butler et al., 2015) and Invisible Walls Wales (Clancy & Maguire, 2017), range from approximately 17 weeks to 12 months with *inter alia* classes, activities, family visits and family focused support. Once again, relationships between facilitators, staff, and participants are crucial in the long-term effectiveness (Clancy & Maguire, 2017). Likewise, having prison authorities and management on board is crucial in longevity and ongoing effectiveness (Hayes, Butler, Devaney & Percy, 2018).

Although prisons do little to encourage the caring attributes that come with fathering (Bartlett & Eriksson, 2018), living with other fathers combats the need to withstand a masculine image thus enabling men to focus on fathering (Nurse, 2002). For young offenders in the US, housing fathers together had a motivational impact and allowed fathers to use other fathers as a source of strength (Nurse, 2002). Similarly in Northern Ireland, an evaluation of the Families

Matter program found that it helped fathers shift their awareness away from themselves and towards their children (Butler et al., 2015). This contributed to a “less macho” environment which consequently allowed them to focus on families (Butler et al., 2015, p. 11). Lastly, findings from Invisible Walls Wales showed participants had improvements in several risk factors related to reoffending (Clancy & Maguire, 2017). Therefore, even in relation to risk management, where the focus is on criminogenic needs (and problems that relate to re-offending), family remains a central part of the process (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

Table 1 displays the supports offered to incarcerated fathers categorised thus far using publicly available data.

*Table 1. Support services for incarcerated fathers in Victoria, Australia*

Type of support	Name of support offered (VIC)	Contact with child (VIC)
EFP	Inside/Outside Program	Parenting None
Supported contact	Christmas and Birthday presents for children	None
	Video Visits	Face to face over video.
	Letter writing	None
	Telephone ‘visits’	None
	Visits	Contact ranges from around 1 hr (non-contact) once a week (maximum security) to 5.5 hours (minimum security)

	Read Along Dads	None
	SHINE: Invisit's program	2 hours
Family days	Closer Families	A full day surveilled
Fathering units	Not available in Australia	N/A

Data indicate a sporadic array of support programs for incarcerated fathers. Research and/or evaluations tend to rely on data from participants who are self-referred or seek out the program (Meek, 2007), who are motivated to change (Harrison, 1997), or those who have just completed the program and are therefore more likely to benefit. Research also tends to use small samples of fathers (Pierce, 2015) and includes evaluations that are generally not longitudinal in nature (Butler et al, 2015). This limits the ability to generalise outcomes. On the other hand the data do provide some insight into what works with regard to practice whilst highlighting gaps. It also shows the importance of individual agency in self-referred fathering programs as it displays a willingness of attendees to *want* to see different outcomes (Bartlett, forthcoming). The current study aims to provide further insight in this area by examining the current state of fathering supports that are offered to incarcerated primary carer fathers in Victoria, Australia.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Data were collected from 39 primary carer fathers incarcerated in Victoria, Australia, between May 2012 and October 2013. Data were originally collected as part of an Australian Research Council (ARC) funded linkage project<sup>2</sup> conducted in New South Wales and Victoria that sought to examine care planning practices for children when their primary carer parent is incarcerated. Here, primary carer is defined using three criteria based on their circumstances: child/ren

required a new carer (relative, friend, or associate) to take over their care at home when their father was imprisoned; child/ren needed to move house to be cared for by a different carer; or child/ren had no carer.

### *Recruitment*

Data were collected from a representation of maximum, medium, and minimum security prisons in Victoria by the lead author using a stratified purposive approach (Patton, 2002). Prisons were selected based on their security rating and the estimated number of parents; numbers drawn from unpublished CV data. Two prisons were excluded as the nature of the offences (specifically, sex offences) committed by a large portion of prisoners prevented any follow up with family members (for the ARC linkage study). Three settings were included in the final data collection process ( $n = 9$ ,  $n = 14$ , and  $n = 16$ ). Flyer distribution in the prison and communication with prison staff were initially used as a recruitment strategy, yielding 23 participants. Group information sessions were then employed with prisoner peer educators to distribute knowledge first hand. A further 16 participants were recruited using this method. While the sample size of 39 is relatively small it does contribute to a better understanding of an invisible group.

### *Data collection*

A multi-method approach was taken with structured interviews providing both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach is useful in the examination of sensitive research and when examining emerging areas of study (Liamputtong, 2007). Interviews were conducted face-to-face with participants inside the prison and security constraints meant audio recording was not permitted. As such, note taking was used to record data. The sensitivity of this research is witnessed in its ethical oversight, with five Human Research Ethics Committees (HREC) and Research Coordinating Committees (RCC) reviewing and approving the project in Victoria. Qualitative data were initially coded using content analysis in NVivo11. Content was then

analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) where latent themes were identified, such as ‘being offered’ or ‘accessing,’ fathering supports in prison.

### *Sample*

This article includes interviews with 39 primary carer fathers incarcerated for at least three months in Victoria. The average age of the sample was 39 years and fathers had on average three children and were primary carers of 96 children in total. After their father’s imprisonment, children primarily lived with the other parent or with their father’s current or ex-partner (45%), with some children living with their grandparents (23%) or with other family members (12%), and a small number of children placed in foster care (7%). Overall, 85% of the sample were born in Australia and 18% were Indigenous.

### *Interviews*

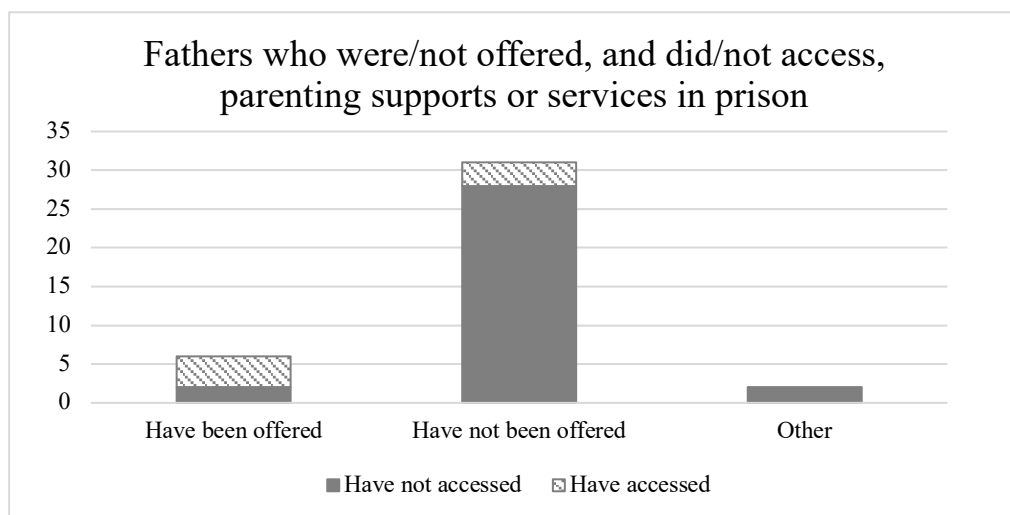
The interview schedule included questions relating to arrest, sentencing, imprisonment and release and the questions used in this article are relating to parenting support programs in prisons. These included for example: “What supports/services have you been offered during imprisonment to support your parenting of your children?” and “What contact have you had with your children?” along with the final question asked at the end of the interview “Do you have any final comments? Anything you would like to say or feel we may have missed?” Data are presented below.

## **RESULTS**

### *The absence of fathering support in prison*

Participants were asked “What supports or services have you been offered during imprisonment to support your parenting of your children?” Figure 1. shows the number of primary carer

fathers who were/not offered and/or did/not access parenting supports or services in prison. “Other” indicates the two participants who did not state whether they had been offered or accessed a program.



*Figure 1. Number of fathers who were/not offered, and did/not access parenting supports or services in prison*

At the time of their imprisonment 79% of the 39 fathers in our study (n=31) were not offered any parenting supports in prison. Furthermore, 28 of these fathers (72%) did not access any supports or services. The differentiation between offered and accessed was made as results indicated that there were three fathers (8%) who, while not offered any supports by prison staff or management, had sought them out of their own accord and accessed these services.

For the 28 fathers who were not offered and did not access any programs, some responses indicate that although participants new of a fathering program, other than that there was very little:

They do a parenting program, you’ve got to put in for it, apart from that there’s pretty much nothing. (‘Dave’, Minimum Security Prison)

None. I think there’s a parenting program but ... (‘Geoff’, Minimum Security Prison)

Nothing. What?!! (laughs) ... We don't get any help like that. ('William', Minimum Security Prison)

For several participants, while they had not been offered any fathering support they also reported that they did not need the help:

Don't think anything's really been offered but at the same time I've never really sought assistance. Any help I've needed I've asked friends and family to help out there. ('Frank', Maximum Security Prison)

None. There are things in jail, but I don't need the help. ('Mick', Medium Security Prison)

Two participants who had not been offered any support noted that they enquired about parenting programs. One of these participants, along with another, mentioned that prisoners were more likely to be offered methadone than parenting support:

I've chased up a parenting course at another jail. I'm an essential worker here ... so they'll be moving me to [a medium security prison] where there's a parenting course. ('Ron', Maximum Security Prison)

None, I have asked and enquired. When I stopped seeing the kids I pushed for it, because it will just fade away and it does. My older kids might think I've abandoned them, but I've made them portraits and jewellery boxes and they haven't given it to them ... Tried to give me methadone when I wasn't supposed to have it. ('Nev', Medium Security Prison)

Nothing. Jails more interested in handing out methadone programs than childcare programs. ('Steve', Medium Security Prison)



Participant responses therefore highlight the absence of fathering support available in prisons and the gap that exists for these fathers who are trying to maintain contact with their children.

As mentioned above, of the 31 (79%) participants who were not offered any parenting supports, three (8%) of these sought out support themselves:

Here plenty [of programs], anywhere else – nothing ... Visiting is good ... Christmas party was excellent. ('Reggie', Minimum Security Prison)

Read Along Dads – done that a few times ... Bit distant, but they know that Dad loves them and cares. Do lots of paintings – Aboriginal art and stuff. [There are no services] – But there should be because they make a lot of money from us. ('Tom', Medium Security Prison)

While fathers have accessed these supports, their responses indicate that primary carer fathers are being offered very few fathering supports in prison and even when they do access programs, these are not intensive.

#### *Current fathering supports offered in prison*

A small group of seven fathers (18%) were offered parenting supports or services by prison staff. Yet only four of these (10%) had actually accessed these supports:

Salvation Army do the Christmas thing and send kid's presents and birthday cards – they were happy with that. Pretty much the only thing that goes on in prison. ('Don', Maximum Security Prison)

Couple at [a medium security prison]: Parenting program [family day]: come once a month on a Wednesday just you and kids and you can do face painting or whatever. And Storybook Dads [sic]. ('Richard', Maximum Security Prison)

Inside/Outside Dad's program [EFP] was really good. Mind Matters or another one ... which is ways of dealing with things when you're out. Give different scenarios and how to deal with them, not directly about parenting but could help with that. ('Greg', Minimum Security Prison)

At the [remand prison], Salvation Army had Christmas presents, so that was really good.

Heard about Read to Your Kids [sic], but didn't do it. ('Matt', Maximum Security Prison)

While these participants' spoke about fathering supports, half of these did not involve an educational or face to face element and were instead services that provided (much needed) assistance to children by way of Christmas and birthday presents and non-contact support.

Below, Table 2. shows the number of times fathers were offered, and accessed, specific supports. Educational Fathering Programs were accessed by two participants (5%), formal fathering contact support (including Salvation Army services for children, Video Visits, Read Along Dads and SHINE) were accessed by four participants (10%), and family days were accessed by one participant (3%). Overall, seven participants (18%) accessed all fathering supports and seven were offered all of these forms of supports by prison management or staff (18%) and as noted above, four of these participants had both been offered, and accessed, a support.

It is also worth noting that with regards to other forms of contact, such as letter writing, visiting, and telephone contact, the majority of participants reported having *some* form of contact. For instance, 30 fathers (77%) reported having at least one visit with their child/ren, 32 fathers (82%) reported having at least one telephone conversation with their child/ren and six fathers (15%) reported having written or received one letter from their child/ren. There were also those participants who reported that due to circumstances beyond their control, such as being moved to a different prison, or conflict with an ex-partner, contact had ceased. Given this article is discussing formal fathering and supported contact these are not discussed in more

detail, however Bartlett and Eriksson (2018) provide a more in-depth examination of visiting for primary carer fathers in prison.

*Table 2. Support programs and services offered and accessed by primary carer fathers in Victoria*

Type of support	Name of support	Number of fathers offered this support	%	Number of fathers who accessed this support	%
EFP	Inside/Outside	1	3%	2	5%
Supported contact	Christmas and birthday presents for children	2	5%	2	5%
	Video Visits	1	3%	0	0%
	Read Along Dads	1	3%	2	5%
	SHINE: Invisit's program	0	0	0	0
Family days	Closer Families	2	5%	1	3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18%</b>

Finally, although seven fathers in total were offered parenting supports or services, two fathers were yet to access these and, again, one father expressed surprise at the question:

[Laughs] ... You're joking aren't ya?! VACRO said they would set up a video visit and help with accommodation and travel expenses and then I was transferred up here and haven't got anything since then. ('Jim', Minimum Security Prison)

Nothing except Closer Families program [family days]. I'm looking into it, not allowed to have my partner there which makes it difficult – if she's travelling far she has to make herself scarce for X amount of hours. Would be much better if it was kids and partner. ('Jeff', Medium Security Prison)

Even when participants are aware of fathering supports, they are presented with challenges when attempting to access these, such as being transferred to another prison or practicalities involving travel and rules relating to specific programs.

#### *The potential for fathering supports in prison*

Data indicate that there are clearly not enough fathering supports offered in prisons. Given there was such a lack of fathering supports in prison, fathers talked about the absence of programs and the potential for supports that would help them stay connected to their children. When fathers were given the opportunity to provide any further comments, many of the men mentioned needing more support to maintain connections with their children; an issue raised of their own volition.

Fathers indicated that the prisons needed fathering programs and services specifically for fathers and their children:

Think there should be more supports systems in place. Also should make a link up with children. Some dads don't know how to express themselves (to read and write), could have classes for expressing themselves ... This is a working prison, should be working towards parenting and family. Building blocks for life. ('Tom', Medium Security Prison)

There should be services for parents with children or some kind of program in place – at least phone call or phone call program (between parents and children). ('Josh', Maximum Security Prison)

There's not enough support ... [Have an] information pack available showing what is available for kids without me being there – what can they do? Because I don't know. Even a parenting program at [a prison] – they have the space for it. ('Richard', Maximum Security Prison)

While one father reported that specialised days would be beneficial:

Maybe more projects where kids can interact with fathers – specialised days. ('Ron', Maximum Security Prison)

These findings highlight both the absence of, and potential for, fathering supports in prison.

Fathers also spoke of wanting to connect with their children in fathering units or dedicated spaces for children and family:

If you've got a wife then you could have a unit with your wife; open. You go in there and you do programs – anger resolution – same as women. In units where kids can go. ('Tom', Medium Security prison)

Hoping that men can have kids in prison ... They have the mental health unit and the other [special] units, they can do that with parents. I mean, fathers with their children is a totally different connection than those who don't have children. ('Adrian', Maximum Security Prison)

While fathering units have not been trialled in Australia, responses indicate that fathers *are* looking for ways to maintain father-child relationships from prison and they are open to being supported in a way that is immersive and engaging with children.

## DISCUSSION

There remain a considerable number of men in prison with children and as our research highlights, for primary carer fathers who are looking after their children prior to incarceration, once inside there is an absence of support to maintain father-child relationships. While a very basic level of fathering supports exist in prisons in Victoria, lack of formal data relating to the existence and impact of these programs, coupled with the small number of fathers in our study who had actually taken part in any supports, means there remains a significant gap in knowledge about what actually works in practice. Our findings indicate quite clearly that there is an absence of fathering support, a factor compounded by the many hindrances present, both from a practical and research-centred standpoint.

Prisons in Victoria currently offer transient, sporadic, and often times “distant” formal support services for fathers with no face-to-face contact involved. As noted, latest numbers indicate around 6,644 men are incarcerated in Victoria (ABS, 2017) and around 730 are primary carer fathers (using the 11% approximation). Yet findings indicate 79% of fathers in our study were not offered any fathering support. This, no doubt influences father-child relationships from prison. While we recognise our study is a relatively small group of men, given the nature of participants’ responses it does shed light on the absence of available supports for this often overlooked group. Overall, our findings support previous research which shows formal supports that are offered are not very hands on and are not conducive to active engagement with children (Bartlett & Eriksson, 2018). Rather than providing intensive or immersive time between fathers and children, data point to the lack of face-to-face programs for fathers and children. While some fathers did access EFP, supports tended to be informal and thus failed to provide in-depth engagement between fathers and children.

Fathers in our study were typically unaware of any fathering supports in prison. This suggests that fathering is not a central component of program delivery in Victorian prisons. The

literature review highlighted creative innovations such as those being implemented in Wales (Clancy & Maguire, 2017) and Northern Ireland (Butler et al., 2015) which provide an immersive experience and give fathers the opportunity to focus on fatherhood whilst addressing inter alia key risk factors associated with leaving prison. Fathers in our study signalled that programs like this would be of benefit along with fathering units or places to have extended time with their children to help maintain ongoing connections. While this may not be a viable option in all prisons due to security and managerial functions of the system, by extending already existing fathering programs in minimum to medium security correctional facilities these programs could offer, as one of our participants stated, “building blocks for life,” as it would allow fathers to be in the role of father; being natural “in a very unnatural environment” (Pierce, 2015, p. 384). This clearly requires the commitment of management and staff (Clancy & Maguire, 2017). Programs such as these would go some way toward addressing key criminogenic needs whilst allowing fathers to focus on fatherhood and their concomitant fathering identity.

Despite over 80% of fathers having some contact (in this case a phone call) with their children since their incarceration, there is very little by way of formal fathering support in prisons. Yet for primary carer fathers in prison there is a need to engage, connect and have support for their children and to work on fathering while incarcerated. Given the UNCROC includes provisions outlining the rights and duties of parents to provide guidance to children when it is in the best interests of the child (OHCHR, 2008) and the Charter includes obligations relating directly to the protection of family as ‘a fundamental group’, making formal fathering supports, and not just the occasional visit and phone call, a central facet of the prison experience would be a step forward in maintaining father-child connections.

## Notes

1. One limitation of this data, however, is the unclear definition of primary carer for staff or inmates recording or reporting the information. It is also reliant on an inmates' voluntarily providing this information.
2. The ARC project was titled "The Impact of Incarceration on Children's Care: A Strategic Framework for Good Care Planning, 2011-2014". See Trotter, Flynn, Naylor, Collier, Baker, McCauley, and Eriksson (2015) for more detail.

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## **Chapter Eight: Integrated discussion and conclusion**

### *8.1 Study overview*

The overall aim of this study was to draw attention to the needs and experiences of 39 imprisoned primary carer fathers in Victoria, Australia, whose child/ren either required a new carer to take over their care in their home, needed to move to a new house to live with another carer, or who were left with no carer. Their experiences at the point of arrest and during imprisonment were of primary concern. This group was investigated in order to develop knowledge and improve responses and supports for fathers and their children who are impacted by the criminal justice system.

The three subsidiary questions addressed include:

1. How do primary carer fathers experience planning processes for their children at the time of arrest and what factors facilitate or hinder the planning process?
2. Is it possible for incarcerated fathers to embody differing expressions of masculinity in prison and if so, how might this be facilitated?
3. How do primary carer fathers experience formal fathering supports and programs from inside the prison?

The findings appear in the previous three peer reviewed journal articles in Chapter Five “‘They didn’t even let me say goodbye’: A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers”, Chapter Six “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in a liminal prison space”, and Chapter Seven “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia”. Two key themes emerge from these chapters: that primary carer fathers are largely overlooked and unsupported at arrest and during their imprisonment. At the point of arrest, fathers are overlooked in care planning procedures, processes, and policy guidelines: planning processes are either ad hoc or absent. Not only this, in many instances conversations with arresting and

responsible officers about suitable care are not taking place, leaving children vulnerable to unstable placement and trauma. Within visiting spaces in prisons, fathers and their children are also largely overlooked and unsupported. While primary carer fathers are open to expressing malleable models of masculinity within the prison environment, the visiting spaces, as they currently exist within male prisons in Victoria, mean fathers are conflicted between expressing what I have coined the “frontstage prisoner identity” and the “backstage fathering self” (outlined in more detail below). Fathers are similarly overlooked and unsupported in terms of parenting programs in prisons. Due to the absence of programs for primary carer fathers, or fathers more generally, fathers are not supported or enabled to connect with their children and work on parenting in prison to the extent that they would like to.

Clearly, this study investigates what might be considered an extreme case group (Patton 2002) of primary carer fathers in Victoria. Yet by examining this group it brings into sharp contrast the overtly hegemonic masculine prison environment and a differing expression of masculinity that is linked to fathering. Furthermore, exploring such a specific situation and group highlights the worst-case scenario by illustrating, very clearly, the gaps. As this chapter shows, primary carer fathers are largely overlooked and unsupported from arrest through to imprisonment. If this is the case for primary carer fathers, who have children in their care, then what does this tell us about the male prison system and its limited focus on family more generally? This study simply illustrates the gravity of the problem and highlights broader lessons about “fathers” more generally in terms of, among other things, contact, services, processes, and prison spaces used to connect with family.

This Discussion Chapter begins with an overview of how the findings are organised; the interaction between internal and external processes for primary carer fathers as they experience arrest and during imprisonment. It firstly explores the internal processes primary carer fathers’

experience which is classified below in relation to masculinity, identity, and the self. The external processes are then discussed, at the point of arrest and imprisonment, and include procedures, policies, and physical spaces that primary carer fathers interact with during arrest and imprisonment. The theoretical, research, and practical implications of this study are presented, before concluding with a final reflexive piece about my own experience conducting prison research with primary carer fathers and reflections about these themes in research, practice, and academia.

## *8.2 Interaction of internal and external processes*

This study's findings are considered within two classifications; these are seen in the interaction between internal and external processes that coexist for incarcerated primary carer fathers when they are arrested and during imprisonment. Firstly, it examines what happens *internally* for primary carer fathers. When people experience situations, they do so on an internal level, with their emotions, feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. Within this study this is seen, for example, in the performance of a masculinity within different spaces and the conflict of identity and self that takes place for primary carer fathers during incarceration. Secondly, this study examines what happens *externally*. Primary carer fathers' experience the first internal process within a setting or space that is external at different stages of the criminal justice system. This is seen, for example, in the systemic structures, processes, and procedures at the point of arrest and in the interactions with organisations, agencies, people, and spaces such as within the visiting area in prison. Organising the argument into the interaction between internal and external processes is a valuable way of illustrating the theoretical and the tangible as dual processes; one happens alongside the other and one is not present without the other. One cannot experience a space without also having thoughts or internal dialogue at the same time. This means acknowledging what happens internally for primary carer fathers throughout the criminal justice system as they

move through different external spaces and interact with different agencies, government/organisations, and people.

### *8.2.1 Internal processes: masculinity, identity, and the self*

Findings from Chapter Six (Article 3) “How fathers construct and perform masculinity in the liminal prison space” indicate that primary carer fathers in prison have multiple masculinities that are expressed in different ways depending on where they are in the prison. Furthermore, Chapter Six shows that incarcerated primary carer fathers choose versions of the self and accompanying masculinities across different situations and interactions (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). This study adds to existing research that points to the possibility of softer masculinities in prison (Ricciardelli et al. 2015; Buston 2018) to discuss how men in prison are able to adopt a softer masculinity than the hyper-masculine narrative that dominates much research (see Michalski 2017). Some men develop this with friends in homosocial relationships (Crewe 2014) and others express this when with their children (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). This study adds primary care fathering to the list of possibilities by illustrating that these expressions of masculinity lie outside traditional notions of hegemonic masculinity and may be witnessed, for example, when fathers speak about their children in the interview setting and when talking to their children over the telephone.

However, this study’s theorisations also highlight the vulnerabilities faced by incarcerated primary carer fathers due to the bleak and unsupportive visiting environment which results in them constantly switching between differing expressions of the self. Adding to research in this area Ricciardelli et al’s (2015) findings indicate that rather than succumbing to the environment, primary carer fathers are choosing different ways of expressing masculinity depending on the environment and adopting considerable agency in order to navigate different spaces and interactions. When in the visiting areas in prison, however, there is an internal conflict that takes place, between “prisoner” and “father”. This is a continual challenge primary



carer fathers are faced with when connecting with their children and while this is something that *internally* they may want to do, *externally* the visiting environment does not support it. As noted in more detail below, past research shows the importance of prioritising the maintenance of developing family ties from prison (Visser 2013) as it could lessen the long-term impact on children (Sharp et al. 1998) and contribute to desistance from crime post-release (Visser et al. 2013). In order to do so, there needs to be a shift in thinking, penal policy, and practice to support differing expressions of the self that relate to fathering which would allow fathers to connect with their children.

In Chapter Six I expanded on Goffman's (1956) frontstage and backstage personas to develop the frontstage prisoner identity and a backstage fathering self (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). Goffman's (1956, 1961) discussion of frontstage and backstage self revolves around space and interactions that take place within each space, whereas this study contributes further knowledge to this theoretical concept by describing what happens *internally*, for primary carer fathers, when moving between different spaces, and interactions, in the prison. Primary carer fathers enter the prison and, due to the nature of the prison environment, where nearly all activities are carried out in front of others, must perform the role of prisoner (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). This study asserts that for primary carer fathers this is an internal process whereby they are drawing on their frontstage prisoner identity. At the same time, as is noted by Goffman (Goffman 1961, p. 12), prisoners enter the prison with a "presenting culture" and a concept of the self that has been made possible by the social foundations and arrangements around them. Chapter Six shows that for fathers, being with children outside of the prison environment is akin to being in a backstage setting and fathers bring with them into the prison setting this backstage fathering self – a more private self – used to distinguish them from others in prison. What happens is therefore an *internal* conflict as they are forced to switch between two separate selves.

In Chapter Six, this study's differentiation between backstage fathering self and frontstage prisoner identity contributes to knowledge in the field of penology, criminology, and carceral geography, which looks specifically at identity and space (in this case the prison). It can be used in theoretical discussions about fathering identity, Goffman's frontstage and backstage personas, and prison masculinities to describe what happens internally for men within the prison. This means recognising the importance of external spaces, such as the visiting area, on internal processes, such as fathering identity, and thus ensuring that social infrastructure plays a significant role in prison design. While there is some research exploring fathering and identity in prison (Clarke et al. 2005; Chui 2016), this study looks at primary carer fathers' conflicting expressions of masculinity and how these are negotiated and performed within different prison spaces, such as during visiting or during telephone conversations. As findings from Chapter Six show, and explored in more detail below, at present this is mainly through telephone conversations as visiting spaces do not support fathering. While they *want* to connect with their children through visiting, the physical, or external, space does not allow for or support it.

### *8.3 External processes: Overlooked and unsupported at arrest and imprisonment*

Primary carer fathers move through different spaces and interact with different services, organisations, and bureaucracies as they move from arrest into the prison. Chapter Five (Article 2) “‘They didn’t even let me say goodbye’. A study of imprisoned primary carer fathers care planning for children at the point of arrest in Victoria, Australia” shows that primary carer fathers are overlooked in terms of guidelines, policies and practices at the point of arrest. Following this, findings presented in Chapter Six (Article 3) indicate that primary carer fathers are then overlooked and unsupported within the prison environment where they move between different spaces and are forced into reciprocal familiarity when interacting with others. Internally, within these spaces that are dominated by harsh walls and concrete, with visiting

spaces that have no toys, and other men who want to appear strong and “masculine”, they are in a predicament as they are conflicted between differing versions of masculinity. Instead of fully expressing their self that is associated with fathering, they keep it hidden, private, and preserved. Lastly, findings from Chapter Seven (Article 4) “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia” indicate that primary carer fathers are overlooked and unsupported in prison as is illustrated by the distinct absence of fathering programs and supports.

### *8.3.1 External processes: Arrest*

Study findings from Chapter Five (Article 2) show that the role and responsibility of primary carer fathers are overlooked and unsupported at the point of arrest, as seen in the absence of guidelines, policy, and practice that address their primary carer role. As noted in Chapter Five, current police guidelines are outlined in the *DHHS Protocol* (DHHS 2012) as well as the *Victoria Police Manual-Guidelines* (Victoria Police 2017) which requires that officers enquire about suitable care arrangements if a primary carer is arrested and to make arrangements for their child/ren if necessary. However, as this study highlights, these guidelines are open to interpretation and are consequently insubstantial.

This study clearly emphasises the need for the *DHHS Protocol* (DHHS 2012) to consider primary carer responsibilities at the point of arrest that relate to *all* children, regardless of location and, whether they are physically present, or not. As noted in Chapter Five, thirty-three participants provided data about arrest location. Nearly half of all arrests took place in the family home ( $n=16$ ) and 15 participants reported that police were aware of their children. This was due in large part to the physical presence of children or because the participant was known to police. Children were present in ten of these arrests and the majority of these ( $n=8$ ) were planned arrests that were characterised by force, a large number of police officers, or weapons. This fact alone points to an urgent need for police to limit forceful arrests in the family home

and in the presence of children. Given that past research shows that witnessing a traumatic event for children, such as parental arrest, can include loss of sleep, hyper-vigilance, irritability, withdrawal (The Yale Child Study Center 2011), and elevated PTSD (Phillips & Zhao 2010), limiting forceful arrests would potentially reduce these short, and long term, effects for children (Dallaire & Wilson 2010).

Study findings outlined in Chapter Five indicate that children who are absent at the point of arrest still require attention. Just over half of all arrests took place in the community ( $n = 17$ ) with 12 participants reporting that police were aware of their children. Yet children in these cases were, for the most part, not present ( $n = 9$ ). While absent children do not require physical attention during the arrest process, their needs still require consideration in order to diminish the potential impact on these children when their primary carer is removed without their knowledge. This contributes further to knowledge surrounding child presence during arrest, which indicates that when children are not physically present at the point of arrest the likelihood of them being considered by police and magistrates is minimal (Flynn, Naylor & Fernandez Arias 2015). While formal data exist in relation to offence location (Victoria Police 2014), no formal data exist in relation to parental arrest location in Victoria. This only highlights its level of priority, when in reality, knowing more about arrest location would allow for better planning of such events as it would signal whether children are likely to be present, or not. This would ultimately result in better responses to children.

It is clear from study findings in Chapter Five that suitable care is not always arranged at the point of arrest and consequently children do not have suitable care in place. Overall eight participants had discussions about suitable care with arresting officers and in these instances, police were aware of the participant's primary carer status (although it was not necessarily due to the child's *physical* presence). While it is noted in Flynn et al. (2015) that officers in Victoria who are aware of children consider it their duty to enquire about children and ensure their safety, particularly when children were present at the arrest, it is also noted that these actions are driven

by individual responsibility and not formal processes. Officers are also more likely to follow up about suitable care if they are in rural settings and if the children are physically present (Flynn et al 2015). The current study contributes to Flynn et al (2015) by showing that while police may in some instances respond to the needs of children, there remains little by way of formal mechanisms for guiding practice.

Despite 27 participants reporting that police were aware of their children, in almost all of these cases ( $n = 26$ ) there was no subsequent discussion regarding suitable care for their children. This was the case irrespective of whether the child was physically present, or not, and was evenly spread between community and home arrests. Even when child/ren were present ( $n = 11$ ), only three participants recalled being asked/had discussions about suitable care and if there was a family member to call. When child/ren were not present ( $n = 19$ ), only four fathers engaged with arresting officers in a discussion about suitable care and in most cases, it was the participant who informed officers about their children, rather than being a question asked as part of police procedure. As noted previously, it is clear that current guidelines outlined for arresting officers in the *DHHS Protocol* (DHHS 2012) and the *Victoria Police Manual-Guidelines* (Victoria Police 2017) are not specific enough and as a result not all arresting officers are enquiring about suitable care when arresting a primary carer with parental responsibilities, whether the child is physically present or not. Arguably, this group of primary carer fathers would present a small number of arrests made on a day-to-day basis and as such responding to the needs of children would not be of primary concern (Flynn et al. 2015). However, it does not diminish the potential consequences for these children. Therefore, implementing a Model Policy like that of the IACP (2014) would be a positive step towards collaborative practice, bringing the police and child protection together to work towards measures that ensure children are safeguarded during parental arrests.

This study has drawn attention to gendered views and how these might impact on policing decisions at parental arrest by bringing primary care fathers to the forefront of the

discussion. Further research would do well to explore the role of gender assumptions in policing decisions when arresting a primary carer father. This point was not examined in this study and yet other findings, such as the failure of police to enquire about suitable care *despite* the physical presence of children, points to the possibility that gendered assumptions were present. As noted in Chapter Five, it may also be that police do not consider children to be their responsibility when making an arrest. This study includes data from primary carer fathers alone and not those of arresting officers. As such there is an absence of data relating to police views regarding their role and responsibilities when arresting a primary carer father. Future research in this area would prove beneficial.

One thing is certain, even when it is *known* that fathers are primary carers of children Chapter Five's findings indicate there are very few follow up conversations about suitable care. It is not enough to simply encourage discussions about suitable care. Responding to children at the point of arrest would involve "seeing" men as fathers, and in turn challenge existing ideas regarding the role of the father in society. Rather than discussions being about "mothers" versus "fathers" in the criminal justice system, it is time to instead focus on primary carers and thus prioritise children in the arrest process. There is a parallel need for adult services and the criminal justice system to "think family" (Scott 2009), which would involve bringing child-sensitive processes to the centre of adult systems. A better response would be a planned response, similar to that implemented in the US (IACP 2014), with child sensitive procedures, interviews, and care arrangements made regardless of location. Additionally, child sensitive procedures would involve giving primary carer fathers the opportunity to respond to, and deal with, their children at arrest when appropriate (Lilburn 2001). It is understood that for serious violent offences, safety is paramount and arrest protocols must be adhered to, however for many of these arrests police are aware that children are in the house *prior* to the arrest being made. Therefore, prior planning of house arrests is crucial in order to reduce the likelihood of trauma experienced by children.

### *8.3.2 External processes: Imprisonment*

Findings from Chapter Six (Article 3) indicate that most of the fathers in this study were largely overlooked and unsupported during prison visiting as they were unable to actively perform fathering within this space. Prior to imprisonment, primary carer fathers performed fathering through active participation in their children's lives. Fathers' described their roles as being very "hands on", including activities such as going to the park, watching television, and playing with their children. It was also defined by one participant as being the stuff that "normal people do" such as making school lunches, doing homework, and eating meals. However, once in prison responses from fathers indicate that a shift takes place due to the obvious restrictions placed on them in prison where there is limited opportunity to actively perform a fathering role.

The point at which fathers and children meet within the prison is therefore pivotal as it is within the visiting space that fathers are expected to connect with their children. Yet rather than being spaces that allow fathers to perform fathering, findings in Chapter Six indicate that fathers were unable to interact with their children and act naturally in the prison visiting space. In this sense, it was almost impossible for fathers to nurture their internal fathering self and be in the role of father. Instead, fathers look to telephone conversations to discipline, listen, and engage with their children as it allows fathers to perform fathering in a routine way. Carceral geography, and its focus on the movement of people through spaces and their experiences within it, situates penal institutions within this debate (Moran 2013b). This study adds to theoretical discussions in this area and indicates that visiting spaces in prisons are instead liminal – in-between – spaces where fathers are temporarily suspended between the carceral environment and the outside world. It adds to research in this area by focusing on what happens internally for primary carer fathers as they move between different spaces in the prison. During imprisonment there are deteriorating opportunities for primary carer fathers to perform fathering. Rather than promoting softer forms of masculinity, prison encourages distant parenting, disconnected parenting, and one that is fragmented, sporadic and, in many cases,

completely fractured. As noted in detail below, given the high rates of imprisonment (CV 2018) and recidivism (VO 2015) for men in Victoria *and* the impact of incarceration on children (Dennison & Smallbone 2015; Scharff Smith 2014) this only creates further obstacles when exiting the prison rather than focusing on factors that promote rehabilitation or desistance (Ronel & Segev 2013).

When examining how the prison limits the capacity to perform fathering, past research highlights a number of long-standing problems associated with visiting such as the distance between prison and home (Pierce 2015; Tomaino et al. 2005), insufficient visitation facilities with bare visiting spaces and no child friendly furniture or toys, irregular visiting opportunities (Dennison et al. 2014), and poor quality visits characterised by limited contact and time (Boswell 2002). These challenges were echoed in this study, with fathers reporting that within the visiting space they were unable to perform fathering in a hands-on way that was familiar to previous fathering experience due to restrictions in the physical space. Fathers were unable to play with their children and instead had to sit on their seats with six or seven officers standing guard. Toys were broken, and, in some instances, children got distressed when leaving the visit. For some fathers this influenced their decision to cease having visits with their children, which ultimately impacts their children.

Like previous research that consistently shows that half of prisoner's report receiving no visits from their children (Clarke et al. 2005; Glaze & Marushcak 2008), findings shown in Chapter Six (Article 3) indicate that some participants chose not to have visits with their children at all and instead told them they were on holiday or working, rather than in prison. As noted above, for some fathers opting out of visiting entirely was seen as a way to minimise pain for their children. For others, it was a way of minimising pain for themselves, particularly in high security settings where the ability to embody a softer or more vulnerable form of masculinity can be extremely challenging. While it is *expected* that the visiting space is a place where fathers will “perform” fathering, there is little opportunity to father from within the



visiting space. When examining this in the context of earlier classifications of internal and external interactions, adding to more practical challenges is the internal struggle that primary carer fathers experience in the visiting space in prisons where they are faced with the ongoing conflict of performing both “prisoner” and “father” and therefore must choose whether they adopt one or the other or both. Consequently, it is difficult for fathers to consider their identity as anything but a prisoner within the visiting space making it difficult to connect to their fathering self and in doing so fully connect with their children.

As well as being overlooked and unsupported during prison visiting, study findings from Chapter Seven (Article 4) “Did we forget something? Fathering supports and programs in prisons in Victoria, Australia” show that primary carer fathers are overlooked and unsupported when it comes to fathering supports and programs in prison. This study examined the literature on fathering supports in prison and created three categories based on how the support is delivered: Educational Fathering Programs (EFP), formal fathering/contact support (including supported contact and family days), and fathering units (Bartlett & Trotter forthcoming). At the time of their imprisonment, more than three-quarters of the fathers in this study ( $n = 31$ , 79%) were not offered *any* parenting supports in prison. Furthermore, of these, 27 fathers (69%) did not access any supports or services. In Victoria, although all of the services and programs offered are incredibly important services for fathers and children and help them maintain ongoing connections, those accessed the most, such as the Salvation Army’s birthday and Christmas present service for children, do not involve any face-to-face contact between father and child/ren. As well as this, there are a range of practical issues, such as being transferred to another prison or eligibility requirements, which means that very few fathers have actually accessed these services. Responses indicate that participants felt the prison did not have enough parenting support services. Participants indicated surprise at the suggestion of a program, highlighting its rarity, while others noted that family and friends were the main support. Some participants also reported that prisons were more likely to be offered methadone than parenting

support in prison, even when it was not needed. As these findings indicate, fathers are clearly overlooked and unsupported in terms of parenting support in prison, further diminishing opportunities to perform fathering or work on parenting from prison.

When compared to the incarcerated mothers in Victoria from the ARC project (Trotter et al. 2015), over three quarters ( $n = 31$ , 83%) of these women accessed/or were offered a parenting program or support, while 79% of primary carer fathers *had not* accessed/or been offered a parenting program or support. This is not to say that the situation for incarcerated mothers should change. Instead, we need to examine why fathers, on the whole, are not being offered or accessing parenting programs in prison. This may be due to gendered expectations around fathering that fall within the confines of hegemonic masculinity, as outlined in Chapter Four the Conceptual Framework, where paid work is central (Collier & Sheldon 2008; Miller 2010) and where other ways of fathering, such as being involved in emotional work or childcare, is absent. As this study suggests, such gendered perceptions of caregiving consequently impact the delivery of parenting programs in prisons, where women are assumed to be carers of children and are therefore offered mothering programs in prison while men on the whole are not; as is demonstrated by the distinct lack of parenting supports available to fathers.

When examining these findings in relation to internal and external processes, for primary carer fathers and children this means that fathers hold back from completely immersing themselves in their fathering identity whilst in prison and developing the internal narrative that is linked to fathering and the self. Rather than promote desistance (McNeill 2006) or generativity (Halsey & Harris 2011), concepts outlined in Chapter Four the Conceptual Framework, it is instead diminishing a primary carer father's capacity to feed this internal self that is so crucial for post-release integration and success (Ronel & Segev 2013). Findings from this study add to discussions about desistance and alternative narrative scripts (Farrall & Maruna 2004) by exploring what happens internally for primary carer fathers when connecting with their children. As this study indicates, for imprisoned men who define themselves as

fathers, giving them an opportunity to work on developing their fathering identity would assist in promoting desistance processes as it moves them beyond identification with the criminal identity. Future research would do well to explore this in more detail to determine how exactly fathers can develop this narrative related to fathering. This would involve a more comprehensive exploration of fathering programs/supports in Victoria to examine what happens internally for primary carer/fathers when connecting with their children and how fathers with dependent children can or do develop an internal narrative script that is connected to fathering. Past research has explored this in relation to desistance (Ronel & Segev 2013), to the family more generally (Maruna 2001), and with fathering identity (Clarke et al. 2005; Chui 2016), however it would be beneficial to explore this *knowing* that primary carer fathers in this study are conflicted within the visiting environment and *knowing* that primary carer fathers are open to exploring a range of malleable models of masculinity within the prison environment.

Indeed, findings from Chapter Six indicate that primary carer fathers *are* open to constructing differing expressions of masculinity than the hegemonic- or hyper -masculine norm. This alone signals the need for research in this area and support in practice. Knowing that fathers *do* want to engage with their children and *do* want to work towards fathering highlights the importance of implementing programs, visiting areas, and/or spaces that allow for, and support, this. As this study, and previous studies (Visher 2013; Visher et al. 2013), have highlighted, maintaining ties with family during imprisonment helps fathers engage in activities that are aligned with desistance, such as positive parenting and employment, and thus would be a simple way of addressing the high rates of recidivism within the Victorian prison population (VO 2015). Focusing on fathering would therefore give fathers a chance to explore their internal narrative script (Farrall & Maruna 2004) that is related to fathering and is pivotal in the process of cognitive change (Berg & Huebner 2011). This allows fathers to foster the part of the self that is related to fathering, rather than that of a prisoner; a key factor in the desistance process (Ronel & Segev 2013).

Implementing visiting spaces and fathering programs that allow for active engagement between fathers and children would involve addressing a number of points. One primary carer father stated it perfectly with the following:

Think there should be more supports systems in place. Also should make a link up with children. Some Dads don't know how to express themselves (to read and write) – could have classes for expressing themselves. Should be having parenting programs. This is a working prison – should be working towards parenting and family. Building blocks for life. ('Tom')

Fathering programs would therefore be “working” programs where participants are working on parenting and relationships. As noted above, this would be a significant shift away from the gendered working programs currently available in prisons and instead would involve a shift in perception, practice, and understanding that recognises the role of fathers in their children's lives. It would also involve the inclusion of fathers in dialogue about family in society and in the prison environment. Fathering would therefore be a central component of reintegration strategies and in doing so would focus on maintaining connections, relationships, and desistance from crime upon release.

It is crucial to recognise the importance of space and the external environment when designing or developing visiting areas and fathering programs in prison as this supports the internal work that takes place when fathering in prison. As findings from Chapter Six show, currently primary carer fathers are not able to perform fathering within current visiting spaces. Nor are they given access to programs that are face to face and provide active or hands-on fathering. Spaces that do this, such as family trailer visits in the US (Pierce 2015), have been shown to provide a greater opportunity for dads to “be dads”. Similarly, in Wales, IWW is an example of how a fathering space in prison, which supports the internal fathering narrative, can be achieved (Clancy & Maguire 2017); working with the whole family to motivate and engage

offenders, their families, and their children. It is a system for allowing fathers to work on fathering and connect with their children, whilst being in a group of fathers who are doing the same. In utilising this approach CV could work within the confines of the prison environment to provide a space that fosters engagement between fathers and children, whilst drawing on the expertise of external services and supports (Clancy & Maguire 2017). In this sense, the *internal* is supported by the *external*. As this study illustrates, when this supported environment does not exist the conflict in identity and self arises and fathers are forced to choose whether they adopt a prisoner or fathering identity. The key then is to create a space that is not transitory in nature, that is not liminal or in-between, but is instead dedicated to fathering or family only.

This would include the provision of *external* spaces that support the *internal* processes necessary to express differing versions of masculinity in prison. This clearly requires the ongoing establishment of trust and collaboration of the professionals involved with input from prison staff and management (Bartlett & Eriksson 2018). Yet making this shift would recognise the importance of family in post-release reintegration and desistance from crime by offering fathers programs in preparation for release. These might be a range of EFP, formal fathering/contact support, or whole fathering units, such as those seen in Wales with IWW (Clancy & Maguire 2017) or in NI (Butler et al. 2015) with desistance (McNeill 2006) and identity work at the centre of their development. It might also involve supporting organisations like SHINE, that do work in this area or expanding the scope of already existing programs, like the Stronger Families Program, or Real Along Dads, as these would offer a realistic, and viable, approach to fathering inside.

Realistically, implementing fathering units would involve an overhaul of the male prison system in Victoria, making “think family” (Scott 2009) a central focus of its ethos. But if rehabilitation and reducing recidivism are current operational and management aims of CV, which they are (CV 2018c), then this seems like an obvious, and cost effective (Clancy & Maguire 2017), choice. If CV truly made rehabilitation central to the prisoner experience in

order to reduce recidivism, then these programs, supports or units would be implemented in *at least* the minimum to maximum security prisons in Victoria. Ideally, however, cultivating family and alternative narratives than that of the prison, as done through intensive program work, would be a central facet of the prison system in Victoria regardless of gender.

While it was not possible to produce an extensive evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of IWW until full re-offending data was available, what was deduced from a preliminary test analysis from a sample of families was that it would cost approximately £29,000 per family (approximately AU \$53,220), a figure that would be outweighed by the benefits seen in terms of improvements to employment, education, reduced substance abuse, and reductions in re-offending and the high cost that comes with re-imprisonment (Clancy & Maguire 2017). It is worth noting again that in Australia, latest figures indicate that it costs around \$130,000 to house someone in prison for a year (Farnsworth 2018) and that 44.4% of male prisoners are returning to prison within two years of release (VO 2015). This is an expensive venture. As noted previously, considering there are currently around 7,232 men in prison in Victoria (CV 2018c), and given the 11% estimation (from unpublished CV data) made by the CJRC (Trotter et al. 2015), this suggests that there were around 795 primary carer fathers in prison as of July 2018. Given that the CV budget was \$1.04 billion in 2015 (VO 2015), before the introduction of a new 1,000 bed prison, prioritising rehabilitation and a reduction in recidivism through the development of programs, units, or supports that are family centric would be a significant, and cost-effective, feat.

If CV are looking to reduce recidivism, and the 2015 Victorian Ombudsman report suggests that it ought to be, and given that incarceration is temporary for most prisoners, addressing the high number of fathers returning home to the communities they left is fundamental. It is the responsibility of the DoJR and CV to introduce policy that focuses on rehabilitation and, as this study has shown, making family central to rehabilitation would benefit. The 2005 *Better Pathways* policy for women prisoners and offenders created a shift

towards seeing incarcerated women as mothers (DOJ 2005). Yet corrections policy omits the mention or acknowledgement of primary carer/fathers. Why not include primary carer fathers in penal policy? Doing so will make it less about a specific gender and instead will involve a family focus where a “think family” (Scott 2009) approach is at the centre of reintegration for primary carer mothers *and* primary carer fathers in the criminal justice system. This would then allow families to work towards rehabilitation and reunification for those who intend to reconnect upon release. Of course there will be other rehabilitative needs and challenges for primary carer fathers exiting prison, such as housing, drug and alcohol issues, and the possibility of not having access to children, however these things will be present *regardless* of whether a person is given the opportunity to focus on parenting in prison, or not. For incarcerated primary carer fathers who are eager to define themselves by their role as fathers, doing so would offer real hope of desistance by supporting, and maintaining, such aspects of their life while inside. Realistically, if incarcerated primary carer fathers are at some point going to exit the prison and reconnect with their families, then a central component of this would be to focus on giving fathers the opportunity to express masculinities that are related to fathering whilst in prison to develop a fathering identity and thus create a narrative that is separate from a criminal or prison identity. Opting for more preparation and an enhanced focus on fatherhood would go some way towards addressing the leap to the community that incarcerated primary carer fathers ultimately have to make. It would indeed be “building blocks for life” (‘Tom’).

#### *8.4 Methods*

One of the benefits of doing this study was that it was part of an ARC project and as the research assistant on this project this included being involved in data collection, data analysis, and building relationships with prison management and staff. It also meant having the support of partnering organisations and a team of academic staff who were able to offer advice along the way. Without this, the study would not have been possible. One limitation of this, however,

was that using data that was part of the ARC project meant that questions were directed towards primary carer mothers and fathers and care planning processes for children at the point of arrest, sentencing, imprisonment, and release. The questions that were originally used for the ARC project that have formed part of this study were those relating to arrest procedures, visiting, contact, and imprisonment. If the interview schedules and method were conducted exclusively for this study, it would have been a qualitative study with semi-structured interviews in order to capture the areas of interest that fathers also wanted to address.

The interview schedules would have included a range of questions focused more specifically toward the research question and the theoretical framework used. Some of these are:

What does it mean to be a primary carer father in prison?

Are there times and spaces in prison where you feel completely able to be in the role of father? If so, what are they?

What spaces, if any, in prison do you feel you can talk about your children?

If prisons included spaces that allowed you to completely be in your role as father, what would they look like? What would they be like? Who would be present?

Why would you feel comfortable to be in your role as a father?

Do you discuss your children in prison? If so, when and where and with whom?

Until the ARC project and this study was done the gaps were not evident. Now that they are, specific attention to imprisoned fathers and their experiences at arrest onwards is warranted. This study therefore provides impetus for future work in this area and is timely, given the current focus on challenging toxic masculinities in society.



#### *8.4.1 Reflexivity and prison research: Methodology*

This study included a reflexive section in Part II of the Methodology Chapter in order to acknowledge any potential biases, observations, or feelings that arose during data collection. This was done in order to enhance credibility by actively reflecting on my experience. To truly present valid data through an unbiased lens involves being reflexive throughout (Berger 2013). Before beginning work on this study I was unaware how I would feel entering a prison. I was unaware that I would feel vulnerable at times talking with primary carer fathers about their children or what my thoughts or feelings would be in any given situation. Doing reflexive journaling was a way of actively keeping track of these thoughts, behaviours, and feelings and always bringing it back to my job as a researcher (Berger 2013): to ask questions and present research in a way that was valid, and true.

Prisons work around structures, routines, and systems and for PhD students or early career researchers who have never done prison research, using other researcher's reflexive accounts of prison research to learn about what prisons are truly like would benefit (Jewkes 2012). This study will therefore be a useful guide or instructional tool for other early career researchers or scholars (Sutton 2011) embarking on research in prisons or correctional facilities or doing sensitive research or exploratory research. It is indeed true that as researchers, not divulging our own personal experiences of challenging or sensitive research environments only does a disservice to other scholars who follow the same path (Jewkes 2012). For it is a unique situation we are in, as researchers going into prisons, to be able to reflect on what we experience, but also to be able to provide a personal and realistic account of what it is truly like. This study therefore makes a real contribution to knowledge in the area of reflexive prison research. Part II of Chapter Three gives scholars who may not have been into a prison before the first-hand experience of what the prison is like, therefore acting as a guidebook for students to come. This differs from the popular representations of prison seen in television or movies. If students go to university with preconceived ideas about what prison is like, then surely when they leave or

finish their university degrees and embark on a research career they should have a realistic picture of what that is actually going to be like? Research methods courses cover methodologies and methods, but what about *actually* going into a prison? When does this take place? More initiatives that allow students to go into a prison would give students a better understanding of the prison environment and thus prepare them for a future in this area. Failing this, adding reflexive articles into the academic curriculum would be one way of supporting researchers and postgraduate students who are still learning about the prison system and its processes, systems, and structures.

Beyond this study, I am interested in further work of an ethnographic nature within the prison environment. In her work that explores theory, practice and allegiances, Liebling (2001, p. 475) talks about ethnography as being “observation, participation, interviewing and almost any other form of interaction between ourselves, the researchers and the social world”. It is for this reason that doing further research that explores fathering in prisons in Victoria could be ethnographic in nature. My experience conducting this research has highlighted that the researcher and the research process are not separate. They are one and the same. Like the participants in this research who have internal processes running parallel to an external process, so too do we as researchers have these dual processes. We may go through the research process *expecting* to be separate, but we can never be completely separate. We have thoughts, emotions, behaviours and unconscious ideas that will surface and so to *acknowledge* this as part of the research method is something that is fundamental in creating valid data and also in our responsibility as researchers to present data that is trustworthy.

#### 8.4.2 Reflexivity in prison research: Overlooked in academia

Through my work as a researcher I have spoken at conferences,<sup>5</sup> been interviewed on a podcast,<sup>6</sup> and been interviewed for a university newspaper<sup>7</sup> and in doing these activities I have come to see that people are, for the most part, interested in finding out more about the experiences of incarcerated primary carer fathers. Despite this, there is very little knowledge in this area as it has not dominated discussions regarding gender and criminal justice. One reflection of significance to the overall findings is an experience I had in 2017 when attending a symposium. A colleague and I presented a paper exploring fathers, liminality, and the criminal justice system. It was a chance to put forward some new ideas and to create a dialogue about fatherhood and the criminal justice system. After we gave our talk several women gave their reflections and voiced their concern about bringing attention to fathers in prison. They suggested that it was dangerous to talk about connecting families and involving fathers in prison as they were violent and a threat to their children. They also spoke of the work that has been done around mothers and the possibility of reversing this by shifting the focus back onto fathers. The discussion seemed to be dominated by assumptions about a) gender b) hyper-masculinity and c) violence that in and of themselves are important points and yet seemed to miss the main theme of the talk which was about finding a way of successfully transitioning incarcerated fathers into the community after imprisonment. At the time I was quite taken aback. Upon reflection, what these responses indicated was a representation of the broader gender

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<sup>5</sup> Since 2017, this research was presented at The Reintegration Puzzle Conference (Hobart, AU), The American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting (Philadelphia, US), The Victorian Criminology Postgraduate Conference (Melbourne, AU), The International Coalition for Children of Incarcerated Parents Conference (Rotorua, New Zealand), The Symposium on Contested Political and Social Orders: Resources, Territoriality, Conflict and Justice (Melbourne University, AU), and the Australia and New Zealand Criminology Conference (Canberra, AU).

<sup>6</sup> I was interviewed about this research on *The Unmistakable Creative* podcast in August 2018, the interview is pending.

<sup>7</sup> In September 2018, I was interviewed by Monash University news hub *Monash Lens* about this research. The article based on this interview is pending.

assumptions that exist with regards to incarcerated fathers in academia, research, and practice where they continue to be largely overlooked.

It is important to acknowledge again here that clearly there *are* some men in prison who are violent. There are also men in prison who have committed violence against family members or children and it may well be that it is in the best interest of the child to keep them separated (Nesmith & Ruhland 2008; Tasca 2018). However, broader research on COIF more generally indicates that children *do* visit and have at least some contact with their fathers in prison (Bartlett & Trotter forthcoming; Clarke et al. 2005; Mumola 2000) and for some fathers and children prison is an opportunity to reconnect (Tasca 2018). Furthermore, for most prisoners, prison is temporary (VO 2015). Rather than ignoring this fact, this study highlights the need to support incarcerated primary carer fathers, their families, *and* their children who may be in conflict and who aim to reconnect post-release in order to transition back into the community successfully and safely. This would involve the implementation of fathering programs or supports that engage primary carer fathers and their family's long term. It would also involve supporting children who enter the prison and who might experience distress when leaving. Rather than professing that this connection does not or *should* not exist, the emphasis needs to be placed on developing ways to address that it *does* exist and in so doing allow fathers to perform expressions of masculinity in the prison environment that are healthy. This may mean working on issues that have arisen, such as anger and/or violence, but addressing it directly seems like a more viable option than opting for no acknowledgement of conflict and, consequently, no rehabilitation or change.

To be an advocate and researcher in the area of fatherhood and criminal justice is not popular. Primary carer fathers in prison are not a central facet of the academic discourse around gender and imprisonment (Sloan 2018). Common assumptions exist in research, practice, and society at large, that are predicated by hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987) and the belief that women are the primary carers of children. The prevailing discussions about gender and

imprisonment in academia revolve around women – as mothers, victims of sexual/violence and trauma (see Carlton & Segrave 2014; Scraton & Moore 2013), despite numbers indicating that over 90% of people entering, and exiting, the prison are male (CV 2018c; Glaze & Marushcak 2008). Gender and crime also tend to draw on queer theory or LGBTQI sexuality in prison (Hefner 2017) and/or focus on the hyper-masculine prison environment (Michalski 2017). These areas of research are completely valid and worthy of attention. However, there cannot be a discussion about gender and criminal justice without concomitantly discussing another group. This group of primary carer fathers may be an extreme case group (Patton 2002) but, up until now, they have been forgotten. This study has shone a light on the invisibility of this group and the gap that exists in research, practice, and academia about fathers more generally. One of the most common responses I am met with when I inform people that I research the experiences of primary carer fathers in prison is, “That is really interesting and not a group I ever would have even thought to consider”. This narrative is reflected in dominant discourse around primary care and children, in discussions relating to gender and criminal justice, and in research and practice. If we as a society are aiming for gender equality and healthier masculinities, then this also means providing equal opportunities for primary carer mothers *and* primary carer fathers in the criminal justice system.

This study points to the restricted view of masculinity that dominates research in prisons and the gendered expectations that exist with regard to the role of fathers in their children’s lives. This is highlighted at the point of arrest, through the failure of arresting officers to enquire about children and follow up about suitable care. It is also seen within the prison with visiting spaces that do not support or enable fathers to express a masculinity that is related to fathering and thus perform their fathering role. Lastly, it is witnessed in the availability of “working” programs for fathers in prison and the consideration of what *is* work. Clearly, fathering is not considered work for men in prison, as is evidenced by the distinct absence of fathering programs

and supports in prison. Primary carer fathers are therefore predominantly overlooked and unsupported at the point of arrest and during imprisonment and not recognised in their role as a primary carer of children. Findings from this study point to the need for more recognition of men as fathers and the importance of acknowledging families in the criminal justice system. Bringing family, and in this case fathering, to the centre of the criminal justice system would diminish potential consequences for children by *acknowledging* and *supporting* fathers and their children. Furthermore, it would give fathers who are returning to the community a better chance of success post-release.

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## **Appendix I: (Article for Sylff) “Imprisoned primary carer fathers and their children: An international perspective”**

By Tess Bartlett

Currently, millions of children worldwide are being impacted by parental imprisonment. In 2008, it was estimated that in the United States (US) alone there were 1.7 million minor children effected (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Numbers indicate that an estimated one in four African American young people have experienced the imprisonment of their father as a child (Wakefield & Wildeman, 2014). It is also well established that the vast majority of people in prison are men (e.g. see Glaze & Kaeble, 2014; ABS, 2016) and around 50% of these men are parents (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Despite this, it is only in recent times that there has been much attention paid to the parenting status of these men. As such, there remains a gap in research, theory and practice with regard to primary carer fathers in prison.

It is due to this gap in knowledge and practice that fatherhood and imprisonment is such an interesting field of study. My PhD research into this topic focuses on the experiences of imprisoned primary carer fathers in Victoria, Australia. I aim to provide new insights into imprisoned fathers’ experiences of arrest, imprisonment and release. Receiving the SYLFF Research Abroad allowed me to speak with experts in research and program design in the US to provide an international context to my dissertation. My research explores primary carer fathers in prison through a lens of masculinity and identity and argues that fathers, as carers, continue to be overlooked throughout the criminal justice process.

## **“Intergenerational Offending”**

One of the themes that arose when speaking with researchers in the US was the – often well-intentioned – tendency when reporting on COIP to highlight statistics that may be unfounded or misleading. For example, the intergenerational cycle of offending is touted as being a main priority and one commonly cited statistic is that COIP are seven times more likely than other children to end up in prison. However, as was noted by a number of academics and international experts in this field this tendency to focus on intergenerational offending needs to be treated with caution (Raimon, Lee & Genty, 2009). Statistics such as this, that simply state the likelihood that a COIP will end up in prison, fail to take into account why this might be happening in the first place. They also do little to acknowledge the considerable number of COIP who do not go on to offend.

If we think critically about why COIP, and Children of Incarcerated Fathers (COIF), might go on to offend at a higher rate, factors such as racial and ethnic bias in the system must be taken into account. Currently in the US one in nine African American children have an incarcerated parent (NRCCFI, 2014). Furthermore, African American people are incarcerated at a rate more than five times the rate of white Americans (The Sentencing Project, 2016). Similarly, in Australia, the historical treatment of Indigenous Australians in the criminal justice system, and in society at large, has contributed to the ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners where they account for over a quarter of the Australian prison population and make up only two percent of the Australian population (ABS, 2017). More research is needed regarding African American and Indigenous COIP to determine the long term impact of imprisonment on children.

## Parental Arrest

If statistics highlighting the impact of imprisonment on children are not treated with caution we also run the risk of over-estimating the causal effect of a father's imprisonment on their children, as there may be a range of other factors, such as sentencing, foster care, or arrest, that have impacted COIF. This is particularly true for those children who are present at the time of arrest as this is a time of uncertainty for children and can have ongoing consequences (Nieto, 2002). Children exposed to an arrest may experience a range of behaviours such as loss of sleep, separation anxiety, hyper-vigilance, irritability, withdrawal (The Yale Child Study Center, 2011) and "elevated PTS[D] symptoms" (Phillips & Zhou, 2010, p. 1253).

However, research relating to arrest often involves the impact of multiple/traumatic events on children, such as imprisonment and arrest, and so may not differentiate between multiple events on children. As a result, the impact of such an event may be over- or underestimated. Furthermore, some studies include specific samples of children, like those who are in foster care (Phillips & Zhou, 2010), who have witnessed an arrest. It is unclear whether the same results apply to those children who are *not* in foster care. Overall then, while it is clear children who witness an event, such as an arrest, may be seriously impacted, questions relating to the validity of statistics remain and as such more research is needed.

Conversely, innovative formal responses to children are advancing on an international level. After being invited to attend the Bay Area Summit on Children of Incarcerated Parents in Oakland I attended a workshop discussing model policies for children at the point of arrest. As there are currently only limited guidelines available to police when arresting parents in Victoria, Australia, this was a great way to hear from police professionals and experts in this area. In the US, there are several child sensitive arrest procedures and policies that, if adopted in Australia, would prove beneficial in reducing the impact on children whose parents are arrested. The IACP recently developed a Model Policy to Care for Children Impacted by

Parental Arrest. This policy statement notes that police officers will be trained to respond to children with an aim in minimizing trauma and promoting child-safety following an arrest (IACP, 2014). As well as this, it includes training, technical assistance and numerous resources for law enforcement (2016). A recent report by Strategies for Youth and the US Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center also provides model policies, checklists, and guidelines for anticipating children's experiences of arrest whilst offering child sensitive responses (ACCIPP, 2017). Lastly, the Urban Institute, in collaboration with the National Institute of Corrections have guidelines for local police departments looking to develop and initiate parental arrest policies that are child sensitive. These were released in the "Toolkit for Developing Parental Arrest Policies" which acknowledges the challenges in changing police culture, how to account for the unpredictability of arrest, and identifying suitable caregivers for children at the point of arrest (ACCIPP, 2017). Overall, these advancements in parental arrest procedures and protocols show a commitment to child sensitive practice and reducing trauma for children. Australian jurisdictions must turn to these model policies to immediately begin minimising the effect on children whose parents, and fathers, are arrested.

### **Fathering from prison**

The lack of attention paid to COIP and incarcerated fathers was initially what sparked my interest in this topic while working as a Research Assistant on a project exploring care planning for children when their primary carer parent is imprisoned (Trotter et al., 2015). During this role one statistic stood out to me: Around three-quarters of the primary carer fathers I interviewed had never received, nor been offered, any parenting support services or programs in prison. The opposite was true for women. When you add to this to the paucity of in-depth evaluations and longitudinal studies relating to fathering programs in prison it signifies a

fundamental difference in how fathers are viewed in society, and in the prison system: fathers – and indeed their children – are simply forgotten.

So as not to be continually forgotten, the focus needs to shift towards what works in maintaining connections between imprisoned fathers and their children. When discussing this with NGOs and researchers it became clear that there is a benefit in providing fathering programs that are fully immersive in nature. This can be seen in the development of fathering units or pods that are intensive, offer a range of skills based learning, are creative, provide education and have a hands-on approach to fathering. Examples of units such as this were developed in Holland with the addition of a Fathering Wing as part of the Prison Project (n.d.) and in Wales where a Family Interventions Unit proved successful in connecting fathers and their children as part of Invisible Walls Wales (Clancy & Maguire, 2017). Fathering programs such as this allow fathers to engage with their children and work towards ongoing connection upon release. This may be the best way forward for prison management in Australia if children and families are indeed a main priority.

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## Appendix II: Interview schedule for parents (Interview 1)

Date of interview	Participant code
Location (prison)	D.O.B.

## BACKGROUND

1. M/F/Other	2. Age (in years)
3. What country were you born in? <input type="checkbox"/> Australia <input type="checkbox"/> Other - Specify_____	
4. What is your ethnic or cultural background?	
5. Are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal <input type="checkbox"/> Torres Strait Islander <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	6. What is your first language? <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Other – Specify_____
7. How many children do you have?	
Age of child (Years – oldest to youngest)	Sex of child (M/F)
Child 1:	
Child 2:	
Child 3:	
Child 4:	

Child 5:	
Child 6:	
Child 7:	
Child 8:	
Child 9:	
Child 10:	
Child 11:	
Child 12:	

**Section i - BEFORE PRISON**

1. Family constellation (genogram)

Living arrangements/locations of **ALL children** (including biological, step, adoptive, or those in your informal care)

	<b>Child 1</b>	<b>Child 2</b>	<b>Child 3</b>
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<p>2. Relationship to child (biological, step, adoptive, informal carer)</p>			
<p>3. Where was your child/ren living before you went to prison? (this time)</p> <p>1. with you</p> <p>2. not with you</p>			
<p>4. If the child/ren was <b>not with you</b>, where was child living?</p> <p>1. Other parent – (current/past partner)</p> <p>2. Grandparent/s</p> <p>3. Other family member – Specify:</p> <p>4. Friends</p> <p>5. Self</p> <p>6. Out of home care – specify (foster/kinship/resi)</p> <p>7. Other –Specify:</p>			
<p><b>Questions 5 to 7 refer to child/ren who were not with the parent</b></p>			
<p>5. How long had the child been living there when you went to prison?</p>			

6. Why was the child living there?			
7. In this living arrangement, was the child living with:  1. Other sibling(s)  2. On own, sibs also placed on their own  3. On own, sibs placed together			

<p>4. On own, sibs various</p> <p>5. On own, have no sibs</p>			
<p>8. For children not living with you, what happened to them when you went to prison?</p> <p>How did you find out about this?</p>			
<p>9. Can you describe a typical day just before you went to prison (Prompt re general circumstances – parenting, mental health, housing, employment, \$, AOD, etc.)</p>			

10. What were the circumstances that led up to you going to prison? (prompt type of offence)



11. What is the length of your sentence? _____ months
12. When are you due for release?
13. Follow up interview likely to be in prison Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

## Section ii - ARREST

1. Can you tell me about the circumstances of your arrest? (Prompts: time; location - at home, in community, by summons; were children present etc.)

2. Was the arresting police officer aware that you were a primary carer of dependent children?

☐ No - Why not? (Prompt Did they not ask? Did you not disclose?)

☐ Yes - How did they become aware (prompt did they ask? Did you advise?)

3. Did the arresting police officer discuss with you if there was a suitable person to care for your child/children?

☐ No

☐ Yes – outline info received and how suitability was assessed and by whom

4. Did the Station Sergeant discuss with you your primary carer responsibilities and how these could be managed and the child/ren's safety ensured?

☐ No -Why not? (They did not ask? You did not disclose?)

☐ Yes – outline info received

5. How long were you held in the police cells?

6. Were you remanded into custody?

☐ No

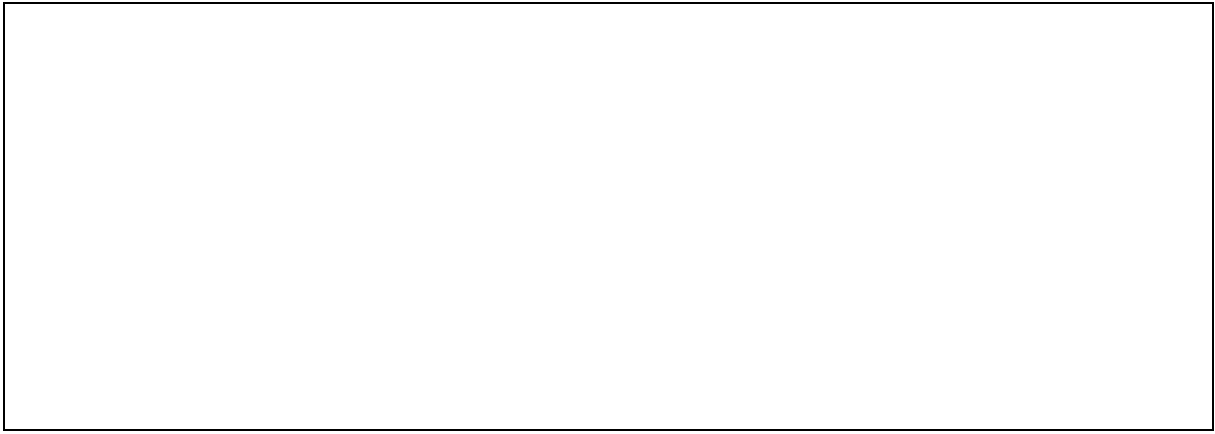
☐ Yes - where did your child/children go immediately?

7. If yes in Q6 how long were you held on remand?

8. If yes in Q6 did you maintain contact with your children during that time?

☐ No – why not?

☐ Yes - how was this able to occur?



Section iii - **SENTENCING**

1. Were you on a community based disposition before going to prison?

- ☐ No (skip to Q 3)
- ☐ Yes - what discussion did the Community Corrections Officer (CCO) have with you about the possibility of a prison sentence?

2. Did you have a pre-sentence report prepared?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes - did the CCO discuss with you your role as a primary carer in the preparation of the pre-sentence report?

3. What discussion did you have with your legal representative about the likely outcomes from your court appearance? (Prompts: what legal representation did you have (legal aid?), when was your legal representation allocated (e.g. on the day of court or prior?), what time did you spend with them? What did they tell you about the possible outcomes of your court appearance?)

4. Did your legal representative present to the judge/magistrate any 'Hardship' to your children if you were to receive a custodial sentence?

☐ No

☐ Yes - If yes, in what terms?

How did the magistrate respond?

**Section iv - IMPRISONMENT**

**FOR ALL CHILDREN FOR WHOM YOU ARE A PRIMARY CARER**

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3
<p>1. Where is your child/ren currently?</p> <p>○ AT HOME – CARED FOR BY</p> <p>1. Other parent – (current/past partner)</p> <p>2. Grandparent/s</p> <p>3. Other family member – Specify:</p> <p>4. Friends/associates</p> <p>5. Self</p> <p>6. Other –Specify</p> <p>○ MOVED – CARED FOR BY</p> <p>7. Other parent – (current/past partner)</p> <p>8. Grandparent/s</p> <p>9. Other family member – Specify</p> <p>10. Friends/associates</p> <p>11. Self</p> <p>12. Out of home care (foster/kinship/resi)</p> <p>13. With me, in prison (CIPP)</p> <p>14. Other –Specify</p>			
<p>2. Was this the first living arrangement they moved to after your imprisonment?</p> <p>Yes or No</p>			



3. How many times has each child moved since you have been in prison (how long)?			
4. Is the child being cared for with:  1. Other sibling(s)  2. On own, sibs also placed on their own  3. On own, sibs placed together  4. On own, sibs various  5. On own, have no sibs			
5. <b>How long</b> was there to organise care for the children (prompt re remand)?			
6. <b>Who</b> decided who would care for the child/ren while you were in prison? (Prompt Why?)			

<p>7. <b>How</b> was this decided? (Prompt: what input did you have into the decision?)</p>
<p>8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement “I was fully involved in planning the placement of my child for the time I was in prison”</p> <p>1. Strongly agree   2. Agree   3. Neutral   4. Disagree   5. Strongly disagree</p>
<p>9. If you were not involved in this, how were you kept informed about your child/ren?</p>
<p>10. How do you feel about the child/ren’s living arrangements?</p> <p>1. Very unhappy   2. Unhappy   3. Neither   4. Happy   5. Very happy</p>
<p>11. What are you un/happy about?</p>

<p>12. Overall how would you rate the planning process for the placement of your child?</p> <p>1. Poor    2. Fair    3. Ok    4. Good    5. Excellent</p>			
<p>13. What might have been done differently to improve this process?</p>			
<p>14. What plans do you have for caring for your children when you are released?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> No plans  <input type="checkbox"/> Children will return to my care (specify: Immediately or is there a transition plan?)  <input type="checkbox"/> Children will remain with current carer  <input type="checkbox"/> Children will be in shared care with me and my ex-partner  <input type="checkbox"/> Children's court will decide  <input type="checkbox"/> Family court will decide  <input type="checkbox"/> Other – please specify         </p> <p>Comment</p>			
<p>15. Is this your first time in prison?</p> <p> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  <input type="checkbox"/> No         </p>			
<p>16. If no, how many times have you been imprisoned previously?</p>			
	<b>Child 1</b>	<b>Child 2</b>	<b>Child 3</b>

<p>17. Where did all child/ren for whom you were the primary carer go then?</p> <p><b>(The <u>first</u> time if jailed more than twice)</b></p> <p>○ AT HOME – CARED FOR BY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Other parent – (current/past partner)</li> <li>2. Grandparent/s</li> <li>3. Other family member – Specify</li> <li>4. Friends/associates</li> <li>5. Self</li> <li>6. Other –Specify</li> </ol> <p>○ MOVED – CARED FOR BY</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Other parent – (current/past partner)</li> <li>2. Grandparent/s</li> <li>3. Other family member – Specify .....</li> <li>4. Friends/associates</li> <li>5. Self</li> <li>6. Out of home care (foster/kinship/resi)</li> <li>7. With me, in prison (CIPP)</li> <li>8. Other –Specify</li> </ol>			
<p>18. Did you know where your child/ren were when you were taken into the prison this time?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes -If yes, how did you get this information? (Prompt: informal or formal processes?)</p>			

19 What were you asked about the care and safety of your children when you were received into the prison?

20. What parenting role have you had with your children since you have been in prison? (Prompt re guardianship, general decision making, communication with carer etc.)

21. What supports/services have you been offered during imprisonment to support your parenting of your children?

22. What contact have you had with your children?

## MORE CHILDREN

Use this for questions responses for further children or if extra space is needed.

Question	Child ____	Child ____	Child ____	Child ____





## CONTACT DETAILS

<b>1. Contact details for 12 month follow up interview</b>
Phone (1):
Phone (2):
Phone (3): contact person who may know how to reach you if we cannot contact you
Address:
Email:
<b>2. Contact details for children's carer:</b> <b>We will only contact your children's carer to ask them if they are interested in participating in this study if there are no outstanding (Intervention Orders) IVOs and if the offence for which you are incarcerated was not committed against a member of your nuclear family (partner, carer, child/ren)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Do you have an outstanding (Intervention Order) IVO?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (do not contact family)</li></ul></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Was the offence for which you were sentenced committed against a member of your family?<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> No</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Yes (do not contact family)</li></ul></li></ul>
Address:

Phone:

## Appendix III: Ethics approval letter



## Department of Justice

### Human Research Ethics Committee

2 June 2011

Reference: CF/11/7191

Associate Professor Christopher Trotter

C/o Dr Catherine Flynn

Monash University

**Re: The impact of incarceration on Children's Care: A strategic framework for good care planning**

Dear Dr Catherine Flynn,

I am happy to inform you that the Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee (JHREC) considered your response to the issues raised in relation to the project *The impact of incarceration on Children's Care: A strategic framework for good care planning* and granted **full approval** for the duration of the investigation. The Department of Justice reference number for this project is CF/11/7191. Please note the following requirements:

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

If you have any queries regarding this application you are welcome to contact me on (03) 8684 1514 or email: [ethics@justice.vic.gov.au](mailto:ethics@justice.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,



Dr Yasmine Fauzee

Secretary, Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee



## Department of Justice Human Research Ethics Committee

### UNDERTAKING

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Project Title: The impact of incarceration on Children's Care: A strategic framework for good care planning

Reference No. CF/11/7191

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

#### *Reporting requirements:*

- *RE: Amendments: I will ensure that an Amendment Request Form is submitted to the JHREC if amendments to the project are required (e.g. staff changes, extension of completion date and adjustments to aims/methodology).*
- *RE: Amendments: If my JHREC application included a Department of Justice (DOJ) letter of support, I will advise the DOJ contact officer of proposed amendments before an amendment request is submitted to the JHREC.*
- *RE: Annual Reports: I will ensure that annual reports are provided if my project extends 12 months in duration.*
- *RE: Completion Reports: I will ensure that a completion report is provided at the conclusion of the research.*

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

Name of Principal Researcher: A/Prof Chris Trotter

Signed (Principal Researcher):



Date: \_\_\_\_5 june 2011\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix IV: Pre- interview screening questions**

### **Children of Prisoners – care planning study**

1. Are you the parent of a dependent child/ren (birth – 17 years)?

- ☐ No - ineligible
- ☐ Yes – please answer Q2

2. When you were remanded/imprisoned, did any of the following things happen in relation to the care of your child/ren?

- ☐ A new carer (this could be a relative, friend, associate etc) took over the care of your child or children in your home
- ☐ Your child or children moved house to live with a different carer
- ☐ Your child had no carer

**If at least one of the above is ticked, respondents are eligible for participation in the study.**

**If no boxes are ticked in Q 2, respondents are ineligible.**



## **Appendix V: Participant information sheet**



Explanatory Statement - Prisoners

### **The Impact of Incarceration on Children's Care: A Strategic Framework for Good Care Planning**

**Please keep this information with you**

My name is Chris Trotter and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Social Work at Monash University.

#### **The reason for the research**

We want to find out what happens to children when their parent goes to prison. We are looking for parents to tell us about their experiences.

#### **What is in it for me?**

We think that telling us about your experience is an important thing you can do to help other children who have parents in prison. You can be a part in the process of creating a better way of helping children when their parent is taken away. You can also get a copy of the results if you wish, just let us know.

#### **What do I have to do to participate?**

You have to agree to 2 (two) interviews with a member of our research team. The first interview will be some time soon and the second one will be in about 12 months. We will not make a note of any information that can identify you, this is an anonymous interview. The interview should take between 30 minutes to one hour. Participation is completely voluntary, so you do not need to do the interview if you do not want to.

If you say yes and would like to participate we would also like to talk to some of your family members. We understand that this is something that affects the whole family not just one person. We are looking for up to 4 (four) members of your family to talk to about the arrangements made for the care of your children. If you allow us we would also like to talk to your children if they are 12 years or older. We would need their contact details to send them a letter inviting them to participate.

#### **How might I feel?**

We understand that talking about your children might be hard for you. If at any stage you wish to stop the interview you can, just tell the researcher you want to stop. We can also tell the prison welfare workers that you want to talk to someone about how you are feeling. You can talk to a Peer Listener, Chaplain or Case Manager if you wish.

### **Can I change my mind?**

Being in this study is voluntary and you do not have to participate if you don't want to. You can stop the interview at any time you feel like it and you can tell us if you want us to use the information you have already given us. Remember that answers will be written in a completely anonymous way.

### **Your privacy**

No identifiable information about you will be recorded. This is an anonymous interview and the information we get from you will remain that way.

### **How we keep your answers**

We keep the answers you gave us in a safe and secure place; only the research team can see it or use it. It will be kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be named in such a report.

### **Results**

If you would like to know what we found out, please contact Doctor Catherine Flynn at [Catherine.Flynn@monash.edu](mailto:Catherine.Flynn@monash.edu).

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, please contact:
<p>Catherine Flynn</p> <p><a href="mailto:Catherine.Flynn@monash.edu">Catherine.Flynn@monash.edu</a></p>	<p>Executive Officer</p> <p>Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>

	<div> <p>[REDACTED]</p> </div> <div> <p>Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee, Department of Justice</p> </div> <div> <p>[REDACTED]</p> </div>
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Thank

you.

Associate Professor Christopher Trotter

Doctor Catherine Flynn

## Appendix VI: Consent form – prisoners



### **The Impact of Incarceration on Children's Care: A Strategic Framework for Good Care Planning**

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I say yes to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the **Explanatory Statement**, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed twice by the researcher ☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to be available for a further interview if required ☐ Yes ☐ No

**and**

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can change my mind at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

**and**

I understand that any information that the researcher gets from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

**and**

I understand that any information I give is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any person will be shown in any reports on the project, or to any others.

**and**

I understand that information from the interview will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

**Participant's name**

**Signature**

**Date**

## Appendix VII: Interview recap

- ◇ What surprised you today?
- ◇ What did you hear that you didn't expect to hear?
- ◇ What was it about it that made you react this way?
- ◇ What stuck with you after this set of interviews?
- ◇ Are there any common links between these factors and surprising data from other prisons?

