NARRATIVES OF POST-CUSTODIAL EXPERIENCES: SURVEILLANCE, SOBRIETY AND RISK

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Certificate of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment if made in this thesis. Any contribution made to research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or anywhere else during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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Ethics Approval

This research has been approved by the Charles Sturt University Ethics in Human Research Committee (EHRC) protocol number 2002/161.
# Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Alcoholics Anonymous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCHS</td>
<td>Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAM</td>
<td>Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADCA</td>
<td>Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIC</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Criminology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATSIC</td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTV</td>
<td>Closed Circuit Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHS</td>
<td>Correctional Health Services, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPSG</td>
<td>Children of Prisoners Support Group, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRAA</td>
<td>Credit Reference Association of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Criminological Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRJ</td>
<td>Community Resources for Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSI</td>
<td>Correctional Service Industry, Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOCS</td>
<td>Department of Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOJ</td>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOJ &amp; CS</td>
<td>Department of Justice and Community Safety (ACT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOJ &amp; IR</td>
<td>Department of Justice and Industrial Relations (Tasmania)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUCO</td>
<td>Drug Use Careers of Offenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUMA</td>
<td>Drug Use Monitoring in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAO</td>
<td>Government Accounting Office (USA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPS</td>
<td>Global Positioning System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEPP</td>
<td>HIV and Hepatitis Education Prison Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMIP</td>
<td>HM Inspectorate of Prisons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HREOC</td>
<td>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICOPA</td>
<td>International Conference on Prison/Penal Abolition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JA</td>
<td>Justice Action (Australia)</td>
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</table>
MMT - Methadone Maintenance Treatment
NA - Narcotics Anonymous
NAD - Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs
NACRO - National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (UK)
NCCHC - National Commission on Correctional Health Care (USA)
NCJRS - National Criminal Justice Reference Service (USA)
NIC - National Institute of Corrections (USA)
NSW - New South Wales
NSW DCS - New South Wales Department of Corrective Services
NT - Northern Territory
NT DOJ - Northern Territory Department of Justice
OCSC - Office of the Correctional Services Commissioner
PHD - Public Health Department (NSW)
QLD - Queensland
QLD DCS - Queensland Department of Corrective Services
RCIADIC - Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
SA - South Australia
SA DCS - South Australia Department of Corrective Services
TANF - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (USA)
TC - Therapeutic Community
TPCI - Transition from Prison to Community Initiative (USA)
US DOJ - United States Department of Justice
VACRO - Victorian Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
VIC - Victoria
VIC DOJ - Victorian Department of Justice
WA - Western Australia
WA DOJ - Western Australia Department of Justice
Abstract

It is very difficult to describe the fear that lies hidden in the minds of those who have been in prison. It is an insidious threat that can suddenly rise to the surface and explode like a overlooked time bomb. It can be triggered by a word, a glance, a gesture or just the close proximity of a stranger. This sudden eruption can toss you into a sea of self-doubt and uncertainty, and leave you struggling against the feeling of being somehow obviously marked – for the public to see – as a criminal and undesirable (Quillen, 1991:147)

Unprecedented increases in prison populations and imprisonment rates nationally and internationally, particularly in the last two decades, have caused concern of a global front. As a consequence, western society is now witnessing an unmatched number of prisoners released to the community each year. Prisoner release has traditionally raised questions of public safety, and the social and economic costs for communities. Indeed recidivism is one of the few prisoner release issues to make it into public and political debates. Current discussions however, dominated by concerns for broader social issues of risk, crippling limit the ways society knows, understands and engages with released men and women. Most significantly, the omission of prisoner narratives and consideration to individual experiences and understandings of release positions a discourse that fails to acknowledge a most critical voice.

This thesis opens up new discussions of prison release and engages with the critical dialogues of released men and women. It draws on semi-structured interviews with twenty-seven released men and women within Australia. Engaging with individual and collective experiences of prison release, this thesis specifically examines post-release surveillance and governance, frameworks of risk, and the problematic nature of addiction in the context of criminality, incarceration and release success. As release scholarship within Australia is in its infancy, the analyses that follow significantly inform what is happening in the Australian release setting.
Introduction

Ready and waiting: the journey from the prison gates to the wider community

If you, dear audience, had a puppy dog with a behaviour problem and you asked advice from a pet psychologist how to correct or rehabilitate the puppy and this specialist gave you the following advice:

“Did you say your dog bit you a few times and you don’t know what to do? Oh, this is easy. Take it to the dog pound. Place it together with another two hundred dogs with severe behaviour problems. Let it survive this, shall I say, unfriendly environment I solemnly promise you that in six months time you will get back a loving, perfectly corrected dog”

What would you say to this specialist?1

* * *

This research is not interested in questioning the legitimacy of the prison or its specific role in Western societies. It does, however, challenge the ways released men and women are structurally and systematically ‘fitted’ into the social body at the time of their release. The prison, as a dominant and violent mechanism of punishment, has infiltrated the contemporary landscape to the extent that prison sentences for both serious and petty offenders are seen as pedestrian. Public and political discourses have concerned themselves with the safety of the moral collective, the suitability of punishment to the crime in question, and the specific exclusion and ‘treatment’ of those viewed as evil, bad and dangerous. Attending to areas of crime and criminality in this way has increasingly directed focus towards the broader social body, at the expense and detriment of the individual offender. The prison signifies the visible beginnings of a journey of castigation. The primary concern of this research is that dominant criminological, penological and social discourses have neglected to consider the men and women ‘ready

1 Lucy Dudko, nd, letter prepared for ICOPA conference, Tasmania, 2006
and waiting' at the prison gates – ready for their release. More particularly, it is disquieted by the silenced struggles, journeys, challenges and triumphs of men and women who make the journey from the prison to the broader social world. In response, the analyses that follow seek to unravel what transpires in the Australian release setting, through the dialogues, understandings and experiences of men and women who have crossed the threshold from the carceral to the social, and often back from the social to the carceral.

Unprecedented growths in prison rates and numbers for men, women and juveniles in both national and international findings suggest these increases are not isolated occurrences (Australian Bureau of Statistics 4512.0, 2006, 2004; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2003; Hollis & Cross, 2003; Bareja & Charlton, 2002). Attributed to changing political and legislative climates, significant recidivism rates, and an increased reliance on incarceration as a dominant mechanism of punishment; rises in prison populations have been extensively explored (see for example Gelb, 2003; Clear, Rose & Ryder, 2001; Carcach & Grant, 2000). Dedicating considerable time and recourses to explorations of penal policy and the experiences of incarceration, the focus of prison scholarship has traditionally overlooked release environments. Social ramifications associated with increasing prison figures are momentous, but of particular and immediate significance is the fact that prisoner release numbers are following national and international prison trends. In particular, on the back of legislative movements in the 1980s and 1990s – specifically “truth in sentencing”, “mandatory detention”, the “war on drugs” and the like – unparalleled numbers of prisoners are completing or nearing the completion of their prison term. Never before has the urgency to understand and respond to released men and women been so apparent. Moreover, there is a critical need to move beyond dominant discussions of recidivism and community safety traditionally associated with prisoner release. As O'Connor (2000: 19) asserts, imprisonment and reimprisonment rates and figures urge a need to 'understand more fully not only the situation within the total institution of prisons but also the situation of the formation or reformation of selves in relation to criminal behaviour within and beyond' the physicality of the prison. She suggests the many years men and women spend inside prisons 'parallel the long,
unconcerned, and counterproductive silence by the world beyond the bars, walls and gates’ (O’Connor. 2000: 1). Extending these boundaries of silence, Denborough (1996: 45) speaks of the ‘silenced voices’ of the families and communities that are also affected by imprisonment. It is towards these silences that this current study speaks as a gesture which might reinstate “the prisoner” at the heart of criminological inquiry.

The available literature on prisoner release and the environments to which men and women are released have been driven and dominated by quantitative investigation. Such explorations have critically informed the post-custodial arena, specifically providing demographics of prison and release populations, rates of prison release and re-entry, recidivism, rates of ‘successful’ parole completion and the like. Whilst this data forges a greater and broader understanding of key issues, it does not tell us how men and women navigate, understand and live through their experiences of prison release. Moreover, it fails to consider and give merit to the underlying issues driving numerical rates and figures. Referencing the contributions of Bottoms and others, Garland (1995: 190) suggests the growth of “managerialism” and privatisation within the penal system perpetuates a ‘new and pronounced concern with system management, resource allocation, cost-benefit considerations, and organisational efficiency’. Feeley and Simon (1992) further suggest contemporary criminology is concerned with aggregates and large offending populations, rather than the individual offender. These shifts in criminological discourse have sought to manage offenders drawn from a knowledge base grounded in statistical findings and data sets. This is a central trend in criminology, and as a result, criminological discourse has become more statistical, more actuarial, ever more concerned with ‘populations, and decreasingly interested in the individual offender as a clinical case’ (Garland, 1995: 191). More recently, researchers have flagged cautions with the use of actuarial assessment particularly in the context of social control (see for example Silver & Miller, 2002), and the limitations of collective reflections on individual experiences of prison and release (see for example O’Brien & Bates, 2003; Terry, 2003; Bosworth et al., 2005).
The denial of a space and location for men and women to account for and discuss their release experiences paves the contemporary penological landscape with a superficial understanding of what transpires in the community following periods of incarceration. And more critically, quantitative accounts engage with prison releasees as a 'population', 'herded together in virtue of the one common characteristic' (Martineau, 1838 in Soothill, 1999: 61), rather than men and women who collectively and individually share the experience of prison release. In this regard, whilst quantitative investigations identify key issues within research environments, statistical accounts restrict the scope and penetration of social settings and largely remove space for consideration to individual experience and conceptualisation. Devlin (2002: 19) argues the 'prison .... is all about numbers', and illustrates the weakness of such categorisations, in particular, the inability of numerical approaches to detail the 'whole picture' of incarceration. Figures 'cannot tell you that each [prisoner] is an individual with [their] own story, [their] own friends and family ... and [their] own tragedy' (Devlin, 2002: 19). Moreover, Denborough (1996: 28) highlights that the stories of individuals who have served time and 'survived' are largely silenced within this culture. He credits there has been little room to consider the ways in which men and women have drawn on and 'tapped into stories of strength, of connection, of love, rebellion, resistance'. The fact that current release literature engages quantitative investigation does not make these discussions any less valuable. Indeed, Lawler (2002: 251) argues the narratives of individuals 'would make no sense if they did not accord, however obliquely, with broader social narratives'. To this end, the contributions of quantitative analysis have forged the cornerstones of a new penal dialogue, a dialogue dedicated to the exploration of an environment beyond the physicality of the prison, within which prisoner narratives are contextualised. The gaps flagged within current release scholarship present an opportunity for a deeper exploration of prisoner release. In particular, they demand the incorporation of prisoner narratives within contemporary discussions.

Qualitative analysis facilitates the deeper explorations of social environments and lived experience. Interested in life experiences 'through the eyes of ... participants' (Henwood in Richardson, 1996: 27), qualitative frameworks engage individual and personalised
accounts resulting in ‘rich, descriptive, contextually situated data (King in Richardson, 1996: 175). Specific to penological enquiry, O’Brien (2001: 139) recognises the contribution qualitative techniques make to explorations of the ‘untold and unheard’ stories of released female prisoners. In particular, the opportunity they provide ‘for women to make sense of … their incarceration and subsequent release’. To this end, qualitative explorations, particularly those that engage with released prisoner’s narratives, have the potential to powerfully inform the ways we currently understand and respond to issues of prisoner release. More critically, they provide spaces and opportunities for contemporary criminological enquiry to engage with the diversification of experiences between men and women². Consideration to the concerns underlying and driving criminological and penological figures has significant implications not only for penal inquiry in general, but more particularly for policy makers, rehabilitative and educative agents, parole departments and the like. This current study looks to develop release scholarship and forge a deeper and more detailed picture of men and women’s return to the community through the specific inclusion of their release narratives.

The available positions from which prisoners talk about their experiences is culturally grounded in social discourses and constructions of “prisoner”, “offender”, “imprisonment” (O’Connor, 2000), and ‘the dominant public … discourse of offending in politics and the media’ (Smith, 1990: 121). Penological actors – law enforcement, court officials, victims, academics and the like – inform these social understandings as they ‘produce discourses of both fear and domination’ (O’Connor, 2000: 158) and a public ‘condemnation of prisoners’ (Smith, 1990: 121). In this regard, Liebling (2001: 476) suggests for the past forty years, ‘the perspective of the subordinate prisoner has had intellectual hegemony’ in prison research, and release enquiry by extension. There has been a shared reluctance to afford legitimacy to prisoner narratives within some criminological scholarship. Morgan (1999: 328) argues that ‘although problematic, prisoner autobiographies should receive more systematic attention as a contribution to penological archive’. Not only are the voices of prisoners significantly unheard and

² Identified as imperative to understanding the ways women experience and respond to the dominant masculine ideologies that frame the experiences of women within the criminal justice system (see for example Carlen, 2002c; Kilroy, 2000).
under-represented, but ‘official discourse is hostile to their accounts’ (Morgan, 1999: 328). Morgan cites Ward (1991: 225) in asking how experiences of incarceration can be detailed by anyone else than those who experience it first hand? Specifically, how can researchers, policy makers and penal management write or discuss issues they do not understand? This is the paradox of much criminological research on prisoners – these studies neglect to actually engage with prisoners, they just count them. These studies are thus impoverished. A recent development within the criminological arena has witnessed a new branch of prison and prisoner release discussions. The emergence of ‘convict criminology’, fostered by men and women who have been released from prison and entered academia, has facilitated a greater and more in depth presence of the prisoner voice within current literature (see for example Kuhlmann, 2005; Bosworth et al., 2005; Terry, 2003). Foucault (1977: 209) maintains that it is the discourse of prisoners that ‘ultimately matters, a discourse against power, the counter-discourse of prisoners’. Prisoner discourse stands counter to social and cultural understandings of “offending”, yet it is from within these social and cultural constructions that penal scholarship and policy has developed. The negation of prison and release ‘talk’ within research material has strengthened negative and ineffective nuances surrounding prison populations, and at the same time, weakened ‘the legitimacy of offenders’ voices’ (Morgan, 1999: 329). O’Connor (2000: 38) argues that the discourses through which prisoners convey their experiences and social environments act as ‘pathway[s] into the prisoner’s view’ of themselves, in particular, ‘structures that reveal agentic, puzzling or deflected positionings’. Her linguistic work with imprisoned men directs the criticality of engaging with released prisoners in these same ways.

The incorporation of prison and release narrations into current scholarship not only serves to complete the picture of the experiences of these populations, but also ‘offers prisoners a vehicle to challenge orthodox representations’ (Morgan, 1999: 331). According to Alvesson (2002: 49), ‘being exposed to and learning new vocabularies means the construction of a new world’. Foucault (1977: 419) speaks to this notion, furthering that if prisoners were enabled to contribute to their social constructions, they ‘might challenge some of the certainties with which we divide the world into normal and abnormal, right
and wrong’. O’Brien (2001: 57) furthers that examining ‘the nature of [current] knowledge production’ enables us to see how particular ‘socialisation practices [operate] to maintain oppressive beliefs and practices’. In particular, Minnich (in O’Brien, 2002: 57) argues expanding knowledge ‘would legitimate and empower [prisoners, and] more accurately reflect the worlds in which they live’. More critically, in light of increases in incarceration, reincarceration and sentence lengths, ‘we surely need to investigate further the reasons and rationales to which criminals ascribe their actions’ (O’Connor, 2000: 164).

In response to the identified misgivings within current prisoner release dialogues, this research attends to the ways released men and women experience, understand and negotiate their experiences of release. The initial focus of this analysis was to engage with the frameworks of governance and surveillance in the release context. More critically, it was interested in exploring the ways such frameworks informed release periods and how released men and women understood themselves within technologies of control. During the research process it became apparent that whilst notions of supervision and regulation are critical informants to the release setting, the men and women’s experiences extended far beyond these narrow concerns.

The men and women within this research painted a release landscape webbed with complexities, contradictions, vulnerabilities and resistance. What became most critical to this research was not the construction of the released body as an effect or object of regulation and control, but rather a released body constructed by the social experiences and internal realities of the men and women themselves. Most importantly, this research recognised the body of the ‘released prisoner’ was most powerful when it was fashioned in their own way, through their own dialogue, and in their own time. In this regard, the analysis of the Australian release setting that follows has been driven and directed by the critical issues the men and women brought to the interview forum. From these understandings, whilst some of the analytical chapters that follow are specifically grounded within particular theoretical constructs, each chapter does not embed the released men and women within abstract theoretical constraints. Sometimes the best way
to share the realities of the existence of a ‘released prisoner’ is to surrender to their story – listen to their narrative. Fashioning the research in this way, I hope to not only colour the release landscape, but more importantly, elevate the language and dialogue of released men and women as the most important, critical and insightful resource available to elucidate real understandings of prisoner release.

Chapter Two, ‘The release setting: current understandings of the experiences of released men and women’, collates the current literature and scholarship pertinent to release populations. It engages with the most critical areas of concern known to face released men and women within the broader social body. Specifically, this includes the areas of: education and employment; health and mental health concerns; the impact of incarceration on families and children; and issues of housing and accommodation. Whilst the current exploration is concerned with the Australian release setting, the infancy of Australian’s exploration and understanding of the release environment has meant significant portions of current release scholarship are mostly drawn from international realms. Most often from the United States and the United Kingdom. To this end, each section of this chapter attends to literature specific to the Australian context where possible. Where there is a dearth of local material, international findings are drawn on to develop a holistic interpretation of the release setting. Whilst comparisons between Australian, American and British prison and release populations are not ideal, the current understandings of these two countries add significant insight to what is happening in our own backyard.

Chapter Three, ‘Penetrating the release setting: a select methodology’, builds upon the knowledge garnered in Chapter Two. In recognition of the criticality of the incorporation and importation of release narratives to current discourses of prisoner release, this chapter outlines the processes and practices that enabled exploration of the release setting. It lays out the difficulties in accessing released men and women, and the access points through which the research was able to penetrate the ‘hidden and silenced’ release world. The men and women within this research allowed me to enter into their lives, their vulnerabilities, humiliations and fragilities. To this end, the process of entering into and
crediting their experiences of release is underpinned by the imperativeness of trust, confidentiality, safety and honesty. This chapter engages with these areas and the ways the men and women’s narratives of release were unravelled in my analysis.

Chapter Four, ‘Grounding the release setting within theoretical frameworks of power, risk and abjection’, stages the platform for analysis within this research. Specifically, it draws on key bodies of literature that emerged as critical to the analysis and interpretation of individual experiences of prison release. Firstly, it considers the offending body as a construction of disciplinary power. Foucault’s understandings of disciplinary power, initiated within the prison, forgives an appreciation for the ways in which the released body is demarcated through surveillance; regulation and binary divisions of normality and difference. Secondly, this chapter identifies the institutionalisation of risk with current criminological and penological rhetoric and practice. Such groundings, it argues, disproportionately locate the released body as an object of risk. It sets up a site from which to begin to consider released men and women as subject of risk within the release setting. Lastly, the work of Kristeva in the context of abjection and danger, speaks to the ways in which excluded and rejected bodies are (re)accepted and received by the frameworks that scaffolded their difference. More specifically, her work provides critical platforms from which to consider the return of the ‘rejected’ prisoner body to the broader social world. Collectively, these theoretical terrains forge the analysis that follows wherein the released prisoner is considered as an object of disciplinary power, a site of and for risk, and as an excluded and rejected member of the social body.

Chapter Five, ‘Regulating the released body: narratives of governance and surveillance’, examines the structural and systematic technologies of surveillance within the release environment. It identifies the most immediate and authoritative regulatory agents in the release setting, namely the police and parole departments. Support and advocacy organisations and Drug Courts are also understood as governing the ways released men and women move and exist within the community. Derrida’s notion of the ‘violence of the archive’ powerfully speaks to the implications of these kinds of release surveillance. Most directly, his work is drawn on to attend to the ways release monitoring and
recording play out in the lives of released men and women. In turn, such analysis provides critical insight into the ways society currently ‘knows’ and constructs the released body. More particularly, it elucidates how such knowledge informs the manner in which men and women move, live and negotiate their release experiences.

Chapter Six is assigned a more lengthy title: ‘This is not the life I want or who I want to be but I don’t know anything else: narratives of addiction and criminality.’ This title speaks to the dominance and destruction of active addiction. During the course of the more general exploration of life in the release setting, the men and women collectively attested drug use as a most critical concern. In this way, the dominance of drug use and the implications of addiction within their lives, offending and incarceration, begged specific and individual attention. This chapter highlights the social and emotional frameworks of addiction. Specifically, it elevates active addiction as a destructive, isolative and detrimental orchestration that extracts the addict from the social world and fashions for them a surreal and dark existence. It argues drug addiction is a performance wherein physical, social and emotional paradigms collide to construct a toxic rollercoaster that is difficult to exit. The marriage of criminality to and within addiction is also explored to identify the ways drug addiction informs, challenges and obstructs periods of release, more directly, “crime-free” periods of release.

Chapter Seven, ‘Becoming ‘free’? Exploring the juxtaposition of “prisoner” and “citizen”, builds upon the symbolism of being released with negligible material forms of (social) identification. The men and women spoke about being released from prison with little more than half a Centrelink payment and their jail release slip. This chapter firstly considers the ways the absence of tangible identification challenges periods of release, most notably within the first few days. As a platform, these challenges forged a consideration of the ways in which released men and women identify and understand themselves after they leave the prison gates. They are no longer prisoners, but are they immediately reinstated full social citizenship? Being released with a jail release form as the only material form of identification, proved to be powerfully symbolic of the journeys
the men and women faced as they attempted to transcend the label of 'prisoner', and embodied the experience of being a prisoner.

Chapter Eight challenges the dominance of risk within current criminological and penological discourse. It is entitled, ‘Rethinking risk in the release setting: an exploration of the neglected notion of the prisoner as a subject of risk’. Pursuant to the criticality of conceptualising the release setting through the eyes, voices and understandings of released men and women themselves, this chapter engages with the notion of the released prisoner as a subject of risk. It concerns itself with the areas of risk and vulnerability the men and women attributed to their lives and their release environments. The primary risk identified by the men and women within this research related to their relationships and struggles with addiction and sobriety. They understood themselves as subjects of risk within social, psychological and physical boundaries that culminated through their addiction. In this regard, this chapter continues from Chapter Six’s departure and engages with drug use in the context of risk. The repetition of drug use within this analysis does not repeat previous arguments, but rather demonstrates the dangers addiction bring to the release setting. Contextualised within frameworks of risk, this exploration of drug use and addiction provides critical insight into the challenges and obstructions to ‘successful’ release.

Chapter Nine, ‘An orchestration of irony: the tenor of prison release’, concludes this thesis. This chapter identifies what the men and women involved in this research have brought to the Australian release table. It draws from the foundations established in Chapter Two to map the current Australian release environment. The second function of this chapter is to assemble the findings of this research into a concise summary that enables contemporary Australia to better address the issues, concerns, challenges and vulnerabilities of its released men and women. It introduces the tenor of irony and the ways in which prison release signifies a departure from the architecture of the prison, but minimally a release from the bondage of penalty. Here Kristeva’s concept of abjection most aptly depicts the realities of prison release for the men and women that relocate from prison facilities to the broader community.
Whilst narratives of released men and women have driven and informed this research, it recognises that some experiences are unable to be articulated – some feelings can not be given justice through voice. In turn, this thesis presents both the articulated narrative and crafted artwork of imprisoned and released men and women to convey the impact of imprisonment on their lives. Whilst prisoners collectively share the experience of prison and release, these men and women individually feel and understand their experiences. Woven into the narrative fabric of this thesis are prisoner artworks that facilitate a visual connection to their experiences, and portray emotions that cannot be fully captured through language. Each image stands on its own and speaks for itself. Where available, the artist’s reflection and inspiration for their work is included. Like the image subsequent to this introduction, this thesis presents nine chapters dedicated to recognising the struggles, triumphs, trepidation and challenges that men and women face as they move from the social to the carceral, and sometimes back to the carceral.
This image appeared on the front page of The Age, Saturday February 18, 2006 with an article entitled ‘Nine Lives’. The article spoke of nine young Australian adults imprisoned in Bali on drug trafficking charges, referred to as the ‘Bali nine’.
Chapter 2

The Release Setting: current understandings of the experiences of released men and women

This chapter examines the current state of scholarship pertaining to the prison release environment. It explores the issues that have informed research into the post-release environment to date, in particular those of release housing, education and employment, health-related issues and the families and children of prisoners. Australian research has contributed to most of these areas, and has been drawn on within this chapter where available. However, knowledge of release environments has been dominantly informed by international investigation, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom. Whilst a great deal of criminological literature has examined the prison and its role within contemporary Western society relatively little research has explored the post-custodial environment. Unprecedented increases in prison populations and imprisonment rates nationally and internationally, particularly in the last two decades, have caused concern on a global front (United States Department of Justice, 2002; Hughes, Wilson & Beck, 2001; Home Office, 2000). As a consequence, Western society is now witnessing an unprecedented number of prisoners released into the community each year. Whilst consistent and reliable data in this regard is difficult to obtain, Australian research estimates approximately 44,000 prisoners are released in Australia each year (Baldry et al., 2003: 1).

The incessant increase in prison populations suggests there is desperate need to open discussion and explore the experiences of this population. Moreover, there is a particular need to better understand and engage with released prisoners beyond political and policy driven concerns. Whilst research in this regard is largely underdeveloped, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of understanding how release periods are experienced by individuals and broader social and familial consequences. Consideration
of the need for transitional support for released prisoners and their families grew largely in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it lost its appeal with the ‘nothing works’ mantra of the 1980s, and the loss of faith in the rehabilitative ideal (Ward, 2001). In the past few years a renewed interest has beset release issues, particularly in light of increasing prison numbers and subsequent release numbers (Ward, 2001; Baldry et al 2003). Moreover, Baldry et al (2003: 11) suggest the return of prisoners to prison is currently ‘a topic of serious political and policy interest’.

Prisoner release has traditionally raised questions of public safety, and the social and economic costs for communities. Austin, Hardyman and Irwin (2002: 56) believe framing released prisoners in this way ‘overstates’ the realities of the risk released men and women pose to the social body. Indeed recidivism is one of the few prisoner release issues to make it into public and political debates (see for example Zamble & Quinsey, 2001; Home Office, 2003). The rate at which released prisoners return to prison, often multiple times and in close proximity to their date of release, has come under increasing focus on national and international fronts. At the helm of such discussions is the efficacy of various treatment programs, the capacity to ‘rehabilitate’ offenders, and the validity of early release initiatives such as parole and work release (see for example Petersilia, 2001; Ward, 2002). In recent times, and in concert with the growing momentum of prisoner support and advocacy organisations, discussions have begun, however minimally, to engage with more intimate and offender-orientated concerns. Nevertheless, understandings of release populations are largely in the formative stages and, as such, the demographics and characteristics of prison populations are drawn on to facilitate a more detailed picture of the men and women who are returning to our communities at the expiration of their imprisonment.

**Australian prison populations in context**

Before engaging with prisoners in the released context, it is important to examine and understand what is happening within Australian prisons. To this end, this section is interested in briefly outlining the demographics of the Australian prison population that inform the composition and nature of current and future release populations.
Nationally, prison figures and rates are consistently rising, with such increases experienced by all states and territories. Moreover, such increases are witnessed in all facets of measurement including gender composition, indigeneity, sentenced, remand and prior imprisonment. At the end of June 2005, Australian prisons held 25,353 sentenced and remand prisoners, a 5% increase from 2004, and a 45% increase over the past ten years. Our national imprisonment rate of 163 per 100,000 (2005) has increased by 3% since 2004 (157), with male and female imprisonment rates of 307 and 22 per 100,000 respectively. Whilst women comprise only 7% (1,734) of the adult prison population, over the past 10 years female incarceration has consistently increased at a greater rate than males (ABS 4512.0, 2006; ABS 4517.0, 2005).

The median average age of all prisoners in 2005 was 32 years, with 71% between the ages of 20 and 39 and 79% of Indigenous prisoners aged 20 to 29 (ABS 4517.0, 2005). Offence compositions identify that nearly half of all prisoners had most serious offences involving violence or threat of violence (ABS 4517.0, 2005). Specifically, the most serious offences in 2005 included the following: acts intended to cause injury (17%); unlawful entry with intent (13%); sexual assault and related offences, and robbery; extortion and related offences (11% each); and homicide and related offences, and illicit drug offences (10% each). Women comprised a greater proportion than men amongst deception and related offences (12% vs. 3%), theft and related offences (11% vs. 6%), and illicit drug offences (13% vs. 10%) (ABS 4517.0, 2005).

Sentence lengths for men and women have further increased with 63% sentenced to less than 5 years, and 38% less than 2 years. The median aggregate sentence length for the total prison population was 36 months (3 years), with expected time to serve minimally decreasing from 2004 (2 years) to 1.9 years (ABS 4517.0, 2005). Seventy one percent of the adult prison population are expected to serve less than 5 years. Currently, 67% of the prison population have served a prior prison sentence, with 56% serving a prison sentence more than 12 months ago, and 56% with previous remand sentences (ABS 4517.0, 2005).
Indigenous populations

For over twenty years the key issue for studies of punishment has been the over-representation of Indigenous persons within the criminal justice system, in particular the disproportionate numbers of those incarcerated. The official recording of imprisonment rates for Indigenous persons began in 1987 and has consistently highlighted significant over-representation in all Australian jurisdictions. Indigenous rates increased 107% from 1988 to 1998 (Carach, Grant & Conroy, 1999: 2), despite the records of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) (1991) highlighting the systematic injustices associated with Indigenous over-representation. During this period a much faster growth was observed in Indigenous imprisonment in all Australian jurisdictions than non-Indigenous populations, with an increase of 6.9% per year compared to 1.7% for non-Indigenous persons (Carach, Grant & Conroy, 1999, 1999: 2). More recently, Indigenous prisoners have represented an increasing proportion of the prison population. In 2005 there were 5,656 Indigenous prisoners held in correctional facilities, a 12% increase from the previous year (5,048), and the largest annual increase since 1999 (ABS 4517.0, 2005). Currently Indigenous persons represent an estimated 2% of the Australian population; however, Indigenous prisoners comprise 22% of the total prisoner population, the highest end-of-year proportion since 1995 (ABS 4517.0, 2005). At a rate of 1,561 per 100,000, Indigenous persons are 12 times more likely than non-Indigenous persons to be imprisoned (ABS 4517.0, 2005). Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales most directly contribute to the overall high national figures. In 2002 the Indigenous imprisonment rate for Western Australia was a significant 2,400 per 100,000, yet a considerable decrease from the previous year of 3,000 per 100,000. During the same time New South Wales (2,100), South Australia (1,703), and Queensland (1,733) rates were consistently above the national indigenous rate (ABS 4517.0, 2005). Research has flagged further concerns for female Indigenous prisoners: in March 2004 Indigenous women were imprisoned nationally at a rate of 20.8 times that of non-Indigenous women. More critically, it is estimated around 75% of Indigenous women will return to prison after their release (Kilroy, 2005). Within such over-representation, ABS data indicates Indigenous prisoners typically serve shorter
sentences than the overall prison population (ABS 1301.01, 2004). As this chapter later identifies, short sentenced prisoners face individualised challenges and obstacles both inside prison and after release, as distinct from that of longer-term prisoners. Coupled with issues and barriers surrounding indigeneity, Indigenous prisoners can be understood to face compounded challenges in the release setting.

The over-representation of Indigenous persons within the criminal justice system, in particular the prison system, has received considerable recent attention, and in turn research has expanded to consider the specific needs of this population. This research has begun to examine the implications and implementations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991) and the ways in which Indigenous populations, in particular prison populations, have been effected as a result (for example see Harding et al., 1995; McDonald, 1996; Cunneen & McDonald, 1997; Hedger, 2002). Research by Cunneen and McDonald (1997), which examined the implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, concluded that ‘Australian Governments have failed to meet the undertakings they made to take affective actions to reduce’ the levels of Indigenous incarceration (McDonald, 1996: 12). Hedger (2002) further argues the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendations have not been implemented effectively and in fact highlights evidence of a worsening situation. A growing and significant body of literature has informed contemporary understandings of Indigenous imprisoned men and women (see for example Cunneen, 2006; Salomone, 2005; Kilroy, 2005; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 2004; Walker & McDonald, 1995). Whilst growing attention and resources are being directed towards indigenous issues, research specific to the needs and challenges of this highly vulnerable population is significantly lacking and the area demands future research and attention. Underscored by political, racial and spiritual challenges, Denborough (1996: 210) asserts that ‘the voices of Indigenous Australians offer a profound challenge to white Australia’.
Projections

Not only are we faced with unprecedented numbers of incarcerated persons, national and international justice and correctional departments project further significant increases (for example NSW DCS, 2002; Walker, 2000; VIC DOJ, 2003; DOJ & CS, 2003). Such forecasts are made in spite of judicial departments implementing programs and policies directing the utilisation of incarceration as a last resort. Nationally, projections indicate increasing prisoner numbers in all jurisdictions. In particular, the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services (NSW DCS) has estimated that the 2002 prison population will increase at a rate of 275 prisoners per year over the next five years (NSW DCS, 2002: 9), representing, based on the 2002 daily average, an increase of over 1,300 prisoners. The construction of new prison facilities and the redevelopment of existing sites between 2001 and 2003 created an additional 1,300 new beds (NSW DCS, 2003), and affirmed the certainty of prison growth projections. The South Australian Department for Corrective Services (SA DCS) announced in 2003 plans for the construction of a new 120-bed facility for women as part of its Towards Corrections 2020 Project (SA DCS, 2003). At the same time, the Victorian Government has undertaken the largest building program in its history, in an attempt to ‘deal with an unprecedented growth’ in prison numbers over the last ten years and the expected increases to follow (VIC DOJ, 2003: 68). At the close of this program (2004/5) a net additional 1,073 permanent beds had been created (VIC DOJ, 2002). The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Prison Project, due for completion in 2006, will be the first facility in the territory for sentenced prisoners (DOJ & CS, 2003).

National trends in Australian imprisonment data largely reflect international shifts in imprisonment. Adult imprisonment in the United States more than tripled between 1978 and 1998 (Lawrence et al., 2002: 2). The United Kingdom experienced a similar increase in prison population of 45% from 1991 to 2001 (Home Office, 2001). In 2003 the total prison population was 72,853 (3% increase from 2002) (Hollis & Cross, 2003: 1). The number of male adult prisoners increased by 3% since 2002 to 68,421, and female adults increased by 1% over the same period to 4,432 (Hollis & Cross, 2003: 6).
From imprisonment to release

Whilst imprisonment increases raise individual concerns with regards to the structure of crime and punishment in the modern Western world, more particularly they are beginning to draw attention to the area of prisoner release. Most highlighted within this focus on prison release has been prison re-entry. Within Australia revocation rates of between 45 and 60% within two years of release are experienced across most states and territories (Yick & Warner, 2005; VIC DOJ, 2003: 54; WA DOJ, 2002). Female prisoners (43%) are more likely to return to prison than males (31%), and at a faster rate (Baldry et al 2003: 30). Hayes (1990) suggests recidivism rates for released prisoners are particularly problematic in the initial stages of release, and that such risk increases ten-fold within the first three months of release.

Across the available research surrounding released prison populations, four key areas dominate discussions: education and employment; health-related issues; circumstances surrounding families and children; and housing and accommodation concerns. Whilst incarceration trends, legislative frameworks and policies, systems of release and the like are acknowledged as differing amongst Australia, America and the United Kingdom, collective examination of available research provides a platform from which to begin a closer examination of release issues. Whilst it is not ideal to compare data amongst different countries, and such comparison does not allow for divergent legislation, policy and practice, drawing on international studies, particularly from countries where release research is significantly more established than in Australia, does offer a stage from which to understand the potential issues that face our release populations. Where the American and United Kingdom dominate particular areas of research, in the absence of such development in the Australian arena, their findings highlight the potential concerns facing our own release populations. Where release data inadequately informs or leaves gaps in current understandings, data on prison populations is utilised within the understanding that all but a few prisoners are released back into the community.
Education and employment

Employment is a marker of social integration (Ross & Ryan, 2003: 5), facilitates economic independence and a means of income (Henson, 1990), and signifies a level of status and focus for social activity (Begg, 1992). Recent studies have flagged employment as a ‘companion piece’ for survival for released men and women (Taxman, Young & Byrne, 2002b: 12) and critical to reducing reoffending (Dion et al., nd: 28; Parsons, 2002; Austin, Hardyman & Irwin, 2002; Crow et al., 1989). Low levels of education, underemployment and unstable employment patterns have been correlated with prison entry, in particular in the first two years of release (Webster et al., 2001: iii; Motiuk, 1996, cited in Dion et al., nd: Henson, 1990). Following incarceration, research highlights both significant unemployment rates and barriers to employment amongst released prisoners (see Webster et al., 2001; Crow, 2001; Sarno et al., 2000a, 2000b). Periods of unemployment are not exclusive to released prisoners; however, factors contributing to and surrounding unemployment are exacerbated by periods of incarceration. Studies suggest many prisoners are unemployed or underemployed upon release (Solomon, Gouvis & Waul, 2001; Begg, 1992). In addition, restrictions and prohibitions on some avenues of employment for particular groups of offenders further impede opportunities for legitimate employment options (discussed in more detail below under ‘workplace restrictions’). Whilst securing employment has been identified as a ‘vital ingredient in the effective re-settlement and re-integration’ of prisoners (Liddle, Feloy & Solanki, 2000: 1; Begg, 1992), the acquisition of stable employment is met by considerable obstacles (Solomon, Gouvis & Waul, 2001). Parsons (2002) suggests social exclusion is exemplified through an individual’s lack of education and employment and sets individuals without these basic attributes at a significant disadvantage. Identified as a population with disproportionately low levels of educational attainment and employment experience, such deficits become compounded by periods of incarceration, in particular as employers express resistance to engaging released prisoners as employees and individuals thus experience disconnection with the labour market. Whilst there is no current data on employment rates for released prisoners in Australia, Graffam et al. (2004) indicate the employment rates of released men and women are likely to be lower than the general population.
Recent Australian research by Graffam et al. (2004) began to explore social and institutional attitudes surrounding the employment of released prisoners. In brief, they found attitudes differed in relation to the characteristics of the respondents and their stakeholder positions (for example, if they were correctional, welfare workers and the like). In general, their research suggested released prisoners were considered less employable than other disadvantaged groups, with the exception of intellectually disabled and psychiatrically disturbed persons (Graffam et al., 2004: 51). Within more detailed explorations of prisoner and release prisoner employment, issues surrounding employability focus on three central areas. In the absence of detailed Australian research, these areas are informed by American and United Kingdom findings. Firstly, prisoners are typically beset with lower levels of education and training, social skills and basic cognitive training (see Niven & Olugundoye, 2002; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2001; Webster et al., 2001; Solomon, Gouvis & Waul, 2001; Sarno et al., 2000a, 2000b; Liddle, Feloy & Solanki, 2000). In particular, the Home Office (2003a) identify prisoners as having much lower literacy, language and numeracy skills than the general population. Secondly, periods of incarceration impose barriers to employment as a result of both the stigma attached to imprisonment and interruptions to their history of employment in the labour force (see Webster et al., 2001; Solomon, Gouvis & Waul, 2001; Sarno et al., 2000a, 2000b). Thirdly, research has indicated employer and institutional reluctance to employ individuals with criminal records (see Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2002; Webster et al., 2001; Sarno et al., 2000a, 2000b; Liddle, Feloy & Solanki, 2000; Fletcher, Woodhill & Herrington, 1998).

Studies examining reoffending and prison re-entry rates and employment trends suggest employment to be a powerful determinant in release success and interpreting offending and incarceration patterns. Harer (1994) found that upon release the recidivism rate for prisoners was approximately 60%, whilst those who were employed full-time or were attending some form of education before their prison sentence had a rate of 25.6% (cited in Buck, 2000: 4). Trends in unemployment and reconviction appear to change over the life course of an individual rather than remaining constant. Webster et al. (2001: 8)
further suggest problems encountered in securing employment decrease as the age of prisoners increases. They also indicate a higher prevalence of court appearances and arrests increases employment difficulties. Although studies in the area have failed to draw direct causal links between unemployment and crime, Farrington (1996) has suggested that phases of unemployment are related to periods of offending. Australian research identifies approximately 45% of prisoners as long-term unemployed at the time of their offence (SA DCS, 1998). At the time of reception, unemployment rates of between 41% for males and 57% for females were recorded in New South Wales (Baldry & Mapelstone, 2003), whilst Western Australia approximated 75%, with two-thirds of Indigenous prisoners unemployed at the time of reception (WA DOJ, 2002a).

**Education preceding incarceration**

Whilst there is a relative dearth of scholarship specific to education preceding incarceration, the available data consistently identifies prisoners as having limited social, educational and employment skills compared to the general population (Urban Institute, 2002; Lynch & Sabol, 2001; Webster et al., 2001; Buck, 2000). Educational disadvantages are identified as limiting employment opportunities, which particularly impact on release populations (QLD DCS, 2003a). Graffam et al. (2004) assert that whilst there are no comparable figures on literacy levels for Australian prisoners or released prisoners, evidence suggests similar disadvantages to those identified within America and the United Kingdom. Within these limitations, state- and territory-specific Departments of Corrective Services and Departments of Justice within Australia shed some light on the education levels of Australian prison and release populations. South Australian research asserts that 5-10% of the male prisoner population are illiterate/illiterate, 60% have below functional levels in literacy and numeracy, and 5-11% are intellectually disabled (SA DCS, 1998). Further concerns have been articulated for juvenile offenders: some juvenile institutions have up to 95% of detainees with an education level of less than Year 10, and some not even reaching secondary school level (Henson, 1990: 300). More recently Baldry et al. (2003: 10) found that 75% of prisoners in New South Wales and Victoria had not completed secondary education, most not completing their school certificate. Further studies of West Australian and Queensland prisoners indicate low
levels of secondary school completion (WA DOJ, 2002a; OCSC, 2003; QLD DCS, 2003b) or trade qualifications (WA DOJ, 2002a; OCSC, 2003), with a proportion of prisoners reporting having only primary or no formal schooling (WA DOJ, 2002a). Levels of educational attainment are reported to be higher for women than men (OCSC, 2003). West Australian data identifies 78% of prisoners with an education level of less than Year 10 and only 3.7% having completed Year 12 or tertiary education. Less than 22% were credited with a professional or trade qualification. American research flags similar concerns, indicating that the employment experience and education levels of individuals, prior to their incarceration, are significantly lower than that of the general population (Lynch & Sabol, 2001: 18).

*Employment histories*

Successful release and transition to the community is powerfully correlated with connections to employment and the labour market. A mere 21% of parolees involved in research in England and Wales were employed upon release, in contrast to the general population, with an employment rate of 60% approximately (Sarno et al., 2000b: 1; Mair & May, 1997: viii). More recently, the Home Office estimated employment entry upon release to be approximately 10% (Webster et al., 2001: iii). To better understand employment concerns for released men and women, skills training before and during incarceration are important factors informing post-custodial employment prospects. Whilst Travis, Solomon and Waul (2001: 31) state that around 25% of prisoners in America reported having employment preceding their incarceration, half of whom were employed on a full-time basis, Australian and United Kingdom data identify significantly higher rates. Unemployment figures in the six months prior to incarceration in New South Wales were 50% and 66% for male and female prisoners respectively. A further 9% of female prisoners and 12% of male stated they had never been employed (Butler & Milner, 2003: 23, 4). Data from Western Australia and Victoria indicate that around 66% of males and a significant 80% of the female prison population are unemployed immediately prior to reception (WA DOJ, 2002b: 32; OCSC, 2003). Amongst Indigenous prisoners, immediately prior to reception, 5% of males and approximately 10% of female prisoners were also unemployed (WA DOJ, 2002b: 33). Lower rates of unemployment
amongst Indigenous prisoners compared to the general prison population are reflective of their smaller composition of the overall Australian population, and circumstances such as their geographical location and lack of opportunities (QLD DCS, 2003a). The 2002 Prison Census in Western Australia identified the highest-ranking occupations were unskilled manual 39%, semi-skilled manual 19%, and skilled manual 13%. Amongst the Indigenous prison population unskilled manual employment (56%) was followed by unknown (19%) and those not in the workforce (10%) (WA DOJ, 2002: 32). Further, Butler and Milner (2003: 24) found males to be typically engaged in labour and trade type positions, whilst female employment varied amongst several vocations, typically sales and service industries.

An Australian study (Baldry et al., 2003: 18) exploring housing needs for prisoners highlighted that upon release, 25% of participants in New South Wales were employed or enrolled in some form of training, while the remaining 75% were unemployed and seeking work. Of those currently seeking employment, 54% had returned to prison in comparison to 8% for employed or studying participants. Within Baldry et al.’s (2003) research, post-release education proved to be a powerful factor in reducing prison re-entry.

Prison as a site for education and vocational training?

Whilst conclusions of research specific to the effectiveness of the prison industry and vocational training in custodial facilities are conflicting, findings suggest there is improvement in skill sets and the potential for employment amongst participating prisoners when such opportunities are offered. Prisoners involved in prison industries were found to have ‘survival times’ (measured by the number of days before re-commitment) that were around 20% longer than members from other comparison groups (Saylor & Gaes, 1996). While Finn (1999, 1998, 1997) has also argued the positive value of prison-based programs (Webster et al., 2001: 15), Boe (1998) counter-argues that programs offered within prison have ‘very little benefit’ in reducing prison re-entry rates (Webster et al., 2001: 14). Contradictions also occur within internal research models. Qualitative data used by Webster et al. (2001: 18) indicated that 33% of prisoners within
the research recorded benefits from vocational programs; however, further statistical analysis suggested release employment is not enhanced as a result of in-prison skills training, and 'prison workshop experience is unhelpful in securing future work' (Webster et al., 2001: iii). In light of this research the variation in findings can also be attributed to the suitability of skills training, motivation levels of prisoners, prison time and resources dedicated to such programs amongst other factors. Surveying prison employment programs in America, whilst allowing for discrepant methodological issues, Buck (2000: 4) noted employment programs have helped 'solidify the link between employment and recidivism'.

Whilst released prisoners experience considerable difficulty in securing employment, research suggests that when they do they will become valued members of the workforce, and, more importantly, valued members of society (Crow, 2001). The growing recognition of the significance of education and training and their relationship to the reduced likelihood of recidivism has sparked new national developments within custodial facilities.\footnote{See for example VIC DOJ, 2003.} \footnote{For a more detailed discussion of rehabilitation programs within Australian prisons see research by Howells et al. (2004).}

In the context of the longevity of prison training benefits, Webster et al. (2001: v) assert that 'even the very best employment interventions in prison' will fail to thwart offending and instil long-term change where released prisoners return to circumstances of homelessness or substance abuse. Examining Queensland’s prison system, Walsh (2004: 19) argued that 'prison work rarely results in credible training'. Gill’s (1997) United Kingdom research furthers these ideas, suggesting that whilst Prison Industry and education programs attempt to enhance individuals' employability and skills training, they are not always practical and utilisable in the community. For example, difficulties are experienced where prisoners are returned to communities that do not support or have provisions for employment within areas of their vocational training. In addition, prison training and education is not uniformly accessed by prison populations. Further barriers have been identified for short sentence prisoners who are often excluded from
participation due to disparities between sentence and course lengths (Lewis et al., 2003; Webster et al., 2001: 68; Niven & Olagundoye, 2002: 3; Gill, 1997), and for younger prisoners and female prisoners. Prison transfers, different programs specific to each facility, and inadequate or inappropriate staff training to deliver programs (Gill, 1997) further thwart the opportunities for all prisoners to engage in some form of training or treatment.

Unfortunately, research on job training and placement for prisoners suggests few prisoners are receiving in-prison vocational training, and even fewer have access to transitional programs linking them to jobs in the community (Baldry et al., 2003; Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001). Research by Baldry et al. (2003: 6) indicates a significant reduction (50%) in hours dedicated to education within New South Wales prisons between 1991 and 2002. Whilst correctional budgets and rates of enrolment and completion for rehabilitation and training programs within New South Wales prisons are unavailable, the Department of Corrective Services has culled a significant number of programs delivered within prisons. Howells et al. (2004: 96) identified the reduction of the 1,000 programs in 2002 to a mere five in 2003.

**Imprisonment challenges social participation: issues of employability**

In addition to supply and demand shifts in the labour market, terms of imprisonment affect ties with employers and labour markets. Dion et al. (nd) suggest limited or sporadic employment histories correlate to detachments with the work force. As prisoner populations are recognised as being particularly susceptible to long periods of unemployment (Webster et al., 2001), this has significant consequences for employment prospects in the release setting. Lengthy sentences often translate to restricted work experience and weakening of skills and training, and Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2002: 8) suggest that ties to legitimate employment or prospective employers may be severed either as a result of an arrest or a prison sentence. Since many prisoners, especially women, are in custody a significant distance from their home towns or towns in which they plan to live after their release, ‘they are less likely to build up local contacts with employers or others who might help them get a job’ (Gill, 1997: 343). From the stance of
employers, individuals with a criminal history or record may be perceived as untrustworthy and problematic employees. Employment following incarceration can be further complicated due to the location and residence of releasees and the availability of appropriate positions (Lynch & Sabol, 2001: 18). Competition between released prisoners and the general population – in particular, welfare leavers and individuals applying for the same low-skill positions – provides additional obstacles to employment opportunities (Lynch & Sabol, 2001: 18).

**Employer reluctance and workplace restrictions**

Released men and women face an ‘explicit unwillingness of many employers’ to hire (Holzer, Raphael and Stoll, 2002), exacerbating barriers to employment. Research in America examining the implications of arrest and incarceration on future employment and earnings of individuals (see Kling, 1999; Grogger, 1995, both cited in Holzer, Raphael and Stoll, 2002) has found that both arrests and incarceration are associated with lower employment and earning capacity of around 10-30% (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001: 31). Whilst higher wages are associated with prisoners being less likely to return to prison, studies indicate a reduced prospect for employment and earning capacity for prisoners throughout their lifetimes (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001). Such results need to be understood in light of economic and labour market shifts; however, they do indicate significant consequences for men and women with criminal records. Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2002, 2003) highlight that employer willingness to appoint released prisoners is low, even in comparison to other disadvantaged groups (such as welfare receivers and the long-term unemployed). Again comparing released prisoners with other recognised disadvantaged groups, employers gave preference to welfare receivers, individuals with a high school level equivalent or poor employment histories, and individuals who had been out of the workforce in excess of twelve months.

In examining employment requirements and attitudes towards individuals with a criminal record and incarceration history, Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2003: 7) found 40% of employers said they would ‘probably not’ or ‘definitely not’ employ someone with a criminal record. A further 20% indicated they would not consider engaging anyone with a
criminal history. However, the nature of the crime (33%) and the workplace environment were significant factors amongst employers. Offences such as driving whilst disqualified (47%), drink driving (26%) and drug possession (24%) were identified as ‘making no difference’ to employability. At the same time, drug dealing, fraud/forgery, sexual offences and violent offences were identified as significantly affecting the reluctance of employers (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2003). Research by Liddle, Feloy and Solanki (2000) in the United Kingdom has identified similar reluctances of potential employers considering released prisoners for employment.

Liddle, Feloy and Solanki (2000: 1) indicate that employers are generally interested in knowing the details of the offences (74%), and a significant number were also concerned with the number of previous convictions (79%). Rubinstein (nd) asserts that as unemployment rates decline, willingness to employ released prisoners increases. In other words, when communities face low levels of unemployment, employers are more willing to consider prisoners for positions. In examining the composition of offences within the prison population in Australia, Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) data illustrates there was a significant increase in crime such as assault and sexual assault between 1988 and 1999, of 18% and 295% respectively (Carcach & Grant, 2000: 2, 8). The aggregate sentence length for such offences during this period would suggest there are currently a high proportion of released prisoners with violent criminal histories. In light of trends in Australian prison populations, both released men and women face significant problems with gaining employment upon release. The most serious offences recorded for women across most states and territories involve deception, drugs, and robbery and assault, whilst males include typically violent offences such as assault, robbery and sexual assault (AIC, 2006; ABS 4517.0, 2005). Such findings further implicate Indigenous populations with rates of assault at twice that of non-Indigenous prisoners (Carcach, Grant & Conroy, 1999). Considering Australian prison data in 2003 and 2005, in the coming years larger proportions of release populations will consist of individuals convicted of violent, drug and deception offences. In this regard, variation in employer partiality to the nature of offences could have significant implications for employment options for released prisoners.
Studies indicate that employers willing to consider released prisoners as prospective employees are typically associated with industry positions such as manufacturing and unskilled placements, as opposed to service positions, particularly those entailing customer contact and liaison (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2003). Employers perceive that released prisoners require particular supervision (posing increased company costs) and increase the chances of theft, physical endangerment and substance abuse in the work environment (Dion et al., nd: 27). As well as individual employer discretion, formal restrictions surrounding recruitment are imposed through individual corporations and state and federal legislation. In America, legislation restricts prisoners from entering professions such as law, real estate, medicine, nursing, physical therapy, education (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001; Dion et al., nd), pharmacy and some skilled trades (e.g. telecommunications, electrician etc.) (Taxman, Young & Byrne, 2002b), as well as jobs involving contact with children (Hahn, 1991, in Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2003: 8; Dion et al., nd) and the elderly (Dion et al., nd). Whilst there is currently no body of literature outlining similar legislative restrictions for Australian released prisoners, Graffam et al. (2004) indicate they are comparable to those experienced in America. Drug convictions and mandatory testing implemented within the workplace have also been identified as inhibiting employment prospects (Dion et al., nd), as well as organisational restrictions, particularly imposed by large corporations (e.g. pay television). Graffam et al. (2004) also suggest that difficulties with adjusting to routines of working may also impose potential barriers to gaining and maintaining employment.

**Literacy and employability: overall contributions to the release setting**

The education attainment level of the prison population is significantly less than that of the general population. As such, the prison presents as a key target for educational resources. However, the literature illustrates a dire lack of political/governmental commitment to this area (Howells et al., 2004; Baldry et al., 2003). Prisoners are significantly worse off with respect to employability upon release. Not only have their education and training deficits largely been ignored, but the associated stigma attached to incarceration, along with interruptions in work history and skills training, translate to
significant difficulties in securing employment for individuals upon release. Taxman et al. (2002b: 15) suggest barriers to employment are ‘collateral consequences that severely limit the ability of the offender to be a productive member of the community’.

Whilst prisons provide various forms of basic and advanced education and life skills programs, the evaluative literature surrounding the efficiency and effectiveness of such programs does not provide uniform conclusions. In-prison training, such as Corrective Services Industries (CSI), is suggested to be beneficial. However, concerns have been raised regarding the practicality and benefit of such experience in the broader community (see for example Boc, 1998; Gill, 1997). Research suggests that not only do prisoners have less education and more limited employment histories (see for example Lynch & Sabol, 2001), but their imprisonment is correlated with future barriers to employment, such as employer reluctance (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2002), lower earnings (Grogger 1995; Kling, 1999, both cited in Holzer et al., 2003), and the fact that largely only low-skill labour positions are available. Further, employer interest in criminal histories, if not immediately affecting employment decisions, could potentially introduce stigmatisation, discrimination and honesty and trust issues within the workplace.

Whilst we know of some of the impediments to employment in the release setting, and the value employment has on successful release in a number of positive ways, we do not know how men and women experience the processes of seeking employment, and the ways unemployment informs broader release issues and pressures. Noting employer reluctance to employ men and women with criminal histories and employer interest in the nature of criminal records, we do not know how released men and women enter into and negotiate the workplace, or avoid disclosing their offending and imprisonment histories with prospective employers. Taxman et al. (2002b) suggest perceptions of barriers to employment are just as powerful as those actually imposed. It can therefore be asked: what are the perceptions of released men and women surrounding barriers to employment? Does limited education and skills development/acquisition inform employment prospects for men and women, and, if so, in what way? How do released men and women seek and obtain employment? Employment is flagged as a positive
attribute to successful release, but in light of broader release concerns, how important is employment on an individual level?

**Health-related concerns**

Prisoner populations are recognised as being disproportionately burdened with physical and mental illness, as well as substance abuse and addiction. The prevalence of chronic and communicable diseases has been found to be significantly higher for prison populations than the general community, and statistics indicate not only the incidence, but more significantly the exacerbation, of mental illness during imprisonment (Maden, Swinton & Gunn, 1994; Herman et al., 1991). National and international research suggests prisons are 'reservoirs of physical illness and psychological problems, which constantly spill back into the community' (Conklin, Lincoln & Flanigan, 1998: 1249; Nelles et al., 1998; Correctional Health Services (CHS), 1997). National and international data, whilst limited, illustrates grave concerns about health issues for prisoners and releasees in turn. Those that enter correctional centres have been characterised as a particularly unhealthy population, exacerbated by high-risk behaviour (Butler & Milner, 2003; Public Health Division, 2002; McVey, 2001; Gaughwin, Douglas & Wodak 1990) and lack of access to resources (Rossman, 2002). In this regard, for many prisoners the prison assumes the role of health care provider. In this light, the prison has been identified as a key target area for health resources and a means through which to begin to diagnose and manage health-related issues (NCCHC, 2002 Gaughwin, Douglas & Wodak, 1990). Akin to employment and vocational programs, the best intentioned in prison treatment minimally impacts released prisoners when they return to the community with multiple release problems, and, in particular, the inadequacy of follow-up medical attention.

To date there is no Australia-wide research detailing the health status of the prisoner population, let alone for the release population. The 2001 New South Wales Inmate Health Survey (Butler & Milner, 2003), a replication of a 1996 report, examined the prevalence of physical and mental health problems amongst the imprisoned population. This report identified official physical health status and self-reported data, including risk
behaviours, utilisation of health care services and offending behaviour. The New South Wales survey has since been adopted in Victoria (2001/2) and Queensland. The Correction Health Services has recommended a national survey be conducted in 2006. The only available research pertaining specifically to the health status of near-release individuals was conducted in America in 2002 by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC). The National Commission on Correctional Health Care report raises concerns about the prevalence of communicable and chronic diseases, mental health problems and the need for in-prison screening and treatment, and the significant need for follow-through treatment for prisoners within the community, as well as broader community protection. This report powerfully frames some of the potential health concerns facing released men and women in Australia.

Collectively the most prevalent health concerns identified amongst prison populations are infectious diseases – typically HIV / AIDS, HCV, HBV, TB and STIs – secondary health issues such as asthma, diabetes and heart conditions, and other disabling illnesses are also noted. Butler and Milner (2003: 43) indicated a high prevalence of prisoners with multiple health concerns; 42% of women and 25% of men were reported as having more than four conditions. As issues of substance abuse and mental illness have been associated with offending behaviour and/or contact with the criminal justice system, inadequate treatment of these conditions can have significant implications for successful transition, recidivism and prison re-entry.

When examining health-related issues specific to prisoner release, three key issues surface. Firstly, there is a relative absence of post-prison research in the areas of health and mental health. Whilst the demographics of prison populations inform current understandings of health issues, there is a great deal that remains speculative. Secondly, research has illustrated a significantly higher incidence of contagious and communicable diseases, mental illness (NCCHC, 2002; Public Health Division, 2002; Sattar, 2001; Blauw, Roesch & Kerkhof, 2000 in Sattar, 2001) and substance use and abuse (Public Health Division, 2002). Thirdly, data indicates that health-related issues are often exacerbated and treatment programs interrupted by periods of incarceration and
subsequent release. The adequacy of in-prison treatment and educational programs has therefore also come under scrutiny. This section will review the available national and international data pertaining to the prevalence of the most concerning infectious diseases, mental illness and substance abuse for the prison population, and the released prisoner population where available.

**HIV/AIDS**

Nationally, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) in its first Trends and Issues Publication (1989) reported a cumulative total of 99 identified HIV-infected prisoners in the nation's correctional facilities; two years later (1990), the cumulative total had reached 206 (Norberry, 1991: 1). Whilst HIV figures for each Australian state and territory are not available, New South Wales and South Australian data provides a more intimate look at the prevalence of HIV within these two states. The Public Health Division (2002) indicated in 1996 that in New South Wales 0.3% of male prisoners and 1.7% of female prisoners had HIV. More recently, Butler and Milner (2003: 73) identified one HIV-positive male in a New South Wales prison. South Australian data (SA DCS, 1998) suggested HIV/AIDS represents approximately 0.3% (four prisoners) of communicable diseases.

International data suggests that the proportion of prisoners with HIV and AIDS is more than five times that of the general population (Rossman, 2002; NCCHC, 2002). In 1996 in America, 17% of the population with AIDS had been incarcerated (Travis, 2000). Between 12 and 35% of persons with communicable diseases had served time in prison, even though only 3% of the adult population had been imprisoned. In 2002 the HIV & Hepatitis Education Prison Project (HEPP) Report (Brown & Herbert, 2002: 1) proposed that between 12 and 18% of the HIV population pass through correctional centres each year. In 1997 the NCCHC (2002: x) estimated that between 34,800 and 46,000 prisoners were infected with HIV, 8,900 of whom had the AIDS virus. In 1996, between 98,500 and 145,000 HIV-infected persons and an estimated 38,500 prisoners with AIDS were released. In examining the nationwide prevalence of these diseases within America, 17%
of the AIDS population passed through a correctional centre in 1996 and HIV-positive prisoners represented 13 to 19% of the total HIV-positive population.

The prison has been identified as a concentrated site for the spread of HIV and AIDS, particularly through high-risk behaviours such as sharing of intravenous materials and the high incidence of assault, particularly sexual assault (Dwyer, 1990). The Australian Institute of Criminology reports that inmates are on average incarcerated for short periods, typically six to twelve months in New South Wales, to which Norberry and Chappell (1989) suggest this is sufficient time for prisoners to become infected before they are released. Further, they highlight significant deficits in educational programs specific to HIV and AIDS within the prison setting. HIV and AIDS become increasingly problematic in the release context as sporadic processes of testing, diagnosis and treatment within prison, coupled with the significant absence of pre-release health care and management transitioning to the community, translates to prison and release populations that are potentially unaware of their contamination, and medically ill-prepared to re-enter the community.

**HCV, HBC, STIs and TB**

There is currently very limited research exploring the transmission of infectious diseases within the custodial setting. Moreover, such material does not extend to consider the spread of 'prison-incubated' diseases to the community upon release (Rossman, 2002: 168). Even less is known about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Hepatitis B Virus (HBV), Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) and Tuberculosis (TB) within the prison population, the large majority of resources having been directed towards HIV/AIDS issues. Nationally, corrective departments indicate that HCV is perhaps of greatest concern and the most communicable disease within Australian prisons, particularly given the significant proportion of prisoners engaging in injecting drug use (WA DOJ, nd; SA DCS, 1997). South Australian data indicate that HCV accounts for 78% (some 300 prisoners) of communicable diseases within the state's prison population (SA DCS, 1998). More
recently, the prevalence of HCV\(^3\) amongst male prisoners in New South Wales is estimated to have increased between 1996 and 2001 from 34% to 40% respectively, whilst figures for female prisoners appear stable (Butler & Milner, 2003; CHS, 1997). Queensland’s health survey amongst female prisoners identified a similar rate to New South Wales, with 45% of women testing positive for HCV (Hockings et al., 2002: ii). American findings report similar concerns for both HVC and HVB (see for example Hammett, Harmon & Maruschak, 1999; Urban Institute, 2002; NCCHC, 2002).

In the New South Wales health survey findings, 83% of female and 78% of male prisoners in the survey had been tested for HIV, HBV, HVC or an STI whilst incarcerated. Of those identified with illnesses, 49% of women and 60% of men had received information or counselling before testing, yet only 73% of women and 85% of men had ever received the results of their tests (CHS, 2002: 58). The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (2002) has also highlighted a lack of comprehensive HIV-prevention strategies within the prison system in America. The current literature on infectious diseases within correctional facilities, and where available release populations, suggests there are significant levels of, and frequently over-representation of, AIDS, HIV, HBV, HVC, STIs and TB amongst prisoners. In light of the infrequent or inadequate testing and treatment within national and international correctional centres (see Grinstead, Zack & Faigleles, 2001; Dolan & Wodak, 1999; Hankins et al., 1994), it is fitting to presume such prevalence is significantly under-reported. In the release context we are witnessing not only a momentous increase in release numbers, but these individuals are over-burdened with contagious diseases. Not only are release populations at risk, but more generally they pose an increasing risk to familial and partner relationships, and place increased pressures on social, medical and welfare provisions.

\(^3\) The 1996 New South Wales prisoner health survey tested for both HCV antibodies (indicating past infection) and RNA (indicating current infection), whilst the 2001 health survey tested for HCV antibodies only.


**Mental illness**

Most prisoners have access to and receive medical attention whilst incarcerated. However, 'access to mental health services is more limited, and follow-up to community-based care is lacking' (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001: 27). Whilst literature specific to this area varies concerning the exact nature and frequency of incidence and its overrepresentation, mental illness within correctional centres is well documented (see for example NCCHC, 2002; Beck, 2000; SA DCS, 1998; Maden Swinton & Gunn, 1994; Herman et al., 1991). New South Wales (NSW DCS, 2002) profiles prisoners with an increasing incidence of more severe mental disturbances, personality and behavioural problems and a greater incidence of co-morbidity and substance abuse. American research estimates that the incidence of mental illness is twice as high in the prison population than in the general population, with some reports of up to four times as high (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001). Hammett, Roberts and Kennedy (2001: 391) argue it should come as no surprise that there appears to be such a high incidence of medical and psychological problems amongst prisoners considering the 'disproportionate poverty and minority racial and ethnic group composition and ... poor access to health care'. The lack of diversionary options and deinstitutionalisation has also been flagged as a potential explanation for the high prevalence of mentally ill prisoners within correctional centres (Butler & Milner, 2003: 94). A recent study by Fazel and Danesh (2002, in Butler & Milner, 2003) reviewing sixty-two prison-based mental health surveys suggested that major depression, psychotic illness and personality disorders were more prevalent amongst the prisoner population than the general community.

In America the occurrence of specific mental health concerns – the rate of schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders is at 2-4% (NCCHC, 2002: xi) – is very similar to the Australian findings of Butler and Milner's (2003: 97) of 3.3% and 4.6% for female and male prisoners respectively. In Australia major depression was identified at 22.5% and 40.1% for males and females respectively (Butler & Milner, 2003: 97), slightly higher than American prison population estimates of 13-19% (NCCHC, 2002: xi). Anxiety disorders are estimated to affect approximately 22-30% of American prisoners (NCCHC, 2002: xi), and 11-15% of New South Wales prisoners (Butler & Milner, 2003: 97).
Australian data (SA DCS, 1998) suggests that 81% of female prisoners have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), 75% have been physically or sexually abused, 38% have drug-related health problems, 39% have previously attempted suicide, 23% are on psychiatric medication, and 36% have previously been admitted to a psychiatric or mental unit. Australian Bureau of Statistics data (4326.0, 1998) suggests that mental illness is highest amongst men and women who are unemployed and not in the labour force. Whilst causal relationships are not clearly definable, Australian Bureau of Statistics findings suggests both scenarios (mental illness and unemployment) may inform each other, therefore the increased prevalence of mental illness potentially informs broader release issues such as unemployment. As discussed later in the chapter, low levels of family contact during periods of incarceration have been correlated with significant increased rates of depression. In this regard, we see the fluid and compounding nature of release issues – in this instance, familial relationships and mental health and wellbeing.

The diagnosis and treatment of mental illness within the prison is potentially hampered by the nature of service delivery, insufficient numbers of support staff, sparse resources and individual prisoner resistance to acknowledge, treat and work through mental health issues. Concerns about the confidentiality of records, health information and privacy during health and mental health consultations (67% for women, 54% for men) were recorded in the 2001 prisoner health survey and are possible explanations of the barriers to seeking treatment services within the prison. In New South Wales prisons mental illness is the most frequent cause of hospitalisation (27% of women, 29% of men), the reason for visits to prison doctors for 11% of women and 8% of men, and to clinics, 7% of women, 8% of men (Butler & Milner, 2003: 49-55). Importantly, Butler and Milner (2003:138) note increases for both men and women receiving treatment for psychiatric illness in comparison to the 1996 health survey. In New South Wales counselling services were accessed by approximately 36% of male and 58% of female prisoners, and between 33% (female) and 17% (male) of Indigenous prisoners4 (Butler & Milner, 2003: 55).

4 In New South Wales a partnership between Correctional Health clinics and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) has provided Indigenous prisoners with culturally sensitive health
Prescription, psychiatric and other such medication is also commonly used by prisoners (Butler & Milner, 2003: 50; Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001: 29). Whilst New South Wales prisons established a free mental health phone service for prisoners, their families and correctional staff in 1999, only 3-4% had utilised this service (Butler & Milner, 2003).

Despite the research pertaining to mental illness within custodial centres, there are significantly few reports documenting the prevalence of mental illness for prisoners soon to be released (Gaes & Kendig, 2002). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), more than 14% of inmates released on parole during 1999 had a mental illness (Hughes et al., 2001). In the absence of release-specific data, prison statistics are again the best indicator as to the potential extent of mental illness amongst releasees. Arguably, persons affected with mental illness are amongst ‘the most vulnerable and disadvantaged’ within the community, and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) further suggests that stigmatisation and discrimination are subsequent to mental illness (HREOC, 1993 in ABS, 4326.0 1998). Ensuring successful periods of release for prisoners identified as mentally ill depends in part on ‘the availability [and access to] treatment in the community‘ (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001: 29).

Opportunities for inclusion and success within and out of prison educative and treatment programs are significantly hampered for those prisoners who ‘display maladaptive behaviours’ (Hayes, 1990: 265). In turn, such prisoners are met with disproportionately more barriers as they make the transition from prison to the community. Hayes (1990) identifies that there are no service provisions to ensure that the mental illness\(^5\) of a prisoner will be recognised within the community by those unfamiliar with mental health issues. In particular he raises concerns for interactions with police, parole officers, and other justice authorities. Further compounding these interactions is the matter of the released prisoner who may be unaware of their own condition (Hayes, 1990).

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\(^5\) Hayes (1990) includes psychiatric disorder, intellectual disorder and dual diagnosis within the definition of mental illness.
The prevalence of drug use and abuse within the justice system

Substance abuse and addiction disproportionately affect prison populations and pose significant challenges to successful release. Research has highlighted a strong relationship between substance use and criminal behaviour, and correlated high incarceration rates amongst illicit drug users (see Butler & Milner, 2003; GAO, 2001; Maxwell, 1998). Australian data from New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia have identified significant rates of illicit drug use and lengthy drug addiction amongst prisoner populations. In the 2001 New South Wales prisoner health survey (Butler & Milner, 2003: 119), 84% of men and 80% of women reported lifetime use of illicit drugs. These figures are comparable to both Western Australia, with 73% of women (Goulding, 2004), and Queensland, with 79.5% of prisoners identifying lifetime illicit drug use (Hockings et al., 2002: ii). Research on Indigenous prisoners has raised additional concerns specific to this population regarding drug and alcohol abuse. Professor Levy from the Correctional Health Services (1999) has highlighted that some findings have identified harmful and dangerous drinking levels of Indigenous prisoners—at almost double those of non-Indigenous prisoners.

Regular illicit drug use in the twelve months preceding prison was recorded for 62.7% of prisoners in Queensland (Hockings et al., 2002: 33), and 74% and 67% for men and women respectively in New South Wales (Butler & Milner, 2003: 119). Collectively, Australian research correlates significant relationships between drug use, addiction and offending, findings which mirror the trends also experienced within America and the United Kingdom (BJS, 2002a; Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001; GAO, 2001; Hamlyn & Lewis, 2000). New South Wales data found that 60% of male and female prisoners were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of offending for current imprisonment, and 14% of men and 7% of women were further identified to be under the influence of both drugs and alcohol (Butler & Milner, 2003:123; NSW DCS, 2002, 2003). Goulding’s (2004) Western Australian qualitative research revealed that female prisoners, regardless of their addiction (drugs, alcohol or gambling), directly related their criminal activity to their addiction. Such relationships are further supported within Queensland data, wherein
approximately half of the male prisoner population reported illicit drug use as a major factor in their offending (QLD DCS, 2003b).

The prevalence of illicit drug use amongst the prison population (80% of men and 84% of women), and regular drug use in the twelve months prior to incarceration (67% of men and 74% of women), identified cannabis, amphetamines and heroin as the most commonly used drugs amongst New South Wales prisoners (Butler & Milner, 2003: 119). Queensland Department of Corrective Services (2003b) suggests that female prisoners represented a higher proportion of those identifying as using illicit drugs. Specific to drug use behaviour, between 53% (men) and 73% (women) noted injecting drugs in the past (Butler & Milner, 2003: 120). Illicit drug use within the prison suggests that between 67% (men) and 72% (women) of prisoners reported they had re-used a needle and syringe after another prisoner, a significant number of which had been used by at least five other people beforehand (36% of men and 31% of women) (Butler & Milner, 2003:122). Comparing drug use behaviour prior to and during incarceration, Butler and Milner (2003: 121) suggest significantly higher risk behaviours surrounding drug use and injection within the prison setting. Such findings raise significant concerns for the health of both prison and release populations.

More problematically, illicit drug use is often continued within the prison setting (Hockings et al., 2002; Butler & Milner, 2003). The New South Wales Inmate Health Survey (Butler & Milner, 2003: 120) examined drug use whilst incarcerated, highlighting that 49% of women and 48% of men had used illicit drugs during their incarceration. Women were more likely to inject drugs whilst in prison. The prevalence and availability of drugs within correctional centres was reported as 'quite easy' or 'very easy' by nearly 80% of prisoners (Butler & Milner, 2003: 122). Relatively easy access to illicit drugs whilst in prison poses concerns for release populations and the broader community in turn. Continued drug use whilst incarcerated detracts from drug and alcohol program efforts to engage prisoners in periods of sobriety and encourage recovery.
While most prisoners have a detailed history of drug or alcohol abuse, only a minority report having received treatment whilst in prison, even less upon release (Nelson & Trone, 2000). More critically, there are few follow-through programs, plans or service delivery models in the context of both drug use and release support more generally (Rossman, 2002; Lawrence et al., 2002; Richie, 2001). The limited amount of resources and prisoner initiative to engage with psychological and welfare services suggests that, whilst incarcerated, the issues underlying drug use are far from addressed. In addition, problematically we see the underlying issues relating to drug use exacerbated by periods of incarceration. Travis, Solomon & Waul (2001: 25) cite research suggesting significant rates of relapse after prison following deficiency in treatment, further noting untreated heroin users resume problematic drug use within three months of release. Prisoner release also raises concerns regarding high mortality rates for newly released prisoners, most commonly drug-related death: including suicide, self-harm, drug overdose and associated complications due to drug use (Stewart et al., 2004; Sattar, 2001; Singleton et al., 2003; Biles, Harding & Walker, 1999). Further concerns are raised for Indigenous released prisoners, who were found to have lower general survival rates after release than non-Indigenous prisoners (Stewart et al., 2004). Singleton et al. (2003: i) found that in the first week of release, prisoners were forty times more likely to die than the general population, 90% of which were attributed to drug-related causes. A 1997 study identified risk factors for drug-related deaths such as living off crime before prison, having a small primary support group, having a history of illicit drug use, and drug use in the months preceding incarceration (Singleton et al., 2003). Looking at what we know of prisoner and release demographics, significant proportions have histories of poly-drug use, particularly before prison, and as discussed later within the chapter many have small support networks. It is therefore safe to assume that, amongst drug users, significant proportions of release populations are at increased risk of post-release mortality.

Current literature indicates prison and release populations are significantly under-treated for substance abuse issues. Rossman (2002: 170) estimates that 24% of the prison population participate in drug treatment programs during their sentence, with men significantly more likely to utilise drug and alcohol counsellors in prison rather than
services in the community (Butler & Milner, 2003: 56). In the month prior to Butler and Milner's (2003: 55, 57) study, 29% (non-Indigenous) and 7% (Indigenous) of men, and 20% (non-Indigenous) and 6% (Indigenous) of women consulted with drug and alcohol workers. Of prisoners seeking treatment for drug problems, 25% of men and 29% of women had done so since their incarceration (Butler & Milner, 2003: 125). Gender and race differences within treatment programs can be attributed to the higher prevalence of substance abuse amongst female prisoners than male, and amongst non-Indigenous than Indigenous prisoners. Methadone maintenance programs and other pharmacotherapies are also available in most Australian prisons, New South Wales being one of the first jurisdictions in the world to offer such services (Butler & Milner, 2003: 125). Whilst such numbers are still low, they do present some promise of addressing, at least in part, problematic drug use amongst prisoners before their release. This is particularly important, as Field (1998 in Rossman, 2002) suggests that most prisoners, with the exception of detoxification programs, do not receive treatment in the community.

The successful release of prisoners with substance abuse problems is challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, even though significant portions of the prison population identify suffering from problematic drug and alcohol (ab)use, treatment programs do not adequately meet such demands. American data suggested in 1997 that a mere 10% of prisoners were recipients of some formal substance abuse treatment (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001: 27). Travis, Solomon and Waul (2001: 27) identify that only 18% of soon-to-be-released prisoners engaged in drug and alcohol treatment whilst incarcerated. In-prison programs have had significant success with regards to case management and abuse issues, particularly when paralleled with follow-through assistance upon release (Fox et al., 2005; Walsh, 2004; GAO, 2001; Taxman, 1998; Flanigan et al., 1996). However, inadequate resources and prisoner reluctance or inability to cope with treatment programs translate to a drug and alcohol dependent population that is largely under-managed and ignored in the release context.

The health-related issues facing prison and release populations are of significant consequence to the individual prisoner, their families, and the broader community. Gaes
and Kendig (2002) have identified five key barriers to the successful provision of health care services within the release environment: firstly, discharge and pre-release planning; secondly, individual adherence to treatment and programs; thirdly, housing associated issues, in particular the effects of instability and homelessness; fourthly, ready access to medical assistance and benefit schemes; and lastly, those individuals who pose dual and triple diagnosis. Gaes and Kendig (2002: 104) reported that most jurisdictions in America 'marginalised address the important issue of forging linkages between in-prison and community based health service providers'. The criticality of developing and expanding current avenues for medical and broader health care becomes even more highlighted in the context of prisoners with serious health needs, who have been imprisoned significant distances from their home communities, and without medical insurance and the like. In the absence of structured and supportive health care planning for soon-to-be-released prisoners, adherence to treatment arrangements, attending appointments or maintaining medication plans are often difficult, particularly in conjunction with the broader challenges of prison release. Issues of housing instability problematise continuity of community health care with respect to both infrequent access to community resources or service providers and the transient nature of homelessness. The prison is often the first adequate contact with health services for many incarcerated individuals. Basic medical attention, together with case planning and management of specialist needs, provisions of medication and general support and advice provide significant benefits and improvements to prisoner health. However, follow-through care during release periods is significantly under-resourced and poorly developed. In particular, the absence of solid collaborations between corrections and community service providers results in often significant deteriorations in prisoner health. Hammett, Roberts and Kennedy (2001) suggest that a sad reality for some prisoners is that deliberate return to prison ensures better health care and management.

The disproportionate burden of health and mental health concerns has been identified amongst prisoner and release populations. However, we do not know the ways in which prisoners understand their illnesses. In light of the correlations between offending and drug use, exploring the ways men and women engage with and conceive of their drug use
behaviours appears significant to broadening understandings of prisoner release. Further, it can be asked, what are the impediments to sobriety and addiction recovery in the release setting? In what ways do substance abuse and other health concerns inform other areas of release, such as gaining and maintaining employment, familial relationships or housing? In what way is the release setting conducive to maintained/ing drug use? Why are significant proportions of release (and prison) populations engaging in illicit drug use? We do not know how drug use and addiction is experienced and understood by release populations. Examining these areas may inform the nature of substance use and/or recovery in the release and broader contexts. The analysis that follows in the later part of this thesis seeks to inform these critical issues.

**Families and children: the permeation of the prison to the home setting**

All but a small minority of prisoners return to the community after periods of imprisonment. Most prisoners have families and many have children, particularly dependent children. It is estimated in New South Wales that approximately 10,000 children under legal age are affected by the incarceration of a parent (Kell, 2000: 9). Whilst research has credited several important factors associated with successful transition and reduced reconviction, the influence of family and peer support networks has consistently been identified as most important (Niven & Stewart, 2005; Crow, 2001). Families present a key source of support for prisoners and releasees through housing, financial and practical provisions and emotional support (Boswell, 2002; Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2002; O’Keefe, 2000; Stanley & Byrne, 2000). Familial networks, particularly during incarceration, have been identified as significantly enhancing prisoner ‘rehabilitation and resocialisation’, significantly decreasing prison re-entry rates, along with improving mental health during and after imprisonment (see Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2002; O’Keefe, 2000: 2; Healy, 2000; Stanley & Byrne, 2000; Standing Committee on Social Issues, 1997; Boudouris, 1996; Aungles, 1994). Whilst research has acknowledged the significance of family relationships and the maintenance of bonds for incarcerated prisoners, little has detailed the varied and multiple roles such structures play in the release environment. The vast majority of scholarship has focused on the effects of incarceration, separation, stigmatisation and reunification on familial
relationships, particularly children. As national data suggests the increased likelihood of offending upon release for men and women is marked by broken or damaged familial relationships, it is important to consider the ways in which family dynamics and relationships are affected by periods of incarceration to better understand the systems of support available to men and women when they are released.

As there is relatively little engagement with the specific ways in which familial relationships support and provide a framework to ease the transition from prison to the community for men and women, we can infer some of the potential advantages such support systems engage as we explore what happens to familial relationships during periods of imprisonment. The potential barriers and obstacles men and women face – as parents, children, siblings and partners – when they re-enter the ‘free’ world can be significantly informed by what we currently know about the deteriorating nature of relationships during periods of incarceration, particularly in the long term. Increased sentence lengths have been correlated with frequent and consistent decreases in familial contact during imprisonment, particularly with children (Lynch & Sabol, 2001: 17). In terms of these changes to familial contact it is, however, difficult to isolate the causal effects between individual prisoner and family choice to reduce contact, or the prison policies and practices which make contact difficult, unpleasant or impossible⁶ (Lynch & Sabol, 2001: 17). Butler and Milner (2003: 29) argue that the rehabilitative value of relationships is important in terms of reintegration into the community upon release from prison. However, they assert that the ‘environmental, physical and emotional strains’ on both prisoners and their families deriving from periods of incarceration ‘are detrimental to maintaining stable relationships’.

To date there has been a dearth of research specifically focused on the significance of family relations to incarcerated individuals, and even less exists in relation to prisoners in the release setting (Stanley & Byrne, 2000). Whilst the related literature has introduced some of the concerns for families and children of prisoners, it has failed to extend to

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⁶ For discussions surrounding the problematic nature of contact between imprisoned men and women and their families or partners see for example: Austin, Hardyman & Irwin, 2002; Brookes, 2000; Kingi, 2000; Tudball, 2000; Farrell, 1998.
consider the implications of changing family dynamics and relationships on the prisoner. 
m moreover, the released prisoner. Tudball (2000) identifies three Australian studies centred 
on the needs of children and families of prisoners, two conducted within New South 
Wales and one in Queensland. A study by Children of Prisoners Support Group (COPSG) 
(2000) examined the nature of prisoner-family relationships, prior to and post-prison, and 
shed light on key family issues, specifically the nature of parent-child relationships prior 
to incarceration. American-based research has also examined the nature of such 
relationships and identified the emotional and practical implications for families (Travis, 

The issues surrounding the families and children of incarcerated persons can be identified 
in three key areas. Firstly, in recognition of the significant increases in prisoner 
populations, in particular the female prisoner population, there has been a significant 
increase in the numbers of families and children also affected by incarceration. Secondly, 
the research has identified the integral role families play in the lives and ‘success’ of 
individuals during periods of both incarceration and release. However, at the same time 
research identifies multiple ways in which the prison and periods of imprisonment 
disadvantage and deteriorate familial connections. Thirdly, the imprisonment of parents, 
particularly mothers, has raised a number of concerns for the social, developmental and 
psychological wellbeing of children and the family unit as a whole. The incarceration of 
men — whilst they are also recognised as contributing fathers to many families — raises 
similar issues, but the literature suggests the incarceration of the mother has more 
detrimental effects on the children and the family unit (Richie, 2001; Tudball, 2000; 
Stanley & Byrne. 2000; Caddle & Crisp. 1997). The incarceration of women, as mothers, 
not only changes family dynamics, but further challenges women’s parental fitness, 
custodial rights, and their roles and identities as mothers.

The incarceration of a parent has a significant impact on children. Particularly 
highlighted are various behavioural, emotional, health, developmental problems, as well 
as separation anxiety, bonding and attachment, and broader issues of stigmatisation (see
for example Horn, 2002; Thigpen, Hunter & Watson, 2002; Boswell, 2002; Kell, 2000; Tudball, 2000).

The growth of the prison population in the past two decades, in particular the growth in female imprisonment, has had significant consequences for an increasing number of families and children (Eddy & Reid, 2002). The structure of the family unit is likely to alter as parental roles merge and some families become single parent entities, wherein the separation and removal of children is also commonplace, particularly in the absence of extended families. These broader familial experiences impact on men and women when they are imprisoned and inform the nature of their prison experience. It is therefore reasonable to assume these same concerns do not rescind at the time of release, but rather are potentially heightened as relationships again undergo change. In the release context, the additional challenges of re-establishing connections and bonds with partners and children, and regaining or resuming individual roles within the family unit, can be understood to further problematise release experiences.

*Mum and dad are gone: the effects of parental incarceration*

Incarceration removes much of a mother’s ability to directly parent her children. More significantly, the prison engages a particularly negative context when characterising women’s ‘fitness’ as mothers (see for example Devlin, 2002; Kilroy & Warner, 2002). The denial of the role of mother is credited as one of the most traumatic factors surrounding incarceration (see for example Olsson, 2005; Pereira, 2002; Stanley & Byrne, 2000; Jacobs, 2000; Boudin, 1998). Kilroy and Warner (2002: 45) argue that the ‘absence of the maternal role … is dehumanising for women, removing from them a vital aspect of their identity’. Amongst imprisoned parents, ‘the separation from children is generally a much greater hardship for women than men’ (O’Brien, 2001: 129). In particular, they experience guilt about their children and the pain of missing them (Olsson, 2005: 113), and no longer know their own place within the family (Olsson, 2005: 248).

For more detailed discussions of incarceration and the implications for families during and after prison see for example a Background Paper by the Urban Institute in America, 2002.
Whilst there are inherent limitations to the full-time parenting role females are able to provide whilst incarcerated, Australian research highlights mothers’ narrations of their desire and need to provide support to their families (see Kingi, 2000; Gursansky et al., 1998; Caddle & Crisp, 1997; Sheridan, 1996). This articulates the particular importance of the ‘interpersonal, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of their children’ (LeFlore & Holston, 1989). Research has also highlighted concerns about re-establishing relationships and regaining custody at the expiration of their sentence, their children’s health, behavioural and emotional state, schooling difficulties, and the physical and emotional distance between mother and child (Kingi, 2000: 4). Research has indicated considerable anguish for imprisoned mothers as a result of the separation from children including feelings of guilt (Olsson, 2005; Kell, 2000); and anger, anxiety, depression, shame and decreased self-esteem and worth (Devlin, 2002: Stanley & Byrne, 2000). Devlin (2002: 55) cites an education coordinator within the prison who portrays the difficulty and ‘impossibility’ women face during incarceration ‘to be able to take advantage of any form of positive prison regime – to concentrate on work, education or training, or even on “getting their head around their sentences” – when they are being torn apart by the agony of speculation about their children’s wellbeing’. She adds further: ‘for imprisoned women this sense of emotional failure is exacerbated by the inability to offer their children even the most basic of practical day-to-day care’ (Devlin, 2002: 52).

In the United Kingdom sentenced women may qualify for release on temporary licence which potentially enables them, particularly as primary caregivers to their children, to return home to ensure family matters, childcare and the like are appropriately managed in their absence (Devlin, 2002). Research highlights the problematic uncertainty that imprisoned mothers face about not knowing if their children are safe, well looked after or happy, so such provisions go a long way to easing the pain of separation for women and their children. Such reassurance removes some of the potential concerns mothers have regarding the mistreatment, abuse or neglect of their children. Moreover, it prospectively limits the issues women face with regards to their children and regaining custody at the time of their release.
Whilst Australian (ABS 4512.0, 2006), American (Urban Institute, 2002), United Kingdom (Hollis & Cross, 2003) and New Zealand (Rich, 2000) data indicate that incarcerated men comprise approximately 90 to 95% of the prison population, research has not addressed in any detail issues specific to incarcerated fathers (Kell, 2000: Howard, 2000). According to some estimates in America, the imprisonment of fathers will affect nearly ten million children before they are eighteen years of age (Horn, 2002: 2). Stanley and Byrne (2000: 2) have begun to look at the impact of the father’s imprisonment on a child and noted a ‘range of social, behavioural and psychological problems’. The imprisonment of a father is suggested to be a ‘powerful predictor of antisocial behaviour’ and criminality, with estimates of children with imprisoned fathers being five to six times more likely to be incarcerated themselves (Horn, 2002: 2).

In the release context, it has been argued that when parents, particularly women, leave prison they encounter problems which they are ‘poorly equipped to deal with’ (Kingi, 2000: 6). A significant proportion return to the same if not worse circumstances than prior to their imprisonment, including: ‘poverty; welfare dependence; rented accommodation; dealing with addictions; the responsibilities of single parenthood; and, worries of children in State care’ (Kingi, 2000: 6). Whilst literature specific to men is significantly lacking, data suggests that released women, as mothers, are faced with more difficult problems than men.

Disruptions, challenges and changes to family dynamics

Most imprisoned parents will return to the community, ‘and a significant number will return to parenting roles (in some capacity) with their children’ (Eddy & Reid, 2002: 34). A number of changes affect the family unit as a result of the incarceration of a parent, particularly changes to the childcare and supervision of children. This includes not only the guardians of children but extends to the changes in parental roles, as some two-parent families merge into single-parent entities. New attachments and bonds established between children and their new caregivers create difficulties for a parent at their release as they attempt to re-establish relationships and parental roles (Parke & Clarke-Stewart,
2000: Kell, 2000). National and international literature identifies significant differences between the incarceration of mother and fathers. When a father is imprisoned, the child’s mother assumes or remains the primary or sole caregiver (Howard, 2000; Stanley & Byrne, 2000; Eddy & Reid, 2000) in 90% of cases (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2002: 2; Austin, Hardyman & Irwin, 2002: 66). In contrast, the incarceration of mothers places children with numerous caregivers (Howard, 2000). Most commonly, it is estimated, grandparents resume temporary and official custody (50%), followed by extended family (33%), fathers (10%-33%), and friends or foster homes (20%) (see for example Gaes & Kendig, 2002: Austin, Hardyman & Irwin, 2002: Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001: Stanley & Byrne, 2000). Removed children present multiple implications for the released parent, particularly re-establishing connections with children. Whilst Austin, Hardyman and Irwin (2002: 73) assert that many ‘incarcerated parents are neither well-suited nor equipped to raise and care for their children’, pressures of parenting (in concert with other transitional issues) and potentially regaining official custody of officially removed children powerfully underscore the experiences of many released men and women.

The time immediately preceding and leading up to release is a particularly stressful time for both the prisoners and their families. Benjamin (nd: 167) argues that release and reuniting with family and the community at large are ‘the last stages of the trauma experienced by separated families’. Each person having developed expectations for the release setting, in particular, male inmates report returning to their partners with the expectation that nothing will have changed between them. Literature on partners of prisoners indicates that the most significant change is that the partner left behind becomes more independent and self-sufficient. It is argued that this accentuates the ‘stress and tension’ of release transitions (Urban Institute, 2002: xxii).

For discussions of the effects of parental incarceration, offending or substance abuse on children see for example Boswell (2002); Horn (2002); Parke & Clarke-Stewart (2002); Kell (2000); Tudball (2000); Stanley & Byrne (2000), and Shaw (1992). Whilst consideration of the specific impacts of parental incarceration on children is too detailed for discussion herein, such awareness – of problematic behavioural, social and
psychological developments and deviance – informs the compounded ways in which men and women, as parents, face challenges when they are released from prison. In addition to changes to family dynamics, the behavioural and developmental impediments caused, compounded or occurring during periods of incarceration present additional points of focus for released parents.

Sustaining contact: the criticality of familial connection

Research has credited the significant role played by the maintenance of familial bonds for prisoners during periods of imprisonment and release. In particular, regular and maintained contact with families and children has been correlated with “improved mental health, release transition and reduced recidivism” (see Kemp, 1980). However, research suggests a large proportion of prisoners are not able to sustain regular meaningful contact with their families and children. Fewer than half of imprisoned parents report weekly contact with their children (see for example Thigpen et al., 2002). Butler and Milner (2003: 98), in their study with New South Wales prisoners, reported that in the four weeks prior to their research 43% of women and 49% of men had not received a visit from friends or family members: however, between 85 and 90% received at least a phone call or a letter. Their research further reported that minimal contact with friends and family was linked to a rate of either moderate or severe depression more than twice as high as other prisoners. Such experiences not only inform the nature of imprisonment but more importantly frame release experiences through either the sustenance of feelings of dejection and isolation, or real or perceived beliefs about familial detachment. These experiences speak to the notion of the abject and rejected prisoner, whereby periods of incarceration and/or offending denounce men and women from familial and broader social networks. Ideas of abjection within familial and broader contexts are considered later within this thesis.

Almost 80% of mothers and two-thirds of fathers documented monthly contact, roughly a quarter of which were personal visits (Thigpen et al., 2002; Eddy & Reid, 2002). Disturbingly, 60% of parents in America ‘reported being held more than 100 miles from last place of residence’ (Thigpen et al., 2002: 1). Problems associated with maintaining
contact include the distance between correctional centres and places of family residence, broken relations between prisoners and their families and/or partners, financial constraints, and institutional barriers such as lockdowns, administration discrepancies and the like (Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2002). Further, Austin, Hardyman and Irwin (2002: 73) argue that contemporary penal frameworks are ‘designed to discourage rather than encourage parent/child relationships’. Complementing existing research, they highlight the pragmatic impediments to sustained contact with incarcerated parents. Powerfully they reason that ‘it is not surprising ... that many family relationships are either nonexistent or largely dysfunctional by the time of release’ (Austin, Hardyman & Irwin, 2002: 73).

Whilst there is a growing body of research directed towards the families, particularly the children, of imprisoned individuals, the literature extends little beyond raising concerns. Moreover, the literature minimally extends to consider the specific ways in which family networks inform periods of imprisonment or release for prisoners. The literature has flagged several key issues. Firstly, following a consistently growing prisoner population there is also an increasing number of families and children in the community also affected. Secondly, with a significant portion of prisoners identified as parents, disruptions penetrate the intimate family unit, particularly in the context of prisoners with dependent children. The incarceration of mothers, as dominant primary care-givers, is noted as particularly problematic in this regard. Thirdly, children with imprisoned parents have been recognised as experiencing emotional, psychological, or behavioural difficulties, as well as increased criminal and deviant tendencies. Fourthly, the family has been highlighted as a key support structure to individuals during periods of imprisonment. More importantly, the family unit has been credited as vital tool in the successful transition of men and women from the prison to the community. The emotional and practical support offered through family ties has been consistently shown to be the most significant need of released populations.

Limited current scholarship in the area of imprisonment or prisoner release specifically engages with the ways family relationships and units contribute to the experiences of
prisoners (with the exception of works such as Aungles, 1994). Imprisonment causes significant disruptions to family structures and is particularly negatively felt by the prisoner. Concerns for the safety, security and wellbeing of children and the family unit as a whole have been increasingly flagged as a concern for imprisoned mothers, yet we do not know how women engage with and negotiate their changing roles as mothers during the incarceration and release process. We do not know the specific ways in which familial networks encourage crime-free lives, or are in fact conducive to offending and drug use behaviour. Further, we know little about the ways in which familial relationships are impacted by drug use and offending prior to incarceration. Current material on prisoner release minimally understands the ways in which limited contact with, broken or damaged familial relationships are experienced or understood by released men and women, nor the ways in which such understandings inform connections and bonds in the release setting. For those women with officially removed children, how do they negotiate their roles as mothers, and how do they understand and experience the processes of attempting to regain custody? How does the removal of children or broader familial breakdown inform men and women’s reoffending behaviour, drug use, mental health and the like? How do parenting roles, particularly of dependent children, inform other areas of release? For example, in the context of employment, the desire to remain at home and attend to the family unit may potentially inform the employment trends and choices of released men and women. This thesis attempts to colour some of these grey areas and inform the ways released Australian men and women understand and experience the changing relationships with their families as a result of their incarceration.

A place to lay my head at night: release housing and accommodation

Establishing a home base is a vital part of social connectedness and a fundamental aspect of belonging (ABS 1370.0, 2002b). ‘The alienation, isolation and poverty of homelessness severely restrict activities that are part of social roles and maintaining ties that form the fabric of society’ (Anglicare, 2003: 5). Perhaps the most basic need of released prisoners is affordable and suitable housing (McGrath, 2000; Hammett, Harmon & Maruschak, 1999). Secure accommodation plays a pivotal role in release success and general wellbeing (Ross & Ryan, 2003; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2001: 35). In the
release setting, many prisoners find themselves homeless. Ford (1991) refers to petty offenders in the United Kingdom, suggesting homelessness is the most pressing of problems suffered in the release setting (in Baldry et al., 2003: 5). Social detachment, isolation and exclusion are experiences fundamental to homelessness (Baldry et al., 2003: ABS 1370.0. 2002b). Carnaby (1998, in Baldry et al., 2003: 4) furthers that ‘social isolation is a core experience’ for homeless released individuals or those in unstable or unsuitable accommodation. Whilst the ABS (1370.0, 2002b) purports that homeless people ‘do not have access to the economic and social support that a home normally affords’, Baldry et al. (2003: ii) suggest there is a ‘progressive stripping away of things that promote social attachment such as stable housing’ as a result of compounded periods of incarceration. There is limited research pertaining to the housing options and implications of various forms of accommodation for released prisoners. The existing research is, however, indicative of the vital role stable accommodation plays in successful transition from prison to the community. Stable housing has significant links to reducing recidivism (Lewis et al., 2003; Standing Committee on Law and Justice. 2000; NACRO, 1995), strengthening employment opportunities (through having a permanent address) (Niven & Olagundoye, 2002), facilitating familial relationships and stability (Baldry et al., 2003), improved health and mental health (Baldry et al., 2003; Lewis et al., 2003; Gaes & Kendig, 2002), as well as broader aspects of social inclusion (NACRO, 1995). Researching female prisoners in Victoria, Carnaby (1998 in Baldry et al., 2003) reported that 80% of women claimed accommodation was a major factor in staying out of prison, further detailing issues of child custody and the like that are relatively impaired without suitable accommodation. More recently, Walsh’s (2004) work in Queensland highlighted a similar picture to Victoria.

According to Anglicare (2003: 10), homelessness is not simply narrowed to the absence of a roof over one’s head, but rather ‘represents a lack of access to secure, safe and affordable housing’. The definition invites us to consider the potential damage or threat to health and safety of individuals and limited ‘access to adequate personal amenities and the economic and social support which would normally be provided by adequate housing’. Baldry et al. (2003: 11) further identify prisoners as a particularly mobile population, noting mobility as ‘indicative of homelessness’. 
Housing opportunities and areas of need

Housing options available to released prisoners include residing with family and friends, supported or public housing accommodation, shelters, shared accommodation, private rental markets or the street. Whilst some individuals return to family units, others may have severed family relations, independent to, or as a result of, periods of incarceration (Conway, 1999 in Baldry et al., 2003: 5; Young, Taxman & Byrne, 2002; Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001; Dutreix, 2000). Opportunities for recently released prisoners are very limited in the absence of family or other networks of support, and New South Wales (Standing Committee on Law and Justice, 2000) and Queensland (Walsh, 2004) data reports the level of specialised accommodation services for released prisoners is ‘negligible’. Halfway houses\(^9\) cater specifically to released prisoners, offering support, counselling and practical life-skills training. Such facilities are very limited and as such typically target a particular type of prisoner; therefore restrictions on age, violent or sexual offenders – implemented to ensure services are targeted appropriately – limit opportunities for men and women who do not fit within such categories. A particularly lowly serviced but highly vulnerable group are those prisoners with dual diagnosis. Lewis et al. (2003: 23) suggest that such facilities, due to their association with the criminal justice system, may further ‘the labelling practices associated with the prison’. They also claim that hostel type accommodation may be detrimental to individuals, ‘suggesting vulnerabilities and exposure to alcohol and drug use amongst other residents’. Whilst not noted in detail within the current research, it is important to acknowledge the individualised needs and options of different types of released prisoners. For example, men and women on parole and probation periods are required to have stable housing in order to qualify for such early release and non-custodial punishment options. Unconditional releasees, on the other hand, do not require such assurances – therefore they are able to draw on refuge and crisis accommodation services in the absence of more stable alternatives.

\(^9\) It is important to note that the dissolve of such relationships may be the choice of either the prisoner’s family or the prisoners themselves, in particular when the family environment may be conducive to criminal and/or drug use behaviour.

\(^{10}\) Aftercare services for people on release from prison (Begg, 1990: 274).
There is currently no national literature, nor estimate, as to the numbers of housing options specific to released men and women. Aiding current knowledge, however, is research such as that by Borzycki (2005) that is beginning to collate the post-release services available on a national scale. Within Australia there is limited governmental funding and resources directed to the housing concerns of released prisoners. In turn, the (minimal) halfway and supported housing available to released prisoners is run through independent charity, advocacy, and church-based organisations. Whilst Baldry et al. (2003) have begun to explore the housing issues in the Australian context, there is still very little known about the housing options and availabilities for Australian release populations. More critically, there is a significant gap in current knowledge surrounding housing concerns and the ways such experiences challenge release experiences more broadly. Whilst this thesis does not cover these issues in detail, it does urge future research to attend to these areas.

Private rental markets create difficulties. Firstly, such agencies require financial security, often employment and housing references, and some also require information pertaining to ‘financial and criminal history’ (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001: 36). Additional impediments result from the monetary security required at the onset of signing lease agreements (Hamlyn & Lewis, 2000: xiii). In this instance, released prisoners are often excluded. Aside from leaving prisoners to the vagaries of the private rental market, the other options are public or specialised housing for prisoners. Public housing organisations cater to the general homeless population and other disadvantaged groups, and they have significant waiting lists and prisoners are not considered a priority. Federal housing policies also enable public housing authorities and other federally assisted housing programs to deny individuals who have engaged in certain criminal activities (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001). There are currently very few non-government organisations that offer supported accommodation to released prisoners. In the absence of family ties or extended support networks within the community, suitable accommodation is out of reach for most releasees. Applications for supported housing are typically made up to three months prior to release and such services are only able to house released prisoners for between three and nine months. Availability and inherently long waiting lists
characteristic of such agencies make homelessness a reality for many released
individuals. Most vulnerable amongst this population are prisoners with specific needs, in
particular women, single women with dependent children, prisoners with medical
conditions (especially those with addiction problems). Indigenous prisoners, individuals
with accrued debts (in particular housing related debts), young unattached males and
short sentenced prisoners (Baldry et al., 2003: 1; Ogilvie, 2001).

Significance of housing as a space that discourages recidivism
If a released individual cannot become established in stable accommodation, the potential
for recidivism is increased significantly (Standing Committee on Law and Justice, 2000).
Fraser (in Standing Committee on Law and Justice, 2000: 138) notes that ‘housing is
probably the most crucial thing you can provide to keep somebody out of jail ... it is far
more important to provide housing options for ex-prisoners than anything else. All the
rest is peripheral’. Ogilvie (2001: 3) also notes that accommodation is ‘central to any
genuine attempt at re-integrating newly released prisoners’. The negative consequences
associated with housing difficulties include ‘a general deterioration of housing conditions
... due to debt, family breakdown, discrimination, stigma, lack of advocacy support [and] resources, limited income and reduced employment prospects’ (Conway, 1999 cited in
Baldry et al., 2003: 5). Lewis et al. (2003) advocate that, without assistance, the prison
experience exacerbates housing concerns for individuals.

Impediments to safe and secure accommodation
Whilst research surrounding housing concerns for released prisoners is limited, the
inherent problems associated with securing accommodation can be broadly identified:
firstly, a significant lack of suitable and available housing options; secondly, a lack of
personal resources to obtain accommodation; thirdly, a lack of knowledge surrounding
housing options, application processes, and release dates and related matters; fourthly,
severed family relations; and fifthly, the absence of solid personal and structural support
networks. Other factors include: legislative restrictions and agency/departmental
reluctance to service prisoner populations; stigmatisation surrounding associations with
the criminal justice system, criminal histories and periods of incarceration; recorded debt.
in particular housing debts; competition with the general homeless population; and inappropriate options – particularly noted are hostels and shelters that may have drug using clientele or those with criminal histories (Ross & Ryan, 2003: 3; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2000: 19).

Any genuine attempt at successful release must address the significant issues of housing. Research by Ogilvie (2001: 3) has noted that housing-related assistance for released prisoners is ‘plagued with difficulties’. Identifying the structural barriers impeding the obtainment of accommodation in Victoria, Ogilvie (2001) cites the Victorian Homelessness Strategy (2001), highlighting that incarcerated individuals are not recognised as ‘homeless’\textsuperscript{11} and therefore not eligible to apply for public housing placements. Many local authorities articulate they are reluctant to accept potentially problematic tenants unless they meet agreed criteria for vulnerability which currently does not include ex-prisoners (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2001: 19). Furthermore, incarceration can also mean that prisoners are removed from official and departmental waiting lists. Discrepancies with release dates are credited as further compounding application outcomes. In addition, housing concerns for women in particular are heightened when dependent children are involved (Ogilvie, 2001: 3).

Some research in this area has considered the issue of prisoner debt. American data suggests that almost 20% of prisoners experience problems with rent arrears, unpaid bills and fines, and their greatest need was for help with benefits and rent arrears (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2000: 19). Australian research (Baldry et al., 2003: 14) also recognises problems surrounding accrued debt, in particular housing-related debts. Correlating increased debts with return to prison rates, their data suggested prison re-entry rates for individuals with debts to be approximately 50%, in contrast to the re-entry rate for those without accrued debts, which is at approximately 30%. They report 35% of their participants were identified as having housing-related debt, and that return-to-prison rates for releasees with housing-specific debt (63%) were significantly higher than for those with other forms of debt (45%). Whilst this data does not suggest that such re-entry

\textsuperscript{11} As prisoners are under the care of the state they are not considered destitute (Ogilvie, 2001).
rates are attributed to debt alone, they give some indication as to further problematic concerns for release populations.

**Frameworks of knowledge in the Australian context**

There are very few studies focusing on the housing concerns for released prisoners internationally, and there is also very little Australian research in this regard. A study by Baldry et al. (2003) is the most comprehensive to date. Their work notes international findings and attempts to identify issues pertinent in the Australian release setting. The key issues their research raised included a significant lack of accommodation provisions, inadequate information and support in securing and maintaining housing, and released prisoners themselves articulating housing issues as a key factor in successful periods of release.

Overall, homelessness for their participants increased following incarceration periods, with homelessness prior to incarceration at 18%, rising to 21.4% upon release. These results can be attributed to a variety of factors such as weakening of family relationships, financial burdens associated with housing start-up costs, and inadequacies of information and support. The return-to-prison rate for homeless releasees was 61%, which is particularly significant in comparison to the 65% non-return rate for individuals who had some form of stable accommodation (Baldry et al., 2003: 12). Of those participants who had some form of stable accommodation, 41% were residing with family or parents, the remaining 59% were either at a residence alone or with other individuals – friends, or unknown. As well as influencing overall success during release periods, associations and contact with family networks proved to be vital in accommodating released individuals, with re-entry rates of 23% and 52% respectively for releasees living with family and those living alone or with others (Baldry et al., 2003: 13). For individuals residing in public housing, those in long-term or rental-assisted placements showed non-return rates of 66% in comparison to 47% for releasees in all other non-family options – including crisis centres, shelters, hostels and other non-supported rental places (Baldry et al., 2003: 14).
In Baldry et al.'s study (2003: 13, 14), 31\% of participants with known parental status had dependent children. A decreased likelihood of re-entry was associated with released prisoners having lived with their children at some stage during their release. More than 75\% of participants who had resided with their children remained out of prison, in contrast to 33\% for individuals whose children were living outside their care.

Baldry et al. (2003: 20) suggest women have greater difficulties securing stable accommodation than men. In particular they note women were less inclined to be residing with parents, partners or close friends. The infancy of research in this area makes it difficult to arrive at firm conclusions surrounding housing and the impact deficits in this area have for release populations. The available data, however, has elucidated an understanding of some potential concerns.

Whilst specific attention to housing-related concerns facing released men and women is minimal, the literature suggests homelessness is a real and problematic experience for many prisoners. Baldry et al.'s (2003) research is the first of its kind, and significantly enhances current understandings of not only housing but broader issues in the Australian release context. As identified within this chapter, incarceration negatively impacts many areas of a prisoner's life, most powerfully the damage to familial and support networks has significant consequences for many areas of release, in particular housing options. Research has examined the general experiences of homelessness within the community and studies such as Baldry et al.'s (2003) inform the potential prevalence of homelessness specific to prison and release populations, yet we are unsure of the ways in which housing challenges and potential homelessness are experienced and understood by released men and women. As housing is the most immediate concern facing released prisoners, it can be asked, what are the options available to men and women in the absence of familial or friend networks? How do experiences of unstable or inappropriate\textsuperscript{12} accommodation inform other areas of release? For those released on parole, of which a stable address is a condition, what are the implications for men and

\textsuperscript{12} For example, environments of domestic violence or abuse, environments conducive to sustaining offending behaviour, drug use and the like.
women who are unable to secure permanent or temporary housing? How do released prisoners negotiate their housing challenges in concert with broader concerns of health, employment and integrating within social frameworks? These critical issues are not considered within their entirety within this thesis. However, the analysis that follows lends weight to the criticality of adequate and safe housing for released men and women.

**Conclusion**

Prisoners have been identified as a particularly disadvantaged population, typically beset with significantly lower education and employment skills, disproportionately burdened with health and mental health problems, substance abuse and addiction, troubled family relations, and abuse in both childhood and adult relationships (for example see Baldry et al., 2003; Gaes & Kendig, 2002; Travis. Solomon & Waul. 2001: Brookes. 2000; Buck. 2000). These areas of concern have been linked to offending and reoffending behaviour, and an increased likelihood of incarceration (Ross & Ryan, 2003; SA DOJ, 2003). Upon release, prisoners are faced with additional difficulties. Not only do periods of imprisonment often exacerbate the above concerns, but additional areas of need arise such as housing and accommodation, financial assistance and family-related matters. Periods of release have been recognised as particularly difficult times for prisoners: moreover the available research has credited that prisoners are at high-risk of reconviction within the initial periods of release.

Community support is vital to successful reintegration. However, at present there is a dire lack of support structures and resources available to individuals recently released from prison, particularly in remote rural areas. Key issues surrounding financial assistance, family relationships, drug and alcohol use, and other practical and emotional support have been widely identified in the prison context and can largely be acknowledged as further areas of concern in the release setting. Denborough (1996: 163) suggests the viability of the idea of rehabilitation 'is challenged by the reality that most prisoners will be returned to the same social conditions that generated the crimes in the first place'.

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Current scholarship pertaining to the release setting raises general areas of concern. However, there are significant gaps in our understandings, particularly with regards to the ways men and women experience, understand and negotiate the interwoven challenges of prospective homelessness, unemployment, health and mental health issues, substance abuse, familial relationships, financial concerns and the like. Examining national and international research we can conceive of the interwoven nature of release challenges, for example where issues of housing inform familial relationships, health issues, opportunities for employment and the like. Similarly, in the absence of familial and other support networks, difficulties with accommodation and mental wellbeing mean that links to employment or the community more generally are exacerbated.

Periods of imprisonment are understood as exacerbating the underlying problems facing men and women, and often those that led to their offending. Coupled with problems of housing, familial relationships, employment, health and substance abuse, imprisonment imports issues of stigmatisation and discrimination, legislative restrictions regarding employment and housing, broken or disrupted connections with support networks, the labour market and society in general. If the prison system fails to adequately address the underlying issues facing the prison population, and, more often than not, compounds broader concerns faced in the release setting, can we be surprised at the consistently high incidence of unsuccessful prison release and prison re-entry? Rather than concentrating on recidivism or revocation figures, should we not engage with released men and women themselves to identify their individualised concerns and experiences underlying social knowledges of recidivism, re-entry and the like? Current criminological and penological discourses embrace a scientised and generalised approach to prisoner release. In contrast, this thesis will examine the release environment through the specific incorporation of release narratives, and the deliberate attention to the ways men and women talk about, understand, and experience their release setting.
How I feel, 2003

There's a rat at the top chewing away at the rope, and the lion is at the bottom, ready to eat me, and all I've got left is a branch of olives, and that is my life line - the only thing that will save me. The lion represents for me - the media, the press, the justice system. They all wanted to see me fall. The rat represents certain people who wanted me to fall, and they are just eating away at me with what they're doing with my children. (Somebody's Daughter Theatre, 2005)
Chapter three

Penetrating the release setting: a select methodology

This chapter presents the methodological framework through which this research examines the ways prisoners experience, understand, and narrate their release environment. Chapter two outlined the current state of prison release knowledge, flagging the critical areas of concern as education and employment, health and mental health, familial and housing-related issues. Current scholarship specific to prisoner release examines these areas largely through quantitative measures that have not drawn on prisoner narratives. More particularly, this literature has minimally engaged with the ways released prisoners understand and discuss their experiences, and thus has resulted in an incomplete picture of post-custodial environments (few exceptions include Devlin, 2002; O’Brien, 2001; Denborough, 1996). Whilst criminological, sociological and psychological discourses have begun to consider the post-custodial setting, they have done so through dialogue that is often in conflict with the dialogue of released men and women themselves. Consequently, this thesis purports to open up channels for released prisoners to enter into discussions, drawing on their own language and conceptualisations, to represent their individual lived experiences. To this end, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodological frames underpinning discussions with released men and women. Specifically, this entails outlining participant recruitment, sample selection, the utilisation of a semi-structured format, and issues specific to entering into dialogue with ‘defended subjects’ (Hollway & Jefferson, nd) about ‘sensitive issues’ (Lee, 1993).

Participation and sampling

Within this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-seven released prisoners: eleven women and sixteen men within New South Wales. The
operational definition of ‘released prisoner’ within this study extends to men and women released from the physicality of prison walls, at some stage in their lives. In this regard, the participants involved in drug court and parole, whilst recognised to be connected to correctional institutions, were included as ‘released prisoners’ because they had experienced periods of incarceration and were released in some manner into the community. The men and women were aged between twenty-one and fifty-five and had spent varying lengths of time in prison custody. The selection criteria for participation included a minimum of one year (not-concurrent) of incarceration and six months of release (at some stage in their lives). It was believed such criteria would facilitate adequate comparative periods of both incarceration and release from which to reflect and draw on. Whilst most of the men and women (at some stage) roughly fulfilled these criteria, the remaining pool was not excluded on the basis of their failure to fulfil ‘one-year’ or ‘six-month’ timeframes. For example, some had spent ten months in custody, followed by four months release in the community, then an additional six months in prison and a year release etc. In this regard, it was assumed they could draw on comparative experiences of both prison and post-release. Moreover, the patterns of their prison (re)entry and release were powerful contributors to the ways in which they experienced their transitional periods. These factors alone informed much of this analysis.

Specific lengths of continuous imprisonment ranged from two weeks to eight years. Twenty-three of the participants identified more than one term of imprisonment, most of which had been served in excess of five sentences – one man recounted eighteen sentences, and others noted they had simply lost count. The men’s and women’s first term of imprisonment was typically at an early age, most usually between fourteen and nineteen years of age. Over a third of the participants noted they had spent most of their adult lives in prison, one man noting in the past twenty years the longest continuous period he was not in prison was six months. It was common for the men and women to spend several months in prison followed by a few months of release and then return to prison.
At the time of the interview, periods of continuous release ranged from three days to six months. Amongst those with previous imprisonment sentences, periods of release varied from several months to a few years at a time. In line with multiple prison sentences, the majority (twenty-three) had experienced prison release a significant number of times.

Collectively the men and women had served time in all of the adult correctional centres within New South Wales. Four men identified their incarceration within juvenile centres, and three of them had been in state boys homes since the ages of three or four. Some of the men and women had also been imprisoned interstate. Within the research sample overall, the men and women had been held in all security classifications, including ‘minimum’, ‘medium’ and ‘maximum’, as well as one woman who was classified as an ‘escapee’. Three men made reference to their time in ‘solitary’, and one woman had been in ‘protection’. Whilst most served time in public centres, two men had also been sentenced to private facilities. All but two of the men and women identified that members of their immediate or extended families had served, or were currently serving, prison sentences.

Two of the (female) participants identified themselves as Indigenous within the interview, and made specific references to their indigeneity. Whilst it is important to consider differential experiences of Australian Indigenous prisoners in comparison to non-Indigenous prisoners, particularly on the back of significant over-representation (Yick & Warner, 2005; Hedger, 2002; Baker, 2001) and reports such as the RCIADIC (1991), these specific issues were not considered within my research. The purpose of the study was to survey the Australian release environment more broadly and explore experiences of ‘released prisoners’ more generally, rather than specifically focus on subsets¹ of released prisoners. However, these are of course critical avenues for future release enquiry.

¹ For example, Indigenous prisoners, female prisoners, short-sentenced prisoners, mentally ill prisoners, young (18-15 years of age) prisoners and the like.
Whilst crimes resulting in the men's and women's imprisonment were not specifically pertinent to the research, nor enquired about within the interview, most prisoners identified the types of offences they had been charged with. Specifically, these were: solicitation; fine default; fraud; drug-related offences; petty and more serious theft; armed robbery; break and enter; and outstanding warrants. One man had served a singular sentence for white-collar crime.

Additional data was generated from prisoner support and advocacy workers and organisations, and some of their published works, as well as the researcher's personal collections of prisoner writings. Specifically, support agencies provided insight into the relationships between their organisations and other government and non-government services, which inform and are discussed within chapter five specifically in relation to the issues of surveillance, regulation and control. The ways in which their services attempted to mediate post-release concerns speak consistently to all areas of this research's analysis and are therefore considered throughout. Data on formal and informal transition pathways, the needs of particular subsets of released prisoners and their families, and day-to-day experiences of released men and women were also generated within discussions with support workers. In recognition of the problematic nature of prison and release research and the challenges in locating and talking with released prisoners, these additional sources helped to complete and enrich explorations specific to the Australian release setting. Consultations with support services not only informed release issues, but extended to facilitate access points to released men and women. Recruitment of participants resulted from two primary methods: the recommendations of support workers to their clients (both current and past), and a 'snowballing effect' from released prisoners, most notably amongst those residing in halfway houses and supported accommodation.

Most of which were obtained through personal contacts with (currently) imprisoned or released prisoners, prisoner advocates and activists within Australia and overseas.

Whereby participants within this research identified and located additional men and women who shared similar experiences of prison and release (Devine & Heath, 1999). In addition, some of the women in particular identified an increased comfort and willingness to participate associated with the prior participation by other women they knew and trusted.
Locating released men and women

Because prisons are a hidden and secret world, access is inevitably mediated (Morgan, 1999: 330). Prisoner support and advocacy organisations serve as one of the key gatekeepers to the prison and release population. Others include corrections and justice departments, and parole and probation boards. By virtue of their work, support services establish not only an avenue for access but also the parameters through which conditional access is mediated or thwarted. Morgan (1999: 338) argues 'prisons have retained a culture of secrecy, often unwelcoming to the projects of researchers, particularly if the methods are qualitative and use the evidence of inmates'. In this regard, support groups provided a particularly significant site for access to released prisoners.

All but one of the participants for this study were identified through prisoner support and advocacy organisations within Australia. From a pilot study conducted in 2001 in which five support and advocacy organisations were interviewed for their understandings of prisoner release, the maintenance of these contacts enabled access to released men and women themselves. I have been involved with one such organisation since 2000, when I began volunteer work with the families of prisoners at a local correctional facility. The five agencies included in the initial study in 2001 were selected due to the longevity of their work in the area, the fact they were the five leading/largest prisoner support agencies, and in recognition of their significant contributions to the support of and advocacy for prisoners, released prisoners and their families. The relationships built with the five organisations in 2000 facilitated a site for (re)entry to continue research in the area.

For the current study four of the organisations assisted in locating men and women for participation. The omission of the fifth agency was reflective of the types of services they offered released men and women and pursuant pragmatic limitations regarding their ability to identify and locate released prisoners to participate. Whilst it is recognised that there are a number of support and advocacy services currently available to released prisoners and their families (including church-based affiliations, smaller community

4 Specific to prison and release populations.
centres and the like), the four chosen were recognised to be some of the largest agencies. with ready access to a greater number of released prisoners. In addition, one twenty-year-old man was recruited from a large community support and advocacy organisation for marginalised and 'in-need' men and women.

Contact was made with the support organisation to discuss the current study, from which meetings were held with both managers and caseworkers to discuss recruitment. After consultation about the ethical elements of the study, specifically ensuring anonymity and confidentiality and voluntary participation, the workers reviewed the question format and began the process of participant identification. Participants were informed of the study through support workers, which sometimes resulted in immediate participation: the remainder were obtained after an informal introduction between myself and various men and women. None of the released prisoners approached for this study declined to participate.

In line with other significant bodies of research, particularly with prison and release populations, participants were given a token payment of $20 to compensate for their time, travel expenses and the like during the interview (see for example Willis, 2005; Butler & Milner, 2003; O’Brien, 2001; Griffith et al., 1998). The implications of ‘paying’ participants are considered later within this chapter.

**Speaking of prison and release**

The interviews were mostly conducted at the premises of the support and community centres through which the interviewees were recruited. Interviews were conducted in private offices. This ‘space’ to talk was an integral aspect of the prisoners’ disclosure and willingness to engage in ‘vulnerable’ dialogue. The interviews were conducted over two

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5 Including homeless, drug or alcohol addicted, abused, those that are socially isolated, without family and community support, street workers and the like.

6 Confidentiality and the ‘privateness’ of talk were significant to the ways in which men and women narrated their experiences. For instance, female participants, as mothers, raised their concerns regarding the ‘safety’ of their discussion. Most notably, for those who had lost custody or were in the process of regaining custody, the confidential nature of the interview setting enabled them to discuss issues that potentially ‘jeopardised’ their attempts to regain custody. Specifically, their problems with drug use, violations of parole and drug court conditions etc. were powerful contributors to explorations of release
periods – January-February 2005 and October 2005 – and varied in length from between thirteen minutes to over two hours. Whilst it was estimated that interviews would last for approximately half an hour to an hour, the men’s and women’s willingness and openness to ‘talk’ dictated time allocation. All interviews were tape recorded, with the permission of the men and women, for the purposes of transcription. As Minichiello et al. (1990: 134) suggest, there is a greater ‘analytical depth’ within the research process through tape recording because ‘the anecdotal information and the ambiguity of response is still available’. Within the interviews there were multiple times in which the men and women struggled with their responses, expressed emotion or paused before they responded. These aspects of the interview dialogue were as powerful in fully engaging with their stories as was the language they drew on to articulate their experiences (O’Connor, 2000). During analysis, these pauses, hesitations and nuances critically underscored the ‘authentic’ experiences of the men and women. Moreover, tape recording enabled full and non-distracted attention throughout the interviews (Minichiello et al., 1990).

The central aspects of the research were outlined either at the beginning of the interview, or during the informal meetings with several released prisoners. The following features of the study were explained at this time: participation was voluntary in nature; there was no obligation to participate in the full interview schedule, nor answer questions that they felt to be intrusive; and, all aspects of the interview were confidential.\textsuperscript{7} \textsuperscript{8} no identifying

\textsuperscript{7} The critical contribution this made to both participation and the piece of mind of the men and women cannot be understated. Moreover, concerns of confidentiality emerge as powerful themes throughout the data analysis. In brief, it was of significant importance that the dialogue between myself and the men and women was not accessed by correctional departments, most notably parole boards, support workers, particularly those in supported accommodation, department of family services, drug court officials and the like.

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information would be recorded, and pseudonyms would be utilised. In addition, (some)\(^9\) were informed of the stipend available to them for their participation.

The question format for this research was driven and informed by my pilot study, volunteer work and consultation with prisoner support agencies, and other academics and advocates in the field. To ensure greater sensitivity to the interviews, extensive consultation was sought amongst national and international researchers and advocates of release environments. Similar to O’Brien (2001: 155), a question format was also ‘derived from patterns that emerged in the review of related literature’. It has been widely noted that experiences of incarceration are painful and traumatic for individuals (for example see Dodge & Pogrebin, 2004; Devlin, 2002). It is also recognised that prisoners rarely discuss, or have the space and opportunity to discuss, their experiences (for example see Denborough, 1996; Hampton, 1993). Attempts to remove any reminders of corrections or incarceration from their lives are quite common (for example see O’Connor, 2000). It seems fitting that these same hesitancies in discussing experiences would carry through in the release setting. The prevalence of mental illness has been identified at significantly elevated levels within prison and release populations (Butler & Milner, 2003), in comparison to the general population. As discussion of prison release touches on very real and potentially traumatic experiences, a significant level of sensitivity is required when questioning released men and women about their periods of transition. Extensive revision and consultation regarding the research questions were believed to facilitate a deeper consideration towards the sensitivity of these issues, ensuring discussions were as comfortable and unobtrusive as possible. Such revision also assisted in informing the language and tone of questions, and ensuring frames of reference were not ‘abstract’ and ‘disconnected’ from the men’s and women’s experiences and understandings (Chase, 2003: 276).

The research aide memoir was loosely constructed around five key areas: firstly, introduction and warm-up questions; secondly, specific details regarding prison

\(^9\) The negation of such disclosure was initially the product of forgetfulness on my behalf, but such omission provided insight into the willingness of these men and women to talk about intimate and traumatic parts of their lives, with a complete stranger, and for seemingly no benefit.
sentence(s), release etc.; thirdly, the question of what ‘release’ means on an individual level; fourthly, experiences of being (with)in the broader community; and lastly, ‘talking’ about prison and release more specifically. As the interviews progressed, the question outline was revised and extended as the men and women highlighted additional issues specific to their experiences\textsuperscript{10} (Minichiello et al. 1990: 114). In addition, after some initial interviews, questions that ‘pulled [the men and] women away from their experiences’ or ‘distracted [their] deeper and broader story’ were edited (Chase, 2003: 281). Hallowell, Lawton and Gregory (2005: 31) suggest that ‘people will tell you what you need to know, but only if you let them’. and in this regard the aide memoir was differentially used within the interviews. For some interviews it was followed to the letter, most notably for those reluctant to talk or not sure of the responses they thought were ‘appropriate’. However, for most it became a guide to initiate discussion from which the men and women largely forged their own direction(s). The interviews almost became a narration of their life stories, and were directed by the men and women to the extent that their perceptions of release and the importance they differentially placed on experiences informed the overarching release environment. The ways they located and hierarchised their experiences powerfully underpinned what is happening in the Australian release setting. More particularly, their narratives spoke to and developed the superficial constructions of the prisoner release setting dominating current criminological and penological discourses. Chase (2003: 275) suggests there is a need to ‘ask about’ individual experiences, thoughts and feelings to ‘gather data thick enough to shed light on our sociological problems’. In this regard, whilst initial interviews were more closely aligned with the aide memoir format and centred around issues of surveillance, regulation and control, the later interviews were held within much looser parameters. In this way the interview became a space through and within which the men and women could ‘talk’ about their lives as ‘released prisoners’. It is these spaces and discussions that were perhaps more contributory and informative to mining the release environment, as the men and women were able ‘to craft their own narrative around their concerns, experiences and perspectives’ (Miller, 2000, cited in Mason, 2002: 232). In addition, the narratives echoed the significance of providing and allocating space for released prisoners to talk

\textsuperscript{10} Discussion of which stands later in the chapter within ‘data coding and analysis’.
about their experiences. As the research was interested in the manner in which experiences of release informed the ways the men and women understood themselves and their experiences, research formats from psychological discourses (specific to explorations and constructions of identity) were also drawn on (for example, Yardley, 1987).

The interviews played out in a very informal way and, save for the initial briefing regarding ethical considerations and signing consent forms, were more like discussions. I monitored the attire and manner in which I presented to the men and women, wearing very casual (and conservative) jeans and shirts, with minimal makeup and jewellery. These considerations were critical for a number of reasons. Most immediately, these were important contributors that enabled me to distance myself from the position of an ‘educated researcher’ and thus engaging with the men and women in a relaxed and informal way. In addition, further to the experience of working within a correctional facility, the manner in which a young female dresses critically informs the responses of male prisoners.

Most of the interviews were conducted in a kitchen or lounge type setting. Most commonly the men and women made numerous cups of coffee or offered biscuits and refreshments throughout the interviews. In common with other researchers, refreshments were always gratefully accepted and made the interaction ‘seem more like a conversation and less like an interrogation’ (for further discussions see Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2003). Hallowell, Lawton and Gregory (2003: 45) suggest that the ‘best interviews happen when we are comfortable as who, and what, we are, and then listen attentively and respectfully’. Ensuing these notions of ‘comfortableness’ within the interview setting it was common for participants and myself to smoke throughout the interview; indeed this ‘shared addiction’ occurred in all but one of the interviews. As other researchers have found (for example see Hallowell in Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2005: 48) shared experiences familiarise the interview environment and bonds are created over shared traits – in this instance ‘addiction’. Hallowell (Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2005)

11 Detailed consideration of which is highlighted within the following analysis chapters.
credits that whilst smoking may not have changed the men’s and women’s perceptions of me as a result of my engagement with cigarettes. ‘revealing that I had vices did make me appear more human’. Moreover, the discussions that commonly bond ‘smokers’ surfaced throughout the interview, and in this regard, in this small way. ‘we shared some common experiences’ (Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory. 2005: 48). In light of the difficulties in getting participants to openly ‘hand over’ intimate parts of their lives to a stranger, small and subtle challenges to traditional ‘research’ practices assist in creating a ‘safe’ space to talk.

As noted above, the men and women were given a token $20 for their participation in the research. Whilst there has been much contention surrounding the implications of ‘paying’ participants for their time and knowledge (for detailed discussions see Grady, 2005; Halpern et al., 2004; Dickert, Emanuel & Grady, 2002), for this research it became apparent that monetary gain was not a driving force behind willingness to participate. Frequently (around twenty-two times) the men and women were not informed of the payment until the end of the interview, initially the result of forgetfulness. Therefore it is safe to assume monetary gain was not the primary incentive for engaging in discussions.¹² In fact, some of the men and women were reluctant to accept the money. One man in particular insisted he not receive the payment, explaining that he ‘enjoyed talking’ and could not possibly entertain the idea. After pressing the issue, he reluctantly accepted. Whilst financial incentives are a perceivable side issue to the research at hand, consideration to the reasons why men and women open themselves to be ‘known’ and narrate their experiences of prison and release tell us a lot about the ways in which contemporary society responds to and acknowledges these experiences. More particularly, it potentially highlights the hesitance with which penological discussions ‘legitimate’ the voices and dialogue of prisoners (Morgan, 1999).

¹² Motivations for ‘talking’ about their experiences and their experience and perception of our discussions are considered within the analysis chapters (for additional discussion see for example King, 1996; Boudin, 1998).
Trust and confidentiality: the most critical elements

The significance of trust in conducting research with human participants cannot be understated. Trust has been recognised widely within the social sciences as a key ingredient to ‘effective’ research relationships (see for example Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2005; Stuhlmiller, 2001; King, 1996), which ‘does not end with the possession of a signed consent form’ (Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2005: 59). More critically, climates of trust, particularly with marginalised and vulnerable individuals such as released prisoners (Willis, 2005; Denborough, 1996), are powerful contributors to men’s and women’s willingness to talk about their experiences. Denborough (1996: 17) suggests that there are ‘many obstacles for prisoners or ex-prisoners to tell their stories of prison survival’. He cites prisoner narratives within the work of Hampton (1993) and Somebody’s Daughter Theatre Company to portray these struggles. ‘It takes courage to put into words an experience which was, for most ... something dealt with overtly, but felt at [the] deepest levels to be a nightmare’; ‘it’s difficult to explain the overwhelming sense of betrayal, suffocation and violation ... it’s difficult to share secrets and thus share pain’ (Denborough, 1996: 17, 18). It follows that the manner in which the intimate aspects of these ‘secrets’ and ‘pain’ is explored demands significant consideration and attention. Lee (1993: 208) suggests ‘research participants mask aspects of their lives and will only drop those masks when they feel it safe to do so’, and in turn it is critical to facilitate as ‘safe’ an environment as possible. Trust is a key ingredient to safety. Within the interviews frameworks of trust were critical in several key ways. Firstly, encouraging and asking men and women to talk about their experiences of release require a reciprocation of trust, comfort and safety (Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2005). In seeking to accomplish ‘deeper, fuller conceptualisations of subject’s lives’. the interview needs to facilitate a ‘safe’ and non-threatening environment (Miller & Glassner, 1997 in Alvesson, 2002: 109). The disclosure of personal information is intimate and the narrator has a significant stake in engaging in such revelations (Stuhlmiller, 2001). In this regard, trust and rapport become crucial to open and ‘authentic’ narratives. Moreover,  

13 An organization developed by women who have served time in prison, who currently work in ‘art, music and drama with women in prison and post-release’. For more information see http://www.somebodysdaughtertheatre.com. 

14 For further discussion of ‘risks’ related to participation see for example King (1996) and Lee (1993).
Denborough (1996: 18) argues that connection with parole and other such regulatory agencies ‘is seen to encourage a public silence’, and as such ‘telling the stories of incarceration [and release] places great demands on those who speak out’. Secondly, recognising the gravity and threatening nature (as footnoted above, with regards to parole, regaining custody, drug court etc.) of their dialogue, in the absence of trust such conversations could not take place.

The ways in which trust was encouraged and manifested within the interviews occurred in four central ways. Most immediately, recognition and ‘acceptance’ by support and advocacy workers forged an initial element of trust, in which I was recognised to be ‘credible’ and ‘okay’. Secondly, as the research sought to penetrate their personal experiences, it was important to offer something in return and not create a relationship based only on taking. Alvesson (2002: 109) suggests that engaging in ‘real conversations with “give and take” and “empathetic understanding” makes interviews more honest, morally sound and reliable’. Recognising the notion of mutual disclosure (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002) and the ‘veiled secrecy’ of the prison and release world, the interviews began firstly with personal disclosure on my behalf. Further, throughout the interviews, the men and women were positioned as ‘experts from whom I would learn’ (Stuhlmiller, 2001). I spoke about the beginning of my connection with prison release as a volunteer, previous research with support organisations, the volunteer work I was involved with at the time of the interviews and more general (yet minimal) details. In doing so I hoped to not only appear credible within their experiences, but also to offer something of myself before asking to take something of theirs. In concert with O’Connor (2000: 24), ‘I was amazed that inmates would be willing to be interviewed at all’. However, as considered within later analysis, the omission of spaces to engage in such ‘vulnerable’ and ‘different’ dialogue may have increased the possibility that [they] would talk in detail to someone.

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15 At the time of the interviews I was working as a crisis counsellor for a well known community support agency. More pertinent to the experiences of the men and women was their use or familiarity with the organisation, and its location in one of the most concentrated areas of drug use, crime and prostitution.
16 ‘Vulnerable’ and ‘different’ conversations are ideas that emerged within the interviews, and considered within later analysis. Most notably, ‘vulnerability’ was introduced by a woman who had been in protection inside prison, and she maintained as active stance to ensure other prisoners did not find out. In addition, ‘difference’ in dialogue was introduced by some male prisoners who spoke about the nature of their typical discussions - drugs, crime and incarceration – and highlighted the differential space the interview provided.
from beyond the walls’ (O’Connor, 2000: 24). Another explanation can be attributed to
the idea of an ‘ease’ of confession with strangers (Lee, 1993). Positioning the men and
women at the helm of their stories conveyed that their experiences had worth and merit.
Stuhlmiller (2001: 67) asserts that ‘even if the story is one of shame and remorse, the
attempt to be understood rather than ignored, judged or discounted enables the person to
feel valued’.

Thirdly, the assurance of confidentiality was critical to establishing trust within the
interview exchange (Willis, 2005). As referenced above and explored more fully
within the analysis, the content of the narratives had the potential to powerfully threaten
and jeopardise release periods, child custody, drug court participation, release
accommodation and the like. Before beginning the interviews the men and women were
assured no identifying information would connect them to their narratives, and
pseudonyms would be used. Specific to the use of pseudonyms, O’Connor (2000)
recognises that while they protect participants, at the same time they limit the ways in
which men’s and women’s experiences can be understood in the context of their broader
life experiences. Specifically, anonymity ensures sentence lengths, family background,
onfending history and the like remain individual constructs that speak to emergent themes
rather than the creation of a ‘whole’ life story. Similar to O’Connor’s experience with the
commentaries of her work enquiring about the offences and prison histories of her clients,
in the course of my research I encountered a similar line of questioning. Thus So
frequently I was asked, ‘why were they in prison?’ or ‘what did they do?’; and m ore
particularly, ‘are you safe in the interview setting?’ Considering these questions and the
importance of ‘knowing’ individual participants, O’Connor (2000: 29) asserts that
‘knowing’ does make a difference. More importantly, however, she points to the
criticality of recognising what information is of importance to the research objective.

The purpose of this research is to examine the release experiences of men and
women; so in this regard the specifics of their incarceration, save for their incarceration,

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17 The fact such assurances were taken on face value also says a lot about the dominant conceptualizations
and assumptions about prisoners and released prisoners.
18 The fact that such assurances were taken on face value also says a lot about the dominant
conceptualisations and assumptions about prisoners and released prisoners.
are of little consequence. It is certainly valuable to consider offending patterns, life experiences and circumstances of incarceration for treatment, education and rehabilitation type evaluations. However, these matters do not critically inform this exploration of the Australian release setting. In this regard, O'Connor (2000: 29) speaks to the 'naive questioner's stance' in which not knowing the offences participants have committed is 'helpful in asking for more detail'. Similarly, Denborough (1996: 152) asserts that sometimes 'an outsider can honour stories of resistance to injustice or notice contradictions in ways that those inside a total institution cannot'.

Lastly, my emotional responses to their narratives were not completely silenced. Whilst there is considerable debate surrounding the 'dangerousness' and place of emotions within social science research, Gilbert (2001: 7) credits that 'emotions can also contribute positively to the process'. A researcher's work is 'experienced both intellectually and emotionally' (Gilbert, 2001: 9), and responding to some of these experiences (within the interview setting) both humanises the researcher presence (Hallowell et al. 2005), and recognises the significance of the participant's experiences. Gilbert (2000: 11) highlights that the exploration of 'emotionally laden human phenomena' speaks to the 'emotional as well as cognitive' aspects of participants' lives. Understanding these platforms, she notes, requires 'empathy [and] the ability to connect at a feeling and thinking level' with participants (Gilbert, 2000: 11). In this regard, responding to the men's and women's narratives of experience, however painful (Lee, 1993; Hallowell, Lawton & Gregory, 2005), and within reason, I shared frustration, empathy, laughter, recognition, encouragement, joy and sadness. In line with the idea of mutual disclosure, engaging with the men's and women's stories in this way conveyed an attempt to connect with their experiences, thus encouraging and supporting their offered narratives. In the same way, recognition of (researcher) emotional responses during the interviews informed the ways in which data was later reflected and analysed.

**Deconstructing narratives of release: coding and analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to organise the qualitative data within this research. A thematic analysis framework then allowed for the identification of key themes and
patterns within the data. In addition, a networking approach assisted in the interpretation of ‘various aspects of the research topic’ and research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). A thematic networking approach enabled me to contextualise the interview data within the ideas generated from the literature review (Chapter Two) and the theory chapter (Chapter Four). Attride-Stirling (2001: 387) writes that thematic networks ‘aim to explore the understanding of an issue or the signification of an idea’. Whilst thematic analysis explores the prominent themes within the data, thematic networks ‘aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes’ (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 387).

Thematic networks organise the research material into 1) basic themes, 2) organising themes, and 3) global themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Basic themes are those ideas or characteristics that are generated within the interview data. Organising themes collate these basic ideas into similar issues or shared experiences, from which we can begin to see patterns emerging across the individual narratives. Global themes then arrange sets of organising themes into concluding arguments about the data as a whole. ‘Global themes tell us what the texts as a whole are about within the context of a given analysis’ (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 389).

The key ideas drawn from the theoretical framework of this thesis (outlined in Chapter Four) provided foundational (organising) themes. In particular, Foucault’s thesis on disciplinary power provided the theoretical underpinnings of the data analysis in the areas of surveillance, regulation, normalisation and examination. In addition, Kristeva’s, Giddens’s and Beck’s work provided the framework for the investigation of the subject matters of risk, difference, abjection and exclusion. In asking the questions, how do prisoners experience the release environment post-prison? And, how do their experiences inform the ways they understand themselves? interview data was initially collated around the organising themes of 1) surveillance and regulation, 2) normalisation – judgement and control, 3) examination and measurement, 4) identity, 5) prison release, and 6) ‘talking’ about prison and release.
Analysing the interview transcripts highlighted subcategories to the organising themes. For example, within ideas of surveillance, data included police surveillance, parole and probation, drug court, and friends and family. In addition, the narratives brought to light reciprocal notions of surveillance and monitoring, where the men and women were both the subject of and perpetrators of surveillance. Further, the notion of identity underscored other broader experiences and considerations of the ways men and women spoke about themselves, and the ways they relayed and perceived the way others defined them.

In line with the additional themes that emerged within the interviews, so too were there significant basic themes and shared experiences that informed data coding and analysis. Moreover, it became apparent that some of the data ascribed to the initial six organising codes either needed individual and separate consideration, or became too diverse to consider within the one theme, and much of the data spoke to several themes. Specifically, additional issues for coding included: 7) control; 8) prison; 9) freedom; 10) relationships; 11) drugs (treatment, addiction, drug courts and the like); 12) power; 13) time; 14) plans and ideas about the future; 15) support; 16) parenting; and 17) prisoner discourse and language. Within these additional areas, drugs and parenting were the most powerful themes introduced and discussed in much length and detail by the men and women. Following the review of current release literature, 18) housing and accommodation, 19) health, 20) education and employment, and families (considered within codes 10, 15 and 16) were also utilised.

Whilst almost twenty basic codes were established in the initial stages of transcription analysis, it was common for themes to speak to each other a number of times and in a number of ways. The basic codes directed the organising themes. The analysis chapters that follow present the organising themes garnered throughout the research process. The organising themes are strongly located within the dominant concerns of a) governance and surveillance, b) drug use and addiction, c) spaces of abjection and identity.

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19 Inherently discussions of prison release drew from the experiences and understandings of periods of imprisonment. Whilst not a dominant theme in itself, separation in this way facilitated data mining.
construction, and d) considerations of risk. At the same time, they are also products of cross-fertilisation between some of the smaller issues (basic themes) that surfaced. Analysis in this way facilitated consideration of: the ways, for example, in which family relationships inform implicit and explicit experiences of surveillance and regulation; the nature of drug addiction, sustenance, recovery and the like; and the ways the men and women located themselves within their family units and broader social world. Division and marriage of themes in this way facilitated consideration of the 'range of ways in which narrators reproduce [individual] discourses' (Chase, 2003: 292). At the same time, engaging with the overarching thematic analysis surrounding surveillance, drug use and identity enabled the exploration of the ways in which men and women 'struggle with those constraints as they make sense of their life experiences' (Chase, 2003: 292).

**Ethical elements**

Prior to conducting my interviews with released men and women, I obtained ethical approval from the Charles Sturt University Ethics in Human Research Committee (EHRC). I outlined this formal ethical approval to the prisoner support agencies involved in the men's and women's participation. In addition, the research format and aide memoir were approved by the director and/or board of directors at each of the prisoner support organisations before the men and women were approached and later recruited.
(About me) This work is made from recycled materials from the farm. They are raw materials which is exactly how I feel.  
(Somebody's Daughter Theatre, 2005)
Chapter Four

Grounding the release setting within theoretical frameworks of power, risk and abjection

This chapter speaks to the theoretical frameworks underpinning this thesis's exploration of the release setting. Drawing on the current state of play in the release setting outlined in Chapter Two, and contextualising the current exploration within the identified gaps indexed in Chapter Three, this chapter extends to highlight key bodies of literature that are critical to the penetration of the prison release setting. It is interested in providing a foundation to explore the ways released men and women talk about their transition(s)\(^1\) from the prison to the community. In particular, this entails exploring how they see themselves through their experiences and their place within the broader social framework as a 'released prisoner'. The works of Foucault, Kristeva, Beck and Giddens are considered to develop these ideas. These works emerged as significant to exploring prisoner release as they provide frameworks to consider both mechanisms of disciplinary regulation and control, and the implications surrounding the return of removed and excluded individuals.

The theorists drawn on within this research have been extensively utilised within penological and criminological scholarship, yet minimally extended to engage discussions of prison release. Foucault's (1977) tenet of disciplinary power speaks to the processes of incarceration and regulation. The notions of discipline, regulation and control that emerge within his writings powerfully underscore social ideologies and responses to 'prisoners' and 'released prisoners'. In this regard his work informs study of the release setting through consideration of the nature of incarceration and disciplinary

\(^1\) Initially prison release speaks to the spatial movement from custodial confines to the broader community, but also furthers to engage with emotional, social, spiritual and political movements as men and women experience their spatial transition.
technologies. Moreover, his work provides the overarching framework from which further theoretical analysis of the release environment evolves. The second body of literature draws on the works of Giddens (1991) and Beck (2005) to consider the current penological climate of ‘risk’, and the ensuing concern for broader public ‘safety’. Specifically, the institutionalisation of ‘risk’ within penological, criminological and broader social frameworks in concert with the diminution of penal-welfare speaks to the ways in which released prisoners exist, or rather, are structurally positioned, within the social body. This literature extends Foucault’s notion of surveillance and locates the released prisoner in a most concentrated and technologically advanced realm of supervision and regulation. This material attaches itself to prisoner release through the dialogues of risk assessment, management and containment. Further, at the height of the contemporary West being flagged as ‘surveillance’ (Lyon, 1994; Foucault, 1977) and ‘risk’ (Beck, 2005) societies, notions of risk and social control are particularly critical to discussions of discipline and release. Foucault (1977), Giddens (1991) and Beck (2005) forge a consideration of released prisoners in the context of discipline, regulation and control.

From these first two bodies of literature emerges the notion of the ‘Other’ – the body that stands outside the moral, cultural and social margins. Scholarship that explores the ways in which individual and social identity is experienced and defined increasingly credits the role of the ‘Other’ (see for example du Gay, Evans & Redman. 2000; Hall, 1996; Rutherford, 1990). Such material suggests that society identifies itself and its structures through the distinction of another, as that which is outside, different, distinct, separate. To this end, the prisoner has increasingly been recognised and regarded as ‘Other’ within criminological discourse (Garland, 2002; Carlen, 2002c; Foucault, 1977). It is the mode of ‘constant division between the normal and abnormal’ that Foucault (1977: 199) argues facilitates subjectivities. As such, specific attention to such exclusion and differential positioning is significant. Kristeva’s (1982) work is drawn on to explore the idea of the abject and polluted body. Specifically, Kristeva’s picture of abjection and exclusion engages with the notions of isolation and rejection. What is particularly interesting about her work are the inherent difficulties she highlights in the ‘reacceptance’ of abject bodies.
Goffman's (1961) essays on the nature of inmates within 'total' institutions suggest the problematic nature of leaving institutional settings. The absence of a clear or direct path for transition, both physically and metaphorically, creates particular challenges for the individual in question. Moreover, this absence suggests a dislocation and fragmentation of identity at the entrance and exit to institutional settings. Bridging Kristeva's (1982) 'abjection' with Goffman's (1961) notion of problematic transition develops ideas of marginal states and indefinable spaces. Kristeva's work speaks to the very practice of incarceration and release as she considers firstly the expulsion and rejection of the 'other', and later the implications and practices of 'reaccepting' that which has been jettisoned and removed.

**Constructing the 'released prisoner'**

Key social\(^2\) and poststructuralist\(^3\) thinkers (Rosenheil & Seymour, 1999) inform study of the subjectivities and the spatial and temporal locations released men and women occupy through and within their experiences of incarceration. Poststructuralist and critical frameworks credit identification processes as fluid, fragmented and unfixed. Primarily concerned with cultural understandings of power, difference and wider social forces, such paradigms are particularly interested in the ways in which identity can be understood as culminating through difference. The works of Derrida, Foucault, Lacan and Kristeva emerge strongly within these paradigms and locate the subject as an effect of discourse, and a product of language and social frameworks. Considering the experiences and social positioning of released prisoners, it appears critical to consider the ways the 'prisoner' is created as a product of the prison institution and the ways the 'released prisoner' is a product of prison release and the inherent power relations occupying penal spaces. The

\(^2\) Drawing on works such as Mead's symbolic interaction, Giddens (1991) and Beck (2005), this literature locates the individual within and as a product of social frameworks. In particular, they explore the relationship between 'identity, modernity and late modernity' (Rosenheil & Seymour, 1999: 3). Identities are fluid products of social forces and individual choice. The individual is viewed as a knowable agent, 'self-mastering and self-monitoring' (Elliott, 2001: 41), and 'active, creative and conscious' (Rosenheil & Seymour, 1999: 5).

\(^3\) Further to social researchers, poststructuralists also credit identification processes as fluid, fragmented and unfixed; however, their focus rests on the cultural understandings of power, difference and wider social forces.
ways identities are fashioned intrinsic to the structures of power operating within social settings provide a platform to consider changing subjectivities as the prisoner leaves the physical setting of the carceral and resides in the broader social world.

Poststructuralist frameworks reject the notion of the individual as closed and essentially fixed, unchanging and independent, rather arguing that the individual is highly vulnerable and sensitive to external interactions and experiences. Drawing on these perspectives, of particular significance to explorations of the release setting is the way in which power structures and social frameworks manifest to locate individuals within particular social spaces. Poststructuralist theories that recognise power and difference as significant markers of subjectivity in particular extend avenues for the exploration of individuals within penal regimes. Most noted in this regard is Foucault's (1977) work on disciplinary power in which technologies of surveillance, classification and regulation provide a new modality of power – that of knowledge. The combination of this power/knowledge nexus activates the identification, categorisation and, in turn, control of individuals. Foucault's (1977) work provides an obvious backdrop to discussions of prisoner release, in particular, by exploring the released prisoner in the context of their incarceration. If we engage with the idea of the individual as a product and effect of discourse and language, it is critical to consider the ways in which released men and women talk about their experiences, and the ways such 'talk' informs their negotiation of, compliance and/or resistance to dominant power structures.

Foucault's (1977) ideas of power inform the position of the released prisoner in a number of ways. Primarily he conceives of power as operating through and within discourse, not located nor concentrated within specific individuals or institutions. It is therefore imperative to engage with these notions of power and discipline to understand the discourses through which the 'prisoner' is created. Moreover, it is important to consider the nature of such disciplinary technologies in the release setting to understand the discourses supporting the manufacture of the 'released prisoner'. Incorporating prisoner narratives to release explorations facilitates a space from which to consider the dialogue and mechanisms of resistance prisoners draw on in the face of dominant penal discourse.
(Foucault, 1977). Rejecting the individual as an autonomous, self-acting agent, Foucault argues that ‘the individual is an effect of power’ (Gordon, 1980: 98). More importantly, he suggests that ‘power is exercised rather than possessed, not solely exercised by or privy to the dominant class’, but rather it infiltrates social systems that sustain and inform social divides. He understands the individual as a ‘vehicle of power, not its [point] of application’ (Gordon, 1980: 93), in which the individual is both the object and subject of technologies of power. Of particular importance is Foucault’s emphasis on the positive nature of regimes of power. He argues that the descriptions of power as exclusive, repressive, masking and concealing negate the productive manner in which power operates to produce realities and domains of knowledge about the individual and the social world. The knowledge gained from and about the individual – through disciplinary power – ‘belong to this production’ (Foucault, 1977: 194). If this is so, we can begin to question the ways in which the released prisoner is an effect of regimes of power, and at the same time enquire into the ways the released body structures, feeds and challenges power/knowledge arrangements.

Driving his thesis of disciplinary power, Foucault (1977) argues that the changing face of punishment (from public torture to private incarceration) brought new technologies of control and surveillance. Such technologies enabled a greater knowledge of individuals and extended the walls of the carceral to penetrate the structures of the broader social world. Arguing for the natural dispersal of disciplinary power ideologies and practices from the prison to the broader community, Foucault’s (1977) work is suggestive of not only the penetration of disciplinary power into other social institutions but, more importantly, the continued focus on the prisoner as the subject of disciplinary power. The change in punishment technology and development of new understandings of individuals were characterised by processes of normalisation, enabling the ‘government of life processes’ (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 68). Disciplinary power extended technologies of surveillance, regulation and comparison of everyday life to the government. Cohen (1985: 220) suggests that the dispersal through the social body facilitated systems of distribution that were ‘simultaneously a way of classifying people [and] placing them into separate spaces’. The supervisory and regulatory technologies inherent within the prison
‘disseminated throughout society’ (Foucault, 1977: 212). Social institutions – medical, educational, religious, familial and the like – also embraced the role of regulating and disciplining populations (Aungles, 1994; Foucault, 1977). Specific to the released prisoner, we need to question the ways in which broader social institutions regulate and control released men and women. Moreover, we need to examine the nature of subtle regimes of power\(^4\) circulating within the social body that watch, control and regulate released prisoners.

Contextualising power within the penological landscape. Foucault (1977) asserts that the development of the prison introduced the great project of exclusion. Offenders were no longer subject to public displays of torture, but rather were physically removed from the social order. The isolation and exclusion of offenders from society facilitates not only new projects of discipline, aimed at the soul rather than the body, but also increased technologies of surveillance. This new technique of discipline, and more particularly of power, was far more forceful than the physical hold on the body, more penetrating to the social order than public spectacles, and far more effectual than any punishment techniques previously embraced. This significant moment witnessed the arrival of a new character of power: ‘masked’ (Foucault, 1977: 17). It purported to be a way of monitoring, knowing and controlling the individual in such a way that they begin to monitor themselves. Drawing on Bentham’s panopticon, Foucault (177: 195) asserted that prisoners became their own guardians, their own instruments of conformity, and manifested their own subjection. This impels us to question the ways in which released prisoners monitor their own behaviour and conduct, pursuant to the learnings of their prison sentence. Moreover, the ways in which their conditioned sensitivity to surveillant and regulatory regimes, within the prison, informs the release setting is worth exploring. Are there similar disciplinary power systems operating within the broader social body? To what extent are these mechanisms (in)visible, and in what ways do they inform the conduct and understandings of released prisoners?

\(^{4}\)Specifically those outside correctional mechanisms of parole, probation, periodic detention and the like.
Disciplinary power as an instrumentality of regulation and control

Foucault (1977) suggests disciplinary power to be the greatest invention of bourgeois society, becoming the primary means through which the cohesion of the social body was ensured and maintained. The new mechanisms of regulation established a new vehicle of social control, and incarceration enabled the criminal to be observed and classified, and in turn regulated and controlled. Manifesting itself through surveillance technologies, normalising judgement and examination, disciplinary power became a medium through which the control of bodies was ensured. This new technique of 'invisible' power ascribed the criminal body as the marker of transgression and abnormality, and as a locale for a new kind of knowledge and power.

The machinery of disciplinary power is divisible (and operational) in three key ways. Firstly, discipline requires detailed observation and the individuation of its targets. The cumulative observation of large numbers of individuals provided an impulse towards the keeping of records, the writing of reports, monitoring and inspection. Secondly, discipline operates through norms and normalising judgements. In observing and knowing the individual, power creates markers for social conduct and normality. Binary divisions distinguish the clean from the unclean, the mad from the sane, the criminal from the non-criminal. It is through and from within these divisions that examinations and comparisons are effectual. The examination, combining surveillance and normalisation technologies, utilises markers (and the knowledge such markers produce) to classify and categorise individuals. It becomes the site for the transformation of the 'economy of visibility into the exercise of power' (Foucault, 1977: 187). The operation of disciplinary power within the prison setting establishes the 'prisoner', and assists in understanding the ways in which power technologies are played out within the social order and facilitate the creation of the 'released prisoner'.

The authoritative gaze

The control of bodies is dependent on the optics of power. Foucault (1977: 187) argues that power traditionally operated and was given impetus precisely through its grandeur of
visibility. Disciplinary power, in contrast, 'is exercised through its invisibility'. Foucault (1977) draws on Bentham's panopticon, both as an architectural design and model for the operation of power technologies in their purest form. In doing so he forwards a visual connection to the ways power manifests itself in the carceral setting. More specifically, Foucault (1977) identifies the ways in which such power elongates the locations of surveillance and control, yet operates largely unnoticed in the shadows. The panopticon controls bodies primarily through its efficient organisation of space and maximisation of the surfaces from which surveillance and observation feed and operate. This is not so much an architectural model embodying power, but rather a means for the spatial and temporal operation of power. It is the efficient organisation of space for the purposes of supreme surveillance, control and regulation.

Foucault's (1977) ideas of surveillance speak to the current research on prisoner release in two key ways. Firstly, engaging with the climate of the contemporary West, our rapidly expanding technological advancements and resources (more broadly than prison and release) have positioned society as a 'surveillant' society in which day-to-day conduct becomes subject to the suspicion of ever growing mechanisms of surveillance. Secondly, engaging with the current penological climate, the contemporary West is also witness to an ever expanding and impenetrable realm of prisoner and released prisoner surveillance. These ideas are considered below.

Technologies of surveillance and regulation have become a customary part of life in the modern world. Contemporary society has extended surveillance and monitoring technologies from key areas of daily government to almost every area of day-to-day life. We have arrived 'at the verge of a carceral city, a panoptic society of observation and discipline ... integrated into social life' (Ainley, 1998: 91). Ainley (1998: 99) suggests that the contemporary manifestation of Bentham's panopticon turns 'every public space

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5 An architectural design for a prison in which a central watch tower was circularly surrounded with individual prison cells. Inherent in such design was the ability for the guard to monitor all prisoners within their cells from this central tower position – pursuant to which, individual prisoners were always under the (potential) surveillance of the guard, and therefore were proposed to behave as if surveillance was unending, constant and total.

6 Such as recording for medical, educational, security, religious, identification purposes and the like.
into a prison-without-walls, and some private spaces into film sets or observation points’. Closed circuit television (CCTV), for example, is installed for security purposes ‘in almost every institutional space open to the public. Its purpose is not to invade privacy ... but to supply information for management purposes’ (Lianos, 2000: 271). This ‘intrusion into public space is generally accepted unquestionably’ (Ainley, 1998: 91), credited as an instrumentality of control and safety in the modern world. Ainley (1998) suggests that this new ‘silent policing’ has become so extensive that it may be less likely to incite ‘self-vigilance’. Regardless of its direct impact on the government of individuals, such technologies have facilitated the provision of a new abundance of knowledge about individual existence.

Technologies of control and regulation have become so functional and embedded within our daily life that individuals are rarely aware of their penetration into day-to-day experiences. Manning (1998: 261) suggests that the media act as sites where ‘both instrumental and expressive conduct takes place’, and operate to ‘contour, prize or dictate behaviour’. Lumby (2002: 107) furthers that the media grounds individuals within technologies of surveillance and self-monitoring, such that ‘normality becomes mediated ... always measured against images of normality’. Enabling and forwarding mechanisms of classification, regulation, association and distinction. Manning (1998: 267) argues that individuals within society ‘are exposed, made transparent to various degrees, and rendered the objects of a specialised field of knowledge relations’ (Manning, 1998: 267). An increasingly surveillant society has rendered every aspect of social life knowable, measurable and controllable, and facilitated a ‘growth of regulatory agencies and ... professionals supervising ever wider aspects of social life in even greater detail’ (Hirst, 2000: 283). The government of everyday life has been woven ‘into the fabric of existence itself’ (Rose, 2000: 327).

In considering the contemporary penological climate, many examples can be given of the penetration and intensification of surveillance (and arguably intrusion) into the individual spaces and lives of offenders. For instance, Global Positioning Systems (GPS) specific to the permanent tracking of serious sex offenders are currently trialling in New South
Wales and Victoria, with plans to soon commence in Queensland. A permanent tracker bracelet and portable GPS device is secured to the offender’s body, ‘allowing a central base to track their every move’ (Todd, 2006: 1). At the cost to corrections of roughly $1,000 less than a prison term of one year, Police and Corrective Services Minister Judy Spence said of the projects, ‘we are most concerned about stopping these people ... from offending in the future, [rather] than their civil liberties’ (Todd, 2006: 1). Similarly, sex offender registers, most notably in America, provide an array of personal details about convicted offenders. Virginia’s State Police Sex Offender Registry, for example, details a particularly extensive list of particulars beside a passport photo and the current address of the registered offender.

At the click of a button, these sites provide the viewer with very specific details about registered offenders, including their current residence, occupation and the nature of their offences. More generally, internet sites such as CriminalCheck.com, Records.com, Private Eye, and People Search offer significant amounts of personal and very intimate information about citizens of the globe. These services purport that users can utilise the sites ‘to locate and/or identify individuals for personal and/or business use’ (criminalcheck.com). Scanning the information they provide raises some critical questions and concerns regarding the kinds of information stored (and accessible) about individuals. More critically, it would ensue that those most discredited by this ‘sharing’ of personal information – in this instance those with criminal, drug or incarceration records – are the most vulnerable in the face of such accessibility. Crimnet.com is an Australian site whose mission is to ‘provide the world’s best information service on crime and

2 Including photo, date of birth, sex, height, hair colour, race, weight, eye colour, ethnicity, address (verified, yes or no), year of conviction(s), relationship to victim, whether they are under supervision, their offence, sex of the victim, registration, sentence details including time served and probation, work, schooling, county etc.
4 For example, adoption, arrest, bankruptcy, child support, court records, correctional files, criminal files, criminal indictments, divorce, DMV, DNA, DUI, grave finders, identification verification, ID theft records, inmate locators, personal history, prison records, civil and criminal court filings, voter registration, naturalisation records, parole and police records, sentencing files, reverse phone directories, to mention only a few of the types of information on offer.
criminals'. 'Recent laws such as the Freedom of Information Act have solicited the process [of obtaining] or being able to access public and private information' (Investigationnet.com). More critically, the sites assert the legality of such services and affirm the right to access such documentation about anyone. To this end they suggest, 'you will be shocked at the volumes of information that are accessible online ... you are not limited to information only in one country, you can access information about anyone anywhere in the world' (Investigationnet.com). Crimenet.com conveys that 'details of criminal convictions are public records in most Western democracies and it is a generally accepted principle of privacy rights that this information should always be accessible'. Whilst such surveillant penetration and provision of information is not as easily accessible within Australia, the implications of this widely accessible and 'no questions asked' philosophy to offender information cannot go unnoticed, nor unquestioned.

The balance sheet of criminality
The operation of disciplinary mechanisms of power are not ensured by law, but rather, according to Foucault (1977), by normalisation. Discipline, rather then being constituted by 'minor offences', is characteristically associated with the standards that the subject of discipline comes to internalise or manifest in behaviour. Standards of proper conduct put into place modes of regulation characterised by interventions designed to correct deviations and secure compliance and conformity. Citizens only become prisoners because they have been defined as having violated societal norms: as normal subjects they can properly be made the subjects of a fully coercive system. The labelling of their transgression serves to both strengthen the surveillance they fall prey to and (re)enforce their positions of 'other'. Maintaining segregation and classification in this way - establishing distinct binary divisions of normal/abnormal, other/non-other, criminal/non-criminal - the purity of such markers is strengthened and reinforced. As McHoul and Grace (1993: 68) argue, the 'dividing line between the normal and the abnormal is crucial

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12 Child protection legislation permits New South Wales police to provide details (name, address, photo, criminal history etc.) of child sex offenders 'passed on as a last resort to those under threat' (The Age, 2004). In addition, for example, Coddington has published two books: The Australian paedophile and sex offender index (1997) and The 1996 paedophile and sex offender index (New Zealand). Internet sites such as M.A.K.O "Safecare" Notification – WA – 2004 exist in response to Western Australia being the only Australian state without mandatory reporting. The extent to which such information is widely available within Australia, however, is considerably minimal when compared to those of America.
in a social organisation dedicated to the administration of life'. Discipline results in the securing of normalisation by embedding a pattern of norms disseminated throughout daily life and secured through surveillance.

The creation of parameters, measures of deviation and the establishment of routines are pivotal to normalisation technologies. Engaging with the released prisoner, Foucault (1977) argues that disciplinary practices extend from the prison to the broader community. He suggests that ‘judges of normality are everywhere’, and the prison regime ‘with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support in modern society, of normalising power’ (Foucault, 1977: 304). The knowledge gained through the impetus of disciplinary power is ‘institutionalised and incorporated into everyday life’ (Clegg, 1997: 484). Such mechanisms are disproportionately focused on those identified as transgressing social sensibilities and thus most subject to the impact of disciplinary power.

Foucault (1977) suggests that rather than facilitating the rehabilitation of prisoners for their release into the broader community, prisons operate to fix prisoners in terms of their abnormal status. The process of incarceration ascribes men and women with a distinct label of deviance and social transgression, locating them within both the realms of penalty and broader social understandings of deviance. The surveillance and knowledge derived within the release environment augment the records and categorisations established within the prison setting. In effect the prison sets up a ‘penal accountancy, constantly brought up to date, [making] it possible to obtain the punitive balance sheet of each individual’ (Foucault, 1977: 180). To this end, we can ask: what happens to the measurement and categorisations specific to prisoners when they are released from the prison walls? Further, it can be questioned whether the markers of deviance and offending vacillate as men and women cross the threshold from the carceral to the community. If we engage with Foucault's (1977) idea that disciplinary power penetrates the social fabric and, more particularly, that judges of normality are omnipresent within its structures, in what way do we ‘judge’ and ‘measure’ released prisoners? Against
which markers of normality, and based on what kinds of surveillance? The analysis within Chapter Five of this thesis explores these ideas in particular detail.

The measurement and comparison of individuals, whilst promoting conformity and homogeneity, work to individualise members of the social body. Foucault (1977: 193) argues that ‘one of the prime effects of disciplinary power was to produce, precisely, individuality’. He furthers that the ‘differences, peculiarities, deviance and eccentricities are ever more highlighted in a system of controls concerned to seek them out ... those upon whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualised’ (Foucault, 1977: 193). ‘The intention may have been to produce regularity, but the effect was quite the opposite: [disciplinary power created] a multiplicity of disparate and variegated identities’ (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 72). Foucault (1977: 183) concludes that disciplinary power ‘compares, differentiates, hierarchises, homogenises, excludes. In short, it normalises’. To this end, it can be asked: how are released prisoners individualised within the broader community? More particularly, if their ‘balance-sheet’ has been largely derived from the penal setting or the specific surveillance of transgression and deviance, can we assume that the released prisoner is measured in much the same way as the prisoner? In the release context, we can ask to what extent such sharing of classifications (between prisoner and released) is negligent of release conduct and experience, and unduly holds the released prisoner within their ‘prisoner’ subject position. In what ways can or do released prisoners encourage a new and positive ‘balance-sheet’ from which they may be measured, and in what ways do or can they resist, negotiate and challenge markers and measures of criminality and ‘prisoner’ positions?

Penal researchers have critiqued the civil, social and democratic disenfranchisement of prisoners and released prisoners (see for example Petersilia, 2003; Taxman, Young, & Byrne, 2002b; Uggen, 2002; Brown & Wilkie, 2002). Such disenfranchisement will be considered in more detail in the analysis to follow. However, the awareness of such boundaries and normalising judgement is important to flag here as it is indicative of a continuation of mechanisms of disciplinary power (normalisation and examination) into the release setting; in particular, it is vital to consider the ways released men and women
experience and understand such barriers, borne within their offending and incarceration, at the expiration of their prison sentence (punishment). In this regard, we can further question the ways categories and classifications, cherished within criminological and broader social discussions of prisoners, are or have the potential to be challenged, negotiated, resisted, refurbished or dissolved at the expiration of terms of imprisonment.

As current literature attests, the increased tendency to engage punitive approaches, restrictions and supervision of released prisoners operates to identify their ‘deviance’ and strengthen the classifications of deviance and criminality. Indeed, the aim of punishment is to make certain individuals ‘feel the offence they have committed ... a humiliation, [and] a removal from office’ (La Salle in Foucault, 1977: 178). In this way we can question the ways in which released prisoners do or are able to move beyond their ‘offence’ and structure for themselves a reality and existence external to their crime and incarceration. If we engage with the ‘removal of office’ as the removal of social, democratic and civil participation of prisoners, to what extent, and in what ways, does (or can) such office become partially or fully reinstated?

*Measuring against an inaccessible norm*

Combining mechanisms of surveillance and normalising judgements, it is the examination that ‘makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish’ individuals (Foucault, 1977: 184). Markers of difference enable the categorisation and segregation of individuals, and extend the economy of surveillance to the exercise and practices of power (Foucault, 1977: 187). The projects of surveillance have facilitated markers and boundaries of difference through normalisation. The examination measures individuals to and against each other and defines the social parameters of conduct and acceptance. Rather than emitting potent signs of power and control or imposing marks on its subjects, the examination ‘holds [individuals] in a mechanism of objectification’ (Foucault, 1977: 187). The examination has become institutionalised within mechanisms of discipline (Foucault, 1977) and penetrates the social setting beyond punishment and corrections.

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[13] Considered more fully under the heading of risk below in this chapter, and within subsequent analysis.
alone. In the prison context, examination begins as the prisoner enters the prison gates and begins a series of tests and searches (Denborough, 1996; Goffman, 1961) that operate to both establish the 'prisoner' subjectivity, and at the same time classify the prisoner within the penal framework. The prison becomes an 'examining apparatus' in which offender bodies are watched, classified and compared (Foucault, 1997: 185).

Examination completes the cyclical nature of disciplinary power as it compares and contrasts individuals, purports to incite and promote conformity and, most importantly, self-governance. The threat of constant visibility 'maintains the individual in his subjection' (Foucault, 1977: 187). Encased within the machinery of disciplinary power, the prisoner experiences and is the subject of the cyclical and enduring process of observation, classification and examination. As the 'laboratory of power', [the panopticon] gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men's behaviour', the knowledge and power ensuring such 'experimentation' expands the 'surfaces on which power is exercised' (Foucault, 1977: 204). As a subject of the disciplinary machine, the individual 'is seen, but does not see ... is the object of information never a subject of communication' (Foucault, 1977: 200). This idea speaks to the notion of the silenced prisoner, who is the 'experiencer' of prison and release, yet minimally and infrequently the narrator.

In the contemporary context, Foucault (1977: 227) attests:

The point of penalty today would be an indefinite discipline: an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgement that would at the same time be the constitution of a file that was never closed, the calculated leniency of a penalty that would be interlaced with the ruthless curiosity of an examination, a procedure that would be at the same time the permanent measure of a gap in relation to an inaccessible norm.

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14 For example, within institutional borders of education, medicine and welfare.
This quotation can be tied to the release experience in a number of ways. Firstly, it indicates a perennial discipline and ‘interrogation without end’, suggestive of a continued (punitive) surveillance of released men and women. Secondly, it speaks to the dispersal and infinite expansion/existence of surfaces of surveillance and examination. Thirdly, the ‘running balance sheet’ that sustains over time and is constantly fed indicates the impossibility of erasing or denying records of deviance. Lastly, Foucault suggests that penalty, in its totality, is measuring the ‘gap in relation to a space of normality that either does not exist or is unreachable (for particular members of the social body)’. ‘The prison, and no doubt punishment in general, is not intended to eliminate offences, but rather to distinguish them, to distribute them, to use them’ (Foucault. 1977: 272). Petersilia (2003: 19) speaks to the potency of ‘using’ such markers, crediting that the impediments to ‘sealing or expunging adult criminal records ... scars one for life’. The analysis chapter to follow engages with released men’s and women’s narratives to explore the ways experiences of imprisonment impact life after release. Moreover, it explores the ramifications and consequences of records of criminality and transgression.

**The institutionalisation of risk within rhetoric and practice**

Notions of risk\(^{15}\) are not new developments within penological thought or the social body more generally. Ideas of risk have been given impetus by the theoretical work of Beck (2005) and Giddens (1991), and utilised in contextualising the contemporary West within changing political, cultural, economic and capitalist frames. These theorists consider the changing nature of social sensibilities towards conceptualisations of risk, trust and safety and argue that the shift or ‘crisis’ of modernist and industrial ideologies created uncertainty and a loss of faith. Changing scientific and philosophical orientation has informed the state of social sensibilities and the extent to which citizens are aware of and respond to their social world. Giddens (1991: 112) argues that the penetration of ‘abstract

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\(^{15}\) The basic tenets of risk animate a (future) state of being open to change, loss or injury. Concerned with future happenings, risks are contextualised within probability statements that infuse spatial, temporal, physical, political, and institutional frames. In the course of everyday life individuals expose themselves to multiple risks where almost every activity requires an understanding and calculation of risk as a threat of danger or vulnerability.
systems\(^{16}\) into day-to-day life, coupled with the dynamic nature of knowledge, means the awareness of risk seeps into the actions of almost everyone. Beck (2005) and Giddens (1991) assert that the culmination of discourses of risk gave birth to several key developments, the most notable of which are the inherent need and demand for security and protection, and the growing strength of technologies of insurance. Their works refer to these concepts in much greater detail and are not repeated here, save for the preface they provide to conceptualisations of risk within penological and criminological paradigms. Clear and Cadora (2001: 65) argue that the rise of instrumentalities of risk are not necessarily engaging with new frameworks of crime control, but rather shifting the ‘context within which the techniques of control are rationalised’ and played out. Technological advancement and scientific explorations, however, have become the driving forces behind the expanded scope by which contemporary society does, and is able to, know, understand and inform the lives and movements of the modern citizen (Clear & Cadora, 2001).

Ericson and Haggerty (1997: 70) suggest that contemporary society is embodied ‘by institutions organised around fear, risk assessment, and the provision of security’, where institutions (such as insurance agents of various kinds) ‘reconfigure the community into communications about risk in every conceivable aspect of life’. Risk has become institutionalised within the contemporary culture to the extent that an array of systematic and structural insurance agents and institutions specialise in the insurance of risk in almost every aspect of social life.\(^{17}\) Preoccupations with risk have coined modern society as a ‘risk society’ (Beck, 2005). Yet according to Giddens (1991: 3), today’s society is not inherently more risky than previous societies: rather concepts of risk and actuarialism have become the principal techniques through which individuals and institutions organise and make sense of their worlds (Hope, 2001: 194).

\(^{16}\) Symbolic tokens and systems of expert knowledge. Giddens (1991: 242) gives examples of the modern monetary system as an ‘abstract system’.

\(^{17}\) For example, medical insurance, house and possession insurance, car insurance, employment insurance, life insurance and the like.
Responding to dialogues of risk are systematic and structural technologies of insurance, or 'ontological security' as coined by Giddens (1991). These mechanisms provide both real and perceived protection from impending and threatening future events. The quest for security, safety and continuity beckons modes of protection on which social agents and institutions alike have become reliant. In the context of contemporary criminalisation, incarceration insures the community against (momentary) offending, by incarcerating the individual, such that the inherent risks of that prisoner are perceived as minimal within that space. In the context of prisoner release, we see correctional, political and social agents employ a number of insurances specific to the prisoner’s presence within the broader community. Specifically, probation and parole, whilst continuations of penal sentences, are inherently aimed at the minimisation and potential containment of risk (Simpson, 1999; Broadhurst, 1990). In addition, offender registers, directed at violent and sexual offenders (considered high-risks to the community): victim notification; conditional release; conditions of drug court or rehabilitation and treatment facilities; limitations on welfare, health and other social benefits all operate to minimise, contain and manage the potential risk released men and women are seen to pose to society.

Underlying conceptualisations of risk are concerns for security and safety, which Lianos (2000: 268) suggests are now major considerations at all levels of social life. The quest for security has been, and is, driving the inherent dependence upon and expansion of mechanisms and technicians of insurance. Hudson (2001: 150) cites Ericson and Cariere and suggests that the ‘demand for knowledge useful in risk definition, assessment, management and distribution is reconfiguring social organisation’. Specific to penological discussions, Lianos (2000: 261) indicates that ‘risk [and security seeking], not crime, have become the central registers of social interaction [and] segregation’ (Lianos, 2000: 261). Society is now assessed and risk-profiled conditional to ‘whatever characteristics the specialists responsible for the definition of [danger and threat] have constituted as risk factors’ (Castel in Hudson, 2001). These ideas speak to the institutionalisation of risk – not its dispersal throughout the social fabric, but rather the ways in which ideas of risk and security are institutionally grounded. As Giddens (1991) noted above, it is not that our current epoch is inherently more risky or at risk than those
previous, but rather the ways we define, understand and respond to risk have elevated dialogues of risk to platform status. Building on Foucault’s (1977) ideas of normality and normalising judgements, specific to contemporary unionism with risk, Ericson and Haggerty (1997: 92) assert that ‘deviation from the mean is in fact the norm’. Every member of a population that is risk-profiled stands along a continuum of risk; in turn ‘conceptions of risk are now displacing conceptions of normality and deviance as the dominant mentality about people and populations’. When we tie these ideas to the released prisoner, we can ask whether our concern with the risk inherent to prison release is indicative of a more dangerous offender, or new understandings and developments in the ways we conceive of and respond to prisoners themselves.

Critical discussion and analysis of risk have been considered extensively (for detailed discussions see Beck, 2005; Giddens, 1991). Within criminological enquiry, risk within criminological frameworks (see for example O’Malley, 1992; Simon, 1987), policing risk societies (see for example Ericson & Haggerty, 1997), justice in a risk society (see for example Stenson & Sullivan, 2001), public safety (Matthews & Pitts, 2001) and the like have all been explored in some detail. However, a detailed (re)exploration of this material is not pertinent here. This section is interested rather in identifying the dominance of discourses of risk in the social body more generally, and the offender body more specifically. To acknowledge the elevation of the released prisoner within frameworks of risk in concert with the withering of the rehabilitative and welfare ideal is of primary importance. In the analysis of risk (Chapter Eight) that follows, release narratives will inform the nature of the release environment as a ‘risk environment’ and expand conceptualisations of risk from released prisoners as risks to engage with the released prisoner as both subject to risk, and object of risk.

Further to Foucault’s (1977) mechanism of disciplinary power, risk technologies become paramount in a social climate in which technological advancement has broadened existing sites and created new spaces for the development of knowledge and power. Ericson and Haggerty (1997: 115) suggest that computer maturation and associated infrastructures have ‘made it easier to collect, process, store, and distribute risk
knowledge'. Such expansion in turn is demanding on technical experts (of risk) to elevate and, more importantly, use new knowledge(s) of risk. They suggest 'computers widen, deepen, and routinise surveillance because they transcend space and time, permit invisible or barely visible forms of monitoring [and] open the door to actuarial analysis' (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997: 115).

Garland (2002: 194) argues that the 'desire for security, orderliness, and control, for the management of risk and the taming of chance is an underlying theme in any culture'. He refers to spatial, situational, systematic, social and temporal controls and the 'imposition of more intensive regimes of regulation, inspection and control' (2002: 194), the consequence of which is an increasingly 'less tolerant and inclusive' (Garland, 2002: 194) society that is 'particularly negative and defensive, no longer concerned with obtaining something good, but rather preventing the worst' (Garland, 2002: 195), 'targeted against particular social groups rather than universally imposed' (Beck, 2005: 49).

In the context of prisoner release, dynamic and static risk and recidivism factors and/or predictors are utilised by correctional agents to assess, manage and treat offending and soon-to-be-released men and women (Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 2001; Taxman, 1998; Stenson & Sullivan, 2001). Actuarial instruments such as the Salient Factor Score (SFS) (Hoffman, 1983), Community Risk/Needs Management Scale (Motiuk, 1997), Level of Service Inventory (LSI-R) (Andrews & Bonta, 1995) and the California Personality Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1987) facilitate platforms from which to understand predicted generalisations of personality, criminogenic need and risk. Static predictors of recidivism such as age, gender, criminal history and familial background are frequently engaged by penal agents in the assessment, management and treatment of offending men and women (Gendreau, Little & Goggin, 2001, 2001). During and prior to periods of release, static risk factors inform parole applications, prison and prison classification transfers, and eligibility for early release schemes, work release and participation within community services (Silver & Miller, 2002; Allan & Dawson, 2004). The engagement with dynamic risk factors such as personality, individualised needs, attributes, skill sets and the like has
received more resistance in the sense that these issues can be perceived to be unreliable or overly subjective. Much of the attention to risk assessment and risk claims in the release context has been directed towards: recidivism by sexual offenders (see for example Barbaree, Seto & Langton, 2001; Allan & Dawson, 2004); violent offenders (see for example Hanson, 2005; Mills, Kroner & Bah, 2003); and juveniles (see for example Funk, 1999; Thompson & Putnins, 2003). In particular, concern has been directed to the ways in which returning men and women pose a threat, security risk and problem to the social landscape (Petersilia & Turner, 2001; Taxman, Young & Byrne, 2002a). Whilst such safety concerns attend to the protection of the broader environment, they limit consideration of the ways in which returning men and women experience and/or respond to their changing environment (prison to the community), changing relationships (familial and other friendships as a result of prison and/or release), changing skill sets (through education and/or treatment programs), and changing sense of self (in terms of identifying as a prisoner, offender, released prisoner and the like).

Hannah-Moffat (1999: 72) suggests the current dialogues of risk have provided ‘valuable insights’ for our engagement with risk and its functioning within the fabric of social institutions. However, she raises some critical issues that have remained unaddressed within the contemporary literature. Most pertinent to discussions of prisoner release is her call for consideration of the ‘moral and political aspects of categories of risk [and] the differential impact of actuarial risk claims on different populations’ (Hannah-Moffat, 1999: 71). In addition, current research also needs to be directed to those most implicated in discussions of penological and criminological risk. From this vantage, release narratives have the potential to shed some light on the ways in which the application of risk is experienced by those identified and ‘managed’ within the risk borders. To this end, this research seeks to extend the current bordered dialogue of prisoners as risk and engage with the differential ways in which risk can be contextualised and tied to the experiences and understandings of men and women in their release environments. In addition, it will consider the ‘differential impact of actuarial risk claims’ to engage with the released prisoner as at risk, of risk, and in risk.
Defining the space of abjection

Kristeva’s ideas of abjection facilitate further discussions of prisoner release and, more particularly, the social space released prisoners occupy. She identifies as abject those things that stand against order and form, those entities that disgust and threaten established practices and ideologies, ‘what does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite ... the traitor ... liar, the criminal’ (Kristeva, 1982: 4). Representing ambiguity and immorality, she argues abjection is not caused by uncleanliness, but rather constitutes that which ‘disturbs identity, system [and] order’ (Kristeva, 1982: 4). Kristeva (1982) uses the body as a metaphor to facilitate her discussion of abjection, and speaks to the daily process of the human body expelling and rejecting objects of waste. She notes that the process of this expulsion and the nature of that which is jettisoned establishes, defines and reinforces the boundaries of the body. Moreover, ‘what is jettisoned disgusts and threatens’ the body (Hyde. 1997: 212). Kristeva engages with Douglas’s (1966) reference to entities of spittle, vomit and excrement to reinforce the severity and distinct separateness between the abject and the clean. Kristeva argues that it is only through the delimitation of the ‘clean and proper body that the symbolic order ... becomes possible’ (Gross, 1995: 86). From these ideas we engage with the abject as an unwanted and threatening entity that is expelled and rejected for the sake of the clean and secure body. Tied to the current study, we can engage with the social body in the same way Kristeva engages with the human body, ‘to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body’ (Douglas, 1966: 115). Identifying objects (or individuals) that are unwanted or threatening to the social order, society responds with mechanisms of rejection and exclusion. Such exclusion is not bound by spatial or temporal boundaries, and typically objectifies marginal groups such as those divisible by race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and the like. In contextualising the position of the released prisoner within their space and experience of ‘prisoner’, Kristeva’s ‘abjection’ provides a framework to consider the prisoner as excluded and rejected within social frameworks.

‘Paradigms of exclusion’ are increasingly relied upon in the quest to maintain order (Bauman, 2000: 208). To this end Gross (1995: 86) suggests ‘proper sociality and
subjectivity are based on the expulsion or exclusion of the improper, the unclean, and the disorderly elements of its ... existence that must be separated from its clean and proper self'. Whilst Gross (1995: 87, 93) indicates the exclusion of the abject is unrealistic in any finality, she argues the ‘abject requires some mode of control or exclusion to keep it at a safe distance from the symbolic and its orderly proceedings’. Moreover, Burgin (1990: 117) argues the exclusion and removal of the abject is necessary to ‘clear a space for ourselves’. In the broader social context, social responses to abjection are directed at treating and confronting the abject through ‘ritualised identification ... and corresponding social rituals of expulsion and purification’ (Hyde, 1997: 206). Building on Foucault’s (1977) discussions of the ‘other’, Kristeva’s (1982) state of abjection can be likened to the role offending bodies play within the social order. As Hyde (1997: 205) indicates, it is ‘disfavoured bodies [that are] constructed as threats to the social order’. The order and pattern of the social body represent distinct boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable conduct. The abject is threatening, Gross (1995: 89) argues, because it ‘demonstrates the impossibility of clear-cut borders, lines of demarcation ... order and disorder’. Individuals who are perceived as endangering the established parameters of social and moral conduct are thus rendered abject. Practices of revulsion and expulsion are natural responses to abjection. Bauman (2000: 206) suggests that ‘order and form are first and foremost about separation, amputation, excision, expurgation. [and] exclusion’. He further that such responses act to normalise and rationalise the presence of the abject, ‘promot[ing] the proper by sharpening the sights of the improper’. in essence isolating the disfavoured entity (Bauman, 2000: 206). In this sense, it is not that criminals or prisoners are in themselves necessarily ‘threatening’ or ‘abject’, but rather their transgressions expose the fragility of social boundaries and the ease with which such parameters may be crossed or challenged. On this Kristeva (1982: 15) writes, ‘the abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts ... takes advantage of them, the better to deny them’.

As human bodies essentially define their boundaries ‘through the expulsion of wastes’ (Hyde, 1997: 205), the social body also delineates boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours through that which it expels. The ‘purity [of the social order] is
maintained through the expulsion of the polluting member’ (Hyde, 1997: 225). The rejection of particular individuals within society not only labels those who are removed but also those who remain. Hyde (1977: 211) suggests, in particular, that ‘legal bodies are constructed in order to cast out from society .... [those] bodies in disfavoured ... categories’. In this regard, prisoners can be understood as having been expelled and jettisoned to the prison because they have disrupted the social order. The threat and disgust of the excluded in this context have the potential to inform the ways and manner in which the abject is dealt with upon its return. We can begin to engage with the way(s) criminal bodies, returning to the community after their release from prison, are (re)accepted.

Bridging theoretical terrains

Social aversion to deviance and transgression are structured around the concern for containing threats to and maintaining the purity and safety of the social order. Social sensibilities delimit clear parameters of hygienic social conduct and engage citizens in both the sustenance of and existence within these margins. The lines of acceptability and appropriateness encumber a fragility that is forcibly supported and strengthened through correction, repulsion and exclusion. Kristeva (1982) raises ideas of borders and structures of cleanliness and order, and we can engage these ideas to consider the moral foundations and hygiene of the social body as scaffolding these perimeters. The deviation of social structures and laws transverse established boundaries and it is the men’s and women’s conduct beyond these parameters that deems them most threatening. Whilst the frames of order and pattern operate to exclude chaos and disruption from the social body, it is these same systems that give rise to the existence and penetration of dirt and defilement. Through systems of identification, classification and active exclusion, in concert with Foucault’s (1977) ideas of disciplinary power, society creates, engages, and responds to the abject and pollutant. ‘Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering’, yet, in turn, it is ‘only by exaggerating difference ... that [a] semblance of order is created’ and maintained (Douglas, 1966: 35, 4). Kristeva (1982: 65) suggests it is the ‘logic of exclusion that causes the abject to exist’, and so it is from these understandings that ideas
of deviance are informed by notions of otherness. (ab)normality, pollution and contagions (Kristeva, 1982; Foucault, 1977; Douglas, 1966).

Offences against the person, property and the state all give rise to concerns for public safety, and the justice system has an impressive resume in advocating their concerns for safety and citizenry protection. As penal reform and political movements play tug-of-war with conservative and radical punishment ideologies, the general consensus in recent years has been towards toughening punitive approaches. According to Garland (2002: 10), the resurgence in the spectacle of crime has seen the ‘stock welfarist image of the delinquent as a disadvantaged, deserving subject of need ... all but disappeared [replaced with images of] dangerous predators, and incorrigible career criminals’. As Douglas (1966: 135) attributes ideas of dirt and contagions to the support of broader moral values we can begin to contextualise the nature of penal reform and development within contemporary ideas about pollution and danger. The political and cultural climates have placed social protection above the ideologies of welfare and treatment, and the penal infrastructure has powerfully followed suit. As growing attention has identified the fast pace at which the rehabilitative ideal of the 1970s has lost its strength to the movements of incapacitation and retribution, we are witnessing new conceptualisations of risk and the net widening of ‘risk’ populations that need to be managed (Cohen, 1985).

Conclusion
These key theorists inform the ideas of correction, surveillance, management, risk, notions of abjection, otherness and danger adopted in this research to conceptualise the ‘prisoner’. By extension, their work can be appropriated to the release setting to consider these same theoretical constructs and their application in the context of released prisoners. The works of Foucault, Giddens, Beck and Kristeva have significant potential to inform the ways we understand what it means to be a ‘released prisoner’, the release setting more generally, and the implications for both the individual and broader social levels of returning prisoners to the community.
Specific to release periods, their ideas are particularly significant as they examine the relationship between the 'other' and 'non-other'. Kristeva's (1982) work stating that what is expelled and jettisoned repulses the core social fabric is particularly significant when we consider the implications and circumstances of 'reactcepting' that which has been expelled and labelled as threatening.

The analysis chapters that follow will draw on the theorists within this chapter to explore what transpires in the Australian release setting. Specifically, they will consider the continuation of disciplinary power within the release setting and the ways in which the 'released prisoner' is positioned within social frameworks. In addition, the analyses explore the ways in which risk is contextualised within the lived experiences of released men and women. Lastly, they will examine how notions of abjection and pollution can be tied to the release setting, and consider the released body as an abject body.
Chapter Five

Regulating the released body: narratives of governance and surveillance

Foucault credited a natural permeation of technologies of (disciplinary) subjection from the structural confines of the prison to broader social frameworks. Such extensions, he argued, inform and revolutionise the manner in which social agents and institutions personify locations of surveillance and regulation within the social body. With these ideas in mind, this chapter draws on narratives of release to explore the ways in which men and women are monitored, controlled and managed within the community at the expiration of their periods of imprisonment. Foucault’s assertion that the mechanics of disciplinary power are not isolated to the carceral, nor singularly fastened to individuals or institutions, invites an examination of the differential ways in which surveillance and regulation operate within the release environment. To this end, whilst correctional agents such as parole and probation departments and the police can be identified at the helm of systematically regulating the released prisoner, it can be asked in what other ways are men and women governed at the expiration of their carceral containment? Further, what is the nature of release regulation? And which agents and institutions perform such regulation?

The visible and predictable\(^1\) nature of governance and surveillance operating within the architecture of the prison delimits clear parameters of conduct within which prisoners are to exist – specifically, the extent to which daily life is routinised within spatial and temporal frameworks. In the prisoner’s release setting, we witness three key occurrences. Firstly, there is an implicit and explicit extension of penal technologies\(^2\) in the form of

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\(^1\) Predictable in the sense that individual behaviour and conduct is understood to be subject to regiment and authority within the structures of a punishment institution.

\(^2\) Explicit in the regard that probation and parole are structured extensions of prison sentences. Implicit in the sense that broader social agents (some of which may be recruited through parole departments), such as
conditional and structured release for those prisoners so allocated. Secondly, we have the broader social body with its own systematic and perfunctory technologies of population surveillance and management – for instance, through democratic, educative, welfare, citizenship and economic systems. Lastly, the contemporary West has culminated technological advancements with the inherent aim of expanding, deepening and improving the efficacy of the ways in which bodies are classified, recorded and regulated. These three independent yet interrelated networks present a problematised release environment in which vehicles of observation and control extend those within penological fields. However, more importantly, their diversification locates released men and women in the midst of the most intense and technically advanced realms of surveillance and control ever devised. As suggested in Chapter Two, economic, welfare and broader social institutions have increasingly become participants in the administration of the released prisoner to the extent that they exclude or permit access to civil, democratic and broader social participation. Considering these ideas, the release setting can be understood as a particularly heightened climate for technologies of supervision and control, as men and women navigate both the conditions of their prison release (for example parole periods) and regulatory/disciplinary frameworks within broader social institutions.

The optics of ‘release’

‘To participate in modern society is to be under electronic surveillance’ (Lyon, 1994: 4). Technological advancement has located contemporary societies in the midst of the most intense and immediate realms of surveillance and regulation than ever before. Everyday life has become increasingly subject to close observation and scrutiny not only from authoritative agents such as the police, but extends to engage broader social institutions in the management of populations (from shoppers to motorists and occupiers of public spaces). The efficiency of such disciplinary power requires a ‘permanent, exhaustive [and] omnipresent surveillance [that transforms] the whole social body into a field of

welfare or rehabilitation officers, may operationalise and be categorised as penological instruments rather than grounded within welfare frames.

For example, in the context of social, electoral and educational registries, and the mandating of voting, schooling, tax paying and the like.
perception' (Foucault, 1977: 214). Whilst the governance of societies concerns itself with the 'management of risk [particularly] containing threatening behaviour'. Lyon (2001: 6, 136) suggests that 'power is often wielded in ways that systematically disadvantage some groups rather than others'. In this regard, it is not the fact that surveillance infiltrates contemporary life that is of concern in the release context, but rather the potential for such supervision to engage a punitive structure. To this end, this section examines the agents of surveillance that the men and women identified in their release environment. Specifically, the police, parole and probation departments, welfare and support workers, and drug courts were most frequently tied to ideas of monitoring and regulation within the community.

Exploring agents of 'release' surveillance is significant for several key reasons. Firstly, at the exclusion or limited scope of prisoner release enquiry within Australia, specific and systematic monitoring of released prisoners becomes the most powerful site from which men and women are or can be understood in the context of their release experiences. It therefore becomes critical to not only identify the locales of surveillance, but further to consider the nature of inherent ideological frameworks underpinning release prisoner supervision. Secondly, contextualising the ways Australian prisoners are released, within the limitations of available data, we see considerable portions of men and women released unconditionally at the expiration of their sentence.\(^4\) For example, in South Australia between 2002 and 2003, of the 32.9% of released prisoners almost half (14.5%) were released unconditionally (SA DOJ, 2003). Similarly, Western Australia recorded 21% of its 6,631 released prisoners were unconditional releases in 2001/2001 (WA DOJ, 2002). In this regard, formal and structured monitoring through probation and parole is unable to both account for and 'know' the issues specific to automatically released prisoners. Whilst the above figures may appear conservative, when we remember Baldry et al. (2003) estimate that 44,000 prisoners are released in Australia each year, we can approximate between five and ten thousand men and women are 'lost' to criminological knowledge when they leave the prison gates. Identifying broader social agents both

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\(^4\) For example, inconsistent techniques of recording and availability of statistical data among Australian States and Territories.

\(^5\) Experiences in America convey similar trends (Petersilia, 2003).
charged and interested in the movements of released prisoners has the potential to expand current understandings of prisoner release. Moreover, exploring the nature of such surveillance enables us to consider if current conceptualisations of prisoner release issues are disproportionately grounded within punitive ideologies, or evenly dispersed amongst a range of social institutions (political, economic, welfare, health and the like). Lastly, examining the ways released prisoners are aware of and negotiate spatial and temporal surveillance in the community scaffolds a framework from which the direction of resources and manpower can be informed and allocated on a needs and individually focused basis.

This chapter considers the released prisoner within disciplinary frameworks and individual spaces of the ‘released prisoner’ within the broader community. In this regard, it considers, firstly, the agents of surveillance and regulation in the release setting and, secondly, the classifications and categories released men and women are afforded at the expiration of their prison terms. Specifically, this entails examining the ways and extent to which subjectivities of ‘prisoner’ are challenged, negotiated or removed as men and women leave the carceral and (re)enter the social. Lastly, identifying the knowledge and information about prisoners, prior to and in the release setting, this chapter considers what this information means on an individual level and how it informs the men’s and women’s lived experiences of release.

Policing the released body

Charged with the responsibility and power to ‘prevent, detect and resolve crime’ (Fondén & Leiknes, 2003: 107), the police are the most visible personification of control and regulation in the social body. Their roles become increasingly problematic for released men and women by virtue of their authoritative power to directly regulate the behavioural conduct and locations which men and women are allowed to occupy. The powers to stop and search, arrest, detain and conduct testing for the presence of drugs and alcohol

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* The nature of release ‘surveillance’ has significant implications for the ways men and women are, for example, recorded and known in the release setting, and the ways they respond to and/or embrace surveillance, particularly from support and welfare agencies.
position police surveillance as potentially threatening and problematic within periods of release. As one respondent remarked:

    They still give ya that feeling you know what I mean that I can get arrested because they got that authority. I mean I still think that (Marissa).

Whilst the broader community concerns itself with individual conduct in close vicinity of police officers, caution and anxiety are potentially heightened for those who have problematic encounters with the law:

    You know most people don’t see the coppas, they’re just there (Daphne).

Daphne’s comment characterised the feelings of many of the men and women interviewed in the course of this research. They understood their contact with, and surveillance by, police as significantly disproportionate when compared to the broader community, and believed that they were not specifically more aware of the presence of police, as much as subjects of police harassment:

    Get harassed by the coppas straight away like you’re wearing a big neon sign you know. Like I know that if you get around in Nike gear and that you’re targeted but I been bloody getting around in decent clothes, collared shirt, trying to fuckin’ blend in and it’s still “come here” (Ballard).

    I’m pulled over a lot you know … but I expect to get pulled over … I see them and think they’ll pull me over for sure … you pretty much get used to it (Damien).

Whilst police attention was not experienced as temporally or spatially routinised, the men and women resigned themselves to negative encounters with the police in which they were treated with suspicion involving presumptions/assumptions about illegal activity. Some correlated their occupation of public spaces that were heavily policed and/or their frequent association with individuals who were themselves subject to high levels of police monitoring with their disproportionate objectification by police surveillance.
The frequency of police contact, typically being stopped and searched, was believed to be an inevitable part of release experiences. As Damien illustrates, the mere presence of police officers instils fear for many the inevitability of constant surveillance. Further accounts almost suggested a resignation to the enduring watchful eye of the police. Moreover, the notion of getting used to interrogation underscored current experiences and particularly beliefs about future life in the broader community. Ballard’s comment introduces the idea of an outfit or specific presentation of the body that invites surveillance. Samson and Roden further inform this idea:

If I walked down the street dressed the way I am they’d say, ‘oh jail bird’. You know tattoos and long hair … it’s just the jail look, it’s a rebel look, it’s a fuck off look … I really don’t, I don’t care about it anymore (Samson).

The police don’t know me over this side … I’ve had my hair cut too, which I think, believe it or not, I’m quite sure that has made a difference, as in police attitudes driving past looking for something … whereas looking like this it’s more run-of-the-mill and they just sort of you know, they don’t notice you, you don’t stick out (Roden).

Samson and Roden reference a particular ‘look’ that provokes a punitive approach or suspicion. All the men and women narrated an awareness of a specific attire or personal presentation that heightened police attention and/or suspicion. From such knowledge, the men and women noted that they systematically negotiated or avoided such presentation, specifically the extent to which they regulated their physical and behavioural presentation in an attempt to minimise or avoid police monitoring. In this regard, for many of the men and women the ways in which they conducted and presented themselves to the community each day were significantly informed by their perceptions about inviting or avoiding police surveillance. The predictability of encounters with police created significant problems in their day-to-day lives as they narrated how they felt continually watched and scrutinised:
But even coming here (to supported accommodation) getting out of [jail] ... I didn’t want to go through [home town] at all because of police harassment you know, it’s pretty full on once they know you they’ll just hammer you and hammer you. If they see me walking down the street they’d pull me up, jump out, ‘what are you doing?’ (Roden).

Here I don’t really know the police ... in Smithtown I used to have trouble all the time, every time the police see me, pulled me up straight away ... always harass me (Romaine).

They pull you over and if you’re walking down the street with someone [the police don’t care] they’re getting searched as well (Deiter).

The inevitability of enduring and frequent police monitoring informed not only the ways men and women engaged in their day-to-day life, but extended, as Deiter indicates, to reporting the ways they would frame future relationships. Deiter’s narrative further identified his perception of the need to inform friends and acquaintances about his period of incarceration due to the potential of future and intrusive police encounters. Another respondent also spoke to this idea of surveillance by association:

Every time they see me they’ll pull me up [even] if I’m with friends they’ll pull me up in front of me friends and embarrass me (Conlan).

Roden and Romaine introduce the idea of familiarity with police officers and policed areas as heightening the problematic nature and frequency of encounters with police. Narrated in distinctly negative terms, police contact was believed to be not only disproportionately high, but characterised as unreasonable, harassing and intimidating. To this extent, the men and women identified the nature of police surveillance to be as problematic as the authoritative power they represented. In particular, the intrusion into their daily lives, including the basic daily rituals of shopping or walking down the street, was one of the most common concerns:

They’ll rip open ya bags and you know, it doesn’t matter where it is they’ll do it in front of everyone you know just right on the spot and search you ... empty your wallet, your pockets, the whole thing (Roden).
The men and women expressed frustration at the open and very public nature of police surveillance and interrogation, and felt devalued and humiliated as they recounted times when they had been stopped in the middle of the main street as police proceeded to go through their personal belongings. Experiences of police requesting receipts for purchases from the local corner store or service station strengthened beliefs about harassment and disproportionate policing. Whilst the police have the right and responsibility to carry out such procedures, the ensuing embarrassment became more encroaching than the practice of the stop and search itself. All the men and women spoke of embarrassment as being inherent to their encounters with police. Comparing his experiences of incarceration and police surveillance, Ballard commented on a very public and negative encounter with police in a bar near his home:

I was embarrassed but you learn to live with that because of the humiliation that you go through every day in jail from the screws and that you know (follows with intimate details of a strip search) ... so what the coppas do to ya on the street, pisses ya off and you’re embarrassed a little bit ... but it [becomes] water off a duck’s back really (Ballard).

The extent of intrusion and the difficulties such police behaviour posed to prisoners’ experience of release periods significantly informed not only individual responses to police officers within encounters but, more powerfully, the very movements of the men and women. They spoke of their familiarity with and recognition by police officers in their home towns. Police were believed to respond to the mere sight or presence of the men and women rather than a display of suspicious conduct. Familiarity with police was typically the result of lengthy police and offending records, frequent searches, questioning, arrests and sometimes imprisonment. With regards to police who knew the men and women by face, they felt relatively powerless to avoid or limit police surveillance save for limiting their visible presence within the community or surveying social spaces for police presence. In response, relocating suburbs to avoid police familiarity and harassment was a common way to negotiate monitoring by police.

In addition to familiarity between some of the men and women and particular police officers, the men’s and women’s narratives introduced another dimension to their
surveillance by police. The reference to criminal records by police challenged the (criminal) anonymity of many men and women, and in turn evoked some extreme responses in which men and women began to regulate themselves in different ways. One such response was that of Plato:

[They] go right through you ... I actually changed my name to try and get around it once because when I was working in computers, a few times I got pulled up for speeding, give them my name, 'get out of the car, what's all these computers?' It [worked] for a while ... but then I just became known as both names (Plato).

Criminal records were perceived to be referenced most frequently by police. Such reference was understood to strengthen the punitive nature of police surveillance.

Police surveillance was perceived and experienced as largely punitive and insensitive to any positive conduct in the release setting. Save for two exceptions, the police force, as a collective body, and also individual officers, were representative of authoritative and disciplinary organisation. Police were identified as problematic in the context of general life within the community and also (potentially) dangerous and threatening to successful periods of release because they had the power and capacity to return the men and women to prison. Foucault's assertion that 'police surveillance provides the prison with offenders, which the prison turns into delinquents, the targets and auxiliaries of police

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\textsuperscript{7} Two participants spoke about their encounters with police who were familiar through past offending and incarceration. Their experiences challenged their traditional perceptions of the police as punitive, regulatory and insensitive to the acknowledgment of positive conduct:

Straight away they saw and they knew me, here's Nash, 'what have you been up to?' 'Oh what have I been up to, you got a few minutes and I'll tell you ... I just got out, going along. I've been doing this drug rehab and blah blah blah and going to work and back with me missus'. Straight away 'ah no worries mate, good luck', shakes hands and have a nice day (Nash).

This lady coppa I used to know???, she used to always come up to me and um she pulled me up and she said 'oh you're looking good' you know rah rah rah, 'and I heard you're in rehab and I'm proud of you and all that, keep going'. She knew I wasn't on drugs and that no more so she was giving me a go (Romain).

These positive experiences with police need to be contextualised within the conduct and general performativities of the individuals in question at the time. Specifically, they were both committed to their addiction recovery and in this regard their behaviour was not invitation to punitive regulation. At the same time, their clarity of mind (through sobriety) provided them a space through which to differentially interpret their encounters.
supervisions, which regularly send back a certain number of them to prison' speaks directly to the experiences and conceptualisations of the men and women in the context of police monitoring (Foucault, 1977: 282).

Extending beyond a superficial gaze, police monitoring began to encroach on individual and private space, 'no longer confined to [public] controlled and arranged spaces' (McCahill, 1999: 41). In the release setting police control and regulation transgresses the traditional parameters of public space to penetrate the men's and women's physical and mental spaces. As Foucault (1977) suggests, surveillance seeks not to infiltrate and occupy existing structures and frameworks, but rather constructs new corrals in which 'permanent visibility and subjection to a central gaze is already architecturally implicit' (MacKenzie, Sutton & Patton, nd: 21). In this regard, release surveillance does not so much penetrate the private and individual spaces of released prisoners, as much as create and delimit them. Prisoners are created in the context of disciplinary frameworks within the prison in which private spaces are deconstructed through the mobilisation of translucent and regulated localities. In the release context, narratives of police surveillance are supportive of the notion of deconstructed private space, in which the prisoner or offender is no longer afforded private space, but rather rendered subject to an unending monitoring that applies itself to every surface. The idea of surveillance penetrating the boundaries of individual space was more commonly experienced as the men and women narrated their subjection to internal surveillance through drug testing by parole departments, drug courts and supported accommodation services.

**Conditional release: institutional governance outside the carceral**

Parole departments are specifically concerned with the supervision and management of released prisoners. Connection to parole departments and their ensuing regulations is mandated through an extension of correctional institutions. Whilst the role of parole agents has for a long time swung between correctional and welfare ideologies, research suggests a renewed focus on surveillance, control and management of released prisoners in recent times, at the expense of supportive and welfare frameworks (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001; Petersilia, 1999). Although Australian research (see for example Baldry et
al., 2003) suggests that recidivism rates are lower for those prisoners who have participated in parole, the intensification of surveillance technologies translates to potential increases in parole violation detection and thus paths to prison re-entry (Travis, 2003). Research by Lowthian (2002: 163) suggests that the ‘enforcement role within supervision, and the ways in which this is monitored to deliver targets leaves little time or inclination ... to provide additional support’. She speaks to the potentiality of current trends within released prisoner supervision to increase prison entry, particularly for women. She suggests breaching prison release conditions is ‘increasingly common as the conditions imposed [on prisoners] are unrealistic and likely to generate failure’ (Lowthian, 2002: 163). This is an idea that resonated with those on supervised parole:

It’s some serious stuff, parole is very serious ... they treat it very lightly, like they pretend it’s like nothing but it’s serious stuff. Like a lot of people in jail now are for parole, like many violations. And it’s many like it’s ludicrous like they do one thing wrong, miss an appointment and they get thrown into jail, it just doesn’t make sense (Varen).

Almost a quarter of the men and women interviewed were currently on parole, and the majority had previously experienced either supervised or unsupervised parole periods. The authoritative power of parole officers to reprimand and sanction non-compliance was identified by the men and women. However, parole officers themselves, in comparison to police, were considered to be less visible or immediately threatening agents of surveillance. Unlike the unstructured nature of police surveillance, parole surveillance was routinised in the sense that weekly or biweekly meetings were mandated. Narratives of parole raised a range of concerns amongst the men and women. In this regard, whilst frequent contact and behavioural monitoring characterised parole periods, supervised parole itself was not specifically located within negative and punitive surveillance frameworks. However, some respondents did suggest parole periods were

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Non-compliance to parole conditions can include missing scheduled parole meetings, associating with other known criminals, drug use and/or failed drug testing, traveling outside of permitted areas whilst on parole, substituting urines for the purposes of clean drug tests, failure to attend prescribed treatment and rehabilitation programs and the like.

‘Threatening’ being suggestive of endangered release periods whereby social agents have the power or capacity to inform or effectuate prison re-entry and in essence ‘threaten’ the men’s and women’s location within the broader community.
extensions of penal structures through the explicit nature of temporal constraints rather than the specific conditions of imprisonment.

I feel like I’m still connected to the prison system until I actually get away from parole you know. Because you know I’ve got to turn up there every fortnight, I’ve gotta give them urines to make sure I’m clean ... I’m still sort of linked to the prison (Damien).

Damien’s comment is suggestive of parole periods extending penal structures through the explicit nature of temporal constraints rather than the specific conditions to which he was released from prison. Whilst the majority of the parolees identified the surveillant and restrictive nature of parole periods (specific to their release conditions). Damien was the only one to directly connect parole conditions to the prison setting. His conditions of urinalysis for the purposes of ensuring or regulating drug-free release were shared by all the men and women with histories of problematic drug use, rather than being representative of the entire parole population. Damien understood his parole conditions to be particularly restrictive, divergent to the other men and women who regarded their conditions, particularly their frequent drug testing, as a ‘means to an end’ rather than a particularly invasive form of surveillance and regulation. More generally, parole conditions and their government for the purposes of compliance were accepted and predominantly contextualised as a part of the process of release.

For some, parole extended a potential and real avenue to access services and opportunities to assist in the transition to the community. Narratives such as Caine’s and Percy’s were common in this regard:

I see them once a fortnight and if I do the things they ask I have freedom you know ... if you deal with the details which you’ve got to because we live in a society, it’s that simple and we have a system in place so we can all coexist you know. I’m not bucking the system you know I mean I’m complying with it (Caine).

Basically I just take directions and if I don’t, I go back in. There’s a lot of boundaries [but] it can help you, you can either go with it or you can be rebellious. Basically I just try and keep in the boundaries (Percy).
It's a pain in the arse ... but in some ways you can use it positively ... if you're okay with them, they're okay with you. If you're doing the wrong thing then they're gonna jump on your back (Varen).

Caine, Percy and Varen acknowledge the margins within which their parole officers mandate their behaviours and the locales in which their conduct is subject to surveillance. Specifically, their parole officers monitor them in the release environment to the extent that they actively engage in drug use recovery and the ongoing maintenance of crime-free lives. They identified the transgression of these boundaries as the 'wrong thing'. Whether they agree with the restrictions and surveillance or not, they accept the parameters within which they must behave. Moreover, they recognise the extent to which their behaviour is subject to and bound within intensive techniques of surveillance. Caine's perception of his parole surveillance, and release experiences more generally, contrast considerably to the other men. In this regard his narrations are contextualised within the experience of the commission of white-collar crime and singular imprisonment in comparison to the other men interviewed who had lengthy and troubled histories with the law and multiple incarcerations. His high career profile and considerable wealth (prior to his imprisonment) set him apart from the other men, as did his conceptualisations of the penal process. He more generally embraced the support and assistance offered by parole and broader social agents, and perceived his monitoring and regulation to be conducive to law-abiding conduct. Caine's narratives of release surveillance reflected more positive frames of reference than the other men and women who related release regulation more generally within narratives of resentment and resistance.

Whereas police surveillance was correlated with punitive responses and often induced sanctioning of some kind, some aspects of supervised parole were considered advantageous. These beliefs were particularly expressed amongst those who felt they needed boundaries in order to maintain both drug-free lives and a successful release. The powerful link between being drug-free and experiencing successful prison release was dominant within the men's and women's experiences, and is considered in more detail in Chapter Six. Varen and Deiter speak to the idea that supervised parole periods offer
structure to release environments, which is so vital to the successful release of some prisoners:

I’ve got parole this time ... supervised parole so that’s hopefully what will keep me in check a bit more ... and with parole there will be more um ... more avenues say with counselling and such (Varen).

This is the first time I’ve had parole ... normally I’ve had straight sentences or just automatic release ... like under the old probation it’s just out on the streets (Deiter).

It was just you know, just to keep you in line. You know I actually stopped drinking and drugging because I thought well I’m not gonna get my parole out of the way (Samson).

The men and women identified a number of ways supervised parole positively impacted experiences of release. Most notably, the provision of an authoritative structure was embraced by those who narrated the need for clear boundaries and guidelines in the release setting. The men’s and women’s understandings of parole support Beck’s (2000: 2) research suggesting parole supervision provides ‘some of the ballast people need during their first months’ of release. In this regard, mandating the surveillance of released prisoners, whilst potentially elevating the identification of parole violations, was suggested to facilitate and support transitional periods for those open to its assistance. Whilst parole surveillance was sometimes considered beneficial to prison release, the opportunity for supervised release to forge supportive relationships for released prisoners is limited to the extent that men and women are open to the parole process. Two respondents spoke to this notion of supervised parole inhibiting positive experiences:

Well they would if I was open enough to let them know what me problems were but I’m not like that so ... because I keep to myself so it probably is more difficult to access [their help and support] but that's just the way it goes (Blade).

I think probably about 70% are [partially honest with parole officers]. Like because some things you’d want to speak to your parole officer about like
say if you’re struggling and you’ve got issues but you’re scared to because you might get breached for them (Varen).

In line with the current of contemporary parole departments whereby parole officers are restricted in the extent to which they can afford time and resources to the individual welfare needs of their expanding clientele (Ward, 2001; Austin, 2001; Travis, 2000), the men and women identified particular resistance to opening themselves to their officers and exposing their vulnerabilities or struggles. Whilst such perceptions are significantly underscored by threats of the potentiality of parole violation, the notion of vulnerability and risk associated with articulating problems in the release context is further explored within Chapter Nine specific to notions of release risk, and in Chapter Six considering the nature of drug addiction and recovery. The comments of Blade and Varen above introduce the common experience of the men and women to have problematic relationships with trust. Impediments to establishing trust with others powerfully characterised the men’s and women’s experiences of release specifically, and life more generally.

Beyond issues of trust, resistance to authoritative figures was conveyed as powerfully informing current relationships and understandings of social agents such as the police, prison and parole officers. A man who typified this attitude stated:

Rebellious towards [stepfather] and it just steamrolls from there, you become rebellious at everything you know, like school, anybody in authority you just turn around ... and do the opposite [of what they say], it becomes automatic just to spite them (Ballard).

Parole departments and individual officers were believed by the men and women to be met with resistance from parolees to the extent that they: possess authoritative (and punitive) powers; are an extension of technologies of penalty; and their potential to expose and use the men’s and women’s vulnerabilities in the context of technical breaches. Whilst surveillance and regulation are inherently part of supervised parole periods, the men and women more often characterised their parole periods as a ‘means to
an end or as an opportunity to desist from drug use or offending rather than punitive monitoring and regulation across spatial and temporal thresholds.

Support and the invitation of structured surveillance

Fondén and Leiknes (2003: 10) recognise prisoner support services as providing support and assistance to released prisoners 'with a view to [facilitate] their integration into society'. This belief was shared by the men and women interviewed for this research as they recognised the surveillance and regulation specific to their supported accommodation engaged supportive and welfare dialogues rather than explicitly (and punitively) governing prison release. The halfway houses monitored the men and women to the extent that the premises are supervised twenty-four hours a day, mandate regular weekly or biweekly meetings and/or counselling, treatment program participation, drug testing and sometimes include various additional vocational training. Whilst supported accommodation services govern release periods within some contexts, they do so from within welfare frameworks that seek to establish relationships for the longer term.

The voluntary nature of the contact with their clients, and the grounding of their services within a welfare framework, contrasts significantly with the explicit forms of surveillance and discipline undertaken by police and parole departments. The marriage of welfare and control within support services was recognised by the men and women as they conceived of their supported accommodation as a mechanism of structured support as opposed to direct and specific restriction of movement. They highlighted a more relaxed and equal power relationship in which they were able to engage more freely with support staff about their experiences and difficulties in the transition process:

This is still part of jail conditions, even though I forget all that, it’s more like a home, a nice home ... that’s the way it’s worded to me by my family (Rosemary).

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10 In the capacity of completing their prison sentences and connections to the penal system.
11 Further informing the ways the men in particular conceived of their parole officers, a support worker noted the men’s and women’s opinions are often powerfully influenced by other released prisoners who have had the same officer or recounted others’ experiences.
There's a lot of space here ... but um they kick ya up the arse to help ya ... and um ... they've always got a watchful eye and they're always kind of right over there if ya want to talk. And advice. Good advice you know (Rosemary).

Rosemary conveyed the feelings of the men and women in the identification of mechanisms of surveillance. Identifying the ways in which their behaviours were subject to regulation as a condition of residence, the men and women presented minimal resistance to their supervision by the support staff. The limited authoritative power to impose sanctions and discipline breaches of prison release can be understood as further informing the manner in which released prisoners engage and understand both the role of support staff and their relationship with the accommodation agencies. The men and women commonly embraced their conditions of residence as supportive and structured rather than disciplinary and restrictive in nature. As two men commented:

You don't find that many people in the world or in this situation that you can approach like that, oh you know if you're doing something wrong he'll pull you up but ... he'll let things slide, he'll give you another chance (Plato).

It's a bit (whispers) don't say nothing, it's a bit, they're a bit nosy, they try and get into ya life story ... they have the excuse like um 'we're not here to tell you what to do but just watch out for you' (Conlan).

Even though Conlan responds differently to Plato to the assistance and guidance of support workers, he still maintains the distinction between structured support and the repressive control identified within the police and parole departments. In particular, he highlights the manner in which the staff sought to contextualise his experience, rather than operate through modes of direct confrontation (typically characteristic of police contact).

The narratives of the men and women suggest they embrace a structured environment. Specific to support agencies, supported accommodation services structure clients' residence through the implementation and enforcement of house rules. For example, regular participation in counselling sessions, urinalysis, parenting courses, participation
in education courses, active engagement with seeking employment, house curfews, conditions of behaviour within the house, no drug or alcohol use and the like are characteristic to many of the organisation. The benefits of such programs and structure are further witnessed as the men and women commonly acknowledged that their past failures in the areas of both addiction recovery and prison release were the product of trying to deal with problems in isolation. In this regard, welfare services extend avenues of both practical and emotional support:

That’s what got me in trouble, not asking for help. Because I’d think well I got myself into this mess I’ve gotta get myself out, it’s not other people’s responsibility (Kyria).

Because I’m a proud person too I don’t. I can’t ask for help and that because I’ve always, never had support all my life (Valora).

Kyria and Valora’s comments are representative of the majority of the men and women, where ideas of independence and pride impede the acceptance of support. The men and women understood their engagement with support services as more often than not positively impacting their experiences of release. Whilst they differentially complied with the regulations conditional to their residency, they located their compliance with accepting or being open to help. Accepting or being responsive to assistance and support is a powerful construct that underscored the men’s and women’s previous (and often multiple) ‘failed’ attempts at prison release. In this regard, differential active engagement with and utilisation of support services and resources are reflective of their personal struggles with recidivism, drug use and establishing a life in the community that is manageable (at an individual level), and promotes legal social participation and citizenship. The significance of support and barriers to accepting or being open to support networks are more explicitly considered in Chapters Six and Nine to follow.

12 Men and women spoke to this notion of manageability as they identified the numerous tasks and performances expected of them by both regulatory agents and the community more generally, which they were unable to cope with or handle by themselves. Such experiences were closely tied to the return to drug use and even purposeful return to prison.
The women's narratives within this research indicated additional agents of regulation in the context of parenthood and individual 'fitness' to mother and care for children. These are powerful constructs underlying the experiences of female released prisoners (Carlen, 2002c; O'Brien, 2001; Eaton, 1993). Moreover, they are not isolated to issues of custody or visitation alone. Women's role and perceptions of motherhood powerfully speak to the complexity of release experiences and are recognised as interwoven into ideas of release more generally, such as frames of identity and subjectivity, drug use behaviour, and the impetus to (desist from) offending. Kala identifies the fears of the women opening themselves to others:

They say they want us to be open and things like that but in my case, I can't be open because in my eyes everything is a threat to me to take her. So if I'm gonna be open with them I can't because I'm scared they're gonna use [my daughter] against me (Kala).

In contrast to their responses and beliefs about police and parole departments, the men and women actively participate and locate themselves within a structured and semi-controlled environment. In line with Ross and Ryan's (2005: 9) research, whilst involvement with support services is voluntary, 'in practice, involvement can mean the difference between a successful parole [and drug court] application'. It should also be noted that given the difficulties in finding stable and secure accommodation upon release, as identified in Chapter Two, the men and women can be understood as complying with house rules in order simply to keep a roof over their heads, as much as a specific concern to live within these services and comply with their rules for the purposes of successful transition alone.

It was common for the men and women to become more comfortable with the services and regulations of supported accommodation services over time. Many noted their reluctance to actively participate in the service in the initial stages of their residence. However, it was common, particularly amongst the women, to request an extended period of stay. Again, such prolonged periods of stay need to be contextualised within the broader difficulties of housing. In this context, the men and women actively locate
themselves in the surveillance and regulation of their release environment; however, they narrated differential engagement with these mechanisms. Active engagement with the control imposed on them by support organisations was most pronounced amongst the men and women who spoke of their lengthy and multiple periods of incarceration. They expressed a need for the structure of the organisation to the extent that they had previously experienced failed prison release, addiction recovery, were isolated or excluded from familial or broader social support networks and ‘had nowhere else to go’:

It’s alright because I’ve put. I’ve asked for help for once in me life you know, so I think they can take a bit of control as well, you know what I mean … you’re giving them permission to do it (Marissa).

It’s a structured environment … and I needed it. You know I can’t pretend that, I’m not that special that I can do it on my own. I, I’ll admit I need help (Rosemary).

I knew I was getting out … I was scared, panicky but at the same time relieved to come here. To come here knowing that I was going to get the support that I’ve always needed and that you know that I wasn’t going to be in jail any more … [a] safe place to go and to be put in contact with people and counsellors and stuff that I need (Bambi).

Resistance to asking for or accepting release support and assistance was characteristic of all the interviews, as narratives recounted multiple unsuccessful and individual attempts at both addiction recovery and prison release. With the exception of one man and two women, all participants had been incarcerated more than three times. In this regard, their histories of resistance to treatment or assistance of any kind within transitional periods were lengthy. Current participation and active engagement with direct supervision and regulation were largely informed by the frustrations and disappointments of ‘wasted years’. Marissa spoke of herself being ‘clean’\(^\text{13}\) for the first time in sixteen years and recounted her twenties as a constant blur of being in and out of prison. In this regard, it has been a long road to embrace and actively engage in supported release supervision. Rosemary iterates the feelings common to the men and women, conveying the problematic cycle of drugs, crime and inevitable re-incarceration associated with their

\(^{13}\) Being drug-free.
previous home settings or ‘old environments’. In this regard the surveillance of support staff becomes a welcome means to the hopeful end of their ‘cycles of drugs and prison’.

More invasive and particularly surveillant in nature, was the frequent drug testing the men and women were subject to to ensure sobriety during their periods of residence. As a result and extension of their drug court involvement, the restrictions and sanctions specific to drug use within the women’s supported facility were more heavily enforced and regarded than in the men’s centres. The women were mandated to participate in regular urinalysis, mostly weekly and biweekly, in addition and independent to the drug testing requirements of the drug court:

Certain things they control you know ... I gotta do urines two times a week and if they’re dirty well you can’t stay here ... the drug court gets one of mine and WH gets one of ‘em, like I’ve got to do it in two jars (Marissa).

Because all the women involved with the drug court were required to provide the courts with urine samples on a regular basis, they were less inclined to participate in and/or readily correlated the drug testing by WH as particularly invasive or punitively motivated. The surveillance and monitoring of their drug use behaviours multiplied the locations through which the women were subject to supervision and control. Whilst they can, for the most part, regulate and control the frequency of their contact with police and parole officers outside scheduled meetings, the penetration of surveillance into the internal body through drug testing removes all power and avenues for recourse and distance from surveillance for the men and women. They are empowered in the face of release surveillance to the extent that they can omit or conceal problematic information or conduct in the belief, for example, that their parole officers won’t find out. However, they lose all control over themselves and the information held about them when compelled to undertake testing for drugs. On these ideas, Hyde (1997: 205) argues that ‘the gaze of the State seeks to uncover the veiled narrative of drug use’. The narrative elicited through

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14 As previously noted, residence with supported accommodation services is explicitly conditional to being drug and alcohol free.
15 Pseudonym for women’s supported facility - WH, women’s house.
urinalysis betrays the drug user – at the mercy of the State. Such surveillance identifies drug-free transgressions, yet is potentially insensitive to changes in drug taking behaviour such as reductions in frequency of drug use or severity of drugs of choice. In this context, such systematic surveillance has significant consequences for both participation in the drug court (where multiple failed tests withdraws participation and ensures incarceration) and the provision of accommodation (where failed tests expulses residence). The amplification of both the intensity and frequency of release surveillance results in the increased identification of transgression. It then follows that the drug testing of released men and women subjects them to sites not of drug-free compliance, but an exacerbation of the locations in which they, both physically and physiologically, transgress the cherished morality of society. These ideas are evidenced as further problematic as Beck (in Harrison, 2001: 48) reports: ‘drug offenders accounted for more than half of the total increase in parole violators returned to prison’.

**Governing sobriety and criminality**

Experiences of surveillance and regulation from broader social frameworks were both specific to and independent of prison release supervision. The men and women within this research suggested the ‘correctionalisation’ of medical, welfare, economic and familial institutions. Specific to medical and addiction surveillance, drug courts are emblematic of governance specific to drug use behaviour and subject participants to multiple sites of supervision. Participants are sequestered to treatment programs, regular drug tests and weekly or biweekly court attendance and other counselling services (NSW Parliament, 2004; Indermaur & Roberts, 2003). The men and women identified court attendance, urinalysis, attending treatment and educative programs, and other individually assigned requirements, as specific sites of drug court surveillance. However, the manner in which the men and women spoke of their affiliations with the drug court and their experiences of regulation, not unlike supported accommodation.

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16 Despite the proposition within current research that urinalysis does not reliably reduce drug use (Public Health Department, 1999: 29).
17 For more detailed discussions on the Australian Drug Court’s designs and implementations see for example: Compulsory Drug Treatment Correction Centre Bill (2004); Indermaur & Roberts (2003); Lawrence & Freeman (2002).
18 Including parenting programs, counselling, methadone participation and the like.
suggested a more relaxed and equal engagement. All of the women and one of the men identified their either current or past involvement with the drug court:

I’ve got to go to drug court every fortnight on Wednesday ... I gotta do urines about four times a week ... you gotta go there and present yourself in front of the Magistrate.¹⁸ prosecutors, lawyers, solicitors, corrective services ... you gotta stand up and talk in front of them (Marissa).

You gotta do urines three times a week, go to court twice a week but it gets less and less as you move up to stage two and three ... it’s good, it doesn’t bother me coz I know [my urines] are clean (Norina).

The women interviewed were at various phases of their drug court ‘sentences’, but were typically located within the first two phases.²⁰ The supervision of participants is graduated as they move from phase one through to three. Phase one employs the most intense and frequent surveillance through weekly court attendance and drug testing several times a week. As the men and women actively engage with the requirements of each phase and maintain sobriety, they move through phase two and three where their surveillance and drug testing becomes less frequent. Sanctions available and utilised by the Magistrate for drug use and non-compliance include increased supervision and surveillance, increased urine testing, decreased privileges and sanctioning of up to fourteen days. In this regard participants are rewarded for their compliance to their release conditions through the reduction of surveillance, and punished for transgressions through increased surveillance.

The omnipresent surveillance of the drug court operated to benefit, or discredit, mothers involved in the program who were in the process of attempting to regain custody of their removed children. Whilst the court was unable to directly terminate or return custody of removed children, the nature of individual participation and commitment to the program

¹⁸ In all Australian jurisdictions Magistrates reside over Drug Court Proceedings, with the exception of New South Wales where a Judge is appointed with dual jurisdiction between the Local and District Court.
²⁰ Only one woman (Kyria) was at the end of phase three. Her recounting did not neglect the difficulties she experienced in maintaining sobriety; however, drug court was conveyed as critical to her ability to commit to long-term change. Kyria narrated that she had made a personal decision to stop using drugs but credited the longevity of her success to her participation in drug court. More particularly, she believed the support, encouragement and guidance she received through her participation were imperative to her success.
was believed to inform the understandings and decisions of broader welfare and family departments:

Because I’m on drug court and I get three urines a week and I go to court every fortnight. I’m with probation. I’ve always got someone watching me and that so that’s gonna help with DOCS. They know I’m constantly watched (Valora).

Valora talks about her constant and multiple surveillance as beneficial in the context of her chances of regaining custody of her removed children. She understands her constant surveillance as significant to both keeping her on the right track and, more importantly, that such surveillance agents record her compliance (to drug court, probation and the like). She believes she will be made more credible in the eyes of family services because she is accountable to and monitored by several ‘correctional’ affiliations. Whilst drug courts impose both internal and external behavioural monitoring, the narratives of the men and women advocated an empowering and supportive context within which they could become active and responsible agents of their sobriety and addiction recovery. Their narratives located their experiences with drug courts largely in positive contexts and acknowledged the benefits and advantages drug court extended them as they worked towards their recovery. Nearly every published evaluation to date on drug courts shows graduates are less likely to be arrested for new crimes (Harrison, 2001: 481). Drawing on the experiences of the men and women participating in the drug court, their narratives attest to the advantageous and supportive nature of involvement. At the same time, for the duration of participation, participants are also additionally influenced by improvements to health, relationships, social capital and the like.

The governance of drug courts was rarely located within the specific confines of regulation and control; rather a supportive and more equal power balance was highlighted in these interviews. In particular, the personalised supervision of the Magistrate was frequently referenced as encouraging participants to both comply with their conditions, and also to take responsibility for their transgressions:
[The Magistrate] comes down and shakes ya hand and that and it’s pretty
good to you know, beat the prosecutor for once coz you know every time
the prosecutor gets up, you know ya goin’ to jail (Marissa).

It’s been good ... you talking to the judge and they clap for you (Norina).

Norina and Marissa locate the surveillance of drug courts within similar positive contexts
as supported accommodation services, where supervision engages men and women in
their monitoring, rather than enforcing external and formalised control over participants.
What is important in the context of general release supervision is that drug courts
personify less regimented mechanisms of surveillance, and facilitate positive changes for
the majority of participants in their drug use behaviour and also in their broader release
experiences. The men and women asserted that they thought successful completion of the
three phases of the drug court was around 14%. Whilst exact numbers are difficult to
derive due to the individuality of each participant’s program and progression, the figures
available from the New South Wales Drug Court shows that in 2004 there were twenty
graduates from the Drug Court program, and a total of 121 since its inception in 1999
(Drug Court of NSW, 2004). What is most significant to the current research are not the
figures of successful or unsuccessful completion, but rather the ways in which the drug
court, in its entirety, is perceived as an agent of release surveillance. Moreover, the ways
its participants negotiate, challenge or comply with the drug court’s mechanisms of
regulation are of particular value to this analysis. Evaluation of Australia’s Drug Courts is
largely in its infancy, and future attention is needed to understand more fully the
motivations and challenges underscoring ‘successful’ participation.

It is important to recognise that the men’s and women’s involvement with drug court was
largely considered as the lesser of two evils, rather than a specific and active attempt to
recover from and challenge addiction. Drug court ‘sentences’ are carried out in lieu of
prison sentences, so whilst the women willingly subjected to regulation and control, the
experiences of supervision characteristic of drug court were favoured over the confines of
prison walls:
I was looking at 18 months jail and I thought I don’t want to do 18 months jail ... so I’ve got 18 months drug court (Marissa).

It was either drug court or a jail sentence ... so when I did get picked up last year I applied for drug court straight away (Norina).

It’s helped me [but] a lot of people can’t be bothered with it. I think they just hear drug court and it’s like a get out of jail and they don’t realise how full on it is (Kyria).

Again, reflecting on the experiences of Kyria (footnoted above), (initial) perceptions of drug court as favourable to imprisonment (versus specific desire for sobriety) may transcend to a stronger commitment and awareness of the benefits of drug court in its own right, as participants move along the phases and experience the renewal of recovery capital (Cloud & Granfield, 2004), improvements to quality of life and the like.

Carlen (2002b: 148) identifies the differential models of drug courts in operation throughout the world. She suggests that some designs and implementations have ‘very negative features’ (such as public shaming) and a great propensity for net-widening (Carlen, 2002b: 149). Whilst the ideas of net-widening are neither considered nor isolatable within this current research, experiences of drug court by the men and women interviewed suggested positive experiences of participation. In particular, the advantageous and more often unfamiliar experience of being acknowledged and regarded in the context of good performance positioned the drug court’s regulation within positive and supportive frames.

Identifying agents of surveillance is critical in two key ways. Firstly, they tell us about the ways released men and women are aware of and understand their subjectification to monitoring and regulation in the release setting. Secondly, they tell us about the lenses through which society knows and conceives of released prisoners. Armed with these two concepts, the remainder of the chapter’s analysis concerns itself with the ways such surveillance and knowledge of released prisoners plays out in the community and informs the lived experiences of released men and women.
The violence of the archive

Foucault (1977) suggested that rather than facilitating the rehabilitation of prisoners for their release to the broader community, prisons operate to fix prisoners in terms of their abnormal status. The process of incarceration ascribes men and women with the distinct label of deviant and social transgressor, locating them within both the realms of penalty and broader social understandings of deviance. The surveillance and knowledge derived within the release environment augment the records and categorisations established both within and prior to the prison setting. In effect the prison sets up a ‘penal accountancy, constantly brought up to date, [making] it possible to obtain the punitive balance-sheet of each individual’ (Foucault, 1977: 180). Individual records in essence become a biography of social transgressions, and the prison is the most violent of all penman. Rejecting the notion of an autonomous subject, Foucault (1977) locates the individual as a manifestation of disciplinary power. To this end, the released prisoner is no more a deviant by nature than a direct product of carceral manufacture. The records and identification of contravening conduct creates the prisoner; the expiration of penal confinement creates the released prisoner. The formation of specialities and professions specific to prison and prison release not only holds individuals within their disciplinary surveillance but, more importantly, nourishes the creation and continuation of a ‘release’ population. It is from within these ideas that this section locates its exploration. Specifically, this section attends to the ways information gained through disciplinary and broader mechanisms of surveillance is garnered to inform periods of release.

Whilst the men and women were monitored in the release setting, their experiences suggested the records of their (prior) offending and incarceration were more dominant and consequential. negative than any established within the release setting itself. For example, one man noted that his disclosure of his imprisonment and (prior) drug use to a new partner resulted in the ending of their relationship. Others noted their records created barriers to rental markets, credit facilities and the like. The most intense and immediate ways in which criminal records problematised release periods were narrated through experiences with employment. To this end, whilst a survey of the differential ways in
which criminal records disenfranchise released men and women would be significant, this section is more interested in the detailed analysis of a specific example of how a criminal record informs and encumbers release periods, and draws on experiences of employment to facilitate the exploration. The consequences of ‘having a record’ amongst the men and women were most immediately felt in the context of seeking or maintaining employment:

I couldn’t be a bouncer, I’d need a security licence. I can’t get a security licence ... everything I’ve ever wanted to do I can’t because I’ve got a criminal record (Carlton).

I started as a courier, just through that I met a bloke and offered me a job [the company] sold the contract to Y Australia and when they bought it they did a security check on all the employees, my fucking criminal record comes up, ‘see you later’. And I was employed as a subcontractor so I was fucked ... it just crushed me (Plato).

Like Carlton, the men and women reported the ways in which their criminal records inhibited their inclusion within multiple employment opportunities. As identified in Chapter Two, federal legislation and resistance from individual employers to employ men and women with criminal convictions create significant and often insurmountable barriers to gaining employment. Not only were these external structural impediments to participation within the labour market, they were barricades that were experienced by the men and women in a number of ways. Plato’s comment introduces two examples of the ways challenges to employment more broadly inform release periods. Firstly, he conveys that his dismissal ‘crushed’ him and his subsequent narrative resonated with a destruction of his sense of worth and achievement. He contextualised his dismissal within his struggle with addiction recovery and connected his return to heroin with losing his job. This is a profound effect. He had been employed with the company for four years and for that time had committed to his sobriety and recovery. At this point, not only does Plato lose his job and avenue for financial independence, but his self-belief has been challenged by both his dismissal and return to heroin use. The gravity of broken sobriety to the men’s and women’s understandings of themselves and broader release experiences is further considered in Chapters Six and Nine. Articulating his experience in this way Plato’s narrative begins to colour the ways in which criminal records have the potential to
broadly infringe on life in the release setting and, more importantly, the interdependent and complex nature of challenges facing released men and women.

Plato also introduces the idea of non-disclosure of prison records in the context of employer/employee relationships. When Plato obtained his employment initially he negated the mention of his history of imprisonment or his criminal record. Such omissions were identified as a deliberate tactic used by all the men and women who were seeking or had actively sought employment. In discussions with potential employers references to criminal records and incarceration were avoided, massaged or specifically omitted:

Would I tell an employer I have been in prison? ... initially no because people judge a book by its cover, unfortunately (Nash).

I've made a creative resume ... self-employed (Plato).

**Recording exclusion**

Foucault (1977: 190) asserts that the 'procedures of writing [make] it possible to integrate individual data into cumulative systems in such a way that they are not lost; so to arrange things [so] an individual could be located in the general register'. At the same time 'it individualises by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialities and to render the difference useful by fitting them one to another' (Foucault, 1977: 184). In contemporary society social institutions collate and store data on citizens in a number of ways, for example, within welfare, medical, educational and broader governmental files. Registration in this way facilitates social participation and provides points of access to economic, democratic, health and other social services and spaces. Akin to mechanisms of modern surveillance, such recording is accepted as a function of daily life and a product of, and condition to, citizenship. Individual files become problematic, however, when they transcend superficial documentation of individual particulars and register transgression, problematic conduct or marks of poor performance. Moreover, they pull into effect repercussions for the recorded individual. For instance, poor school performance, failure to participate (vote) in democratic elections or a disease
picked up in medical testing can discredit, challenge or exclude individuals within some social frameworks. The most problematic and exclusionary to social participation are those records specific to the registration of deviance. Whilst released prisoners are registered in the same ways as the general population, it is their police and prison records that become most problematic in the context of their release.21 The men and women interviewed in this research all made reference to their ‘records’ during the interviews: however, their narratives suggested the gravity of having the record itself was of more consequence than the specifics detailed. Recorded data of offending amass intimate knowledges of individuals that create potentially significant vulnerabilities and weaknesses. Derrida (1996: 22) identifies a ‘violence of the archive’ suggesting the ‘process of archiving and record keeping is as, if not more, significant than that which is archived’. It is the act or the decision to make permanent (and widely available) records of social, ideological and behavioural transgression, rather than the act of eliciting a record itself, that is of concern to released prisoners. It is the idea of locating released men and women within their ‘deviant’ histories that makes the release environment problematic, it is the ‘semantics of the archive’ that holds the prisoner to his or her past (Derrida, 1996: 22).

Beyond the negative implications of having social records of offending, narratives surrounding employment also exposed the ways in which the absence of other social records operates to exclude the men and women from full social participation and perceptions of citizenship. In particular, the absence of employment, rental and educational registration became exclusionary to the extent that the men’s and women’s pasts were unaccounted for, non-productive and discredited. As Bambi and Ballard noted:

21 In contrast to negative implications of registering offending and conviction raised by the men and women, one man spoke to the idea of registered sex offenders. Specifically, the importance and social significance of both having a record base to reference, but also the ability for the community to access such information:

I s’pose they’ve got to in some cases but not all you know what I mean. I mean because if there’s a sex offender going for a job in a school, like they say you know they’ve got to do a check … even though I’ve been in [prison] I reckon they should [be able to check criminal records] (Deiter).
I've always been on the streets as well and that's gonna make things hard. Like coming to a resume, what am I gonna do. I'm thirty-two years of age, how am I going to explain myself? (Bambi).

What do you say to these bosses when they say where were you working before now? 'I wasn't.' 'Well where have you been working in the last five years?' 'I haven't.' [If] you say you've been on the dole they're gonna think you're a bludger (Ballard).

Bambi and Ballard introduce the idea of unaccountable time and the benefits of inclusion within various social registries. Specifically, documentation within social data systems facilitates social participation and access points to forms of citizenship. For instance, a record of previous employment attributes to the individual the skills, reliability and creditability suitable for future employment. The presence of employment records, education, military or government service chronicles similarly positively credits an individual. More particularly, such records account for the individual’s time and renders it productive. Foucault (1977: 151) speaks to the idea of productive and useful time in which disciplinary power seeks that payment of time should be ‘without impurities or defects; a time of good quality’. Within the prison, the leverage of a prisoner’s time ‘impresses in concrete terms the idea that the offence has injured, beyond the victims, society as a whole’ (Foucault, 1977: 232). In this way, periods of incarceration render a prisoner’s time unproductive and unaccountable by virtue of both the creation of a criminal record, and the exclusion to registration within other social databases. As Ballard identified, an inability to productively account for his time (whilst incarcerated) gave rise to some additional challenges surrounding gaining employment. Whilst recipients of welfare are more likely to gain employment than individuals with criminal records (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2002), as discussed in Chapter Two, Ballard speaks to the stigmatisation of being ‘on the dole’. With this example he suggests a close correlation between the negative implications of being in prison and receiving welfare in the context of seeking employment. Bambi furthers the notion of unaccountable time as she locates her individual challenges within the context of her past life more generally. Living on the street since the age of fourteen, she identifies how the absence of past stable housing and rental records challenges her entry to the labour market. Financially
supporting herself through her street work. Bambi laughingly questions the benefit of documenting such skills on her resume. If we consider the essence of a resume more generally, specifically as ‘an account of a person’s education or work history’ (Macquarie Dictionary, 1998), it draws to a singular location the ways in which citizens are socially registered. It is a record of recording. In this regard, exploring the ways released prisoners are documented and classified within the community becomes critical to understanding the ways labels of ‘offender’, ‘prisoner’, or ‘deviant’ are challenged, negotiated and permeable to change.\(^\text{22}\)

**The state is never clean**

Lyon (1994: 218, 220) argues that ‘the expansion of electronic surveillance represents one aspect of a major challenge to social participation and to human personhood’, as ‘data-image[s] reconstitute “selves” by piecing together bits of data drawn from diverse sources’. Contained knowledge about released men and women from juridical records extend in the release setting to include encounters with housing, medical, welfare and familial institutions. Technological development, moreover accessibility and immediacy of the internet, facilitates the immediate gathering of diverse information to a singular location, for the purposes of categorising, comparing and measuring. Whilst a vast amount of information is gathered and collectively stored about all members of the social body, the information and records specific to the released prisoner extend beyond superficial identifying information. Moreover, public accessibility to (some) criminal records challenges the traditional performativities of (and specific to) the State. The State, as authoritarian provider of security, stores, accesses and uses information about its citizens for the purposes of the greater good. The expansion of technological databases and accessibility to an ever-growing cabinet of social files and information enables the general population to become regulators of citizenship within the community. The implications of such transcendence can be identified within examples of vigilantism. Most immediately recognisable are the public outcries and retributive responses towards sex offenders returned to the community (see for example Hodgson & Butler, 2006; Wilkinson, 2006; Buttler & Binnie, 2005; Pratt, 2002). As flagged in Chapter Four,

\(^{22}\) Explored below and also in Chapter Seven.
public registries in the form of police websites. Published books or community vigilante websites provide the public with personal details about registered sex offenders including current addresses and sometimes places of work. In this regard, the potential to exploit the use of such information becomes significant.

The above examples call upon the notions of disenfranchisement and exclusion of released men and women when they enter into or seek employment. Such prohibitions appear fundamental to the operationalisation of disciplinary technologies in which individuals are characterised and classified, and distributed along a scale which organises disqualification and invalidation (Foucault, 1977: 223). According to Foucault (1977: 272), penalty deals with illegalities by ‘laying down the limits of tolerance, of giving free reign to some, of putting pressure on others, of excluding a particular section ... of neutralising certain individuals’. In this way, mechanisms of exclusion and disenfranchisement within the social body can be understood as cogs of the disciplinary machine. The exclusion of a released prisoner, in the form of ‘disqualification and invalidation’, extends the perimeters of their punishment beyond the architecture of the prison.

The men’s and women’s narratives suggested that the negative consequences of having a record were not isolated to finding employment alone. Attending to Plato’s earlier comment, he speaks about the revelation of his criminal record to his employer whilst gainfully employed. He provides another example wherein the mere registration of his offending, rather than the nature of his offending itself, problematises experiences of release:

I went to get a job yesterday as a cleaner, vacuuming fuckin’ floors ... got the job, beautiful, been there two days, went in on Wednesday and they went ‘no sorry here’s you pay’. I said ‘what’s the problem?’ ‘Oh, criminal record’, I said ‘how the fuck did you find that out?’ His wife gets me in there, crime.com.au, anyone in [two states] with a criminal record, up it comes ... and that was for a cleaner’s job ... like $10 bucks an hour. ‘You’ve got a criminal record, how can we put you in that position?’ (Plato).
Further to Derrida's (1966) notion of the 'violence of the archive', the dangerisation of records of offending may not be felt in the immediate future, as Plato identifies. Rather, their existence locates and potentially discloses released prisoners forever within the context of their deviance. The real violence perhaps rests in the nature of data availability and the immediacy with which the general population can (within limits) access such intimate information, in effect ensuring 'the slate is [never] cleaned' (Taxman, Young & Byrne, 2002a: 16). Following the recent murder of two sisters in Victoria, Australia by a convicted violent rapist and burglar, there has been much contention regarding the Freedom of Information Act (1982) and its application to convicted offenders. Headlines such as 'Police protect dead man's evil past', and 'Silence on a suspect's past' were common surrounding this case. Victorian police, despite heavy criticism, have tightened both privacy policies and their application following complaints to the Privacy Commission by a convicted rapist whose photo appeared in a newspaper in 2004. Such media attention further fuels public debate surrounding the rights of offenders and the rights of their victims (and the broader community). As Anderson (2006a: 4) comments, 'arguments by criminals that the release of convictions and mugshots might humiliate or endanger them doesn't stack up next to the safety of the innocent'. At the same time, publicly recorded instances of offending by prisoners after their release has sparked further criticism about the release of serious, violent and sexual offenders (Hodgson & Butler, 2006).

Whether real or perceived, the assumption that criminal record accessibility is readily available was shared by the men and women in this study. In line with the work of Taxman, Young and Byrne (2002b), such beliefs were of particular concern when negotiating the decision to disclose or conceal criminal records, particularly in the context of employment. The men and women conveyed that even if they were questioned directly about prior convictions they would not disclose their histories. Problematically, the conflict between disclosing and not disclosing past imprisonment suggested a double-edged sword, where immediate revelation was believed to significantly impede possible employment, and later detection by employers themselves served a similar outcome in that employment was terminated. The men and women reported that whilst employers
suggested that termination was the product of dishonesty alone, for the men and women interviewed such actions were contextualised within the presence of their record, rather than a lack of full disclosure. The chief function of disciplinary power is to ‘train ... to make it possible to know [and] alter’ offending bodies (Foucault, 1977: 170, 171). Documenting criminal records not only delimits the behaviours and freedoms of released prisoners through prohibitions on employment, places of residence, financial constraints and the like. More particularly, it locates men and women within the boundaries of their perceptions of what bearing a record encumbers. They begin to conduct themselves within the frames of their transgressions. They isolate themselves from social settings, collective groupings, employment paths, relationships and the like because their record, references to their record and, more generally, social frameworks have informed and conditioned them to do so. As Foucault (1977: 282) writes:

Because the prison facilitates the supervision of individuals when they are released, because it makes possible the recruiting of informers and multiplies mutual denunciations, because it brings offenders into contact with one another, it precipitates the organisation of a delinquent milieu, closed in upon itself, but easily supervised: and all the results of non-rehabilitation make it all too easy for former prisoners to carry out the tasks assigned to them.

The men and women understood themselves as living up to the expectations of others, such that their positioning with deviant and transgressing categories became a self-fulfilling prophecy:

I didn’t turn out the way people thought I might you know. From an early age being in boys homes the nuns used to bash me up and say to me you’re gonna be nothing, you’re gonna turn out no good’ you know and that’s probably what I’ve done you know, I turned out, like I believed them you know (Damien).

The categorisations that delimit the parameters of identity formation and the sustenance of ‘deviant’ identities are made permanent through technological advancements. The sustainability of data keeping and storage conduits ceaseless markers of transgression and difference. The ‘normalising gaze ... qualify[ing], classify[ing], punish[ing], establishes
over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them' (Foucault, 1977: 184). Narratives of release suggest criminal records establish the criteria by which the men and women are measured and socially located within their release environment. In particular, their narratives located them within the parameters of digression and 'non-observance', their departure from the rule (Foucault, 1977: 178) and the broader community. The experiences of the men and women suggested a perennial recording and occupation of categories of 'offender' and 'prisoner'. Whilst the immediacy of data recovery and reference may not be easily pinpointed (for example, the moment at which an employer references a criminal database), each time individual 'files' are observed, the scaffolds of 'offender' identities are strengthened.

Garfinkel (2000: 184) suggests that 'ownership creates a kind of control'. and to this end the availability of criminal records (whether all or part) to the broader social body impacts individual control over the life choices of released men and women. The power to create and maintain offending records by police, parole and the like establishes a control within those agents over the individuals about whom records are kept. Garfinkel (2000: 207) suggests 'it's not your information, [but rather], it is information about you'. The judgemental nature of the broader social body was identified to the extent that the term 'prisoner' ascribes particularly negative characteristics to the men and women. Foucault speaks to this notion as he introduces the idea of the record that is kept about the individual, without the individual's input. He asserts the prisoner 'is seen, but does not see ... is the object of information, never a subject of communication' (Foucault, 1977: 200). In the context of experiences of employment, released prisoners can negotiate their records of offending to the extent that they can or do negate disclosure of their records to potential employers. In this regard, they are vehicles of (selective) communication about themselves. When employers have the capacity and resources to reference social documentation specific to serious offending, released prisoners' opportunity to be carriers of communication is shut down and they become 'object[s] of information' (Foucault, 1977: 200). To this end, released prisoners have little impact on, or recourse to, the data that is kept about them, let alone its reference and analysis. To this idea, Foucault's (1977) work again speaks, wherein he asserts that whilst the intention of
disciplinary power is to normalise, correct, mould and improve, the effect was the creation and nurturing of an enduring transgressing population. Indeed the aim of punishment is to make certain individuals ‘feel the offence they have committed ... a humiliation, [and] a removal from office’ (Le Salle in Foucault 1977: 178). Engaging these ideas within the experiences of social employment, a period of imprisonment fastens the offending records to their person, and structured identity. Within these examples, the criminal record can be conceived as powerful (and exclusionary) in defining an individual’s space and place in the social fabric by virtue of its collation of illegalities. At the same time, the criminal record becomes further exclusionary as it limits the ways in which men and women are recorded within broader and more acceptable social registries.

Prison and offending registration categorises men and women as ‘prisoners’ and deviants. The released men and women interviewed suggested these categorisations were significant and powerful informants to their release experiences. Firstly, they identified the ways in which their records were accessed and referred to in the context of gaining employment and their encounters with police. Secondly, the ways they were monitored within the release setting and the nature of the information gathered about them in those contexts barely challenged their classifications of deviant and transgressor. The men’s and women’s narratives suggested that, with the exception of the drug court, meritable conduct in the release setting, save for successful completion of parole itself, is minimally recorded or registered. In this regard, released prisoners have minimal opportunity or avenues, if any, to resist or positively impact their registrations and classifications of deviance. Released prisoners can be understood as empowered to negotiate their criminal records to the extent that they can (to some degree and in some instances) restrict the information externally known about them, for instance in the company of strangers, work colleagues etc. To this end, the negation of disclosing offending or incarceration records was believed to limit significant branches of
knowledge and discrimination about them. Legislation such as the Spent Convictions Acts 1998 provides an opportunity for a small subset of prisoners to remove or distance themselves from their criminal and incarceration records. When we look at the demographics of the Australian prison population (outlined in Chapter Two), however, and indeed the men and women interviewed within this research, few released prisoners are able to take advantage of such provisions. Of the twenty-seven men and women interviewed for this research, none fulfilled the eligibility criteria for the Spent Convictions Act 1998 (in New South Wales).

**Permanent transgression**

The men and women conveyed that their records of past (offending and incarceration) more critically informed their periods of release than the information specifically gained during their current release. The power and knowledge gained through the monitoring of offending men and women establishes a systematic surveillance for the purpose of identifying deviation. Creating and extending the capacity to identify the transgressions of released men and women inevitably perpetuates the occurrence of transgression and, more critically, binds individuals to their deviance. Whitfield (2001: 115) asks, “if we set an offender free to roam in the community, yet also feel we must track [them] everywhere, what are we trying to do?” Practices of examination and the technologies structured through disciplinary power are exclusionary rather than inclusionary… this

[23] The men and women spoke of an exception to this problematic notion of disclosing prison and criminal records to others: they indicated their vulnerabilities and shame associated with disclosure minimised as they engaged in dialogue with other prisoners and released prisoners:

> It’s not something you really want to keep talking about anyway you know… I mean it’s good for a laugh about some things and what you’ve done and try and get away with from police… you know stupid things you do trying to get away from them and that (Roden).

Roden’s narrative is further suggestive of circumstances where offending records are elaborated and glamorised in the company of fellows. This idea is not explored within this thesis; however, its exploration has significant potential to speak to the ways in which prisoners define themselves in the context of their offending and incarceration.

[24] Spent Convictions Act, 1998 (2) stipulates a criminal record is a spent conviction on the expiration of a period, immediately after the date of conviction of the offence, of a period of five years for juveniles subject to the Juvenile Justice Act, and 10 years in any other case, during which period the offender has not c) been convicted of an offence punishable by imprisonment, and d) served all or any part of a sentence of imprisonment. Traffic offences and prison terms subsequent to such offences are also taken into account within these periods.
permanent “underclass” is increasingly regarded by the wider society not as a group to be integrated but ‘as a risk to be policed’ (Nelken, 1994: 4). The parameters within which prisoners are monitored and categorised in the release context can be conceptualised as establishing not a transitional path to become ‘effective’ and ‘productive’ contributors to the broader social body, but rather locate and fasten them within their deviant classifications. Moreover, restrictions on civil liberties and the extent to which individuals are inhibited and excluded from various aspects of social participation by virtue of their imprisonment arguably ‘serve to impose a penalty structure after the offender has theoretically repaid society’ (Taxman, Young & Byrne, 2002b: 12).

Disciplinary power impresses a ‘compulsory visibility’ that ‘assures the hold of power’ over a subjected population (Foucault, 1977: 187). Objectifying released prisoners within the realms of surveillance, normalising judgements and examination, disciplinary power structures the release setting for men and women and constrains the spaces within which they are allowed to exist. The examination ‘engages [released prisoners] in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them’ (Foucault, 1977: 189). Constantly measured and considered in the context of their ‘records’, released prisoners move narrowly within their release environment, constrained by real and perceived limitations associated with their embossed social deviance. ‘The formation of a whole series of codes of disciplinary individuality ... established by the examination [marked] the “formalisation” of the individual within power relations’ (Foucault, 1977: 190). Released men and women become a formal and distinctly recognisable population, their status established, maintained and made permanent through the carceral, and broader inscriptions of deviance and transgression:

There’s a stigma also like, I’ve never robbed from my family but they think things are gonna go missing of course they’re gonna ask me coz I’ve been to prison you know ... like if mum loses an earring she blames me and then she finds it and she doesn’t say sorry, she never says sorry (Varen).

The written account of transgression, the criminal record, constitutes ‘the individual as a describable, analysable object’ within a ‘comparative system that made possible the
measurement ... and calculation of the gaps between individuals [and] their distribution in [the broader] population" (Foucault, 1977: 190). The examination 'makes each individual a case' from which new branches of knowledge and specialities are established (Foucault, 1977: 191). Prisoner release has given birth to a variety of professional bodies specific to the monitoring and management of transitional periods and released individuals. Beyond the mere presence of a record of transgressions, the existence of these specialist agents further holds released prisoners within their positions of criminality and social exclusion. Foucault’s work argues that ‘differences, peculiarities, deviance and eccentricities are ever more highlighted in a system of controls concerned to seek them out’ (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 72). In the contemporary context, Lyon (2001: 67) suggests that the ‘electronic environment automates processes of selection of inclusion and exclusion, thus turning it into an agency of social sorting ... reinforcing stereotypes, discrimination and social difference is [one result]’ (Lyon, 2001: 67). Lyon (2001: 67) proposes that the surveillance of risk aggravates/exacerbates social divisions.

In this regard, the men and women identified the ways in which their prisoner status limited their movement and inclusion within the community:

A lot of times I’ve got to prove I’ve been to prison, like when you deal with Centrelink or [the] housing department and all that you’ve got to produce your release slip and all that so you’re always known as an ex-offender (Damien).

I looked at seven houses and I tried to be honest when I first seen a few houses, I said ‘I’m from jail, I’m at a halfway house and here’s my parole and that’s all I’ve got’ you know coz I never rented a house before ... and they were just straight away ‘no we don’t want you’ (Samson).

They’ll judge [you] in a negative way ... like ‘oh no, you’ve been in jail’ without even knowing it and not even asking if you’ve been rehabilitated you know (Marissa).

Foucault (1977: 301) argued that the natural extension of carceral frameworks to the broader social body assures the ‘formation of delinquency on the basis of subtle illegalities’ (Foucault, 1977: 301). Mandated and intensified social surveillance of men and women specific to their release environment and the identification of their
transgressions creates and sustains a delinquent release population, permanently located and referenced by their delinquency.

I kept a low profile ... I'm hiding ... see most people unless they've been to jail themselves, the images it creates in people's minds is terrible, it's something people don't want to consider, it's like you've got leprosy or something (Caine).

The 'image of the leper cut off from all human contact, underlies the projects of exclusion' ... 'in a practice of rejection, of exile-enclosure' (Foucault, 1977: 199, 198). Caine parallels his incarceration, moreover the mark his incarceration has left on him, to the plight of the leper. Engaging binary divisions in defining what constitutes normality and abnormality establishes two poles between which individuals are located. Never occupying both locations at the one time, on this account individuals are either normal or abnormal, with arguably little movement between the two. The men and women identified themselves and understood their broader identification as 'prisoner' as starkly contrasting with 'normal' and 'free' citizenship. They suggested they would always be a 'prisoner' or 'offender', and even those who had been released for several months or years previously were never able to occupy a space of 'normality', limited by either real or perceived barriers. The men and women spoke about having a sign or tattoo on their foreheads that the entire social world could see (an idea considered further in Chapter Seven). The release setting becomes an 'enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded' (Foucault, 1977: 197).

Conclusion
The men's and women's narratives of release identified visible and subtle, formal and informal, spaces of surveillance from correctional departments and the broader social framework. Regulation of men and women in the release setting can be understood as diversely and individually managed by key social actors and institutions. At the same time, however, the individuality of such control is intricately interwoven, in ways that are both recognisable and discrete to the released prisoner, to create a release environment
that is systematically governed at every surface. Narratives of release supported Foucault’s (1977: 211) assertion that the mechanics of disciplinary power are ‘decarcerationalised’. As the men and women identified the ‘correctionalisation’ of medical, welfare, economic and familial structures, they elevated the idea of a release environment that was both authoritarian and subtle in its systematic and structural surveillance and regulation. Foucault (1977: 302) argues:

The prison continues, on those who are entrusted to it, a work begun elsewhere, which the whole of society pursues on each individual through innumerable mechanisms of discipline. By means of a carceral continuum, the authority that sentences infiltrates all those other authorities that supervise, transform, correct, improve.

Giddens (1991: 126) suggests that ‘normality is managed in fine detail within the textures of social activity’. The experiences of the men and women within this research support Giddens’s proposal. In particular, their identification with and consideration of the intricate and often veiled technologies and implications of the release environment as disciplinary in nature link Giddens’s ideas of modernity to the prison release context.

Few people would deny the need for criminal records and incarceration files, indeed they serve very important roles in modern society in the context of monitoring offending patterns, crime trends, the nature of repeat offending and the like. What is critical in the context of prisoner release, however, is the manner in which criminal records appear disproportionately referenced and drawn on in the day-to-day lives of the men and women within this research. As noted above, whilst there are many examples wherein criminal records are directly cited, specifically within the labour market, deconstructing the experiences and narratives of the men and women, it appears that their perceptions about the accessibility of records and the gravity of negative implications surrounding their possession are significant. Further, we see the nature of release surveillance (as identified by released prisoners within this study) is disproportionately bedded within authoriative and punitive wadding. Save for the potentiality of drug court and some relationships with support services, there appear few avenues, if any, for released men and women to challenge their negative social recordings. More particularly, there is little
opportunity to emboss marks of good conduct and performativities of good citizenship on their social records. In the context of social databases, records of criminality most immediately impinge on ease of prison release as they become integral to social participation through avenues such as employment, housing, economic means and the like. In essence, the social records of the men and women are like credit files. Unlike the Credit Reference Association of Australia (CRAA), who expanded its database in the late 1980s from recording ‘bad credit’ to include records of payments and credit profiles, criminal records are most powerfully concerned with the ‘negative reporting’ of individuals (Davies, 1992: 91). Problematically, not only is there limited scope to distance oneself from records of illegalities, but further there is an explicit negation of contextualisation to the underlying issues driving such behaviours. In this regard, we can draw reference to the differential ways in which police and parole departments were perceived in contrast to those of supported accommodation services and drug courts. Most pointedly, this was seen in the ways in which transgressions of drug use or conditions of residency were contextualised within the lived experiences and struggles of the men and women at the time of their transgressions, which in turn provided sites for the men and women to challenge and positively inform their ‘negative recording’.

Foucault (1977: 197) engages the totality of the panopticon to lay down for each individual:

His place, his body, his disease, his death, his well-being, by a means of an omnipresent and omniscient power that subdivides itself in a regular, uninterrupted way even to the ultimate determination of the individual, of what characterises his, of what belongs to him, of what happens to him ... discipline brings into play its power which is one of analysis.

If we consider the ways in which both real and perceived limitations incumbent to having a criminal record play out in the release setting, we can draw on the idea of a panoptic release, in which the released prisoner becomes the subject and creation of penological manufacture. Further, akin to the panopticon, the release setting is ‘individualising and

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25 In the sense of desistance from crime, drug use (or reduced drug use), gainful employment, regaining custody or adequately caring for dependent children, stable housing and the like.
[one of] permanent documentation’ (Foucault, 1977: 250). Foucault (1977: 202) locates power’s principality in the ‘distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes: in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up’. The extension of surveillance and regulation within the release environment beyond penological actors propels the diversification and expansion of released prisoners’ spatial and temporal governance. They become subject not only to the monitoring and authoritative control of correctional institutions, specifically parole departments and other such conditional releases, but they also become entangled within a surveillance web that recruits medical, welfare, economic and broader social agents. Mechanisms of disciplinary surveillance and regulation operate ‘according to a principle of relative continuity’, ‘at the culmination of disciplinary networks’ (Foucault, 1977: 299, 306). As medical, political, economic and educational institutions ‘assume an ever greater share of the powers of supervision and assessment, the penal apparatus will [become] medicalised’, politicised, and educationalised (Foucault, 1977: 306). Engaging with the narratives and experiences of the men and women within this research, we can certainly give merit to the idea that broader social institutions have become responsible and taken on the positions of regulating, administering and managing those identified as deviant and transgressor.

In the release setting, the corpus delicti is no longer the men’s and women’s initial crime or offence, but rather extends to include their connection with the criminal justice system, the stigmatisations associated with being in prison and having a criminal record, marks of drug addiction and broader poor social performance such as ‘unfitness’ to mother and care for children, the inability to hold positions of employment, possess stable housing and the like. The commission of their criminal offence punished them through imprisonment, and has triggered the mechanics of a system that structurally and systematically disenfranchises them from full social participation. More particularly, the tone of contemporary society has fashioned this disciplinary system, or ‘laboratory of power’ (Foucault, 1977: 204), in such a way that records of social and physical transgression (in the sense of drug use) are made permanent, accessible and disproportionately grounded in punitive and ‘negative recording’. 

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The differential ways in which gender informed the men’s and women’s perceptions of release surveillance and governance are not considered within this analysis. In light of the experiences of women as mothers and the complexity that characterises their conditions and lives in the release setting, specifically the recruitment of departments of family services and additional parole, drug court and supported accommodation requirements, indicates that penetration of these issues in future research is critical. As key researchers (see for example Dodge & Pogrebin, 2004; Carlen 2002c; Kilroy, 2000; Kemp, 1980) have powerfully characterised the differential experiences of women within penological contexts more generally, in comparison to their male counterparts, such research coupled with the ideas flagged within this thesis invite and urge an extension of research specific to women in the release setting.
(Confusion) With this work I was soul searching. I was lost for so many years through drugs and a hectic life. Through all these confusing lines, I still found my way home. In my artwork I find something of myself that I have been looking for after being locked in a shell for so long.

(Somebody’s Daughter Theatre, 2005)
Chapter Six

This is not the life I want or who I want to be but I don’t know anything else: narratives of addiction and criminality

It’s like being in a hole really and like just being able to see the light but not being able to get up to it. It’s like being stuck somewhere you know. You feel sort of like … um like you’re not really living, you’re only half living, only living part of the time (Senna).

*  *  *

This chapter is dedicated to the men and women who have struggled with drug addiction in concert with problematic contact with the criminal justice system. In the initial scope of this research analysis, explorations of addiction and drug taking behaviour in the context of prisoner release were not going to be considered in specific detail. More particularly, prior to conducting the interviews with released men and women, the gravity and criticality of drug addiction to experiences of release were not fully realised. The content and focus of this chapter is driven by the powerful references the men and women made to their drug use within their broader narratives of release. In this regard, it is not so much a theoretical deconstruction of drug use in the release setting, but rather an exploration of the ways addiction is experienced, negotiated and articulated by individuals who have been captured (and silenced) within substance abuse.

Identified as a significant personal, medical and broader social problem, drug and alcohol addiction has been extensively examined. Specifically, contemporary research has explored various models and lifecycles of addiction (Cloud & Granfield, 2004; Keane, 1999), experiences of recovery and sobriety (Hewitt, 2004; Hänninen & Koski-Jännes, 2004), patterns of offending and incarceration (Willis & Rushforth, 2003), rehabilitation and treatment programs (Fonden & Leiknes, 2003), and entry into and maintenance with
recovery programs (Weatherburn & Lind, 2001). Whilst such explorations have begun to paint a more detailed picture of addictive behaviours in general, very little is known about patterns of drug use and recovery amongst release populations. Drug use trends are largely reliant on self-report data, statistics from rehabilitation and treatment programs, police and criminal records, and recent drug testing programs such as DUMA, DUCO, and ADAM.¹ In this context, the reliability and accuracy of police records (Makkai, 2001), changes in policing approaches and legislation (Graycar et al., 2002; Makkai, 2001), the reliability of self-report data (Makkai & Payne, 2003a, 2003b), and limitations of drug testing (Makkai, 2001) have all been identified as inhibiting current understandings of drug use trends and behaviours amongst prison and release populations.

Whilst drug use and its connection with offending behaviour have begun to occupy criminological literature (see for example Makkai & Payne, 2003a,² 2003b; Willis & Rushforth, 2003; Harrison, 2001; Maxwell, 1998), theorising addiction patterns amongst prison and release populations largely draws from more general addiction research. Within these limitations, the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA, 2004) estimates that almost one million Australians use illicit drugs at least on a weekly basis. Further, there are an estimated seventy-four thousand dependent heroin users in Australia, forty-eight percent of whom live in New South Wales (Darke & Hall, 2000: 1). Prison populations have been identified as disproportionately burdened with substance abuse problems in comparison with the general community. More critically, substance abuse is recognised as one of the most prevalent and problematic health concerns for prisoner populations (Butler & Milner, 2003; NCCHC, 2001). Within these frames, drug addiction is understood to similarly burden release populations, and these issues become more problematic when combined with broader prison release concerns. In the interests of expanding current understandings of the Australian release setting, attention to drug use and addiction becomes a critical component to consider. More particularly, the

¹ DUMA – Drug Use Monitoring in Australia; DUCO – Drug Use Careers of Offenders; ADAM – Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring.
² Makkai and Payne’s (2003) work furthers to provide a summary of the findings of significant bodies of both criminological and drug addiction research.
assimilation of a narrative approach to exploring drug use behaviour develops a greater omniscience within contemporary knowledge, and, at the same time, provides a platform for men and women to make sense of their entry into, existence within and exit from addiction (Hänninen & Koski-Jännes, 2004: 231).

This analysis does not attend to the physicalities of drug addiction, nor the day-to-day practices of buying or using drugs. With regards to the physical experiences and implications of drug addiction, the men’s and women’s stories are much the same as broader experiences of drug addiction. What is pertinent to this study are the ways the men’s and women’s broader experiences of drug addiction inform and challenge their experiences of prison release. This chapter firstly attends to the demographics of the men’s and women’s drug use to outline their shared experiences of addiction. The body of this analysis explores several key ways in which addiction can be understood to problematise the release setting. Specifically, these include the social and emotional developments subsequent to drug use, and the connection between offending, incarceration and drug use. This chapter’s analysis is not interested in comparing or locating the narratives of these men and women within criminological enquiries or addiction models more generally. Rather, it plumbs the ways they understand their drug use in the context of the prison release setting and their individual lives more broadly. Where links or sureties are made with criminological and addiction research, such links are appropriately referenced. Attending to experiences of addiction in this way, this chapter extends and complements contemporary research through its divergence from traditional dialogues of ‘success’, ‘failure’, causality and the like.

**Performances of drug addiction**

This research considers drug addiction in the context of performances, wherein addiction is not so much a state or space of being, as an orchestrated performance that is scripted and executed in tune with social, physical and emotional investment(s). Several key concepts have assisted in the mapping and deconstruction of experiences of addiction within this chapter. Most immediately, drug addiction is divisible from drug use in that drug addiction is characterised as the physical, emotional or social dependency on drugs,
whereas drug use (arguably) is not necessarily grounded within frames of dependency. Further, critical distinctions are made between 'sobriety' and 'recovery', and the ideas of 'active' and 'passive' engagement with or commitment to recovery. Firstly, 'sobriety' and 'recovery' are distinguished to suggest differential spaces or states of non-drug use. Specifically, sobriety refers to the specifics of non-use or the abstinence from drugs. Recovery refers to a commitment to not use drugs executed through participation in treatment programs, changes to lifestyle, and attempted restoration of a drug-free life. More generally, it involves actions beyond simply an abstinence from drugs. The men's and women's narratives argue that sobriety is powerfully externally influenced (through parole, drug court and the like), whereas recovery may be initially externally influenced, but is sustained and essentially driven by individual and personal choice. It is here that the ideas of activity and passivity are located. Passivity is essentially characterised as a relative indifference to process wherein participation is a derivative of external regulation and control. For example, in the context of sobriety, where states of non-use are specifically externally governed, this research argues for a passive commitment to sobriety, where desistence from drugs results from punitive regulation (through parole and drug court), existing in environments not conducive to drug use (arguably the prison or in-patient treatment centres) and the like. In contrast, active engagement involves individual responsibility. In the context of recovery, where individuals make the transition from external to individual influences in the form of different choices and life changes to maintain non-use, this research ascribes an active commitment. These constructs are by no means concrete or insensitive to the pendulous nature of drug addiction. However, their division in this way assisted in differentiating the experiences of the men and women within this research.

All the men and women interviewed, with the exception of one man who was reluctant to detail any aspect of his life, identified themselves as either a 'drug addict', or as having a significant drug problem. In response to an opening question which asked the men and women to describe themselves, over half in fact credited their drug use and addiction as a

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5 Houborg Pedersen (2003) uses the terms 'passive' and 'active' to describe program commitment by homeless and socially excluded people. This current analysis shares Houborg Pedersen's conceptual understandings of 'active' and 'passive'.
defining characterisation. Histories of drug use commonly spanned the majority of their adult lives, over half identifying struggles with problematic drug use for more than ten years, and almost a quarter reported between twenty and thirty years. Periods of active addiction, as distinct from drug use more generally, ranged from several months to several years at a time. The prevalence of serious drug use amongst release populations more generally was further identified by the men's and women's support workers. For example, one worker noted that, amongst her clientele, only two of the men she had worked with in the past year did not have a history of serious drug use.

Consistent with current research (Hewitt, 2004; Goulding, 2004; Makkai & Payne, 2003a, 2003b; Johns, nd), poly-drug use was typical, with heroin identified as the most commonly used drug, followed by alcohol, marijuana, amphetamines, cocaine, party drugs and various types of prescription medication. Heroin was also identified as the most problematic of all illicit and prescription drugs (Bennett & Holloway, 2004), followed by amphetamines, cocaine and alcohol. A reliance on alcohol was identified as the primary substitute for heroin. All but two of the men interviewed were currently on a methadone treatment program. The majority had been on methadone for many years, either continuously or sporadically, and often in concert with continued drug use. One woman noted she had been on methadone continuously for the last thirteen years.

Whilst openly engaging in discussions of their performances and the consequences of drug use, the men and women differentially acknowledged their drug taking as particularly detrimental or problematic. Whilst labelling themselves as 'addicts', they spoke of their drug use as a 'habit' or 'problem'. Amongst these, three characterised their drug use as a 'bad problem', another three identified themselves as having an 'addictive personality', and two specifically referred to themselves as 'junkies'. In this regard their narratives downplayed the gravity of the consequences of drug addiction. The extent to which the men and women recognised the problematic nature of their drug use was proportional to and dependent upon considerations such as: the presence and exposure to drugs and incarceration within families and/or significant relationships; having dependent children, particularly for sole parents; the number of previous incarcerations; and the
men’s and women’s age or maturation. For those with histories of addiction and incarceration in their family environments and significant relationships, drug use was primarily perceived as problematic in the context of financing habits and the like, rather than in terms of the dominant physical, emotional or social implications.

Whilst research has debated causal relationships between drug use and offending (Makkai & Payne, 2003a; Graycar et al., 2002), in conjunction with other research (Bennett & Holloway, 2004; Pudney, 2002) the men and women attributed the majority of their offending to the funding of their habit or impaired judgements when under the influence of drugs. Moreover, they identified their incarceration as symptomatic of their drug use. To this end, the inevitability of incarceration was conveyed as one of the most immediate negative aspects of their drug use, followed by the use and consequences of the drugs themselves (see also Weatherburn & Lind, 2001).

The men and women frustratingly recounted ‘a number of false starts’ (Hewitt, 2004: 223) within their attempts at recovery, in particular for those with significantly long histories. The ways they had actively or passively engaged in the process of recovery in the past and ‘failed’ had a significant impact on current beliefs regarding their ability to overcome addiction. Almost half conveyed an inevitability of failure within their current attempts at sobriety and recovery as they highlighted their past as indicative of their future. At the time of the interviews, all but two of the participants were officially required to be ‘sober’ and were subject to multiple sites of surveillance in this regard (for example, drug court, probation and parole, or supported accommodation). Influencing their current performances of non-use the men and women identified: offending and imprisonment (Weatherburn & Lind, 2001); damaged relationships (Weatherburn & Lind, 2001); regretful behaviour and choices when using; loss of custody of children; pregnancy; frustrations, despair and the ‘out of control’ nature of active addiction (Alexander, 2004; Cloud & Granfield, 2004); ‘turning points’ (Cloud & Granfield, 2004; Koski-Jännès, 1998); hitting ‘rock bottom’ (Hänninen & Koski-Jännès, 2004); or maturing and ‘getting on’.
Regarding the status of their drug use at the time of the interviews, the men and women mostly identified themselves as 'not using', with differential commitment to their sobriety, independent of the regulations and controls within which their drug use was monitored in the release setting. Collectively, their narratives of non-use suggested their experiences could be divided into two distinct but very significant ways. Firstly, some men and women identified their commitment to sobriety was powerfully informed by heavy policing and regulation rather than strong individual convictions of desisting, and they conveyed relative passivity towards recovery. Secondly, there were those who conveyed an active engagement with and commitment to their recovery. These men and women attributed their commitment to personal choice, determination, personal losses, or being fed up with the 'using' lifestyle. With regards to casual and recent drug use, two men noted their drug use mere hours preceding the interview, one woman had been clean for over twelve months, and the remainder fell somewhere in between. Longer periods 'up' (of sobriety) resonated with increased feelings of control and responsibility (Hewitt, 2004), freedom, improved relationships with friends and families (Cloud & Granfield, 2004; Hewitt, 2004), and increased engagement and participation within the broader social body (Cloud & Granfield, 2004). It is important to note that amongst those who conveyed an active commitment to their recovery, sporadic drug use or 'slip-ups' were common experiences, particularly in the initial stages of recovery.

All of the men and women conveyed their desire to stop using drugs. Whilst they differentially identified their addiction as problematic, their narratives raised issues such as: the inevitability of crime and incarceration; damaged family relationships, sometimes already perceived as irreparable; and significant emotional, financial, familial and social loss and sacrifice. Other issues included death; problems specific to regaining custody of removed children; the chaotic and stressful lifestyle of the addict; inability to reach the levels of perceived achievement or success of the general population; amongst others. All had identified significant personal losses associated with their addictions. Most had engaged in some kind of treatment program, counselling, detoxification, or therapeutic communities (for example NA and AA), some multiple times. Moreover, they identified friends and family members who had also engaged in various treatments. All but two had
experienced previous incarcerations or recounted sometimes decades of being ‘in’ and ‘out’ of jail, to the extent that they were sometimes unable to specifically detail the exact length of total prison time or the number of sentences they had received (excluding bonds, probation, community service orders, suspended sentences or home detention). In this regard, they also recounted their previous ‘failed’ attempts at prison release. All had connected their offending and incarceration, either directly or indirectly, to their drug use. All identified their isolation, and the absence of ‘real’ or ‘true’ friendships external to those of shared drug use. So why had they maintained their addiction over the years, particularly when most had identified being in this same position multiple times? Why did only a small portion of the men and women convey an active commitment to their sobriety, let alone their recovery?

A world of drugs: narrating active addiction
Exploring the social ‘world of drugs’ is significant because it assists in understanding both the barriers to ‘successful’ sobriety and recovery, and also powerfully underscores broader experiences of release. This analysis engages with the notion of a ‘world of drugs’ in the sense that performances of drug addiction become all-consuming for the addicts. This idea most aptly conveys the ‘encapsulating’ nature of addiction as narrations elevated the idea of a distinct and separate existence in which drugs wrote on the social, physical and emotional state of the men and women interviewed. The analysis that follows paints a series of serious struggles and challenges specific to drug addiction that operate in concert with the multiple (previously identified) broader challenges of prison release. None of the men and women at the time of the interviews identified themselves as actively addicted; however, all but two discussed their previous occupation of this state of being. In this regard, it is largely in the context of past performances of addiction and from various spaces of casual and non–drug use that the men’s and women’s experiences of drug addiction are discussed and understood.

* Conceptualisations of ‘success’ are differentially defined amongst medical, welfare, regulatory and support agents. By extension, the men’s and women’s understandings of success further diverge from traditional associations of ‘success’ as complete abstinence. In this regard, success should be extended to include some of the following: complete abstinence; momentary use in the face of severe personal or social challenges; changes to drugs of choice; or small incremental steps such as reduced drug use or desistance from offending (see for example Harrison, 2001).
Active addiction powerfully surfaced as an apparatus of social contraction and personal isolation. Engaged in performances of active addiction, the men and women spoke of the contraction of their social world. Their lives became consumed by a world of drugs in which day-to-day existence was driven by the pursuit, use and funding of their addiction, in concert with their attempted escape from a ‘comedown’ or withdrawal. Their social worlds became insular to the extent that drug use enabled and mandated specific sites of performance that were secluded and protected. Fashioned in two distinct ways, these settings firstly negated and existed in contrast to meaningful and intimate relationships (outside those founded and sustained through collective drug use), and, secondly, fortified connections forged through shared drug use. Exploring what happens to the men’s and women’s relationships within performances of addiction is important because it informs the nature and kinds of support networks and environments men and women re-enter when they are released from the prison setting.

It was a common experience amongst the men and women to have lost contact with their families and, particularly for the women, to have lost custody of and sometimes visitation rights with their children. Some had no idea where their parents or siblings lived, or if their families were even aware that they had served their last prison term. Whilst such estrangement was attributed to years of drug use, incarceration, abuse, betrayal, rejection and the like, the strength of addiction to informing these divides cannot be understated. The section below paints the landscape of retraction from friendships and familial relationships subsequent to the men’s and women’s drug use. The criticality of support networks in the release transition has been widely acknowledged (Butler & Milner, 2003; Travis, Concotta & Solomon, 2003; D cuts, 2000; Farrell, 1998). In this regard, the way in which the men’s and women’s performances of addiction interconnect with their avenues of support in the community powerfully underscores and determines their experiences of release and addiction recovery.

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5 For example, in the context of not being questioned, stopped or challenged by non-users about their drug use, locations that were relatively protected or hidden from police surveillance and the like.
Most immediately, the men and women identified the dominance of their drug use and addiction within their lives. Addiction had woven itself into the fabric of their lifestyles to the extent that their everyday lives were overcome by the entirety of performing their drug use. Their most immediate concerns in the initial stages of addiction were centred around the quest, use and experience of illicit substances. During this time critical fractures were appearing in their friend and family relationships, yet their preoccupation with drug use veiled a full appreciation of what was happening. As they reflected from spaces of sobriety during the interviews, they were able to identify how the temporal restrictions of their addictions inhibited and thwarted their relationships. For example:

Before I was on drugs I was into sports you know I had a happy life with my kids and that, involved with my kids all the time and that and yeah since I came onto drugs that [the drugs] was my main thing (Valora).

Because I was so high ... I was just selfish, preoccupied on myself you know ... I didn’t really have time for friends or family or anything else [addiction] just becomes your whole life (Caine).

Whilst I was using drugs I’d only associate with people that was in the circle, that was using drugs or, anyone outside that circle I wouldn’t associate with ... because I didn’t really have time. Because once you have a taste of the drugs you’re back out there again searching for the money or a way to get it again. So you don’t really have a life because it’s a circle, you have a shot or whatever, you enjoy it, then once you start coming down you go after it again, yeah and that’s your life (Valora).

Caine and Valora identify the ways their preoccupation with addiction acted to create points of departure from their families. The physicalities of addiction engaged the men and women in carefully orchestrated performances in which the theatrics of drug use framed their contact and associations with the broader social world.

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Valora’s narratives are more detailed in their focus on the nature and experiences of addiction. The interviews for this research were conducted in two segments several months apart. References to drug use by the men and women in the first round of interviews were made within general narratives of prison release. Subsequent to the analysis and consideration of the significance of drug use within the first-round interviews, the second round of interviews sought to penetrate and develop ideas of drug addiction in more detail. In this regard, some of the men and women are drawn on more heavily within this analysis as a result of their participation within the second round of interviews, and the direct questioning specific to their drug addiction.
Valora introduces the notion of becoming so consumed within the physicalities of addiction and the escape of a ‘comedown’ that family life and participation within these contexts becomes systematically restricted. She talks about the happiness in the life she lead prior to her heavy drug use, whereas now, like the majority of these men and women, she strives to return to her life and relationships prior to her addiction. The significance of sobriety to informing the consequences of addiction cannot be understated. Caine further supports the idea of the clarified and omniscient opportunities sobriety endows as he articulates and perceives of his actions (whilst addicted) as ‘selfish’ and ‘preoccupied’. Whilst none of the men and women was actively addicted at the time of the interviews, they conveyed that their addiction clouded their ability to visualise the growing distance between themselves and their families. As Valora suggests, experiences and associations outside those conducive to drug use wilt at the materialisation and ascendance of addiction. In this regard, the decisions and actions of withdrawing from these kinds of contacts, whilst not always consciously performed, were primarily the product of the men and women themselves. Moreover, the incremental departure from meaningful relationships at this point was a consequence of the consuming nature of addiction to the extent that drugs (often on a daily basis) had to be sought, purchased, funded and the like.

As the men and women spoke of the endurance of their addictions, their narratives introduced additional sites of withdrawal from friend and familial networks – most notably, as they articulated feelings of shame and isolation when they were using. In these contexts, their removal from meaningful relationships became more conscious and deliberate. For example:

I’d stay away from my family because I’m ashamed of using drugs (Valora).

I hadn’t seen [my parents] in four years. That was my decision to withdraw from them. They’d give me a hard time, how I looked. I looked terrible, sick and mum just used to cry. It’s made them worry so I just sort
of thought if I cut ties well they won't worry. less stress for me, less stress for them (Kyria).

With friends ... the ones that are straight\(^1\) and doing well ... I distance myself from them anyway ... because um we haven't got anything in common anymore (Varen).

Themes of shame, difference and abnormality commonly surfaced within the interviews. These feelings became particularly apparent when the men’s and women’s families challenged their drug use. Such confrontation was met with resistance, denial, deception, betrayal and sometimes physical or verbal abuse. As a common response, the men and women became cognisant of their avoidance of contact as they sought to evade questioning about their drug use. Varen’s narrative reveals the (social) penalties of addiction to be multilayered in nature as he talks about not only the loss of contact, but the distinct difference he feels between himself and his friends. As his narrative continued he identified his addiction as the effacement of his friendships through the loss of shared experiences and goals, differences in lifestyle, and (his stunted) personal development. The ways Varen understood his difference within his relationships further fractured his associations as he deliberately removed himself from connections with ‘straight’ friends. Akin to the experiences of the majority of the men and women interviewed, his perceptions of the disparity in his friendships were just as powerful in forging the separation, as were the practicalities of differences in lifestyles. Chapter Seven attends to the points of reference the men and women use in identifying and understanding themselves and their experiences, and the ways such markers impede or advance their opportunities for change and success within the community. Engaging these ideas, Taxman (2000b: 8) identifies that offenders also face ‘internal questions of shame, blame, guilt and culpability for their offending and also for the state of their lives’.

The loss of friendships and engagement with the broader social body – particularly a loss of common ground, trust, respect and loyalty – underscored the social ‘costs’ of addiction.

\(^{1}\) Straight – referring to non–drug use.
The men and women conveyed a multiplicity of losses as they withdrew from relationships with parents, siblings, partners, children, and other friends and relatives. More often than not, the withdrawal was a gradual process that spanned the years of addiction.\textsuperscript{8} The disintegration of these relationships can be grounded within four key occurrences: firstly, individual resistance to familial offers of assistance or help regarding drug use; secondly, removing oneself from problematic or confrontational associations, typically where drug use was challenged or monitored; thirdly, self-preservation, specifically regarding the men’s and women’s feelings of poor self-worth and value; and lastly, the pain associated with disappointing, hurting or disrespecting their families, particularly those who had maintained support in the face of particularly problematic or lengthy addictive periods.

The culmination of addiction further damaged the men’s and women’s relationships as it tore at their families’ unconditional love and support. Ensuing the protraction of the men’s and women’s problematic drug use, they identified the ways their families began to understand the nature of their relationships; more particularly, the ways their families began to detach and remove themselves from the men and women and their struggles with illicit drug use. Such developments were understood as the culmination of their years of drug use, addiction, abuse and deception; however, the consequences were no less real or detrimentally experienced. Again, it is from the spaces and clarity of sobriety that these conceptualisations are more fully appreciated and problematically experienced. As Roden and Kyria comment:

Family I have nothing to do with [they said] ‘look Roden if you keep going on with this and that we don’t want anything to do with you’ coming from such a straight family it just sort of blew them away. Mum and dad don’t want to talk to me anymore ... they don’t want any hassles or anything and it stresses them (Roden).

\textsuperscript{8} With the exception of those that shared collective drug use. It is important to recognise the significance of the men’s and women’s familial settings to informing their use and perceptions of using illicit substances. In line with other research (for example Kevin, 1994), the presence of histories of incarceration and drugs amongst family members were common for a lot of the men and women interviewed. In this regard, HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2001: 92) research asserts that ‘contact with family and friends does not always protect against further offending where these contacts support criminal activity’. The current research extends these beliefs to suggest familial and friend relationships similarly influence drug use behaviours.
It ended up wrecking our relationship because he didn’t go that way again [towards drugs] and I did sort of thing. So I lost my first child and his father from drug use … the father’s very resentful over what’s happened. He more or less thinks that I chose the drugs over him and my child (Kyria).

The point at which families pull out their contact and support is informed by multiple attempts at negotiation, ultimatums and often years of denied and/or rejected offers to support sobriety and recovery. Roden talks about his lifestyle significantly challenging the values and acceptability of his high-profile and well-educated family. He identifies his isolation from the family in this way and further understands his seclusion as sustaining his reliance on heroin as an apparatus of support and comfort. The criticality of friend and familial support networks to both drug addiction and prison release more generally cannot be understated. The gradual withdrawal of support and contact from families and other significant relationships, as a result of addiction, powerfully challenges the men’s and women’s ability to navigate obstacles in the release setting. In the initial stages of addiction, whilst temporal restrictions inherent to the lifestyle of drug use and feelings of shame and betrayal withdraw the men and women from their families, it is the point at which their families choose to depart that is of concern in the release context. Problematically, however, it is not until the men and women experience spaces of sobriety that they begin to fully realise the gravity of their disconnection with their families. Preceding this movement, the men’s and women’s stories suggested an inability to fully grasp the concept of loss or the implications of their drug use. As Caine and Nash suggest below, realisation of the gravity of addictions consequences are sometimes far removed and distant from the exact points of departure from their families:

It didn’t really hurt until you know everything started to dawn on me after about six months in jail … and I realised, I thought oh my god what have I done? (Caine).

I’ve got seven sisters and four brothers and out of them, only one of them talks to me … they ideally like to see me come good but they don’t want anything to do with me … it’s been a number of years since I’ve seen them. Nowadays that sort of stuff hurts a bit because I would really like to
mend all the shit with my family so that I can be like the rest of the family. [The relationship] with some of them will never be mended (Nash).

Caine identified his addiction to cocaine spanning at least fifteen years and believed that the current ‘broken’ relationship with his sister was a gradual process of struggle and resistance throughout this time. He recounted the multiple times when his sister offered help both individually and professionally to work with him towards his addiction recovery. Each extension of support from his sister was met with denial, anger and resentment. Part of Caine’s challenge to accept help from his sister lay in his perceptions about being the eldest in the family. In the absence of his parents his beliefs about adopting the parental role and looking after his sister significantly opposed his capacity to see her in the light of carer and protector. In this regard, his resistance to his sister’s hand can be understood, in part, as much a product of his denial of his addiction as his beliefs about failing in his role as parental figure. He talks about the moment in jail when he became aware of the impact his addiction had on his family. Self-preoccupation and the paramount desire to maintain addiction came at the expense of a relationship with his sister.

Nash, in contrast, has a much larger family and whilst he indicates the connections with some of his siblings will never be revived, he maintains contact with his mother and two sisters. In this regard, whilst he narrates his experiences of exclusion from family functions such as weddings, birthdays and the like, as a result of being incarcerated and the death of some familial relationships, he is still able to draw (limited) support from a small subset of his family unit. Several years ago he was working towards his recovery from heroin addiction, he had entered treatment and relocated closer to his mother. He spoke about one of his sisters helping him establish his new home with furniture and some household appliances. He recalled he was both surprised and humbled at her generosity. Familial support is not always extended along emotional corridors, as Nash’s recount indicates. The men and women conveyed both the multiple and differential nature of extensions of support and assistance by their friends and families. Their return to addiction each time, however, chipped at the strength of these relationships and subsequently forged further rejections and withdrawal of their friends and families.
Frequently referenced within the men's and women's narrations, the loss of support and respect from families was one of the most painful consequences of addiction.

Butler and Milner (2003: 30) identify the rehabilitative value of relationships in terms of ‘reintegration into the community upon release from prison’, and highlight a link between recidivism and ‘social exclusion’. Additional research has also correlated social attachment with the reduction and sometimes cessation of ‘criminal careers’ (MacKenzie & Brame, 2001). The men and women identification that active addiction significantly contributes to the destruction or fracturing of meaningful relationships supports current research, and has serious implications for their experiences of release. The absence or limitations of available support networks powerfully challenges both the men's and women's ability and perception of their successful integration into the community. As Caine suggests:

I hurt them …. broke their trust, because they all said to me 'look Caine what are you doing' you know, 'tell us, you're not fooling anyone'. I thought I was fooling everyone, the only one I was fooling was me …. now I'm on my own, completely (Caine).

Caine talks with particular regret about the broken relationships with his close friends and family as a direct result of his addiction. His narrative highlights both a loss of trust and closeness but, more importantly, his regret about the lack of respect others now have for him. The men's and women's experiences of familial breakdown parallel findings of research in Western Australia with imprisoned women (Goulding, 2004). Dawn's reflection below builds a bridge between the exploration of the diminution of positive relationships in this analysis and the amplification of negative associations in the next section. Specifically, she speaks of her family's waning expectations of her and their withdrawal of support, in concert with close relationships that share common threads of drug use and criminality:

I've been in and out of prison for about ten years ... with a heroin addiction and the lifestyle that goes with it – well you go way down in

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*See for example Hammett, Roberts & Kennedy (2001).*
your family's estimation and I'm not allowed to go to mum's house. I know my mum still loves me but she gave up supporting me years ago and she won't visit me in [jail] or even when I'm out so we hardly ever see each other. So now my family is just my partner who is on remand waiting sentence so she could be in here with me next week (Dawn, cited in Goulding, 2004: 44).

Destructive bonds: the company of fellows

As addiction creates distance between users (the men and women) and non-users (their families), the spaces within which addiction can be and is performed become restricted to and conditional upon the men's and women's perceptions of safety, security and acceptance (within their drug use). In other words, as the commonality within friendships and family relationships dissolves, the locations\(^{10}\) and frequency of other acquaintances become conditional upon the extent to which they facilitate, encourage or inhibit drug use behaviour. The narratives above alluded to some of the ways connections within the family setting are severed, fractured and dissolved, at the hands of both the men and women themselves, and their families, yet all conditional to addiction. The following narratives extend these ideas to explore the relationships and environments to which the men and women retreat and seek acceptance when actively addicted.

As the men and women distanced themselves from non-users, they identified the magnetism of fellow users. These associations and encounters are understood as the culmination of broader social exclusion (from non-users, most significantly families and partners) and the 'safety' inherent to collective drug use. Relationships founded and sustained on shared drug use are safe to the extent that they encourage, support or justify continued use. Such associations are in contrast to familial relationships that often challenge, regulate or undermine the protraction of drug use. At the most immediate level, fellow drug users understood the existence of an addict. Addiction lifestyles were not downplayed as easy or carefree; however, there was a powerful conveyance of the protection, familiarity, predictability and rush inherent to this existence and these kinds of relationships. The men's and women's experiences are similar to Pereira's (2002).

\(^{10}\) Associations are localised in the sense that drug use and associated behaviour(s) are performed in specific settings or under specific circumstances. For example, drug users meet and/or frequent social spaces contingent to their quest for the use and distribution of drugs.
articulating there is a safety and belonging inherent to associations bonded by collective drug use:

With my unemployment status and increased drug use came relief – I no longer had to worry about trying to belong somewhere because I was comfortable with friends who also used (Pereira, 2002: 159).

You tend to keep away from people that don’t use … because they don’t understand I think (Blade).

My choice of drugs was heroin and heroin is a good drug. If you don’t have it your body hangs out for it and you feel it (laughs) you really feel it. so before you get to that stage you try and get another taste before your body starts hanging out. So you won’t associate with anyone else unless it’s gonna benefit you with the drugs or with money you know (Valora).

The men and women perceived ‘safety’ within the relationships sustained by shared drug use to the extent that they: were not challenged about their addiction; were not subject to feelings of shame, rejection and inferiority; and existed in environments wherein experiences, beliefs and goals (specific to addiction) were shared, and facilitated the provision of drugs or money. As Pereira (2002: 159) and Blade reflect on the nature of relationships bonded by collective drug use, they introduce notions of comfort, understanding and relief inherent to these associations. In concert with the deterioration of other meaningful and intimate relationships (as considered above), the men and women sought and retreated into spaces of belonging, acceptance and understanding through their connections with fellow drug users. In this regard, their addiction began to fashion their social world to the extent that relationships and environments conducive to continued drug use were elevated at the expense of associations that challenged and opposed drug use. With addiction’s longevity came an increased reliance and in fact dependence on the company of fellow users.

11 Identified in the previous section to be key influences informing the distance between the men and women, and their families (and subsequently encouraging continued drug use). Further explored below is how feelings of shame, low self-worth and the like inform the ways men and women understand themselves – similarly understood to encourage or sustain drug use.
Valora extends beyond the emotional and social benefits of the drug using community to engage with the practicalities of relationships with fellow users or dealers. She demonstrates the centrality of these associations to the sustained (and often daily) drug use through the provision of illicit substances or the funds to finance addiction. As Pereira (2002) and Blade spoke of environments of acceptance, Valora speaks to the collection and retention of relationships with other users as savoured through both necessity and shared experiences.

Whilst significant to sustaining and facilitating active addiction, the nature of these drug relationships was recognised as negating the foundations of meaningful and nurturing friendships. Valora's comment below speaks to the idea of hollowness within associations founded on shared and collective drug use:

They don't care, they don't care about you you know all they care about is just having that taste. They'll use you up and that and then you know leave you as soon as you've got nothing to offer them. A lot of them they're your associates, I wouldn't call them friends ... because like I said they'll do anything just to get that money to have a shot of whatever you know their drugs, drugs of choice ... and you don't care when you're sick and that you don't care who you hurt and that to make yourself feel better, you don't think of the consequences till after you feel better (Valora).

Detailing the behaviour of addicts in this way, Valora firstly engages with the fundamental physical characteristics of addiction and the endeavour to avoid a 'come down' or experience withdrawal. Her narrative is suggestive of a selfishness and indulgence inherent to the encounters between addicts. Moreover, in the absence of 'care', she perceives the predisposition amongst addicts to use each other and then leave. Valora relates her own preoccupation with addiction (and the avoidance of withdrawal), to the extraction from her family (as considered above), and her painful experiences of physical withdrawal (immediately above). If we consider her comments earlier within this analysis, together with their repetition at the end of the above narrative, we begin to understand the complexities of shared addiction, and the ways relationships between addicts become conditional on a range of factors. Firstly, considering the idea of 'use', associations are understood to be contingent upon connections of convenience.
Specifically, the provision of drugs or money, safe spaces to use, and the like were relayed by the men and women as strengthening their associations with fellow drug users and addicts. As Valora voices, such relationships are powerfully characterised as associations rather than ‘real’ and ‘honest’ friendships.

Of most concern in the context of prisoner release is not only the perceived inability for these relationships to nurture and engage structures of care, but further that these relationships, developed within the ‘world of drugs’, predominantly shared the common thread of drug use and criminality:

*I don’t know anybody at all that doesn’t use drugs ... at all. The only people I know are the people that I’ve been on the street with and who I’ve known in jail (Bambi).*

The friendships I’ve had have always been criminal, always been drug addicts and um the friendships ... you don’t really make friends with ‘em, you get to know ‘em and you end up usually seeing them in jail anyway (Damien).

It was a common experience for the men and women interviewed to (only) move in circles that were founded and sustained on shared drug use and offending behaviour. Within the interviews none of the men and women was able to readily identify or name a friend or family member who would be unconditionally supportive or present for them. In this regard, the associations with drug users and criminals were most powerfully the only networks or structures of support within their lives. The sustenance of these relationships was not so much the product of active maintenance on behalf of the men and women, as the result of sharing the highways of addiction, offending and incarceration.

Bambi, as a street worker, comments that all her associations are underscored by the common threads of drug use, prostitution and/or homelessness. From this standpoint, and at the time of the interviews, whilst fighting to maintain her sobriety she found herself

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12 For example, for those men and women who sporadically lived on the streets, they identified that they would sometimes inject at a ‘friend’s’ house, for both health and safety reasons, and also to evade punitive policing of their drug use by police and other regulatory agents.
with no support structures to assist in both her release transition and heroin recovery. Bambi was residing in a supported released prisoner accommodation facility when I spoke with her, and even though the agency’s workers provided structured support, there was an inherent foreignness to their assistance. She noted that in order to extend and indeed maintain her sobriety for three days, she would have to cut ties with her street connections and begin from scratch. In the absence of familial support, indeed the presence of familial abuse and rejection she experienced, Bambi’s capacity and perceptions of her capabilities of successfully negotiating her release setting and addiction recovery are significantly impaired and damaged. If she is to stay out of jail, and more particularly stay off drugs, she narrates that she needs to begin a completely new life, in a foreign place (support service rather than on the streets), with experiences, people and ideals that are alien to her own. The struggles Bambi faces each day are indicative of some of the differential challenges the men and women interviewed face in their release setting.\(^{13}\) Considering the multiplicity of Bambi’s particular release challenges, we should not ask why some released men and women return to drugs, offending and prison, as much as \textit{why not}? Taking Bambi’s experiences as an example, and reflecting on the release concerns identified in Chapter Two, together with structural and systematic barriers to the ease of prison release raised in Chapter Five, it can be recognised that it takes a very strong individual to be able to negotiate such challenges and successfully manage their prison release. In the context of addiction, the emotional and social degradation intrinsic to drug use can be understood to significantly obstruct and inhibit the released prisoner’s ability to navigate and address broader release concerns.

It is largely with the benefit of hindsight that the men and women are able to identify the destructive nature of the associations within the social landscape of drug use. Whilst in

\(^{13}\) Bambi’s above example is merely one challenge operating in concert with her additional concerns of: living in a house for the first time in fifteen years; struggling to accept help for the first time in her life; overcoming her sexual abuse issues; dealing with her sexuality and the damaging consequences of her street work with abusive men, as a lesbian woman; learning the fundamental daily tasks of cooking, paying bills, nourishing and looking after herself; negotiating her limited finances and trying to establish basic living resources such as clothes, female amenities and the like; bearing a debt with the State Debt Recovery Office of over $12,000 for solicitation that she will need to make efforts to repay; and fighting every day to find a reason to keep going and not turn to drugs as a coping mechanism.
the midst of addiction they understood such connections as superficial and merely associations, the lenses of sobriety facilitated a deeper appreciation of the ways in which such relationships nurtured sustained use and, more critically, the return to use after periods of sobriety (usually within prison). As Marissa reflects:

Like the heroin’s right behind Westfields there and I live behind Westfields and to walk to get to the hospital to get methadone I gotta walk past there and ... everyone knows me. And they see you doing well and it’s like that’s when they offer it to you. Even when you haven’t got money and they say ‘just have a taste with me’ you know and then you get hooked on it again and then it’s not free for very long (Marissa).

The shallowness of relationships founded within states of active addiction – in particular, the absence of trust, loyalty and compassion – surfaced within the interviews. These relationships presented significant barriers to later attempts at abstinence and recovery. The propulsion towards problematic relationships, at the expense and distance of familial relationships (in the past context), meant the men’s and women’s choices and actions of using drugs, committing crime and drifting in and out of prison remained largely unchallenged. In the context of release, the fractured nature of positive familial relationships, and sometimes complete absence of support networks, limits avenues not only of assistance and encouragement but, more particularly, sites and spaces of accountability and responsibility (for drug use and release experiences more broadly). At the same time, as the men and women identified that their networks of support and companionship were disproportionately located within drug use and offending circles, sobriety and release success became conditional on the men’s and women’s strength and ability to isolate themselves from these circles. Valora articulates the significance of this:

And you can’t put yourself in that position in the same area where you’re gonna get tempted and that and around negative people. You can’t put yourself, because that’s putting you down for a fall straight away, putting you back in the old area, the old people and that’s gonna bring you down (Valora).

Valora above relays her advice to (herself and) other addicted women she talks to about the processes of recovery. She recognises, as a result of her multiple ‘failed’ periods of
prison release and sobriety, that in order to change her drug use behaviour, maintain her sobriety and work towards her recovery, she needs to remove herself from the social network exclusive to drug users. Valora, and indeed the majority of the men and women interviewed, identified the critical need to disengage with relationships within the ‘circle of drugs’ in order to affect a level and maintenance of sobriety (Cloud & Granfield, 2004). Practising such renunciation, however, was much harder than its articulation.

For the men and women who were able to isolate themselves from destructive bonds with fellow drug users and enter spaces of sobriety, their narratives exposed the fragility of such a journey. More particularly, the men and women identified the ways sobriety and recovery became a battle of determination, and a social, emotional and physical navigation of the magnetism of addiction. Addiction challenges temporal boundaries and persists even in the face of years of ‘success’ and sobriety. The decision to desist from drug use was a conscious choice the men and women had to make every single day. In line with the practices and teaching of therapeutic communities such as NA and AA, addiction is negotiated each day. The ideologies of such structures are ‘built on the notion of addiction as a lifelong condition from which you can sober up but never recover completely’ (Hecksher, 2004: 253). Extending these ideas and the relational experiences inherent to addiction, the next section explores the men’s and women’s emotional connections with their performances of addiction. In doing so it paints a more detailed and complete picture of how addiction is understood and fused to the men’s and women’s experiences of prison release.

**Escapism: a conspiracy of silence**

In concert with research in this area (for example Dutreix, 2000; Maxwell, 1998; Boudin, 1998), accounts of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, violence, neglect, feelings of being unloved, parental drug and alcohol abuse, dispossession (of an Indigenous woman) and other forms of trauma or difficulty were common experiences amongst the men and women interviewed. Frequently, multiple episodes and forms of abuse were experienced, and current literature confirms disproportionate levels of abuse and trauma within prison and release populations in comparison to the general population (Willis & Rushforth, 1998).
2003), particularly for women (Goulding, 2004; Home Office, 2003a; Covington, 2002). Informing the violent and cyclical nature of addiction, family problems including abuse and prevalence of and exposure to drugs and incarceration are some of the most commonly identified risk factors associated with offending and drug abuse (Willis & Rushforth, 2003; Kevin, 1994). As the men and women within this research spoke about their experiences of abuse they drew strong correlations between their experiences and the onset and maintenance of their drug use. In this regard, the interviews contribute to current bodies of literature that identify significant and multiple forms of abuse in the context of drug use behaviour. Specifically, the men and women relayed the ways experiences of trauma and abuse affected their lives, and, for those without structures of support and positive coping strategies, many turn to negative (and immediate) techniques of pain management – in this instance, most commonly drug use. An exploration of the specific traumatic life experiences of the men and women interviewed is not pertinent to this analysis, rather the focus rests on the vivid connection made between drug use and life trauma. The fact that the men and women interviewed correlated their drug use with their abuse and problems more generally does, however, shed important light on the ways we currently understand prisoner release and drug use behaviour. Of critical concern in the context of this analysis is the dominance with which drug use is drawn on as the most immediate and frequent coping instrument within the men’s and women’s lives.

Drug use was dominantly correlated with the notion of escaping and the creation of a safe haven. As the men and women spoke about their addiction their narratives relayed the ways they attempted to remove themselves from their lives and memories of traumatic life experiences through substance use. Drug use enables distance and distraction from painful life experiences in two key ways. Most immediately, drugs provide a clouded and euphoric existence wherein the torments of abuse or trauma become less real and are (momentarily) suppressed. Secondly, the omnipotent nature of addiction engages the men and women in a performance that, in its entirety, dominates their waking hours. The practice of addiction provides a distraction to the extent that the rituals of locating, financing and using illicit substances demand significant emotional, temporal and mental investment, allowing minimal room for external activities. Some of the men and women
narrated the connections between their traumatic experiences and their drug use in the following ways:

I had my first shot of heroin, um I was eighteen. I don't know why because my daughter's father passed away and I was seven weeks pregnant with [her] when he died on a motorbike accident. I lost my mother through heroin, she died of a heroin overdose. My dad's been in and out of jail all my life, so I don't know. I think from there I hit the drugs hard (Norina).

I got a daughter out there ... it plays on my mind every day. That's why I been into the drugs a little tiny bit coz I try to block it out but it doesn't work you know (Conlan).

Everyone that's passed away, both my parents are gone, my mum died in '84 when I was eleven. That was my road to destruction. I just turned. I was a really good student everything at school, from the day she died that was it. I hated the community, I hated the world you know ... and that's when I started using (Kala).

What happened to me when I was small, being molested and that, I used drugs because of that ... it's a vicious cycle (Valora).

In multiple and interwoven ways, drug use sheltered the men and women from their experiences and perceptions of loss, pain, failure, rejection and humiliation. The narratives above articulate the links between drug use and the men and women's endeavours to evade traumatic pasts. Problematically they saw drug use as the only or most effective coping mechanism available to them (rather than therapy or counselling). Such beliefs were significantly informed by the presence and exposure to drug use and incarceration amongst family members and peer groups. Norina's narrative in particular conveys the familiarity of heroin use and patterns of incarceration within her family. She later spoke about the addictions and incarcerations of other family members, and in doing

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14 Ideas of generational deviance are not considered in detail within this research. However, the men and women spoke about their exposure to drugs and/or incarceration by their families and parents. They also furthered to detail the ways their own drug use and incarceration had impacted their children. Specifically, several of the men's and women's children were or had been in trouble with the law and were identified as drug addicts or problematic drug users.
so, whilst recognising the dangers inherent in drug use such as overdosing,15 her narrative suggested an acceptability and normality of her heroin use. Like a lot of the other men and women interviewed, she locates her heroin use as a management strategy for her life experiences, and in this way she justifies and rationalises her addiction to herself and within the context of this research. Conlan, Kala and Valora further rationalise their drug use. Whilst the men and women interviewed identified drug use to be their primary apparatus for coping with abuse, their narratives did not engage with other coping mechanisms. In this way, it is not known whether they sought solace in other ways, for example the company of friends, professional help, families and the like, preceding their engagement with illicit substances. Further research in this area, specifically on the additional ways in which (addicted) men and women manage experiences of abuse and trauma, appears critical to developing and extending current understandings of addictive behaviours amongst release populations. Perusing the men’s and women’s narratives within their entireties, this research suggests that, whilst drug use may not have been the first tool they drew on in dealing with their experiences, it emerged as the most effective and perhaps immediate relief. Specifically, the ability for drugs to immobilise and numb the men’s and women’s traumatic experiences can be understood as strengthening their reliance on and retreat into illicit substance abuse. Smith’s (2000: 349) assertions align with the narratives within this research, arguing that existence within an environment that seems out of control, coupled with feelings of anger and frustration, enhances behaviours considered ‘risky’ or unhealthy’ as a means of release and coping. As Plato and Nash comment below, drugs become an anaesthetic for pain management:

It’s just coping, a coping mechanism, coping with reality (Plato).

Any time any little thing goes wrong, bang, get on it ... because it blankets it out (Nash).

15 The men and women identified a number of friends and some family members they had lost to (predominantly) heroin overdoses. Within these experiences, the prominence of overdoses in close proximity to prison release was significant. Post-release mortality, particularly as a result of drug use, has been recognised as particularly problematic for release populations (see for example Home Office, 2003; Seaman et al., 1998).
When you’ve been a long-term user it helps shit … it stops the pain … it’s the first thing you do, instead of living (Rosemary).

In this way, the men and women understood their drug use as primarily driven by coping and escaping their day-to-day lives. They conveyed the strength and efficiency with which drugs enabled spaces of freedom and removal from their problems. Addiction research further validates the narratives of the men and women; in particular, as Alexander (2004: 16) suggests, ‘addictions can serve as a vital adaptive function’ and as a transient relief from pain. Drugs thus become the dominant, and more often than not, the only, mechanism they drew on to deal with their issues. Further driven by their withdrawal from familial and positive networks of support, they began to perceive that they had limited, if any, alternative resources available to them. Contextualising the multifaceted challenges of release periods (outlined in Chapter Two), in concert with the deterioration of support networks (discussed earlier in this chapter) and the men’s and women’s drug use as the most immediate coping mechanism, the continuance or return to drug use upon release is really not surprising. Identifying the overwhelming nature of prison release and an inability to cope and deal with a multitude of issues, the men and women frequently recounted the immediacy of their return to drugs after their release from prison:

People might think it’s easy but it’s not that easy really … especially if you’re getting out of jail with nothing type thing … before I couldn’t, before I’d go and get on it straight away (Percy).

The adoption of such negative and destructive coping strategies significantly challenges opportunities for release ‘success’.

As they sought solace within their drug use, the men and women spoke about the emanation of feelings of normality, freedom and release. For example:

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16 The men and women spoke of having to attend to an extensive list of issues, including: establishing housing; significant lack of money; purchasing basic personal items, including clothes; meeting the requirements of drug court, parole officers, and welfare workers; dealing with frequent police contact, addressing familial issues, including re-establishing relationships, and regaining custody of removed children; feelings of being alone or unsure of how to adjust and manage in society.
It makes me feel wonderful, it takes away the pain that I'm going through, it makes me actually feel normal inside and happy, to try and cope (Bambi).

It’s easier to use drugs and have that quick fix you know that relief than to face your problems and that ... face down the road sometime later (Valora).

Usually [I’m] in a world and blur of drugs or I’m always stoned and I don’t really, the reality of life’s just sort of in the background all the time you know. Each day I used to wake up and the reality I used to hate it you know, and I used to think how can I get stoned today (Damien).

Perceptions about reaching some level of normality were particularly heightened for four men and women who directly identified their drug use as a way to manage and medicate their mental illness.\(^\text{17}\) Valora identifies drug use as an apparatus of postponement for dealing with and managing her problems. In this way, her narrative speaks to the experiences of all men and women, to the extent that in the absence of other coping strategies, if nothing else drug use delays experiences of pain, abuse and self-reflection. In the context of addiction recovery and the release setting, these narratives become powerful tools in contextualising the experiences, struggles and ‘failures’ of addicted men and women after periods of incarceration. In other words, locating the men’s and women’s understandings of their traumatic life experiences within their dependence and utilisation of illicit substances enables us to more fully appreciate the struggles and challenges of sobriety and recovery. In this regard, it is not so much that the men and women within this study have extensive histories of violence and mistreatment that is central to their experiences of release. Their retreat into, and solace within, drug use as a mechanism of managing and dealing with their issues, however, does significantly inform and impede their attempts and opportunities at ‘successful’ release. Harrison (2001: 473) speaks to these ideas, arguing that ‘drug abuse is a disorder of the whole person’ and in

\(^\text{17}\) Research identifies co-morbidity of addiction and mental illness is ‘extremely common’ (see for example Hammert Roberts & Kennedy, 2001).
this way, treatment needs to engage and concern itself with more than simply the abstinence from drug use.

Using illicit drugs to medicate painful and traumatic experiences was common amongst the men and women interviewed, but, as Conlan suggests above, whilst drug use potentially provides a refuge from past experiences, it inevitably fails to resolve the underlying concerns. Nash further articulates the notion of a temporary state of relief through drugs and the inflammatory nature of drug use in this way:

When you come down your problems are still there and then you gotta run out and get on again (Nash).

But then I start getting depressed because my problems are still there … they’re not going to go, and I start thinking about them, I start getting the feelings. Like the drugs only work for that short period of time. And it’s like I’m taking them to feel better but I’m feeling this way because of all these problems and drugs are never going to fix it, they’re just going to relieve the pain I’m going through, the emotional pain, but that eventually comes through. The more drugs you have the more you’re always going to need (Bambi).

The men’s and women’s drug use forged an escapism, but also a ‘conspiracy of silence’ in which their underlying problems are not given voice, and the nature of their addiction further silenced both their traumatic pasts and their existence and participation within the social body. What these understandings of drug use tell us is that whilst the men and women largely acknowledge and realise the temporary nature of their drug use as a coping mechanism, it is still a powerful aspect of their pain and stress management.

There’s an uncomfortable juncture between drug use and release. The challenges of release propel the men and women to seclude themselves within their mechanisms of coping, most immediately heavy drug use. In order to succeed in the release setting, the men and women acknowledged the imperative of sobriety. However, in the absence of drugs, the gravity and enormity of release challenges became more real. The agony of sobriety, most severe in the initial stages, of sitting with themselves and facing the world,
their responsibilities and perhaps the consequences of their drug use, their offending and the like was no longer blanketed out through drug use. The men and women interviewed understood the destructive nature of their drug use as a coping mechanism yet were unable, or had no idea how, to reach for different or other coping strategies. These obstacles and barriers were identified by the men and women to be compounded for longer sentenced prisoners. Goulding (2004: 44) asserts that the demands and requirements placed on women in the release context require 'significant coping skills which, if they ever had them, have been removed through the process of institutionalisation'. From these ideas, the next section explores the ways drug use disfigures the men's and women's perceptions of themselves, and in doing so explores why some men and women are unable or perceive they are unable to manage their lives in the absence of drugs.

The broken and worn addicted body
The men's and women's narratives of loss, isolation, pain and inconsistency intrinsic to their addiction powerfully dominated the ways they felt about themselves. Most notably these challenges were experienced in seeking to form and maintain intimate relationships, but also in contrast to the general community. Below Varen speaks about the difficulties he faces in entering into close relationships as a young male, with significant histories of both drug addiction and incarceration:

That's why [you] hang out with people that are also messed up, because it makes [you] feel a bit better about [yourself] ... not so different ... you know it's a lot easier to hang out with a bunch of losers than it is with people that are successful, you don't feel like you are successful you know (Varen).

Tied in with the drug usage because you don't mature as much when you're on drugs ... um I haven't had that uh growth and the skill of maintaining relationships. I haven't been able to sustain anything for very long, long term. It's hard to maintain a relationship or even start one because I've been in prison. That's a big one that plays on my head a bit, so all I can do is read about stuff like 'Men are from mars [women are from venus]' (Varen).
The torment of addiction is evidenced in Varen’s comment as he discusses the nature of his intimate relationships. He recognises a deficit in his ability to contribute to relationships and conceives his heroin addiction as robbing him of significant emotional and social development. These experiences can be understood to be exacerbated for men and women who spend significant periods of their lives incarcerated (Ross & Ryan, 2003). Ideas of isolation and difference were particularly articulated by the men as they compared themselves to other men their age. Their ideas of ‘normal’ lives, experiences and successes (of non-users), both real and perceived, strengthened their feelings of isolation and seclusion within the release setting:

I’m looking at my other friends, the straight ones and they’ve, you know got mortgages and they’re doing normal things … and I should have been doing that kind of stuff but instead I got trapped in this lifestyle (Varen).

Not one of my mates has been through what I’ve been through … they’ve got mad jobs and it’s like ‘fuck, where did I go wrong?’ … they turned left and I turned right … maybe I could backtrack but you can’t do that (Carlton).

[I’m] inexperienced for my age … at life, family, family life things you know … um lonely sort of a person (Damien).

Addiction captures the men and women within their immediate concern for drug use. However, their narratives suggested that from spaces of non-use or limited use, they began to consider the broader consequences of their addiction. As the men above highlight, comparison and measurement against perceived social markers of ‘success’, ‘productivity’ and ‘normality’ locate them in a very different existence to the broader social body. These ideas are considered in more detail in Chapter Seven. However, it is important to recognise within this chapter the ways drug use, particularly lengthy histories of drug use, powerfully inform the ways the men and women interviewed understand and locate themselves within their addiction and social body more generally.
Varen further articulates his perceptions of his distance from normality and productivity, as he talks about the negative relationships he sustains and engages in as a result of shared drug usage and periods of incarceration:

It’s almost like I’m more comfortable being with losers than people that are successful these days ... like I deserve to be with these people instead of normal people (Varen).

Within their addiction the men and women conveyed feeling secure in the presence of fellow users to the extent that they shared experiences of ‘failure’, and limited social participation or markers of success and the like. Drug usage for the men and women began as a haven from emotional pain and suffering. However, as performances of addiction became more orchestrated, the physical, social and broader manifestations of addiction became just as powerful to informing sustained drug use. The movements in their social world, specifically the withdrawal from positive relationships and the seclusion to negative associations, model the emotional changes the men and women experienced. As they distanced themselves from meaningful relationships and participation within the social body, their feelings of worth, value and contribution diminished. Rowe’s (1996: 227) research speaks to these ideas as he suggests that feelings of self-doubt and being frightened erect barriers between individuals and the broader social world. In other ways, narratives of addiction elevated the ways drug use had begun to emotionally fracture and almost destroy the men’s and women’s sense of self and value. Bambi is one such example:

It’s got a lot to do with self-esteem and what you think of yourself ... and we can tell mine’s pretty damn low. I don’t have any self-esteem at all and I don’t like myself at all (Bambi).

I’m a bad person, I put myself out there (prostituting on the streets). I took the drugs. Kids don’t [plan this life] but I’m thirty frigging two and I’ve been going around in circles since I was a kid. I should’ve learnt by now and the thing was where I got to the stage where I just didn’t care. I’d given up ... and I do it all the time, I give up ... run away. give up, whatever, hide (Bambi).
In the constructions of her experiences Bambi is particularly critical of herself. Her drug use has chipped away at her perceptions of self-worth, belonging and value. Whilst she also struggles with the pain and torment of her street work and incarceration, she identifies those experiences to be subsequent to her addiction. In this way, we can begin to identify the complex and sometimes delayed emotional destruction inherent to drug addiction.

Many of the men and women recognised they needed to challenge the way they thought about their drug use and lives more generally if they were able to begin or maintain sobriety and recovery:

I’ve got to learn to deal with it and change, alter everything you know, change the way I think, the mindset, get rid of that mindset you know ... habitual criminal, gotta get rid of that idea you know ... and the weakness I have for drugs and the urges to use drugs you know. I’ve got to change the way I think, what triggers that thought you know, what triggers that urge. I’ve gotta learn to change them you know (Damien).

In the context of their current release, individual understandings of both offending and drug use behaviour were suggestive of the ways the men and women believed they would succeed in the release environment. The ways in which their drug addiction had informed their sense of worth and ability had led some men and women to suggest their future was strongly indicative of their past, almost suggesting an inability to individually influence their future:

[I’m] most concerned about not goin’ back in jail b’cuz my track record shows that I will (Varen).

Ideas of self-concept and identification are examined in more detail in Chapter Seven, but it is important to flag the contributions addiction and ‘failed’ sobriety and recovery make to the perceptions the men and women have of themselves.

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18 Acknowledging that all but two of the men and women have served multiple prison sentences (identified in Chapter Three).
The marriage of criminality and addiction

In concert with criminological findings (for example Goulding, 2004; Butler & Milner, 2003; Makkai & Payne, 2003b; WA DOJ, 2002b; Maxwell, 1998; Johns, nd) suggesting a strong relationship between drug use and offending, the men and women directly related their offending behaviour, and subsequent incarceration, to their addiction to drugs (Griffin & Armstrong, 2003; Li, Priu & MacKenzie, 2000). Particularly for women, abuse and drug use have been identified as the most common passageways to offending behaviour (Goulding, 2004; Covington, 2003; Willis & Rushforth, 2003; Bloom & McDiarmid, 2000; Kilroy, 2000), an idea that resonated within the lives of the women interviewed during the course of this research. Very rarely, however, were the men and women charged with offences directly related to drug use, possession or dealing. Specifically, patterns of offending involved petty theft, property crime, violent crime, or fraud and were attributed to funding their addictions, or being under the influence of drugs at the time of their offence (Butler & Milner, 2003; Willis & Rushforth, 2003; Makkai & Payne, 2003b; Devlin, 2002; Maxwell, 1998). Most commonly, narrations of crime and drug use suggested lengthy drug use had preceded offending behaviour. As Butler and Milner (2003: 119) suggest, (whilst actively addicted or during heavy drug use) the men and women identified their offending to be primarily motivated by the avoidance of the ‘comedown’ from drugs. Whilst recounting multiple periods of incarceration, the men and women were typically short-term prisoners. Such prisoners are a population recognised as ‘most likely to re-offend’ (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2001: 18) due to unmet needs, inadequate support, and compounded problems through incarceration. To this end, the HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2001) recognises short-term prisoners as having the greatest transitional needs and receiving the least treatment and support. Specifically, Travis, Solomon and Waul (2001; Lewis et al., 2003; Harrison, 2001) argue that short sentenced prisoners are significantly limited in their opportunities to participate in in-prison treatment programs due to the incompatibility of sentence and program lengths.

As the men and women spoke of their offending behaviour they challenged their accountability and responsibility for crimes associated with their addiction. Within the
interviews their offending was conveyed as symptomatic of their addiction. In this way, akin to embedding drug use within emotional frameworks, drug use was often embraced as a justification and rationalisation for offending behaviour. The extent to which they embraced responsibility for their offending behaviour was reflective of their active or passive engagement with their current performances of ‘sobriety’ and ‘recovery’: more particularly, to the extent that the mental and emotional clarity inherent to spaces of sobriety facilitates a more objective and ‘honest’ look at their behaviours. Differential definitions of ‘serious’ criminality also informed the manner in which the men and women self-identified as criminal. The men and women frequently distanced themselves and their offences from what they perceived to be more serious offenders and ‘real’ criminals. In this regard, they often did not identify their activities as criminal; in Bambi’s example of prostituting for instance, she distances her solicitation from other types of offending. In addition, some considered themselves to be petty offenders, without ‘real’ victims, in particular in the instances of social security fraud and the like. For example:

I was a prostitute because I didn’t want to get involved in crime to send me to jail ... I’d stay away from thieves and bag snatchers and that kind of stuff because I’m just not that kind of person (Bambi).

I’ve always done crime where I didn’t have a victim, like I did. Society was the victim, no one’s lost a night’s sleep over it. I’ve done a lot of crime where society pays through insurance or costs of whatever. But no one loses a night’s sleep over what I’ve done. I’m rationalising what I’ve done, you know what I mean, trying to justify it (Ballard).

Other men and women tied their offending to their drug use in the following ways:

It really numbs you and you could be walking down the road and you see you know, you know (stumbles for example) something, you know a crime which stimulates payoffs, automatically you go hang, you go do it, where when you were straight you’re walking down the road you see exactly the same thing and you go ‘fuck that’, you think of the consequences (Plato).

19 The idea of perpetrating victimless crimes is also identified in Devlin’s (2002) work with female offenders in America.
[Crime], It's just shit you do on heroin (Nash).

Drugs and crime go together. once you've got a heroin habit, whatever, any type
of addiction, to finance it you gotta do crime (Plato).

The ways they spoke of their offending and incarceration significantly downplayed
criminality as particularly negative or problematic. The men and women spoke at length
about the crimes they had committed, been caught, arrested and imprisoned for, the
multiplicity of their incarcerations and the like. They were particularly hesitant in their
articulations, however, to ground their behaviours within negative frames. For those
whose last ten or twenty plus years had been occupied with serious drug use, offending
and incarceration, such behaviours had become their lifestyles. In this regard, there was a
predictability, safety and familiarity in maintaining their way of life. From these spaces,
they similarly rationalised past 'failed' attempts at prison release. For example:

I was given bail and I went out and re-offended, of course I am, high on
addiction and nowhere to go ... they asked me for an address and
apparently I gave them an address that doesn't exist, they didn't check on
it and I walked (Bambi).

For those who had spent years upon years in jail, they conveyed the idea of comfort in
being 'at home' within the prison. From these ideas, this research suggests that such
perceptions are not so much deliberate choices as the culmination of despair, loss,
torment, hopelessness, isolation, exclusion and rejection.

**The prison as a safe and familiar refuge**

Previous incarcerations and past release periods were correlated with the inability,
resistance and lack of support to address the issues underlying drug use. Imprisonment
was recognised as a non-deterrent to both drug use and crime. Rather, it was understood
as compounding the initial problems of abuse and/or trauma, and, more critically,
Goulding (2004: 52) argues the 'prison system tends to punish addictions'. The threat of
incarceration itself did not impact individual decisions to desist from drug use or offending behaviour, nor did the men’s and women’s participation in in-prison drug treatment programs. There were also no follow-through or release plans established for any of the men and women within this research for their transition to the community, specific to their addiction or lives more generally. In this regard, their narratives support research indicating the resumption of drug use in the release setting occurs in the presence or absence of in-prison treatment, without avenues for follow-up care (Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2003: 26). Rather, as later narrations of sobriety and recovery identify (see Chapter Eight), cessation of drug use (and crime) principally are informed by individual choice, maturation, and changing priorities:

Being in prison is no deterrent I can tell you that, otherwise I wouldn’t have gone back there fourteen times. Seriously it’s a deprivation of liberty but it doesn’t mean you’re deterred ... in fact some of the best times I’ve had in me life have been in jail (Nash).

Problematically, the men interviewed identified the benefits of being incarcerated. Some identified the preference for incarceration to release, particularly as they recognised the problems inherent to periods of release (outlined in Chapter Two). These ideas have surfaced in other release research (see for example Tudball, 2000: 10), particularly amongst released prisoners who believe there is 'no hope' for them. Periods of incarceration were spoken about in some of the following ways:

It becomes a fallback when things are going bad outside, you know what you’re going in there to ... it’s a life I’m familiar with. I know I can kick on in jail (Nash).

It’s no deterrent, especially for young kids living on the street ... half of them have things better in jail than they do on the street. You get fed, you’ve got a gym you can get fit again ... all ya mates are there to play football with or whatever you want ... you can survive quite well in there (Blade).

I’ve been in probably eighteen times, in and out. I went back every year, probably twice a year sometimes, it was always like a comfort thing. It was more of a comfort thing for me because I knew it. It was something I
could accept, I could do my time there easy. And like when certain times of the year comes round I was always in jail and all my mates would come back. I think deep down in all our hearts it was on purpose but we’d say it was by chance, coincidence you know (Kala).

I felt like I had no one, and the only place I wanted to be was where my friends were, and that was in jail, so I would put myself back in jail (Kala).

These narratives problematise the release setting to the extent that life inside, and in and out of prison, whilst not downplayed as easy, facilitates spaces of security, connection and belonging. In concert with embracing drug use as a coping strategy, some men and women conveyed that they used or perceived the prison in a similar way. Contextualised and underscored by threads of institutionalisation20 and broader social exclusion, conceptualisations of the prison in this way point to the inevitable (and arguable intentional) failure of some released men and women. Kala’s narratives powerfully speak to this idea of intentional ‘failure’ in the release setting, and her beliefs and experiences are not isolated to her alone. The notion (and action) of ‘intentionality’ with regards to (re)entering the prison setting surfaced significantly within the interviews in the course of this research. The findings of this analysis, specific to conscious and deliberate return to prison, are supported by other narratives (see for example Soothill, 199921; Eaton, 1993), and broader criminological research with imprisoned and released men and women (Hammett, Roberts & Kennedy, 2001). Prisoner dialogues within their work mirror the experiences and understandings of the men and women within this current research. Specifically, the ways in which incarceration and the prison system (over time) lose their perilous stature:

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20 For discussions surrounding ‘institutionalisation’, ‘prisonisation’ and the impacts of long-term imprisonment see for example Haney (2002).
21 Soothill’s ‘criminal conversations’ collates decades of conversations between Tony Parker and prisoners. The prisoner dialogues within Parker’s work speak to the (underneath the surface) issues and concerns of imprisoned and released men and women. Soothill (1999: 31) comments on the ways in which prisoners are traditionally afforded platforms of communication about their lives and experiences and suggests that ‘persons in authority rarely have the time or technique to elicit a full answer’. In this way, his understandings, and the richness of Parker’s works, point to the criticality of enabling and creating ‘safe’ spaces for men and women, entangled within the criminal justice system, to enter into dialogue about their lives.
Terrors? No, why should it. I don’t mind being inside. Once you’re in there you’re safe, aren’t you? Well, I mean you can’t do no more harm, can you, you can’t do anything else wrong in prison. [Sentenced to eight years imprisonment] I thought well, that’s it then. I’m all right. I’ve got nothing else to worry about for eight years (prisoner, cited in Soothill, 1999: 46).

They can send me to prison as many times as they like it’s only me who can decide if I want to give up crime. They can only incarcerate you for so long and then you’re free again (Alice, cited in Eaton, 1993: 6).

Whilst an exploration of these ideas is not considered within this analysis, their consideration within future release enquiry appears critical to broadening current understandings of, responses to and frameworks of prisoner release. Considering this testimony, the process of incarceration and release engages much greater concerns than the physical practice of entering and leaving a carceral institution.

The marriage between drug use, crime and incarceration was powerfully echoed throughout the interviews during the course of this research:

Crime and drugs go together, um once you’ve got a heroin habit, whatever, to finance it you gotta do crime ... it goes arm in arm. At one point you know, it mightn’t be today, mightn’t be next week but down the road it’s going to happen (Plato).

There’s sort of a circle there, once you get involved in drugs and that you end up doing crime and crime gets you in trouble and you go to jail you know (Damien).

All it is is drugs. You use drugs and you do crime to fund the drugs and you get caught for the crime and then you go to jail. And when you get out you want a shot, then you have it, then that leads to crime and that leads to jail so it goes on and on, it’s a never-ending circle (Kala).

A strong indifference to both drug use and imprisonment underscored many of the men’s and women’s interviews. Whilst they were able to identify incarceration and drug use as generally negative, they conveyed the notion of being stuck, without internal or external resources and/or the determination to remove themselves from what they described as the
cycle of drugs and crime. As Varen commented earlier, particularly for those who have served multiple prison terms and ‘failed’ releases, there was a strong resignation to their lives continuing in much the same way as it had previously. Crime is a critical tool sustaining their drug use, and as they understood their drug use a primary instrument of pain and stress management, (re)incarceration was understood as a mere symptom of their lifestyles.

Like being on a roller-coaster or merry-go-round, the men and women articulated the circles they travelled through their drug use, offending and incarceration. They conveyed an inevitability of failure within the release transition through both internal and external, and real and perceived, pressures. Until they were caught and until they reached a point where they were open to change and active commitment to sobriety and recovery (as discussed within Chapter Eight), they believed they would perennially exist within these familiar spaces of drug use and offending. The only thing that would/could break this cycle, independent of individual ‘turning points’ (Cloud & Granfield, 2004; Koski-Jännnes, 1998), was the perceived ‘other road’ addicts potentially travel. Narcotics Anonymous literature, ‘Am I an Addict?’ (2000a), recognises the death penalty (through both incarceration and individual spirit) associated with sustained addiction, stating that ‘addiction is a disease which, without recovery, ends in jails, institutions and death’.

Two destinations for a heroin addict, one’s prison and the other one’s the cemetery ... you either go to jail or to the grave ... anyone that tells you anything further, I won’t believe it (Nash).

The end result ... jail if you’re unlucky, and if you’re lucky you die, that way you don’t have to go through what other people have gone through (Blade).

You know the saying with drugs, got one foot in the cell, and one foot in the grave, there’s no in between like it’s either jail or you die. And the ones that go to jail have been the survivors (laughs), everybody else dies (Barth).
Aware of the gravity of consequences inherent to drug addiction, the men and women frequently spoke of the potentialities of prison or death (Home Office, 2003b; Sattar, 2001; Seaman, Brettele & Gore, 1998). In this regard, Blade’s comment above suggests being in prison is more difficult than possible death. Whilst the men and women noted some beneficial aspects of being incarcerated, they also powerfully conveyed the pain and torment inherent to serving a prison sentence. Even so, such realisations were not strong enough to interrupt their drug use or subsequent offending and, in fact, in many cases propelled them into further drug use in an attempt to forget or blank out such experiences.

An additional challenge to successful release that surfaced within the interviews is the ways in which periods of incarceration are seen as beneficial and supportive of sobriety and breaking with relationships and environments conducive to sustained drug use. Some of the men and women identified that they ‘put’ themselves in prison in an attempt to break their cycles and lifestyles of drug use and offending. So in this way, whilst drug availability and use in the prisons were widely acknowledged by the men and women within this research, going to prison was perceived to also facilitate interruptions to drug use and addiction. O’Brian (2001) identified similar findings in her research with female prisoners. In particular, the women believed that their incarceration would mean access to some form of counselling or alcohol treatment. Worrall (2002: 53) identified increased resources for drug treatments were made available within women’s prisons in England following critical levels of drug use within the (female) prison system. In these contexts, she identifies the danger of courts sentencing women to prison as an avenue for treatment.

For the men and women within this research, the prison setting enabled their participation in methadone maintenance programs, and prison entry also removed them from their old neighbourhoods and associations that facilitated and encouraged their drug use:

22 The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research released findings for New South Wales suggesting participation in methadone maintenance programs reduced offending behaviour for all age groups in both men and women (Lind et al., 2004).
In the situation I was in I felt [prison] was the only option I had. There wasn’t the support [in the community] and I wasn’t. I couldn’t function enough to keep appointments or anything (Bambi).

I actually put myself in [prison], I actually knocked back bail and that just to get myself away from the drugs and everything, so I can have a bit of head space, that’s why I did it. That’s how I wanted it because I couldn’t have that piece of mind out here (Valora).

[Prison] I’d say it’s kept me alive. Well it’s kept me off the streets. Off the drugs, if I was out I would have been using more drugs, chances of [overdosing], getting shot by the police or whatever (Blade).

If anything I think it’s helped healthwise you know, because it slows you down you can’t be right into the drugs you know and the alcohol so your body’s having a rest (Roden).

Lost a lot of friends but that was through the drugs I think, um yeah through jail ... they saw jail as getting help, it was um, they sort of thought ‘she’s caught, she’s off the street now’ but they sort of saw it was a second chance (Marissa).

The men’s and women’s beliefs about prison as an interregnum to their drug use supports current Australian research (Goulding, 2004) with incarcerated women in Western Australia, as well as research in the United States (Harrison, 2001). Problematically, such research also identifies the return to both drug use and offending for many after release from prison. Contemporary scholarship has engaged with both qualitative and quantitative technologies to inform the ways in which desistance from drug use and offending is reached by individuals. Considering this analysis to date, periods of imprisonment and drug use have significant detrimental effects on the lives of the men and women interviewed, and prisoners more generally. Critically informing these ideas is a consideration of narratives of addiction recovery and processes of change. Chapter Nine explores some issues of treatment and rehabilitation, as well as individual understandings and articulations of the ‘breaking point’ or ‘point of change’ within addiction and drug use behaviour.
Conclusion

The men’s and women’s experiences of addiction, outlined in this chapter, do not necessarily point to specific paths of treatment or rehabilitation. The consideration of these kinds of dialogues, however, tells us a great deal about the ways addicted men and women perceive and locate themselves through and within their addiction and the broader social world. Hopelessness, low self-worth and value were common threads throughout narratives of both addiction and release more generally. That the men’s and women’s nuclei of support are embedded within circles of drug use and criminality becomes particularly taxing of their abilities and avenues to modify their drug use and offending behaviour in the release setting. The men and women within this research lend support to Dutreix’s (2000: 3) work suggesting that, for women in particular, the morphosis of relationships, subsequent to addiction, leave many cut off from support networks, and they ‘find themselves very alone and isolated’. The denigration of the men’s and women’s positive relationships at the accretion of problematic and destructive associations: challenges and inhibits spaces and avenues from which issues may be supported or managed; restricts opportunities for men and women to move above and beyond their problematic behavioural choices; and limits the points at which the men and women may be held accountable and responsible for their decisions in the release setting. Such awareness elevates important platforms from which transitional and addiction recovery support and resources may be directed in the community following periods of imprisonment. If we begin to contextualise the ways in which released addicted men and women engage with, navigate and understand their drug use and the challenges they experience in entering spaces of sobriety and recovery (explored in Chapter Eight), we can more fully appreciate the persistence of illicit drug use amongst release populations. Such consideration of experience is imperative to understanding, supporting and easing the transitions from addiction to recovery, and from prison to the community, for significant numbers of released men and women.

The men and women associated feelings of normality, escapism and removal from reality within their drug use. Embedding drug use within such powerful emotional wadding has very significant implications in the prisoner release setting in a number of ways.
Specifically, research has recognised the carceral setting as contradictory and/or a problematic therapeutic environment (see for example Covington, 2002; Hammett Roberts & Kennedy, 2001; Harrison, 2001; Nelson & Trone, 2000). The prison system has been challenged on its ability to extend sufficient and effective drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, behavioural programs such as anger management, parenting classes and the like (see for example Malloch, 2000; Wykes, 1997). Moreover, the prisons’ ability to differentiate between security and surveillance on the one hand, and rehabilitation on the other (Malloch, 2000), has challenged the efficacy of many intervention attempts. Such frameworks afford limited opportunities for prisoners to address not only their superficial issues of addiction, anger and like, but, more critically, severely thwart avenues which offer attention to more intimate issues such as abuse, trauma and mental illness that underlie their addiction and problematic behaviours. The men and women within this research asserted they had very minimal, if any, external and/or professional help in prison to deal with and manage their issues and experiences of abuse and/or personal trauma.

Experiences of abuse and trauma were dominant in the men’s and women’s lives. And powerfully informed and sculpted the ways they understood and perceived themselves. The marriage of addiction to these destructive experiences is dangerous and contradictory to addiction recovery and release success. Problems do not get better with the passage of time, and unless and until the men’s and women’s underlying issues are attended to, moreover addressed, drugs will remain a dominant point of refuge in the face of past and current life challenges. Imprisonment exacerbates and/or ignores the initial and underlying problems of drug use, offending and the like amongst prisoner populations. In this way, in the release setting we witness men and women who: are disproportionately burdened with experiences of abuse and trauma; have limited avenues of support and assistance; whose initial problems are exacerbated through their incarceration; and have significantly damaged relationships and beliefs of self-worth. The men and women within this research portrayed feelings of low self-worth and pain associated with previous failed attempts at periods of release and recovery. To this end, self-acceptance and forgiveness resonated as key ingredients to overcoming the detrimental beliefs the men and women
interviewed had about themselves. From these ideas, it appears critical to not only contextualise the ways in which released men and women utilise and understand their drug use behaviour but, more importantly, to reconsider the disproportionate ways in which society sanctions and punitively responds to (continued) drug use amongst released men and women.
(The Visit) This painting depicts the theme of the disconnection between families and homes; of broken relationships and lost hopes. I realise that breaking the law is a terrible thing but I found that punishment in prison too often grossly exceeds the crime.

(Somebody's Daughter Theatre, 2005)
Chapter 7

Becoming ‘free’? Exploring the juxtaposition of ‘prisoner’ and ‘citizen’

Prisoner: someone who is caught or seized: in prison
Release: to free from imprisonment, responsibility, pain etc.: to set free

*   *   *

Conceptually, the grammatical construction of the term ‘released prisoner’ suggests that one word, in effect, effaces the other. As subject positions, however, the thresholds between ‘prisoner’ and ‘release’ are far from definitive. There is a clear process and procedure for becoming a ‘prisoner’, wherein men and women undergo a (social) stripping of citizenship and acceptance, but what happens when they make the return journey, from ‘prisoner’ to ‘citizen’? This chapter explores the transition from the subject position of ‘prisoner’ to ‘released prisoner’. More particularly, the chapter is concerned with examining the ways in which the occupation of a ‘prisoner’ status, and all the social connotations it encumbers, disbands when men and women walk through, and out of, the prison gates.

Notions of displaced and transient identities were interwoven into the men’s and women’s discussions of their prison and release experiences. They identified the critical problem of not having material documents of identification (ID) at the time of their release. Within the first few days and weeks of release, a released prisoner’s inability to verify and validate their social identity makes the transition to the community particularly challenging. Such experiences fundamentally translate to notions of ineligibility or exclusion from key social service providers. Entering the carceral setting challenges an

individual’s social identity in a number of ways. Most notably, imprisonment results in
the loss of, disqualification of or inaccessibility to many forms of material identification.
Whilst prisoner disenfranchisement has begun to be entertained in criminological
enquiry, this chapter explores notions of identity beyond the physicalities of
documentation. The men and women within this research elevated the pragmatic barriers
a lack of material identification brought to their experiences of release, and in doing so
their narratives were powerfully symbolic of a much deeper and more complex loss and
displacement of identity – specifically, the ways they understood and negotiated the
subject positions of ‘released prisoner’, ‘free citizen’, (returning) ‘parent’, ‘partner’ and
the like.

Whilst erecting various pragmatic concerns with regards to re-establishing themselves
within the cultural, social and economic fabric of the broader community, the loss of
identity heightens the idea of a metaphorically and actually displaced and rejected body.
In this regard, this chapter is interested in the differential ways in which positions of
‘prisoner’ and ‘citizen’ tie themselves to the men’s and women’s experiences of release.

**Tangible identification: instrumentalities of inclusion and belonging**

Fundamental tools for participation within contemporary society, identification
documents such as a driver’s licence, passport, proof of age card, birth certification and
the like provide crucial links to social institutions that facilitate movement and existence
in day-to-day life. More critically, the entitlement to and possession of such
documentation not only provides access points to social citizenship, but also elevates
spaces and positions of exclusion and ineligibility. In line with so many aspects of life in
the contemporary West, tools of identification are a much taken for granted part of life –
that is, until they are misplaced or lost. Stop to consider the horror and paralysis inherent
to losing a wallet or handbag and its entire contents. Mere pieces of plastic and paper
have become such critical tools within our mechanisms of identification and inclusion.
Without them, we struggle to justify our entitlement to bank accounts, entry to office and
other private spaces, the right to drive, travel internationally and the like. It is not so
much that we lose ourselves, but rather we lose the ability to (socially) validate ourselves
and our lives to others. If this feeling were to endure beyond the week or two it may take to replace all our lost documents, what would it mean in the course of our lives, and our ability to function and exist in modern society?

One of the most basic concerns the men and women raised in the initial stages of their release was the absence of material identification, and the pragmatic barriers this presented to establishing themselves within the community. In the first few days of release the lack of identification such as driver’s licences, birth certificates, bank statements, and Medicare cards made transition particularly difficult. Moreover, the absence or inadequacy of identification heightened and complicated broader release challenges. Primarily the men and women identified difficulties in establishing financial stability (through Centrelink and banking institutions); housing (in the absence of suitable familial accommodation); participation in methadone and buprenorphine programs; and connections with social institutions (such as Medicare and transport services). In this way, the absence of material identification created significant impediments to the men’s and women’s basic functioning and existence within the community. The difficulties of opening a bank account and accessibility to welfare entitlements, for example, limit the extent to which released prisoners can ground and establish themselves within important social frameworks. Current research similarly identifies the challenges released prisoners face in the absence of identification. Nelson and Trone (2000: 3) credit that most people are released from prison without photographic identification, and as such obtaining any form of photo identification upon release is ‘difficult, if not impossible’. Beyond photo identification they assert that utility bills, or other social documentation, are ‘products of

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2 Within Australia the verification of identity for the purposes of access to services, benefits, eligibility and the like is typically met through the collation of 100 points of identification. In ascending order, one or more of the following documents are commonly required: driver’s licence; national or international passport; firearms licence; Medicare card; credit or bank account card; Centrelink card; security guard licence; tertiary education student card; utility bills; bank statements (NSW Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages, 2006; NSW Road & Traffic Authority, 2006). The inadequacy of identification documents held by released prisoners means they may be in possession of a Medicare card or Centrelink card, but no photo identification, and thus are unable to meet the 100 points required.

3 The imperativeness of tangible documents of identification to released prisoners is recognised by Corrective Services, and a report by the Standing Committee on Law and Justice (2000: 134) recommended that ‘all inmates have sufficient ID upon release from prison to make Medicare claims, access the services provided by Centrelink, and open a bank account’.
a stable life and the result of having ID*, which many released men and women are without.

At the time of their release, the majority of the men and women identified that they had no material form(s) of identification save for their jail release slip. Personal documentation had been lost over the years and was correlated to the sporadic nature of their lives in and out of prison, periods of addiction, transient accommodation, and instability more generally. Only five men and women noted they had an additional form or basis of identification beyond their release slip, commonly an existing bank account, familiarity with caseworkers at their local Centrelink office, or a Medicare card. In this regard, the process to (re)gain identification documents was a little easier. For a significant majority, however, they narrated what appeared to be a never-ending process of running between social agencies in an attempt to gather sufficient documentation to validate themselves to social institutions. Several men and women had to seek assistance from international services to obtain birth records from their countries of birth and, accordingly, the process to establish identification was further lengthened.

As the men articulate below, obtaining ID documentation is far from simple and involves considerable negotiation between government agencies and broader social institutions:

If you’re disqualified you can’t get your licence, you can’t get the 18+ card if you’re over twenty-five. So if you’re disqualified before you can get photo identification ... I had to get ID, and you have to have some of it that’s why it’s not so easy for people coming out of jail because some people when they come out they’ve got nowhere to stay and they haven’t got family ... like even to get accommodation and stuff you need it (Barth).

There’s so much to get a bank account. ID was hard because it’s all photo ID but then you need more ID to get that. They give you a cheque when you get released and they put that in your jail account and then you gotta get one for your next payment to go in a fortnight later. It’s frustrating because they don’t care, they say no we can’t help you, you haven’t got points you know ... They said no you need more points and you need a bank, a keycard, a Medicare card and all that and then the Medicare card
takes three or four weeks to come to you ... and until you get that sort of thing you can't open a bank account (Deiter).

I've let my ID lapse in a lot of cases, so re-establishing my ID with Centrelink is one problem I do have you know. It's worse because each department will say well you got to go to the [driver's licence registry] and they'll help you, and you go [there] and they say no, they say what Centrelink said, they all keep fobbing you off (Caine).

Whilst the absence of identification created difficulties, the men and women conveyed a deeper frustration at the manner in which their requests for identification and assistance were met. Each agency and service provider the men and women attended required some form of initial documentation. The men and women generally understood the need to provide adequate documentation to service providers; however, in the process they conveyed a sense of helplessness to the extent that they perceived they were unable to positively influence their situations.

The need to collate adequate ID documents for the purposes of entitlement and eligibility to social services is an experience shared by the broader social body. For released men and women, however, the possession of such documentation is particularly challenging. Prisoners are often ineligible or disqualified from access to many forms of documentation (Uggen, 2002; Rubinstein, nd), and not in possession of considerable others (see for example Nelson & Trone, 2000). Specifically, periods of imprisonment, particularly lengthy sentences, mean that: bank accounts are often closed; contact with social agencies such as Centrelink and Medicare has stopped or is out of date; birth certificates or health care and travel cards may be lost; passports or driver's licences may be lost or disqualified; and rental agreements, utility bills, and bank statements are often inaccessible and not applicable during periods of incarceration. The men and women in this study predominantly shared the experiences of homelessness or transient and unstable accommodation, numerous prison sentences, limited personal possessions and a dearth of networks of support. In this way, absence of identification documents significantly excluded them from critical services (and support) they needed in the initial stages of release.
Discussions with prisoner support workers further informed the problematic nature of the men’s and women’s difficulties with identification. One support worker spoke about the lengths her organisation went in order to verify the identity of one of her clients. Appendix A includes a letter written to Centrelink by the Support Organisation in an attempt to verify the client’s identity. In the absence of tangible documentation, the support worker validated the woman’s identity by virtue of her constant supervision by correctional staff and court officials from the prison facility to the court room. Whilst the letter confirmed the woman’s identity, it became symbolic of the ways in which the released men and women within this research were more broadly grounded and contextualised within their ‘prisoner’ status when they returned to the community. Another woman relayed a similar experience in which her immediate entry to an inpatient drug treatment centre from prison enabled her to certify her identity:

The only thing I had was my jail release slip and that was it. But um see I went straight from jail to [a drug rehab] and so little by little, well I wasn’t allowed out of there like that’s you don’t go out at that one. So luckily by the time I left there they wrote me a letter saying who I was and I had a chance to accumulate ID and then finally I went to Births, Deaths and Marriages and got a birth thing, a birth card (Kyria).

Relationships with family and other support organisations alleviate some of the immediate pressures of release. For released prisoners like Kyria, who enter treatment facilities or supported accommodation services, some of the limitations stemming from the lack of identification are minimised to the extent that basic living requirements, such as accommodation and food, can be provided.

The men’s and women’s experiences with identity documentation are introduced within this analysis not so much to explore the implications of insufficient or inadequate material ID, but rather to draw from the idea of a lost, misplaced or ineligible identity. Several key ideas surfaced within the men’s and women’s discussions of material identification. Most notably, the absence or inadequacy of ID documentation was a common experience, influencing many aspects of the release setting and challenging
broader transition concerns. The absence of identification meant that many men and women were unable and/or ineligible to access social services, and the process(es) to obtain and regain material identification were particularly complicated, and perceived as ill-advised and/or ill-assisted. Whilst erecting pragmatic barriers to the ease of release transition, the challenges the men and women faced surrounding the loss of identification are powerfully symbolic of a more complex and underlying experience of identity loss. The men’s and women’s narratives within this research were suggestive of much deeper and broader losses of identity through, surrounding and subsequent to their incarceration, and release.

The analysis below considers the individual identity of the men and women within this research in the context of their experiences within the penological system. More specifically, it deconstructs their narratives to engage with the ways their experiences of prison and release informed, altered and challenged the ways they understood themselves and their connection to the broader social body. As the men and women entered into a dialogue of self-reflection within their release experiences, their stories conveyed critical changes occurring as they entered the prison gates, long before their release.

**Becoming a ‘prisoner’: the rape of social citizenship**

Rights of citizenship and belonging within the broader collective are challenged and forfeited at a number of levels when men and women are sentenced to prison (see for example Petersilia, 2003; Kilroy & Warner, 2002; Kelly, 2002; Ridley-Smith & Redman, 2002). The identity of ‘free citizen’ is removed and instead replaced with the positions of ‘prisoner’ or ‘inmate’. As Damien articulates below, individuality, personhood and intimate identities are displaced as individuals enter the prison. They become part of a population, ascribed with administration numbers and distinctly subordinate uniforms:

> A number, it reminds me of being a number, just another number in a crowd of a thousand maybe in jail ... you’re an inmate, that’s what they call an inmate in there, you’re an inmate and you’re one of a thousand you know, you’re just a nobody (Damien).
Once you enter the jail gates and you’re handcuffed they give you a min number ... we’re all inmates locked up, we all wear green, we all wear green ... and corrective services all wear blue (Conlan).

When you go to jail everything’s removed you know you don’t have your suit and tie, you know get into our green clothes and go to your cell (Caine).

Goffman (1961: 14) describes the nature of entry into institutions as forcibly and distinctively separating connections between the individual and the broader social framework. Upon entry individuals are ‘immediately stripped of the support’ provided by external relationships and ‘begin a series of abasements, degradations and humiliations’ (Goffman, 1961: 14). He suggests that role dispossession occurs as the individual becomes a member of the institution. As the men’s dialogues convey above, defining individual roles and unification with the broader collective is disrupted and challenged, and becomes replaced with signifiers of membership to a homogenous prison world. The notions of being a number or a ‘green’ blur within hundreds indicate the stripping of a social identity and the beginning of a replaced and displaced ‘prisoner’ identity. As Caine articulates, when an individual enters the penal system, ‘everything’s removed’, they become a prisoner, clothed in green and allocated a cell. His narrative of the process of entry and initiation to the carceral setting highlights the physicalities of the transition from ‘free citizen’ to ‘prisoner’. However, as the analysis below explores, such initiation processes are powerfully indicative of more complex and underlying mental and emotional changes that transpire as men and women become ‘prisoners’.

The surrogacy of names with numbers, and personal possessions with prison-issued uniforms and belongings, operate to enforce the barriers between prisoners and the broader world (Devlin, 2002: 27). Goffman (1961: 16) offers the idea of ‘trimming’ or ‘programming’ to administration procedures where individuals are shaped to fit within the institution through the issuing of uniforms and the like. Fingerprinting, strip searches, and bathing upon admission firstly identify the individual, and then serve to remove remnants of the broader social world. Foucault (1977: 236) argued that the first principle of the carceral was isolation, ‘the isolation of the convict from the external world, from
everything that motivated the offence, from the complicities that facilitated it'. He suggested the isolation of prisoners 'guarantees that it is possible to exercise over them, with maximum intensity, a power that will not be overthrown by any other influence; solitude is the primary condition of total submission' (Foucault, 1977: 237). In this way, a definitive stripping and degradation of social connection, entitlement and eligibility fashions the prisoner as a penological body, separate and excluded from the broader social framework. A prisoner in O'Brien's (2001: 14) research writes:

Remember when you enter prison your individuality is immediately surrendered from day one, you cease to be a person. You are a number, another head of cattle. All rights, privileges and possessions belong to the prison administration and their dictates are doled out by their officers (Brown).

The technologies of identification within the prison such as uniforms, administration numbers and issuing of cells ignore and supplant 'previous bases of self-identification' within the community, and embody a 'leaving off and a taking on, with the midpoint marked by physical nakedness' (Goffman, 1961: 16, 18). New 'prison' belongings and demarcated roles ingest the individuals within the institution, and the prisoner experiences a 'civil death' (Goffman, 1961: 16).

Whilst imprisoned men and women are collectively expelled and rejected from the broader social world to the prison, the sharing of the prison compound or cell between individuals does not translate to a harmonious community of prisoners. O'Brien (2001: 17) engages with Jose-Kampfier's notion of an 'existential death' that prisoners 'experience from the day-to-day losses of self and [the] separation from the world outside the prison institution'. The prisoner is rejected by the social body to the extent that they are spatially and temporally expelled. At the same time, they are exposed to rejection, exclusion and hierarchy within their prison exile. The men's comments below highlight hierarchies and states of inclusion and exclusion within the prison setting:
The ones that go for the first time they’re the ones that get hassled coz your min\(^4\) number, alright it’s on your cell and the last number it means the first time you went to jail ... if it’s your first time in jail you will get hassled every day (Conlan).

The kooris go around the cells and look at people’s min numbers to see who they can stand over ... the min numbers will give you a very good indication of how long someone’s been in jail or how long they’ve done ... the lower the number, the longer you’ve been in (Ballard).

Some blokes do their jail very hard and very basic coz they don’t know how to kick on in jail or rort. Other people like myself and some of these blokes would do their jail very easily and very comfortably ... You get a bunch of seasoned prisoners like me who’s done eighteen years, who knows the system, we know how to manipulate people, how to twist them ... it’s survival of the fittest type of thing you know (Nash).

Nash’s narrative opens the hierarchy of the prison setting. He talks about the ease of prison life for those prisoners who know how to work and ‘manipulate’ the system to their benefit. Nash, and some of the other men and women, later talked about the ways in which prisoners stand over, trick and intimidate other prisoners for fun, extortion, or social status within the prison. In this way, the prison environment becomes conducive to immorality, violence and betrayal. As prisoners turn on themselves in retaliation to the prison system, spatial restrictions, the regiment and deprivation inherent to incarceration (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2004; Haney, 2002; Sabo, Kupers & London, 2001; Skyes, 1958), they in a sense validate and justify their exclusion from the broader social world. In other words, as they continue or engage in immoral, deviant and deceitful behaviour they reinforce social beliefs and perceptions about the need to exclude and contain abject bodies.

Within the carceral ethos the idea of a fresh prisoner as noted by Conlan, in contrast to the seasoned prisoner Nash, introduces the beginning of ambiguity. Research on prison hierarchies and cultures inform these ideas in more detail (see for example Edgar, O’Donnell & Martin, 2003; Sabo, Kupers & London, 2001), but what it is important to this research is a recognition of changing states of identity beginning as the individual

\(^4\) ‘Min’ is slang for administration.
crosses the threshold from the social to the carceral. More particularly, what is significant is the notion that whilst men and women are collectively jettisoned to the prison, they are not necessarily accepted within prison culture. Bambi’s comment below provides an example of the exclusion she faced within the prison setting. In this way, the position of ‘prisoner’ does not afford some individuals a distinct and tangible identity. As Bambi illustrates, she was socially allocated ‘prisoner’ status; however, within the prison setting she was further excluded and allocated an outcast positioning:

I was in prison long enough to feel the pain ... I got stood over for my shoes so I had to go to smack unit, they don’t know that here ... it’s like a protection unit because I don’t fight. I had five koori girls stand over me ... and because I wouldn’t punch on with them and stuff like that ... it’s like I’m branded for life now because I’ve been in that unit. If they knew, if the girls knew here I’d be outcasted ... like they call you a dog and stuff like that (Bambi).

Whilst Bambi was not particularly interested in fitting in and belonging within the prison culture, her acceptance meant a place of refuge from the social rejection she perceived to dominate her life. Bambi’s rejection within the prison distances her from ‘acceptable’ prisoner roles and behaviours. In this way, whilst she is socially recognised as a ‘prisoner’, her separation from the prison culture challenges her status as ‘prisoner’ within the prison setting. As she later spoke about her rejection from her family and her homelessness, her narrative conveyed her incarceration and her addiction as powerful frames of reference for the ways she perceived herself. Her exclusion from the prison culture meant that her experiences of prison were particularly traumatic, and yet in the release setting she could not take comfort in the company of fellow released prisoners. In other words, her exclusion from social and familial frameworks limited the ways she could identify herself as a daughter, citizen, sister and the like. At the same time, her exclusion from the prison culture challenged her identity as a ‘prisoner’ and negated the possible refuge and safety of relationships bonded through shared incarceration. In this way, her release setting became a particularly difficult and depressing time in which she

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5 Bambi whispers this part of her narrative. She was concerned the other released women in the house might hear and she believed she would forever be an outcast within the prison culture. Bambi believed such reactions would follow here to her release experiences and she would be rejected as ‘one of the girls’ within the house.
perceived her only available references of identification were her addiction and life on the streets as a prostitute.

Incarceration not only socially ascribes an individual with the label of ‘prisoner’ but, more powerfully, it begins to challenge and alter the ways imprisoned men and women understand and identify themselves. Within their interviews, the men and women spoke about the ways in which their beliefs about their sense of worth and value had been eaten away through their imprisonment:

Prison wears you down over the years, sort of in a lot of ways you become institutionalised and ... because it's a negative place you get into that head space, you get into like a depression (Plato).

The psychological damage of being locked up in a cell for eleven months in a little cage definitely does have damage ... for me you know yeah it does, definitely changes things (Fergus).

Things change after prison like I think it's mostly just self-perception that changes ... I've lost a lot of self-worth should I say, self-confidence and self-belief has um ... been diminished (Varen).

Goffman (1961: 333) suggests there’s a general acceptance that prisons, as institutions of social control, ‘impact upon individual’s sense of self in coercive and all too frequently negative ways’. Fergus’s narrative engages the imagery of a ‘cage’ to describe the small confined space in which prisoners are housed inside prison. He talks about being locked up and the mental and emotional damage such experiences evoke. Plato’s and Varen’s narratives become more explicit in the ways in which the prison setting is experienced as a negative, depressing and destructive space. Plato conveyed the feelings of those men and women who had served significant portions of their adult lives behind or in and out of prison walls. Whilst the negative effects of incarceration were identified by shorter sentenced prisoners and those with fewer sentences, years of imprisonment ate away at the prisoner’s sense of value, broader social connection and, critically, their perceptions of entitlement for a better and different life. Varen speaks to these ideas as he specifies the ways his incarceration(s) have deteriorated the confidence and belief he has in
himself. Goffman (1961: 334) argues that if an individual's 'most powerful defining experiences of growing up are primarily based within a prison environment', it is unlikely that their experiences have equipped them for a life or existence outside of deviance or criminality. Considering these ideas in another way, if the prison system shapes the ways imprisoned men and women understand and identify themselves, the opportunities or ability for men and women to construct social bases of identification external to those of 'prisoner' or 'offender' when they are released can be understood as significantly damaged. Plato and Varen, like most of the men and women within this research, have struggled with heroin addictions in concert with their lengthy histories of imprisonment. In this regard, addiction (as discussed in Chapters Six and Eight) can be understood as an additional violent marker to the men's and women's individual constructions of identity.

Paterline and Petersen (1999: 11, 16) comment on the ways prison informs a prisoner's sense of self and identification:

Prisons are different from other socialisation experiences in that inmates may totally lose or repress their extraprison sense of self ... prisons are designed to resocialise and change inmates' sense of self. The prison experience is a depersonalising process in which inmates are stripped of their civilian or preprison identities. A new self, adapting to the situation, is gradually reconstructed, but unlike the old self, it is based on the master status trait of prisoner.

They further question in what ways such prison socialisation experiences inform a prisoner's experiences of release. More particularly, they urge for consideration towards the implications of institutionalisation for released prisoners' feelings of belonging and bases of identification. The men and women within the current research support Paterline and Petersen's (1999) work, in identifying a level of comfort and belonging within the prison setting. The placatory nature of imprisonment, explored in more detail in Chapter Six, can be understood as the product of both broader mechanisms of social exclusion and the (re)socialisation that occurs within the prison. In other words, as the status of 'prisoner' physically removes individuals from the broader social framework, it furthers to systematically and structurally (re)inforce their exclusion through their
disqualification, disenfranchisement and ineligibility from participation within social arrangements, such as economic, political or employment systems. In this way, the imprisoned body is rejected and excluded from the broader social system on multiple levels, and more intricately from individual social institutions and agents. Whilst the men’s and women’s interviews focused more heavily on their experiences of release, their narratives exposed the ways in which their imprisonment had significantly challenged their ideas of belonging within the community and their abilities to move beyond their classification as ‘prisoner’.

**Breaking free from the prison: transcending the label of ‘prisoner’?**

A man who has spent any time ‘inside’ is put permanently ‘outside’ the ordinary social system. With no right of aggregation which can definitively assign him a new position he remains in the margins, with other people who are similarly credited with unreliability, unteachability, and all the wrong social attitudes (Douglas, 1966: 97).

Douglas’s (1966) quote speaks definitively to the experiences of the men and women within this research. Despite the time of Douglas’s (1966) writing – in the 1960s – her statement still holds true. As considered above, an individual’s entry to the prison collates systematic and structural processes of initiation that are both physical and psychological in nature. Specifically, the issuing of prison clothing and ascriptions of numbers for individual identification elevate the physical prisoner body. As prisoners are distanced and disqualified from social frameworks and become socialised within the prison culture, their bodies are both physically and psychologically constructed as ‘prisoners’. The transition from ‘prisoner’ to ‘released prisoner’ or ‘free citizen’, however, is less clearly scripted. The moment of release for many of the men and women was symbolic of the broader ways in which their return to the community travels a path marred by multiple road blocks and uncertainty. Lucy’s and Conlan’s narratives are most powerful in this regard, and are closely aligned with prisoner narratives within research by Community Resources for Justice (CRJ) (2001):
It's pretty scary. I didn't know where I was or what I was supposed to do. Lucky I went over to the window, the window was about to shut okay, it's this hole in the wall, they call it the window, the magic window and it's where you can get, that's where you get your money that's left in your account. I had enough money left in my account, luckily, to catch a cab right from [the prison] to the train station because I was freaking out. You know it's like where do I go, which way do I go and they just said 'yeah yeah ...' and walked off, and I'd forgotten by the time I turned around. I'd just walked out you know (Lucy).

Release that's um the scary time, that's sort of time's up, you've done hard time in jail and now it's time to get out and you're on your own. When I walked out the gates I looked behind me ... the screw was there walking me out ... I stood there like this (makes image of statue). I stood there like this, I just stood there for five minutes. didn't say nothin' I just looked, stared for five minutes. Chief's going 'come on hurry up you're released, get out of here' and I was like 'wait boss'. and I just looked and waited and when I got out to society I started spinning out (Conlan).

I was free and I should have been happy but I had never been sadder at any time in my life ... I had no one to call ... nowhere to go. I didn't know how to do anything ... I had all the best intentions but I was wicked lonely. Where do you go? (CRJ, 2001: 18)

The experiences of Lucy and Conlan are not isolated to a handful of prisoners alone. The men and women within this research all spoke of the traumatic, uncertain and overwhelming nature of their release. Lucy describes being left at the prison gate without any directions, routines or processes of initiation to the social setting. She talks about the 'magic window' in which her last physical connections to the prison system are made and evoked. Her request for directions to the train station was met with a brief and unconcerned description from the guard behind the window. Conlan's experience similarly portrays a harshness and shock to the experience of release. Lucy and Conlan both articulate a distinct coldness and hesitation as they walked through the prison gates. Whilst release is welcomed by many prisoners, the return to the community is particularly frightening and uncertain. As the prisoner in Community Resources for Justice's (2001) work articulates, prison release can be an intensely sad, uncertain and lonely time. Lucy's and Conlan's experiences at the prison gates mirror the loss, displacement and ambiguity men and women face more generally when they return to the
community. Most critical to this analysis are the ways in which the men and women conveyed an uncertainty within themselves. They were unsure of who they were and where they would fit within society. As discussed in Chapter Six, many released men and women find themselves with limited familial or broader relationship support, outside of criminal and drug using circles. In this way, their bases of identification within family units are limited to the extent that parents or siblings thwart contact and some are perceived to no longer care. As a result, the men and women within this research were challenged to identify themselves as children, brothers or sisters within these circles. Similarly, those men and women who have a lengthy history of drug addiction, and are working towards their recovery, conveyed a struggle to ground and identify themselves outside of relationships and social positions that were conducive to drug use. Because addiction had dominated so much of the men’s and women’s lives, without drugs their narratives echoed that they were often facing their real selves and thoughts for the first time.

Some men and women spoke about their feelings of release in the following ways:

Just because you get released that’s great, you got your freedom but that’s, that’s not the … like in my case okay, I’ve lost my house, cars, everything I own. And previously, I’ve always had somewhere to go and this time I’ve had nothing … it’s like having your arm cut off (Plato).

You get out say you did two years or six months, you get out with $185 and a slap on the back, most of the time you just get the money (Percy).

When I got out I had nothing, no clothes or nothing and um I put in for gratuities. They gave me one t-shirt and one set of pants and that’s after eight years … that was all after eight years and then that’s it, that’s all you get when you get out (Deiter).

I was in minimum security, they dragged me to the gate, checked I was who I was supposed to be, ‘there’s the bus stop, see you later’. There was supposed to be a Centrelink payment at the gate waiting for you but it wasn’t there, so then I had to make my own way to the Centrelink office, took me an hour to find it (Blade).
It's sort of like you do your time and then your time comes up and you get packed up and that's it. If you got somewhere to go, you've got somewhere to go, if you haven't you haven't ... you get your cheque and off you go (Marissa).

As Plato articulates, prisoners experience significant losses of personal and economic capital when they are sent to prison. Within the community markers of social status, success and belonging inform individual identity to the extent that individuals may be regarded as parents, employed, partners, accomplished, financially independent and the like. For men and women who are denied access or are ineligible for many bases of social identification and status, feelings of belonging and comfort within the community are particularly challenged, if not almost impossible. Percy and Deiter talk about the physicalities of having a single cheque or set of clothes in their possession at their time of release, an experience common amongst the men and women in this research. The dearth of personal possessions, coupled with limited social networks of support, considered in Chapter Six, means many released prisoners have limited resources and avenues from which to (re)define themselves at the time of their release. As they entered the prison gates they became a 'prisoner'; however, at their time of release they were no longer a 'prisoner', yet lacked the critical social tools for identification and belonging as a social citizen. Smith and Stewart (1998: 96) write that the exclusion of prisoners rests not solely on the shoulders of legislation and citizenship, but also 'in social and personal insecurity'. They further that prisoners are 'excluded from the full range of goods associated with citizenship, not only by virtue of their status as offenders, but through other experiences of marginalisation and deprivation' (Smith & Stewart, 1998: 96).

Marissa above comments that as a released prisoner, 'if you have somewhere to go you've got somewhere to go, if you haven't you haven't'. In this way her narrative is indicative of the complex ways in which prison release purges men and women into ambiguous spaces in which their social and individual references of identification are blurred. Moreover, her description of place and placelessness can be extrapolated to the men's and women's experiences within their familial units, peer relations, employment and vocational opportunities, housing and accommodation provisions and the like.
In numerous ways, the men and women conveyed the ways the expiration of their 'prisoner' classification threw them into uncertainty. Most immediately, they identified the difficulties in (re)establishing themselves within the community – specifically, the ways in which their periods of incarceration had inhibited and quashed their independence and decision making ability about often fundamental aspects of living:

Because I spent so long in jail I’m institutionalised. Freedom is something that I need to work on, like I’m gonna have to get used to it you know … I’m gonna have to work on being free you know (Damien).

You’re useless in society because [in prison] you’re woken up at certain times, you go to bed at certain times (Conlan).

[Getting out] well it was no thrill, it might sound weird to the ordinary person but I wasn’t really happy about getting out … I just knew how hard it was going to be. Like in jail I was the inmate delegate so if the inmates had a union I was the president you know, and I got respect from all the inmates … I was trusted at work and I was in a routing and um to get out and not have a job or to have money (Ballard).

I was very scared, it’s a lot different because when you’re in there you’re told when to sleep, when to eat, when to get up, you know what to do, and there’s always someone there and it is pretty scary when you get out and look around and you’re your own person. You can tell yourself when to eat, what to do, where you can go … it’s pretty full on (Kyria).

Kyria talks about the apprehension of being her own person. As she continues her narrative and her experiences of prison release, she suggests she is untrusting of herself and, more particularly, unsure of herself. Kyria and Ballard detail the regiment of the prison and the ways prison routines and culture have shaped the people they know themselves to be. With distinct rules and submission to authoritative and coercive control within the prison, they have not had to consider themselves outside of their position and status as 'prisoner'. In turn, their release from prison is particularly challenging as they come to terms with who they are now that they are no longer technically a 'prisoner'. Whilst Kyria no longer has to be told when to eat, go to the toilet or sleep, the way she
constructs and narrates her experience suggests that at a basic and primary level, she faced significant changes and personal losses when she left the prison setting. As considered in Chapter Six, many of the men and women spoke about the comfort and ease of being in prison; moreover, they identified the intentional and deliberate ways in which they returned themselves to prison. If we consider Kyria's narrative within this context, the process and experience of incarceration can be understood to not only provide a safe and familiar place to (some) prisoners but, more powerfully, the prison becomes a critical tool in the men's and women's references of identification and understandings of themselves. The men and women grounded their incarceration in the context of their lives in the following ways:

I've grown up with it and I've just taken it as a matter of fact now ... it's something that's happened in my life you know ... I've taken it in my stride (Roden).

I can never forget I've been to jail, I've been there too long you know. Hopefully I'll grow out of it (Damien).

I'll never forget it because it's been too much a part of me life you know ... it'll always be a major part of me life because I spent so long in there you know (Deiter).

It's really a part of who I am now, it'll always be part of me now ... but am I proud of saying I've been in prison? No (Varen).

I haven't really got any dreams or ideals about getting something because I got this feelin' that it's all been too late (Damien).

Oh you never forget ... it's always very fresh in the back of your mind. Even things like seeing a police car, you wonder what you've done or if they're coming for you (Daphne).

Within the initial stages of the interviews these men and women located and identified their incarceration as a powerful factor in their individual frames of reference. It is important to recognise that whilst periods of incarceration most dominantly negatively informed and changed the lives of the men and women, imprisonment also extended
some positive experiences: for example, in terms of education (Stewart, 2005),
counselling and therapeutic opportunities (also considered in Chapter Six in the context
of drug use):

Good things about it is I was nineteen when I first went to prison, I was
illiterate, it taught me to read, I got me apprenticeship out of it, I got
educated (Percy).

To be honest with you, a lot of my learnings have been in jail, or from
going there ... you know I, I've learnt a lot of, apart from criminal things,
which I also picked up quite a few of ... I, I, all of my extra-curriculum
education stuff I did, I did in there (Nash).

The benefits of incarceration such as those identified by the men above are not explored
in detail within this analysis. However, it is important to identify the differential ways in
which experiences of imprisonment impact the lives of the men and women.

As the men and women continued their stories of incarceration they conveyed a sadness
and pain associated with the ways they felt about themselves. When asked to describe
himself, one man responded: 'drug addict, jail ... and alone and suffering' (Blade).
Damien's narrative above conveys a sense of hopelessness and of the impossibility of a
life outside of prison and drug use. He feels it's too late for him to fashion his life in a
different way, and in doing so his narrative suggests he also feels it is too late to consider
himself beyond his criminality and drug use. Clear, Rose and Ryder (2001: 342) suggest
'the ability of a person to thrive socially is partly a result of a person's sense of identity'.
Damien's narrative supports the ideas of Clear, Rose and Ryder (2001: 342) when they
argue that 'an identity associated with the cycle of incarceration is a difficult foundation
on which to build life choices' and an identity outside penal frames of reference. Such
challenges are further compounded when support networks and family units are unsure of
how to emotionally and mentally support returning prisoners (Rossman, 2002). In
addition to trying to 'forget' experiences of incarceration, some men and women spoke
about the ways their families still identified them as 'criminals' even though they had
made significant efforts in prison to change their lives. For example:
When you go to prison ... the people outside, and you do stuff to better yourself, you’re doing it on your own, they’re not going in there to do the shit to deal with all the problems that you had ... so when you get out, that’s what happened to me [with my wife], when I got home her mind’s telling her that this is the guy that left before that’s all fucked up ... me as trying to do the right thing and that, this is a new person for her, she’s not used to it (Nash).

Nash highlights the difficulties in resisting and challenging the established markers of deviance and criminality. Making momentous steps to challenge his own belief system and his perspective on life, whilst in prison, he identifies the difficulties he faces emerging from prison as a ‘new’ person. His wife holds him within his history and record of deviance.

Prisoner narratives within Eaton’s (1993: 55) work further convey the uncertainty and foreignness encumbering the experiences of released men and women:

It’s like expecting an alien to come down from a totally different planet – because that’s what prison is like. There you’re in an environment that’s not real – you’re separated from the rest of society. So you come out and you don’t know what to do. And that’s when you go back to knowing what you know is safe – which is usually crime (Linda).

Prison does distort your thinking incredibly. Everything is distorted so completely. People find it hard to catch what it is about prison that is so destructive, but it is also what you bring out (Fran).

Analysing these narratives, Eaton (1993: 55) argues that ‘within the prison each woman is closed off from the wider society and held within the narrow world of the prison. Placed by others, she has no space in which to define herself. She returns to society disorientated and disempowered’. Like the women in Eaton’s research, the men and women within the current research spoke about the ways their experience of prison had both deprived them of their previous identity as a ‘citizen’, and also marked them with the identity of ‘prisoner’. Caine narrates the correlations between prison and his release into a supported facility. In doing so he suggests how some men and women may be
challenged to transcend the subject position of ‘prisoner’ as they experience loss and uncertainty within the community. More particularly, opportunities to define and locate oneself outside of penological frames are often significantly challenged as men and women enter treatment and/or other prisoner services:

You know a couple of times it’s occurred to me that in a way this is like jail too ... you know I mean the, the walls have gone but psychologically it’s still the same in a lot of ways ... my life’s been shattered and blown apart ... and I’ve come to jail and then jail here once again under sort of a regime ... it’s not my own flat, I’m not driving my own car, I’m not sort of earning my own money. So in a lot of ways it’s a step on of the same feeling rather than you know, because in jail everything’s removed you know you don’t have your suit and tie, you just get into your green clothes so um [release] is definitely more freedom and it’s preferable ... but it’s not like, it’s not ... still not total independence (Caine).

Ballard elaborates about his experience of release. He also discusses uncertainty, and introduces the ways in which damaged and problematic familial connections further challenge the men’s and women’s ability to (re)define themselves in the community:

It’s really, really hard and I don’t think you’re gonna find anyone that’s figured out how to solve that problem ... yeah it’s too much. See a lot of us have burnt our bridges with our families and that so you’re actually out here on your own, you’re on your own, you got no one else to turn to, no one at all (Ballard).

Exclusion from familial networks and relationships, considered in more detail in Chapter Six, was a powerful influence on the ways the men and women within this study located and identified themselves within their release environment. Whilst they differentially understood and articulated the influence of their familial connections on their beliefs about themselves, their narratives elevated the feelings of disappointment, rejection and uselessness. For example:

With my family I think they’re more on their guard expecting me to screw up. And there’s that kind of general feeling I’m always going to screw up ... there’s that stigmatisation (Varen).
Varen is a twenty-eight-year-old Filipino man from a close and religious family. Within his interviews he spoke about his family's strong cultural and religious heritage and the way his behaviours – his heroin addiction and multiple incarcerations – challenged his family unit, but more particularly the strength of his family's name and reputation. The ways in which he understood himself – as disappointing and a blemish to his family name or reputation – powerfully underscored his feelings of worth and value. Varen's age and culture tie his points of identification and reference more closely to the family unit than most of the other men and women. In this way, as he talked about the loss of contact and the expectations his family have of him to 'screw up', his experiences defining himself, particularly outside of his 'addict' or 'prisoner' identities, were significantly challenged. He later spoke about the probability of his successful release this time:

I'm most concerned about going back in jail b-u-t track record shows that I will (Varen).

Varen identified himself in the following ways: single; heroin addicted; in possession of limited social and emotional skills and development; unemployed; uneducated; and likely to return to prison. At the time of the interviews, Varen was living in a supported accommodation house and had not had contact with his family for several months. Considering the strong and traditional cultural, religious and familial references of identification within Varen's family, coupled with the ways he understands and identifies himself, his interview conveyed a dislocation and displacement from his identity as a Catholic of Filipino origin. His narratives indicated he more closely aligned himself with a 'prisoner' and abject identity than a member of familial and broader social frameworks.

Reflecting on the environment and conditions into which many men and women are released – limited support networks, low self-esteem, few personal assets and capital – we can understand the ways in which men and women align themselves with settings and associations that are familiar to them. As highlighted in Chapter Six, drug addiction and incarceration, whilst destructive and problematic to their lives, create a safe, familiar and secure space for many men and women. Damien and Daphne reflect below on the difficulties of multiple prison releases:
It’s been harder in actual fact you know [this time], because usually it’s in a world and blur of drugs or I’m always stoned and I don’t really care, the reality of life’s just sort of in the background all the time you know (Damien).

[This time] is harder I think, because I’d fucked it [last time] … it’s like a kick in the pants, very disappointing (Daphne).

Narratives of released women in Eaton’s (1993: 8) research further elevate the comfort and familiarity inherent to the return to offending and to problematic relationships when released:

I didn’t know who I could turn to, I couldn’t turn to anyone [so] I was clinging to my reoffending because it was giving me moral esteem or self-esteem. I belonged, I had something, I achieved something … because it was the life I’m used to living it’s no big deal for me (Alice).

Alice’s narrative introduces the critical notion of clinging to offending and criminality as a point of reference for both belonging and achievement, but also as a way in which she could easily identify and understand herself. Hall (1996: 5) writes that ‘identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render “outside”, abject’. In this way, attachment to offending, imprisonment or addiction identities facilitate a safe, comfortable and known refuge for those who struggle to understand themselves within divergent frames. At the same time, however, such attachment excludes and renders individuals outside of other socially ‘acceptable’ positionings. Prisoner narratives within the work of Hampton (1993) and Soothill (1999) articulate the perpetuity of a prisoner’s bond to their ‘difference’:

Being inside gives you an unreasonable sense of alienation from mainstream society. The sense that what you know is worlds apart from what most people know never leaves you. Your eyes have been opened and you can never forget what you have seen (Hampton, 1993).

I think I must have a very deep sense of not really belonging outside in the community at all. Imprisonment is a very dehumanising experience, it
takes away your manhood and your sense of identity and everything: the more you have of it, the more dehumanised you become. I suppose that’s why I’m now incapable of thinking properly about myself as a person, as an individual anymore (Ron, in Soothill, 1999: 98).

Marrying the ideas of the prisoners above with prisoner disenfranchisement, exclusion and discrimination, as introduced in Chapter Two and Chapter Five, we can understand the push and pull effect for released men and women towards offending and criminal frames of reference. Specifically, the structural and systematic mechanisms of social exclusion and rejection within the community such as employment restrictions, obstacles with welfare, housing and other social agencies, police and broader social surveillance push released men and women to self-identify as ‘criminal’ or ‘prisoner’. In addition, self-identifying as a ‘criminal’ or ‘drug user’ for many men and women provides a comfortable and familiar point of reference in which they are able to understand and locate themselves within the fabric of society. Whilst many of the men and women within this research understood the problematic and painful nature of their drug use and offending, identifying themselves as users or criminals appeared to be within their grasp. In other words, years of incarceration, addiction, destructive relationships and traumatic pasts have written on the slate of these men and women to the extent that they are minimally capable of considering themselves both able and worthy of an identity and life outside those of ‘criminal’, ‘prisoner’ or ‘addict’. These ideas need to be contextualised within the individual lives of these men and women, specifically that the large majority of the men and women within this research believed they had no familial support, had no education or personal value to offer the social body, and had nothing within their lives. These ideas further support Tudball’s (2000) findings that prison is understood as an easier life (for some) in the absence of social capital. In this way, they were not able to imagine or fashion for themselves the visions of a future any different to the offending and addicted past life they had led. Current research lays claim to the criticality of feelings and experiences of social inclusion for released men and women for both an ease and success of prison release (see for example Ross & Ryan, 2003; Needels, 1996). Such findings suggest compounded negative implications for released men and women who feel and experience separation from broader social and familial frameworks. For men and
women with stronger family connections, social support and encouragement, however, the story may be different. In light of current research highlighting the significant lack of familial and broader support networks available to men and women at the time of their release, however (Rossman, 2002; Farrell, 1998), the above experiences can be understood to be shared by many released prisoners.

As the men and women grounded themselves within their comfortable frames of reference, they also understood the ways in which their social interactions and treatment within the community pulled them towards ‘safe’ spaces. Problematically, as discussed in Chapter Six, such spaces predominantly bore the threads of drug use and/or criminality. Identified in Chapter Five, the men and women believed themselves to be subject to heightened and disproportional mechanisms of social surveillance and physically bore the marks of ‘prisoner’:

I’m hiding ... see most people unless they’ve been to jail themselves, the images it creates in people’s minds is terrible, it’s something people don’t want to consider, it’s like you’ve got leprosy or something (Caine).

I feel I’ve got the stigma, I’m an ex-prisoner ... the way I see myself ... where I’m walking around with ‘prisoner’ on me head ... I expect people to look down their nose at me (Caine).

Connections with some social institutions and agencies require the men and women to disclose their incarcerations, and in this way they are further tied to their ‘prisoner’ status within the community, despite their transcendence from the physicalities of the prison setting. For example:

Because I’ve let my ID lapse and everything fall apart, I’ve needed [help from Centrelink and other agencies] to rebuild things, which reminds me again of what I’ve been through so it’s not as if suddenly I can assume my life and I can forget about it (Caine).

Marissa provides another example in which she believes she was discriminated against and belittled because she had been in prison:
I went to social security with a jail release form right and I was talking to this lady over the counter. She was really nice to me, I mean really nice to me and it spun me out and then when I showed her my jail release she changed straight away. She said she couldn’t give me money and I’d have to come back. I told her I couldn’t wait that long and she said ‘oh why don’t you break into a house or something like that if you can’t wait till two o’clock. I felt like I did my dues, I done my time you know. I just wanted a second chance in the community and that’s what she had to say to me (Marissa).

In response to this situation Marissa jumped the counter and punched the woman. Whilst her response was inappropriate, it demonstrates the ways in which released men and women are continually tied to their offending histories. Moreover, it reflects the limited resources and recourses some released men and women believe they are able to draw on to deal with and respond to such encounters. Marissa talks about doing her time and paying her dues, and in this way, whilst she struggles to distance herself from her past incarceration and addiction, she conveys the perception of being worthy of transcending her status of ‘prisoner’. Kidney (1990: 292) argues the ‘biggest challenge facing aftercare is community attitudes towards ex-offenders ... the community needs to be challenged as to its responsibility in assisting people who have paid their penalty required by law’. Austin, Hardyman and Irwin (2002: 62) further support this idea as they suggest that ‘current discussions on prisoner reentry and public safety in general [are] recognising that community attitudes have at least if not a greater impact on prisoner recidivism and public safety ... than the characteristics of the individuals released from prison’. Damien furthers to talk about the perennial link to a ‘prisoner’ identity:

A lot of the times I’ve got to prove I’ve been in prison, like when you deal with Centrelink or housing department and all that you’ve got to produce is your release slip and all that so you’re always known as an ex-offender you know (Damien).

For the majority of the men and women in this research, the only form of material identification they possessed at the time of their release was their jail release slip. In turn, as Damien’s narrative suggests, there is a powerful link between the men’s and women’s
identities in the release setting and their previous occupation as 'prisoners'. Damien talks about the need to prove his incarceration in order to validate access to welfare entitlements and emergency and priority housing. In this way, whilst his position as a prisoner provides access points to social services in the release environment, it critically grounds his sense of self and his perceptions of the ways social agents engage with and respond to him. The men and women described their release slip as a big blue bit of paper with their name, (prison) administration number and the prison they attended. One of the men commented that previously a jail release slip was sufficient identification to establish connections with social services, banking centres, housing departments and the like. In recent years, however, the jail release slip is no longer a useful or adequate form of identification within many social frameworks, with the exception of registration for Centrelink payments and priority housing, as Deiter comments below:

No place now looks at your jail ID as um identification anymore ... whereas jail certificate used to be pretty much alright you know ... now they don't even accept that ... they don't even accept your release papers (Deiter).

Through this analysis we witness three critical junctures between the 'citizen' and the 'prisoner'. Firstly, the social status of an offender is nullified as they enter the carceral setting. Secondly, the prisoner's social identity is replaced and supplanted with a prison-issued (uniform, administration number and social space) identification. Thirdly, within the broader social body, the prisoner bears the social mark of 'prisoner'. Most critical to their experiences of release, the men and women within this research began to internalise the position of 'prisoner'. Whilst physically 'freed' from the prison walls, the obscurity of their 'citizenship' and belonging to familial and broader social frameworks renders them socially excluded and rejected.
Conclusion

Collectively, the men’s and women’s narratives convey the dominance of their ‘prisoner’ status within their individual understandings and points of reference for identification. Through diminished personal perceptions of worth, value and ability, alongside with rejection and exclusion by familial and peer units and the broader community alike, the men and women are minimally equipped or capable of defining themselves in ways that are external to their experiences of incarceration. Themes of rejection and exclusion powerfully underscore the release experiences of the men and women within this research. As they narrated their relationships with their families, the obstacles to gainful employment, secure housing, perceptions of police harassment, failed past attempts at addiction recovery and prison release they elevated a picture of a depleted released body. Whilst the process and practices of entry to the institutional setting are marked by formal and systematic routines, exiting the role and position of ‘prisoner’ is less clearly scripted.

Goffman (1961: 319) argues that the ‘simplest sociological view of the individual and his self is that he is to himself what his place in an organisation defines him to be’. He furthers, ‘without something to belong to, we have no stable self, and yet total commitment and attachment to any social unit implies a kind of selflessness’ (Goffman, 1961: 320). Engaging these ideas with the study of prisoner release and, more particularly, with the experiences of the men and women within this research, there is a clear and distinct connection for the men and women to their ‘prisoner’ and ‘offender’ identities. The social body has fashioned an excluded positioning for released men and women; outside the prison system they are no longer prisoners, but within the social body they are not fully considered as ‘citizens’. In this way, released men and women can be understood to experience a selflessness and ambiguity in the community as they struggle to divorce themselves from their social status as ‘prisoners’, while at the same time seek to create new identities that fit within their conceptualisations of who they can be, and the frameworks in the broader community that stipulate what they should be. The narrative of a prisoner in Soothill’s (1999: 78) work conveys the ways the men and women within this research perceived their abilities, despite their desire and determination, to transcend their ‘prisoner’ identities within the broader community:
Your class of person has a long way to go, too, before they ever accept a criminal as anything else but an insensitive second-class citizen. I remember a man coming to see me once, a straight man he was, and he was looking along that row of books over there on the shelves, and he said: ‘You know, it’s really amazing you should read books like this. I’m staggered I am. I should’ve thought you’d read paper-backed thrillers, things with lurid covers, books like that.

And I always feel this with straight people – that whenever they’re being nice to me, pleasant to me, all the time really, underneath they’re only assessing me as a criminal and nothing else. It’s too late for me to be any different now to what I am, but I still feel this keenly, that that’s their only approach, and they’re quite incapable of accepting me as anything else (Robert).
Secrets/Pit of Despair, 2004
assemblage

(Somebody's Daughter Theatre, 2005)
Chapter Eight

Rethinking risk in the release setting: an exploration of the neglected notion of the prisoner as an object of risk

Released men and women are not singularly objects of risk within the community. In the release setting, they are also subject to and bound within individualised instrumentalities of risk. It is to these complex fragments of individualised risk that this chapter directs its analysis. The current criminological climate ascribes frameworks of risk to released prisoners to the extent that released men and women are categorised and classified according to the imminent risks they pose to the social body at the prospect of their release. Whilst such practice is indeed critical to the safety and security of the community at large, particularly with regards to serious, violent and repeat offenders, such ascription largely concerns itself with the materialisation of superficial constructs. In other words, the emergence within penological rhetoric and practice of dialogues of risk assessment, containment and management dominantly fashions the released prisoner as an object of risk. The current research argues that any true or real measure and understanding of the potential risk released men and women pose to the community at the time of their release need to attend to, and conceive of, the released prisoner as both an object and subject of risk. The ways released men and women understand, experience and calculate risk(s) in the release setting powerfully underscore not only the nature of their ‘success’ within that environment but, at the same time, inform broader ascriptions of penological risk.

In the process of narrating their experiences, the men and women within this research began to deconstruct and reconstruct the meanings of their experiences of prison and release. In doing so they became critical instruments and informants of definitions and understandings of risk in their release setting. This research has firmly attested to the criticality of providing ‘safe’ and engaged spaces for released men and women to
structure and portray their lived experiences of release. More particularly, it has argued that released men and women need to be recognised, encouraged and nurtured as the key narrators within penological and criminological conceptualisations of release environments. Extending these ideas, this chapter argues that released prisoners themselves are perhaps the most powerful, yet underutilised, actuaries to their experiences and possibilities of ‘success’ in the community following incarceration.

The release setting as a territory of risk

The propulsion towards the management of risk, and the calculation and containment of danger, within penology have materialised at the expense of welfare, rehabilitative and individualised crime control policy (Garland, 2002; Kemshall & Maguire, 2001). More critically, the argued shift in penal rhetoric and practice has meant an 'increasing replacement of professional judgement by the reliance on actuarial instruments for assessing levels of risk' (Kemshall & Maguire, 2001: 248). Such changes in response and (re)action to crime and criminality have a momentous impact on the ways in which men and women exist within and experience their prison and release environments. Garland’s (2002: 175) observations of the ‘transformation of penal-welfarism’ in Culture of Control most aptly relate these connections. Specifically he identifies the elevation of the penal mode as more punitive, expressive and security-minded, at the same time as the welfare mode becomes more muted, conditional, offence-centred, and risk conscious (2002: 175). He writes that the equated effect means:

Offenders, dealt with by probation [and] parole, are now less likely to be represented in official discourse as socially deprived citizens in need of support. They are depicted instead as culpable, undeserving and somewhat dangerous individuals who must be carefully controlled for the protection of the public ... rather than clients in need of support they are seen as risks who must be managed. Instead of emphasising rehabilitative methods that meet the offender’s needs, the system emphasises effective controls that minimise costs and maximise security (Garland, 2002: 175).

Beck (2005: 23) argues that risks ‘can be changed, magnified, dramatised or minimised within knowledge to the extent that they are particularly open to social definition and construction’. Relating the ideas of Giddens (1991) and Beck (2005) to prisoner release,
the elevation of a released body as 'culpable, undeserving, dangerous', and a threat to the social order, significantly informs the ways released men and women are received, managed and contained within the fabrics of society. More specifically, the illumination of risk assessment, management and containment technologies within penal-community structures provide little space through which released men and women are able to challenge or resist their ascribed positionings as objects of risk. Increasing prison and release rates and figures have translated to significant pressures on parole and early release schemes to the extent that categorisations of risk are increasingly utilised as a means to distribute and allocate social attention and resources. Released prisoners, identified as 'high-risks', are receiving more, albeit punitive, social attention and resources (Bloom & McDiarmid, 2000).

The rationalisation and/or evaluation of current trends and practices within criminological risk assessment techniques and their ramifications are not significant here. The following analysis does not attempt to (de)construct discourses of risk in relation to prisoner release — such consideration is both beyond the scope of this thesis, and does not serve to maximise an exploration of the Australian release setting more generally. This preamble on frameworks of risk within the contemporary climate of penology is included because its consideration demonstrates the ways in which 'scientised' and objective approaches to prisoner release neglect critical individualised components. Hannah-Moffat (2005: 36) makes reference to the work of Hudson (2004: 66), citing 'the morally neutral scientific actuarial terminology of risk disguises the condemnatory pariahdom created by classifications'. As the current research has earlier argued, there is a critical place for the individual lived experience of the released men and women whom criminological and penological scholarship observes. In examining the release setting and the behaviours and movements of men and women within these environments, research needs to attend to the ways in which individuals exist, challenge and experience their worlds. Such constructs can not legitimately be reduced to a mere scientific object of study. Released prisoners are collated by their experiences of prison and release, but more significantly they are individuals who individually perceive, understand and negotiate their experiences. In this way, whilst scientific enquiry provides critical insight into many areas of penology, such
focus does not attend to released men and women as thinking, feeling and separate bodies. From these understandings this chapter directs its analysis to the individual experiences and understandings of risk in the release setting, as identified and negotiated by released men and women themselves.

Within the interviews the men's and women's narratives assembled a list of some twenty-eight ways in which they understood and identified risks within their current and future lives. Their narratives identified risks from being in the community and the stress of release more generally, to specific areas such as: returning to or maintaining contact with the 'wrong crowd'; the absence of structured and systematic release planning; mental illness; and poor self-perception and self-esteem. Additional elements of risk were understood in relation to experiences and perceptions of institutionalisation: lengthy track records (of offending, prison and drug use); the boredom inherent to unemployment and idle time in the community; difficulties in reaching for and accepting various avenues of support; difficulties in asserting and entering into trust-based relationships; frustrations of release and reoffending; the comfort of prison; and damaged familial and child-parent connections. Whilst these individualised elements and manifestations of risk were critical in their own right, they powerfully bore the common thread of underlying drug use and addiction.

The most real and immediate dangers the men and women perceived within their release setting, more particularly, their ability to 'succeed' within the community, related to their abilities and capacity to maintain and commit to their sobriety and recovery. More critically, their understandings and relationship to their sobriety were informed by the interlacing of smaller components of risk associated with maintaining or continuing drug use. The men and women are powerful actuaries in their release environment, particularly in the framework of addiction. Whilst they were able to access and predominantly calculate the dangers within their drug use, they narrated a greater difficulty in negotiating, managing and conducting themselves as insurers and responsible managers of risk. From this standpoint, this chapter explores the ways in which drug addiction is understood and narrated as a critical component of individualised risk. Specifically, this
entails, firstly, examining some of the most immediate risks and dangers the men and women identified in their release environment specific to their (return to) drug use and, secondly, attending to the ways the men and women positioned, negotiated and managed themselves as actuaries within their experiences of drug use and release. More particularly, the later section of this chapter explores the men’s and women’s involvement with treatment and therapeutic interventions, and the junctures at which they began to assert an increased individual commitment to their sobriety and recovery. Attending to these areas of addiction demonstrates the realities and dangers inherent to drug use within the men’s and women’s lives. Establishing the difficulties in entering into and maintaining states of sobriety forges a greater appreciation for the ways in which the men and women experienced and understood their addiction within frameworks of risk.

Most immediately, risk was tied to prison release in the sense that the inability to overcome and negotiate obstacles within the community translated to the threat of likely failure. Such failure largely translated to the return to problematic drug use and/or prison. The complexity of drug use as an element of release risk became apparent as the men and women firstly spoke about the difficulties of prison release propelling them towards (the return to) drug use and, secondly, identified the critical consequences of such drug use.1 Pressures to ‘succeed’ within the community at the time of release are a heavy burden for many men and women. Specifically, the men and women spoke about their concerns: of returning to prison; the inability to function and manage within the community; expecting too much of themselves and setting unrealistic goals; a lack of planning for and during their release; diminished self-worth and value; and not reaching out for or using avenues of support. These problem areas were correlated with the return to drug use in close proximity to their release from prison. For those who have served previous prison sentences and ‘failed’ in their release setting, the pressures are both more real and often appear insurmountable. The four strongest risks inherent to the return to drug use included (re)incarceration, death, irreparable relationships or social connections, and issues specific to the care and wellbeing of dependent children. Chapter Six attended to the ways the men and women tied their addictions to the inevitability of returning to

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1 These ideas were initially highlighted in Chapter Six.
prison, the possibilities (and realities) of death, and the damage to their familial and broader relationships. In this regard, their repeated mention here as factors of risk, is unnecessary. The analysis below concerns itself with the fourth risk identified within this research. It explores the experiences of women, as mothers, to consider the ways they located dialogues of risk within their experiences of addiction recovery, release and motherhood.

Carlen (2002c) argues that criminological and political discourses have not opened discussions of crime and punishment to the individualised and gendered distinctions between men and women. She suggests women are ‘always seen, but darkly through the distorting mirror of male criminology’ (Carlen, 2002b: 4). As a result of dominant ‘male’ criminological discourses, policy and research bodies have for a long time neglected the unique experiences of women within dialogues of crime and punishment (Pollack, 2004; Covington & Bloom, 2003; Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2001). Moreover, the treatment of and re-active responses to the underlying issues informing the criminality, imprisonment and prison re-entry of women have minimally engaged with the women’s narratives of struggle, resistance and empowerment (for exceptions see for example O’Brien, 2001; Devlin, 2002). Bosworth (2000: 266) writes that contemporary criminology theorises about experiences of prison and release ‘without considering the needs, experiences or qualities’ of women. The analysis below, exploring women’s narratives of sobriety, motherhood and incarceration, informs current understandings of women’s experiences within the criminal justice system. The narratives provide a snapshot of the struggles and needs of some mothers in New South Wales who have drug use problems and a history of offending and incarceration. It begins to challenge the gender-neutral nature of current dialogues of the custodial release setting through the explicit incorporation of the needs and concerns of women within this space.

Chapter Six dedicated its analysis to the difficulties and obstructions drug addiction brings to the release setting. The continuation of attention to drugs within this chapter does not seek to repeat previous arguments, but rather builds upon and complements the ideas problematising drug use in the release setting. More specifically, it argues that
frameworks of risk, within addiction, surface as separate yet interrelated aspects of threat and danger within the release environment for the men and women within this research. To this end, the research acknowledges the thematic repetition of drug use within its analysis, yet also believes the dominance of problematic drug use within this research beckons further attention. In this way, such analysis further informs not only the destructive nature of drug use amongst prison and release populations but, more particularly, highlights the complex and interwoven nature of prisoner release issues/concerns.

This analysis does not assume that the risks of drug use and/or subsequent addiction, in the release setting, pose the most real and immediate threat to release periods in the broader Australian context. In light of recorded drug abuse amongst prison and release populations (see for example Butler & Milner, 2002; NCCHC, 2001), however, the potentialities of drug use as a critical and powerful element of release risk is considered to be representative of significant portions of the Australian release population. Within this chapter’s analysis, whilst the men’s and women’s narratives are collated in the interest of highlighting common themes, the bridging of their experiences does not ignore the ways shared articulations of risk are unique to each individual.

The ability to nurture

Research specific to the incarceration of women has highlighted multifaceted problems during periods of incarceration for both female prisoners and their children (see Chapter Two; Miller-Warke, 2000). Issues of anxiety associated with separation; problematic and disruptive behaviour of children; confusion; helplessness of women; anxiety about caregivers (Travis, Concotta & Solomon, 2003; Covington, 2002) and the like have been identified as particularly difficult. The women interviewed within this research raised these ideas specific to their incarceration, but also identified some of these same concerns within the context of their addiction. The emotional investment required to sustain active addiction, primarily for women as mothers, comes at a significant cost to their families and dependent children. For the women within this research, the severity of risks inherent to drug use became most real and apparent in the context of their capacities, roles and
identities as mothers. The women collectively identified the risk of losing the custody of their children (if they had not already), the risk of not gaining visitation or some form of custody in the future (both dependent on and independent of their current success at sobriety), and the risk that they would damage both their children and their parent-child bond. These issues were critical to the women in the context of their addiction recovery and release experiences more generally. Moreover, the women spoke about the ways both their past and possible future drug use informed the nature of their relationship with their children. Specifically, whilst their past use and addiction have meant their children have been officially removed, the ways they negotiate their sobriety and manage themselves within the community, in the current context, critically impacts their opportunities to resume their physical and emotional roles and identities as mothers.

All but one of the women had had their children removed by the Department of Community Services (DOCS), and placed in either foster care or in the care of other family members. Whilst not all imprisoned mothers have lost/lose official custody of their children through their imprisonment, research (see for example Richie, 2001) exploring the separation and removal of children during periods of imprisonment suggests that the experiences of the women in this study are representative of large numbers of released mothers. As current research identifies the prevalence of problematic drug use amongst female prisoners, the experiences of the women within this research can be understood to speak to the realities of significant numbers of women within the criminal justice system.

The women’s narratives resonate a powerful resistance to authority, most specifically with welfare and support services. They feared that exposing their vulnerabilities, struggles and possible incapacities as ‘stable’ mothers would jeopardise the parental privileges they currently held, and negatively impact their opportunities to regain custody. Such resistance presents significant obstacles for women’s successful transition from prison to the community, most notable as they close themselves to genuine assistance and support. Whilst the men and women were inclined to perceive support services in a less punitive light more generally (as considered in Chapter Five), when the
women were facing issues of child custody, support services tended to be considered in a similar (threatening) way to police or probation and parole departments. At the most basic level, support (and broader community) services were perceived as risks, that were both unknown and unpredictable, in the context of parental custody and the women’s active roles as mothers. Attributing their past failed attempts at release and sobriety to trying to manage their issues in isolation from external help and assistance, the women’s resistance to and fear of social agents significantly cripples their abilities to navigate release periods. Moreover, it challenges their engagement with support services that have the potential to help them heal and work through the issues underlying their drug taking and offending behaviours.

It is largely from spaces of non-use and several weeks or months of sobriety that the women are more clearly able to identify the risks inherent to their drug use. They expressed hurt, frustration and pain as they talked about the ways the marriage of their addiction and periods of incarceration resulted in their children being forcibly and ‘violently’2 removed. Most immediately, the women narrated that their preoccupation with finding, funding and using drugs had withdrawn them from their children physically and emotionally. The experiences of the women within this study support the findings of research such as Boudin (1998):

I had a lot of shame and guilt, leaving the children with their father, remarrying, and not focusing on my boys’ life too much. I was afraid to tell them that I was on drugs and the importance of drugs at that time in my life. It seemed that it was more important to get my drugs then, and I took it for granted that they were being taken care of. They were not my priority, I can see my priorities were not in order (Boudin, 1998: 119).

2 This research suggests a violent removal not to denote physical brutality, but rather to convey the idea that children are often removed without preparation, without being able to spend time with their mother to say goodbye or to explain why the removal is happening. Moreover, the mother’s anxieties of separation and concerns about the whereabouts, welfare and safety of their children are often more damaging than any forceful or physical brutality.
Similarly, mothers within this research stated:

The visits sort of got lengthened because I was too busy on drugs. I’ve never given up on [her] but it was just always on me back and I was getting sick of them being on me back ... I haven’t given up but it was hard walking away you know. I wanted to get me baby back, that’s what I wanted to do but then I’d fall into this trap again of using (Marissa).

[Drugs have] taken my kids off me. DOCS have got involved. They’re out of my care at the moment. Being away from them for this three years (through periods of incarceration and DOCS removal of the children) is enough. like I had one last year and I’m missing out on a lot there you know. My cousin’s basically got him and he’s going to be calling her mum and that and she’s gonna see his first step and hear his first words and that you know, that crushes me (Valora).

Marissa talks about the nature of the contact with her seven-year-old daughter. She identifies the ways in which her drug addiction has risked her relationship, both physically and emotionally, with her daughter. Marissa’s frustrations about the criticism she receives about her drug use by her daughter’s caregivers, the department of community services and her parole officer further informs the nature of her relationship with her daughter. As identified in Chapter Six, the resistance to control and being challenged about drug use means many addicts extract themselves from significant relationships and broader social connections. Whilst Marissa wants her daughter back, the ways she talks about ‘falling into’ the trap of using suggests a powerlessness to make alternative life choices. Marissa clearly identifies the risks involved with her drug use – specifically the (former) loss of her custodial rights and the potential risk of not regaining custody. However, her narrative identifies her difficulties with effectively managing her drug use behaviour. In this regard, her (continued) drug use can be understood as a calculated risk taken during her release period.

Where Marissa talks about not giving up on her daughter, there are possibilities of her perceiving she has in fact not given up on herself, or her ability to positively manage her drug use. However, the ways she talks about her drug use more generally indicates she has not yet reached a point at which seeing or regaining custody of her daughter has
transcended the importance, or dominance, of her addiction to drugs. Moreover, the risks associated with continued drug use are not bad or deterrent enough at this point in her life.

Because Marissa’s daughter has already been removed and has been absent from her care for six years, aside from the possibilities of future custody, Marissa perceives her return to drug use and/or incarceration as posing little external risk to her relationship with her daughter. Within Marissa’s narratives of release and drug use more generally, she makes multiple attempts to justify and rationalise her constant return to drug use (see for example Chapter Six). In doing so, we can conceive of her decision making as a protective mechanism, in the sense that drug use alleviates the pain and separation from her daughter. In addition, she also conveys a resignation that her life (in the future) will not include the custody of her daughter and, in this way, she appears less perturbed by the potentialities of (future) drug use and (re)incarceration. In other words, the risk of drug use to her custodial and maternal rights is less real and immediate in her current situation than has previously been the case. Within the context of her broader narratives of release, most notably, her indifference to periods of incarceration, Marrissa’s narrations suggest that drug use no longer personifies the same kinds of risk.

Valora’s narrative is more explicit in its identification of the risks associated with drug use. Specifically, she references the pain and torment of having children removed as a result of drug use. Whilst Marissa had experienced the removal of her only daughter, Valora had had all six of her children officially removed. In this regard, the loss and anguish of the separation from her children had been relived multiple times. Valora directly attributes the removal of her children to her drug use, as most of the other women within this research also do. Valora furthers to connect the agony and grief inherent to the loss of a child (through drug use) to her subsequent drug use as an alleviator of pain.³

³ The idea of drug use as an anaesthetic was introduced in Chapter Six.
mum first you know because I haven’t had that bond with him. I haven’t
had that bond (Valora).

Valora’s first quote engages with the idea of a displaced and challenged state of
motherhood. She talks about the ways in which her newest son (born last year) is
bonding, on a daily basis, with her cousin. As she talks about the (real) possibility that
her son will call her cousin ‘mum’, she experiences her identity as a mother to be a
contested positioning. Within this narrative, Valora talks about the risk of losing her
custodial rights. In addition, she introduces broader concerns about her drug use. In
particular, the risk of losing her maternal bond with her children and her identity as
‘mother’ within her children’s eyes.

Resorting to drug use as a means of pain management was a common experience
amongst the men and women within this research. Such (pain) alleviation through drug
use was particularly heightened amongst the parents, most notably mothers, within this
study. From these dialogues, drug use can be understood as a calculated risk for many in
the prison setting. In the context of the following – lost parental rights; fractured familial
and broader social relationships; and the exacerbation of issues of mental illness, abuse
and the like (these later ideas were discussed in Chapter Six) – we can assume two key
ideas about the women within this research. Firstly, the men and women are capable
actuaries to the risks associated with continued drug use. In this regard, in the face of
significant life challenges, the risks associated with drug use are overshadowed by the
need for alleviation and escape. Secondly, in the face of personal trauma, loss or despair,
the women are no longer able to calculate, let alone manage, the risks inherent to their
drug use.

Valora believes her inability to share her child’s first steps or hear his first words robs her
of a critical bond. Her choice of language powerfully conveys the despair and torture of

4 The gendered discrepancies within these experiences are understood to be due to a higher proportion of
the women than men having dependent children. Whilst many of the men spoke about their children, most
had very little, if any, contact with them, and several others spoke of their child’s age but had no idea of
their whereabouts or lives more broadly. Such findings are consistent with other research: see for example
Carlen (2002c).
losing a child: she remarks that she used drugs, not so that she wouldn’t have to think about the loss of her son but, more significantly, that she would not have to feel the loss. The cyclical nature of drug use, disaster and further drug use is evidenced within her first comment. All six of her children have been removed and as she struggles with her identity and role within their lives, she perceives herself almost as an adjunct mother.5 Through her drug use Valora has risked the very essence of her family unit, particularly her role as caregiver and protector.

These same experiences of pain and torment subsequent to the separation of a child have been widely documented in the context of women’s entry to prison (see for example Kilroy & Warner, 2002; Devlin, 2002). Whilst the prison erects physical barriers and structural constraints on a mother’s ability to attend to the care and wellbeing of her child(ren), the same experiences within the community are sometimes much harder to deal with. O’Brien’s (2001: 102) research with women in transition from prison speaks most directly to the feelings of the women within this study. As one woman articulates:

Because, when I meet somebody, it’s never mind that I’ve been in prison.
The hardest thing for me to say is that my kids don’t live with me (Jeanette).

O’Brien (2001: 102) writes that ‘reclaiming’ the role of mother gives ‘women an indicator of having proven something to themselves related to their ability to resume an important component of their identity as mothers’.

Valora calculates the risk of losing her unborn child to her return to drugs during this period of release and is very attuned to the possibility and inevitability of her child’s removal. In this way, the negotiation and positive management of her life – release pressures, issues of abuse, addiction and the like – become critical, not only for the welfare of her unborn child, but to her perceptions of her role and capabilities as a

5 Experiences with parole boards, department of community services, magistrates and the like, in the context of challenging the women’s abilities and ‘goodness’ to mother, have been understood to further erode women’s identification as fit mothers (see for example Pereira, 2002; Kilroy & Warner, 2002; Covington, 2002). In the context of the current research, notions of unfitness to mother, at institutional levels, strengthen the utilisation of ‘proven’ coping mechanisms, most dominantly drug use.
mother. Comparing the narratives of Marissa and Valora, the close proximity of Valora's contested role as mother (last year and possibly in the next few months), makes the risk of a return to drug use very immediate and illuminated within her life. Marissa, on the other hand, had her daughter removed several years ago and since that time has not made serious attempts to regain custody or resume visitation. In this way, whilst Marissa would like to have her daughter in her life, the risks associated with her return to drug use, in the context of her identity and role as a mother, are less immediate and threatening than in Valora's experience.

Prior to her current pregnancy, Valora shared similar feelings to Marissa, in that the hopelessness subsequent to her children already being removed, meant that in the face of day-to-day struggles or critical pressures, the return to drug use was understood not so much as an imminent risk, as much as a prolongation of the separation from her children. Prisoner narratives cited in the work of Covington (2002) further speak to the trap of (re)incarceration, specifically the hopelessness and emptiness women feel when their children are removed and, as identified in Chapter Six, the ways drug use and incarceration provide spaces of familiarity, belonging, comfort or a 'fallback':

Many women that fall [back] into prison have the problem that their children have been taken away. When they go out to the street, they don't have anything, they have nothing inside. Because they say 'I don't have my children, what will I do? I'll go back to the drug again. I will go back to prostitution again. And I'll go back to prison again. Why fight? Why fight if I have nothing?' (Coll et al., 1998, in Covington, 2002: 132).

I have tried periods clean and that and done rehabs and that. But then something might set me off again, like the kids, like getting judged by DOCS, getting the kids taken off me all set me off again (Valora).

In her current period of prison release, Valora reflects heavily on her past drug using choices. Valora has been (predominantly) sober for several months and reflects that she is able to more clearly identify the risks of her drug use. Specifically, she recognises the dominance of her drug use over her connections and activities within her family. At the time of the interviews she was eight months pregnant and concerned with the official
removal of her unborn (and seventh) child. In this regard, she was particularly focused on and concerned with the ways her addiction had impacted her familial unit. As she struggles with her sobriety and recovery at present, significantly driven by her determination to keep her unborn child, she becomes a keener actuary in the context of her addiction and its impact on her role as a mother and nurturer.

Many of the women within this research narrated that both the physical and emotional experiences of pregnancy engaged them in a process and space of self-reflection, evaluation and opportunistic change. Some of the women spoke about their (current) pregnancy and/or newborn baby as a powerful catalyst for affirmative changes within their lives, most notably in their utilisation of illicit substances:

To get out it meant just to have him you know, yeah that’s all I was concerned about. Because I don’t care ... I ... whether I’m in or out to tell you the truth ... except I want my kids, if I didn’t have kids it’d be a different issue. If I didn’t have my kids I’d still be running amok, I’d probably be dead, I’d have shot myself by now (Lucy).

The women’s children are powerful catalysts in the momentum towards addiction recovery. In this regard, in the context of (contested) motherhood, women can be understood to become better actuaries and risk managers within their experiences. Challenges to a woman’s role as mother, her ability to nurture and her individual conceptualisations of motherhood have significant implications for the ways women understand themselves (see for example O’Brien, 2001). These self-conceptualisations are also significant informants to release experiences more generally. The narrations of the women within this research were suggestive of a critical juncture inherent to the contested positioning and role of mother. The challenges and barriers to their physical ability to care for their children can either throw them into the depths of despair and hopelessness, or propel them to make critical positive changes within their lives. In the first instance, the removal of children was narrated as a crippling experience to both their daily lives, and their understandings of themselves as mothers. Kala speaks to this idea:

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6 At the time of the interviews, two women were pregnant and two had very recently given birth, since their release.
When I had my son I thought I was a shithouse mum because I didn't do things right. He was my first child, I was so hard on myself it wasn't funny. You know I blamed myself for losing him and not looking after him properly you know, not doing the right thing when I was pregnant (Kala).

Kala spoke about her (re)incarceration as a direct result of losing her son. She spoke about the intentionality of her reoffending and the desire to be in prison, where she felt safe, comfortable and in the company of 'friends'. Several other women also made the connection between the removal and loss of their children, and their intentional return or indifferent attitude to their return to prison and/or serious drug use. In the long term the women identified the problematic nature of their responses to the loss of their children [in terms of hindering their ability and opportunity to later (re)gain custody of their children]. However, in the immediate face of loss, they were unable to deal with the perceived crumbling of their worlds and sought solace in drug use and/or being in prison. Within these frameworks, it can be argued that the risks associated with drug use [in this instance lost custody and prison (re)entry], lose their personifications of 'risk' and 'danger', and instead take on a different role within these women's lives. The notion of intentionality (discussed in Chapter Six) within these women's experiences suggests at different times in their lives, or under different circumstances, individualised components of risk change. Whilst the application of risk to drug use appears universal amongst the women within this research, drug use becomes individualised and divergent within the personal experiences and struggles of each of these women.

The line between despair and determination after the loss (through official removal) of a child is a fragile yet critical boundary. Whilst some of the women spoke of their hopelessness and indifference to the course of their lives after the removal of their child(ren), others identified the most intense determination to resume their physical roles as mothers and regain custody of their children. These perceptions and responses to traumatic experiences are not polar opposites in the sense that some women only feel

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7 The return to prison was identified as both the product of intentionality, as well as the manifestation of drug use, offending or erratic responses to the removal of their children (see Chapter Six).
destruction and others determination. Rather, as the women within this research highlighted, both responses are often experienced in tandem (however, possibly in less overt ways), or over the course of their occupation as mothers. The women conveyed the criticality of their children within their lives and the power such love and attachment has with regards to their commitment to sobriety and recovery. They also recognised the ways in which such realisations sometimes came after years of separation from their children, years of indifference (as a result of the pain and torment of separation), and years of cumulative losses and destruction inherent to the continuation of their lives as addicts. A quote by Boudin (1998: 104), as a mother, a released prisoner, and recovering addict, captures the essence of these ideas:

Many years into my time in prison I wanted to attempt to answer the question that hovered over me. ‘How is it that I loved my son so much, yet I made choices that resulted in my arrest, and in my leaving him? What was going on in my life? Inside of me?’ Trying to face this question is one of the factors that took me on an internal journey.

Like Valora, many of the women within this research had children who were teenagers. As the women spoke about their lengthy histories of drug use and (re)incarceration, they spoke of the years they had lost with their children as a result of their (official) removal. Valora and Norina are currently pregnant, and Kala and Lucy have newborn babies, and in these contexts they expressed a specific determination to commit to their sobriety and work towards recovery in the effort to keep their young children. Amongst all the women, the struggles and challenges in the release setting of the four women above were particularly heightened as they bore the immediate pressure of the need to succeed, and the risk of failure. In contrast, the other women’s children were already removed so in this way the immediate risk of loss (of their children) was not as dominant in their day-to-day life. In other words, the consequences of ‘slipping up’ were not experienced as instantaneously critical or risky to their roles as mothers. The women of course understood the cumulation of their ‘slip ups’ and possible reincarceration had significant implications for their processes to regain custody.

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8 Returning to drugs in some capacity, predominantly infrequent and casual use.
The women all identified the ways pregnancy heightened their positions as actuaries, and forced them to re-evaluate their lives and life choices (particularly in the context of their drug use). In this way, it could be assumed that Valora, Norina, Kala and Lucy would be likely to succeed in their (current) attempts at sobriety. The women identified their children as catalysts for moving towards positive and significant life change(s) throughout their lives, and spoke about the ways their children had given them the determination to ‘make good’. Problematically, however, the motivational impetus children provide to parents to affect positive changes within their lives is sometimes only momentarily experienced. As the four women all identified, prior to their current pregnancy all their other children had been officially removed as a result of their drug use and incarceration. Why had all of them returned to drug use and/or incarceration? In these conditions, we can ask why pregnancy, young children, or motherhood more generally can be considered as (only) momentarily motivational? This research does not argue that when a woman returns to drug use the level of her love and dedication to her children reduces, but rather there appears something more critical and underlying within spaces of sobriety and recovery that pulls (or pushes) these women to return to drug use. Under certain conditions, it appears that the risks associated with drug use transcend their boundaries of ‘risk’.

These narratives speak to the interwoven nature of drug use with the challenged positioning and role of mothers and with incarceration. In this regard, this research has provided significant insight into the areas of need for women in the post-custodial setting. Specifically, the women implied their need for assistance with: entering into and maintaining spaces of sobriety; parenting; and counselling and support for women who become separated from their children. All the women within this research had lost custody of one or more of their children. Problematically, the women powerfully linked the loss and separation from their children with two significant outcomes: firstly, the

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9 Release and drug use issues specific to women require significant attention and their brief consideration here does not downplay the criticality of the need to consider these concerns more fully. A detailed exploration of drug use and its detriment to prison release and the family unit are not considered here, as the interest rather is on addiction experiences more generally. It is imperative, however, to recognise the complex and multifaceted experiences unique to different types of released prisoners. The consideration of women’s experiences in isolation here merely aims to flag some of the additional challenges which released women, as mothers, face.
return to drugs; and secondly, the return to prison. The return to prison was identified as both indirect, as a result of drug use and subsequent offending, and direct, through their intentional return to a ‘safe’ and familiar environment. If these areas of need can be targeted, supported and adequately resourced, we may well see less women returning to prison after their children have been removed, or their family unit broken up. In line with current research that argues for placing women’s authentic needs at the helm of prison treatment and programs (Pollack, 2004; Holtfreter & Morash, 2003; Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2001), this research has the potential to inform areas of policy and treatment support in the post-custodial setting. In particular, attending to the narratives of women negotiating sobriety, living in the community, and motherhood allows us to identify authentic areas of need. The most pressing areas of need amongst these women are: assistance when family units break down or when the roles of mothers become contested; support to remain sober during periods of interpersonal and/or social turmoil; and ongoing support to refrain from situations or circumstances that precipitate offending and prison re-entry.

The analysis within this chapter thus far has engaged with the risks the women within this research have identified in their release setting – more specifically, the ways the return to drug use was illuminated as the most immediate and consequential risk within their experiences of release. It has highlighted the dangers and risks the women associate and tie to their (return to) drug use, specifically (re)incarceration, death, broken familial and social connection, and the loss of their children (for mothers). As Chapter Six examined areas of prison re-entry, death and the impact on relationships, this chapter has focused on the manifestation of drug use as a risk to the parental rights of women and their individual understandings and experiences of motherhood. In this way, the women have been elevated as critical and capable actuaries within their experiences of drug use and release. However, within the example of women’s relationship to motherhood and drug use, they appear less able and capable to (responsibly) manage and negotiate themselves in the context of their identified risks. From this platform, the remainder of this chapter concerns itself with the difficulties and challenges of sobriety and recovery of the men.
and women in this research in an attempt to determine how and why men and women return to drug use, despite readily identifying the risks inherent to such choices.

**Sobriety and recovery**

*You can see what needs to change but still not affect change*

*You can understand why, but still not do*

*You can reason, but still not embrace*

Examining the men’s and women’s experiences with drug treatment and rehabilitation and their narrations of the difficulties within spaces and performances of sobriety forges an appreciation for the ways in which the men and women are unable or challenged to positively negotiate themselves within their ascriptions and understandings of risk. Despite the ability to identify risks subsequent to their drug use, so often the men and women return(ed) to drug use in the release setting. As identified in Chapter Six, return to drug use after incarceration can be understood as the culmination of broken relationships and social attachments, poor self-worth and value, and the inability to manage and cope with life pressures (in other ways). Whilst the men and women are able to readily identify the particularly negative consequences of their drug use, why is it so difficult to stop using? What challenges the men’s and women’s abilities to commit to their sobriety and recovery?

**Perceptions of treatment, rehabilitation and therapy**

A report by the Melbourne Criminology Research and Evaluation Unit (2003: 72) in Australia indicates that the process of addiction recovery is particularly complex where ‘some participants [go] through several episodes of treatment, relapse, and further treatment’. Moreover, as Pereira (2002: 156) furthers, ‘because people use drugs for a variety of reasons, giving them up is a different experience for everyone’. The men and women interviewed within this research certainly support these assertions. In addition, the men’s and women’s support workers further validated the notion of delayed efficacy.
and realisations of treatment objectives and effects experienced by the men and women.\textsuperscript{10} Most of the men and women identified some form of previous engagement and (active or passive)\textsuperscript{11} participation in various interventions, treatment programs, methadone maintenance and detoxification plans, rehabilitation services or therapeutic communities (such as AA and NA). They spoke of participation in these same services by family members, friends and intimate partners, and recounted the principles, mottos and steps through which non-use may be actively embraced. Recounting what they had learnt from treatment programs and the ways in which they could maintain their sobriety, they furthered to identify the benefits of going to rehabilitation facilities, particularly those that were removed from their home (and using) environments. They correlated significant help, boosted confidence and establishing momentum in their recovery for several days, weeks or even months (Cloud & Granfield, 2004). However, the men and women narrated that return to drug use typically followed their return to old (using) neighbourhoods, old circles of friends or when they faced (broader) life challenges. Return to drug use in this way support’s research by Travis, Solomon and Waul (2001) on the segregation of drug users within the prison setting, indicating that when participants returned to their old stressors, environments and lives, in the absence of (follow-through) treatment, they returned to drug use. An examination and evaluation of the various treatment models the men and women interviewed participated in, whilst significant to understanding the nature and efficiency of such programs, is not considered within this research. Rather, the analysis below concerns itself with some of the ways the

\textsuperscript{10} In discussion with support workers, they identified multiple periods of consultation and treatment with released men and women that were broken by the return to drugs and/or incarceration. I questioned the disheartening and frustrating nature of seeing so many return to drugs and particularly prison. They noted that it ‘was part of the job’ (Nerida), ‘some you get through to and others you don’t’ (Irene). More significantly, they contextualised the work they had done with addicted men and women as stepping stones within a process (of recovery). They understood that, for example, three months of intensive therapy, whilst perhaps immediately informing sobriety and the beginning of recovery, is often not enough to affect permanent change, particularly if the men and women are not ready to embrace their recovery. Further obstructions result from the men’s and women’s return to old neighbourhoods and associations. The workers conveyed comfort and accomplishment within their work as they identified that whilst the men and women may not immediately maintain their sobriety, and return to drug use and prison, when they are ready to change their lives, they draw on all their encounters and experiences in and with treatment services. In this way, the support workers understood their work as critical, yet not immediate, to the men’s and women’s recovery and long-term life change.

\textsuperscript{11} See Chapter Six for definitions of passivity and activity within the context of addiction.
men’s and women’s perceptions and experiences of treatment, sobriety and recovery have inhibited their opportunities and avenues for long-term success.

Past treatment involvement amongst the men and women had been both voluntary and mandated in nature. There was a particular resistance amongst the men and women to actively engage in those processes and programs in which participation was forced and conditional. Specifically, those tenured to programs through the prison system, probation and parole, department of community services, or family persuasion conveyed an explicit opposition to their conditional involvement. Moreover, the efficacy of the treatment within these circumstances was compromised with regards to affecting long-term change, despite the fact that research indicates that increased supervision and regulation specific to drug use behaviours increases participation in treatment programs (Hough et al., 2003; Petersilia & Turner, 2001; Weatherburn & Lind, 2001). In particular, the increased frequency and length of participation in singular or multiple drug treatments elevate opportunities and likelihood of ‘success’ (see for example Taxman, 1998). Denborough’s (1996: 163) assertion that the viability of the rehabilitation paradigms are challenged ‘by the reality that most prisoners will be returned to the same conditions that generated the crimes [and drug use] in the first place’ is supported by more recent criminological enquiry (see for example Hammett, Roberts & Kennedy, 2001). The men’s and women’s narratives of return to drug use, despite addiction treatment, supports the research of MacKenzie and Brame (2001) who indicate that coerced interventions will not be effective unless participants are individually motivated. Hammett, Roberts and Kennedy (2001: 399) suggest that whilst there is limited published literature on ‘post-release adherence to treatment’, adherence to treatment is more challenging in the release setting, particularly amongst those not tied to correctional supervision and regulation.

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12 Conditional to the extent that participation in programs in prison, for example, is understood to positively influence parole board’s decisions. In this way, their participation was conditional to their desire to be released from prison, rather than the specific concern of drug use desistance.
13 Research has also identified that increased surveillance and regulation specific to drug use behaviour elevates the visibility, detection (and subsequent punishment) of addicted individuals (see for example Frantzen, 2003; Indermaur & Roberts, 2003).
14 Such findings should be contextualised within the identified dearth of follow-through and continuous care from the prison to the community for the men and women within this study, external to those officially regulated and mandated through probation and parole and the like (see for example Ross & Ryan, 2003).
through parole, probation and the like. Harrison (2001: 466, 480) continues this idea, suggesting that ‘criminal justice clients benefit more from longer stays in treatment than self-referrals’, and that coercive and compulsory treatment may be the ‘stick’ that influences longer periods of treatment participation. Within Harrison’s (2001) work, attention is given to the moral and ethical legitimation of coercively mandating participation in treatment and rehabilitation programs, specifically the extent to which involuntary participation enables or forces men and women to actively participate, independent of their individual desires and commitment to desistance.\(^\text{15}\) This current analysis of drug use amongst released men and women argues that whilst external (and differentially mandated and regulated) influence can affect periods of non-use,\(^\text{16}\) commitment to sobriety and long-term change is largely insensitive to coercive and punitive responses.

Ballard’s narratives are most prominent amongst the men and women in this research as he speaks to the problematic nature of coerced treatment, particularly in the absence of individual commitment and engagement. He articulates what he believed to be the dominant experiences and feelings surrounding therapy within the prison setting as he recounts a program he participated in whilst serving his last sentence:

I was interviewed by a staff member, ‘what do you expect to get out of this course?’ and I said well ‘coffee and biscuits in the afternoon and a certificate and me parole’ ... and she said well at least you’re honest, everyone else comes in and bullshits and paints a big rosey picture but in reality that’s not how it is (Ballard).

\(^{15}\) Regarding coerced and involuntary participation in treatment programs, the men’s and women’s narratives suggest that whilst not always immediately effective in terms of maintaining sobriety (and sometimes counterproductive in the sense of deliberate defiance and resistance to treatment – see for example Chapter Five), at some point, as the men and women reached a ‘breaking’ or ‘turning’ point, such spaces and capabilities are fabrics threaded by all their support, treatment and rehabilitation encounters and experiences.

\(^{16}\) For example, Harrison (2001: 481) sites that nearly every published drug court evaluation shows graduates are less likely to be arrested for new crimes. Drawing on the experiences of the men and women participating in drug court within this research their narratives attest to the advantageous and supportive nature of their involvement. At the same time, for the duration of participation, participants are also perceived to be additionally influenced by improvements to health, relationships, self-esteem, issues of child custody and recovery capital that further inform the recorded desistance from future offending (for additional discussion see Chapter Six).
Everyone just sits there and mucks around and be’s stupid you know. Everybody was the class clown when they were at school and there you got a room full of class clowns you know. I mean nothing’s gained out of it (Ballard).

The ideas elevated within Ballard’s narratives were differentially alluded to within the men’s and women’s broader narratives of treatment. Specifically, those who conveyed similar understandings and experiences of treatment and rehabilitation programs to Ballard, both in and out of prison, can be divided into two key ways. Firstly, the men were more inclined to downplay the relevance and benefits of treatment, whereas women generally conveyed a greater appreciation for the opportunities and benefits inherent to various treatment models. Whilst such gender differentiation was evident within the interviews, it is outside the scope of this research to suggest distinct gendered tendencies. Further research in this area, specifically gendered analysis, appears crucial to deeper understandings of drug use amongst released men and women. The current research discusses the difference between men’s and women’s drug use not through gender divides, but rather differential spaces and individual performances of addiction recovery. In other words, the women in this research were more generally occupying spaces of committed and engaged performances of addiction sobriety and recovery than the men.

As introduced previously within this chapter, and considered in more detail later in this chapter, all the women in this study, as mothers, were driven by the underlying and inherent risk of losing their children and/or being unable to regain custody if they did not commit to their recovery. In addition, it is important to recognise that most of the women within this research were placed in supported housing through drug court, and therefore their experiences of control and regulation specific to their sobriety were more intense than that of most of the men. It is important to note that whilst the experiences and understandings of the men and women within this research can be understood to be representative of a considerable portion of the Australian release population, they are by no means entirely encompassing of all released men and women. In this regard, the gendered difference within this analysis is not assumed to penetrate broader prison and released populations. This research does argue, however, that addicted men and women within this sample who occupy spaces of active engagement to their sobriety and
recovery are more inclined to convey an appreciation and awareness of the potentialities of addiction treatment and recovery programs. More particularly, their narratives were resonant of the amplification of the risks inherent to sustained drug use. They demonstrated they were more acutely aware of the ramifications and consequences of continued drug use, in contrast to those less committed or more indifferent to the prolongation of their substance use. Such perceptions further support the findings of Taxman (1998) and Harrison (2001) above.

Secondly, the men and women who perceived and articulated that they ‘had nothing’ (outside of their prison and drug circle) were similarly more inclined to disregard the benefits and advantages of addiction treatment programs. Specifically, those who conveyed a relative indifference to treatment participation and efficacy typically: narrated severely damaged and irreparable familial relationships; for those with children, had had no contact with their children, didn’t know their children, or their children wanted nothing to do with them; had few, if any, networks of support or associations outside of relationships forged by shared drug use and incarceration; perceived themselves to be ‘too old’ or that it was ‘too late’ for them to ‘come good’ or to be bothered trying. In this way they rationalised that using drugs enabled them (largely) to function at what they perceived to be a basic level of existence. These ideas have also been tied to prison (re)entry more generally (see for example Tudball, 2000 & Chapter Seven). In addition, Devlin’s (2002: 54) work offers another challenge, to women’s opportunities in particular, to engage with and embrace in-prison treatment and programs. She writes of a female education coordinator within the prison who argued for the impossibility ‘for women to be able to take advantage of any form of positive prison regime – work, education or training – when they are being torn apart by the agony of speculation about their children’s wellbeing’.

Beliefs about social exclusion, fractured attachment, minimal social and emotional capital and investment within the social fabric meant that calculations of risk and consequences of drug use were impaired and crippled. More directly, individuals with strong familial units or social connections (through employment, friendships or participation in various
social networks) had more to lose and risk in the face of problematic drug use. Social connections not only gave them feelings of meaning, purpose, security and belonging, but also forged points of accountability, responsibility and morality. For the men and women who narrated their disconnection with the broader community, their calculations of risk inherent to drug use were contingent upon the probability of (re)incarceration, and the day-to-day dangers of seeking, funding and using drugs, rather than the potential loss, disappointment or betrayal of the people around them – evident amongst those with stronger social ties. Such narratives elevate the vitality of social networks and resources of support within the release environment, particularly for those men and women struggling with substance addictions. These ideas further support research outlining the risk of social exclusion and a lack or fractured connection with the social body for released prisoners (see for example Travis 2002).

**The break in my stride**

Dealing with addiction is not simply a matter of finding a treatment program or residential rehabilitation; ‘for many, engagement in treatment is something that only happens when they [have] dealt with the basic issues of life support’ (Melbourne Criminology Research and Evaluation Unit, 2003: 74). O’Connor’s (2002: 23) linguistic work and research with prisoners speaks to the processes and experiences of sobriety and addiction recovery amongst the men and women interviewed within this research. She contends that ‘the self becomes a negotiated (and contested) positioning, a dynamic process. To carry out the work of rehabilitation requires change in the particular life [and] choices’ of the individual. As the men and women spoke of their life experiences they wove drug use and incarceration into their stories, almost matter-of-factly. For many, addiction, offending and incarceration had become the totality of their existence and, in this way, the familiarity and predictability of their lifestyles produced some level of comfort and belonging. From these understandings, we can begin to conceive of addiction sobriety and recovery as more than the mere abstinence from drug use. From the standpoint of the men and women, their individual recoveries meant engaging in a

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17 Previously identified as a welcomed outcome for many of the men and women at different times in their lives (see Chapter Six).
18 See Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion of these ideas.
process and performance that extracted them from the 'secure' and known life they had created. In this way, the men and women engaging or engaged in the process of recovery negotiate the loss of everything (with regards to the lives culminated through drug use), over the experienced difficulties in the administration of recovery, in order to begin or be able to construct for themselves a new (drug-free or minimised drug use) existence. Bambi most directly speaks to this idea:

It is difficult and I honestly don't know if I'm going to cope. I don't know if I'm going to succeed you know ... who knows I could just end up being that stressed that I end up using. But I get to a point where it's actually, it gets back to the drug addiction, I have one and then I might not be able to stop, but that one is like going to be my saviour when I feel like it's either necking yourself or having a shot, that's how it gets (Bambi).

The challenges of release and negotiating sobriety have located Bambi in a position where she struggles to exist within and manage the two circumstances. She draws on her heroin use as a means to relieve the torment of both her prison release and, more particularly, her perception that outside of prison she is again homeless, without structures of support and significantly crippled in her ability to exist and function within the community. Bambi narrates the ways in which her heroin use momentarily alleviates her thoughts of suicide and enables her to continue her path. In this way, the risks inherent to her drug use diminish as her drug use becomes (perceivably) her source of life. As considered below, these ideas demonstrate the ways commitment to sobriety and recovery is frequently marred with casual or momentary drug use in the face of what appear as insurmountable daily challenges. These ideas speak critically to the ways in which social agents and institutions regulate and (re)act to drug use amongst released men and women. Surveillance and governance in the release setting were considered more generally in Chapter Five; however, issues of surveillance and regulation specific to drug use were minimally touched on. In order to more fully understand these processes and reactions of men and women to addiction treatment and (official) governance of drug use, future research and attention to this area is crucial – specifically, the imperativeness of contextualising the circumstances and rationalisations surrounding continued drug use by released prisoners. Rose (2000: 322) argues that 'schemes of risk reduction, situational
crime control and attempts to identify and modify criminogenic situations, portray the criminal as a rational agent who chooses crime in the light of a calculus of potential benefits and costs. The current research argues not for the diminished culpability or accountability of the released men and women within this analysis with regards to their decisions to use illicit substances (and later offending). Rather, it elevates some of the underlying and situational impediments to moral, ethical, legal and risk calculations within their individual decision making. More directly, the criminalisation of a large number of the men and women within this study, specific to their addiction and subsequent lifestyles, neglects to engage with the crippling nature of addiction at social, emotional and physical levels. As Chapter Six highlighted, drug addiction is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, and, in this regard, the ways addicted men and women rationalise their drug use can be understood as not always contingent upon broader social mores and values. There is a critical need to begin to unravel, if not simply acknowledge, the complexities of addiction and the ways broader day-to-day judgement, particularly in the context of calculated risk, is often opaqued as a result of addiction. Moreover, contemporary (and largely punitive) social responses need to recognise the propensity towards continued drug use as a critical tool for (emotional) survival for many addicted men and women, rather than the residual quest to ‘get high’ or experience euphoria.

Hewitt (2004) argues there has been a great deal written about the onset of drug use, experiences of addiction and various treatment and therapeutic models for recovery. However, he highlights that ‘there is less written about recovery beyond the issue of maintaining sobriety’ (Hewitt, 2004: 222). In response, this current research has identified some key barriers and obstacles to maintaining periods of sobriety. Moreover, it has engaged with some of the challenges men and women face in performances as capable and efficient actuaries, specific to drug use behaviour. Chapter Six explored the ways in which social connections, emotional ties, and criminality are experienced and understood to problematise both the process of, and commitment to, recovery by released men and women. The analysis below draws on narratives and understandings of the passages from addiction to sobriety and recovery to further develop our conceptualisation
of the issues underpinning spaces and performances of sobriety, and the ways the risks inherent to drug use are managed and potentially insured by the men and women.

Within the men’s and women’s narratives of sobriety and, more particularly recovery, several key ideas surfaced as critical informants to active engagement and commitment to addiction recovery, the first two of which will be considered below. Firstly, time and age were identified as distilleries to drug use (and offending) behaviour; secondly, significant personal and broader social losses propelled many to (re)evaluate their lives and future choices.¹⁹ Thirdly, some men and women spoke of hitting ‘rock bottom’ as a key moment and catalyst for importing change. As one man comments:

I tell you that down the bottom there’s nothing there. When you get to the bottom you find there’s nothing there. I’ve been to the bottom a number of times, at the very end … and there is nothing there, you got to start crawling back up (Nash).

Within these contexts, the men and women powerfully conveyed the need to reach these points in their own time and their own way. Their narratives suggest the significance of the immediacy of risk consequences to (efficient) calculations of risk. In other words, along the journey of drug use and addiction, the incremental losses and risks tied to drug use – fractured familial relationships, imprisonment, deteriorated health etc. – do not always present themselves as immediate and specific risks. As highlighted in Chapter Six, criminality and incarceration, for some, are seen as symptomatic of drug addiction, rather than imminent risks. As another example, the risk of damaging familial and parent-child relationships through drug use was opaqued as a result of the drug use itself, or the incremental departure and fracturing of these relationships.

¹⁹ These ideas have been considered within the analysis of Chapter Six: specifically, the damage to familial relationships, broader social connections, and feelings of self-worth and value. In addition, the men’s and women’s narratives highlighted the influence of the loss of individual capital and assets, loss of custody of dependent children, significant lost and wasted time associated with years of being clouded by drug use and being contained within prison walls. In this way, their experiences support the findings of broader addiction research identifying that ‘frustrated aspirations, traumatic life experiences, feelings of alienation, and a general existential angst frequently act as catalysts to powerful conversion’ to sobriety and recovery for addicted men and women (Cloud & Granfield, 2004: 188).
The older men and women spoke about reaching an age and time in their lives where they had had enough of the burden of addiction and the oscillation of incarceration and release. Such points were informed by significant histories of personal loss, torment, pain and suffering (Hänninen & Koski-Jännies, 2004), yet were articulated by the men and women as the product of maturation. As some men commented:

This is the first time I've ever sat, I was in jail this time and I sat down and said 'ah fuck this, I've had enough'. I think I've just come to that age where I've grown out of it Tiffany you know. I just, it's just the first time I've ever really sat down and thought I'm not going back you know. Seventeen years, eighteen years of it, I just felt that was it, that was enough for me (Damien).

*I'm getting old.* Health reasons and uh my age, um I'm sick of the lifestyle. I don't feel attracted to it anymore. Basically I want a bit of a life. The five months [sober] have been enough to clear me head to actually know what I want (Percy).

Their narratives of maturation and growing out of drug use (and offending) reflect the findings of research in the context of both addiction and offending careers (see for example Hewitt, 2004; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Blumstein et al., 1986), arguing age to be a powerful distiller to both deviant and drug use behaviour. Pereira (2002: 156) continues the ideas of maturation (within experience) as informing the finality of drug use: 'often users just grow out of drugs, others need to keep chipping away until they might be ready to give up one day'. The passage of time, identified as maturation or just things running their course, was one of the most influential informants to the men's and women's exiting of their addictions. It was particularly common for the men who had served significant portions of their adult lives in prison to convey an aging to their addiction, and thus its eventual finality. In this way, the risks of drug use may be more apparent as the men and women age and mature, or the lifestyle becomes no longer attractive. Some other men and women continue these ideas:

Some things have to run their course, some people you just can't help, they'll keep going and going and have to find out for themselves (Nash).
You figure it out yourself. At the end ... you can be told something a million times ... it sorta does half way sink in but then something just snaps inside of you and you go 'shit that's too much' you know (Marissa).

I think everyone has a point in their lives that they know that what they're doing is not right and they need help. I think most people come to that (Varen).

As Nash and Marissa spoke about their current relationships with their sobriety, they introduced the idea that as they age and endure their drug use, the end of addiction is imminent. Both Nash and Marissa had significant histories of (re)incarceration and lengthy drug addiction, as well as participating in various (voluntary and involuntary) treatment programs. They both perceived incarceration as a non-deterrent to their continued drug use, and understood the benefit of their treatment participation as momentary. Varen is significantly younger than Nash and Marissa and, in this way, his assertion challenges the dominance of maturation as a critical juncture in drug use behaviour. On the other hand, he has had a lengthy heroin addiction and multiple (re)incarcerations, so whilst his age differentiates him from Nash and Marissa, his narrative is suggestive that a critical turning point within the life of an addict can be understood as the product of maturation within addiction, as much as an artefact of chronological ageing.

Whilst the men and women spoke about their ages and the time in their lives that they needed and wanted to make significant changes, such decisions are contextualised within the chronological experiences and losses subsequent to years of addiction (and incarceration). Specfically, informing a maturation or turning point in later adult life are such things as: significant loss of personal, social and economic capital; deterioration of familial and broader social networks; self beliefs and values; and feelings of isolation and alienation from social markers of success (such as the accumulation of a home, family, career and the like). In this way, whilst the passage of time appears to envelop a key window of clarification and self-reflection, it can be understood as the culmination of

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20 See for example Chapter Six.
21 Cloud and Granfield’s (2004: 187-8) research similarly identified financial, physical, emotional and social degradations as promoting the addict’s ‘reappraisal of their commitment to substance use’.
broader life experiences up to an individual 'breaking point'. In this way, commitment to recovery can be understood as the product of personal loss, torment and suffering, as well as the realisation that life, at the exclusion of drug use, is more important and significant than the lifestyle that accompanies addiction.

These findings support other research within the area of addiction and offending, specifically with regards to the relationship between drug use and life within the community. The work of Griffin and Armstrong (2003), and Laub and Sampson (1993), found that involvement in conventional activities (such as employment, significant and meaningful relationships, good marriages and the like) resulted in a decreased likelihood of engaging in certain types of crime. The significance of employment and sharing strong relationships for desistance from both offending and drug use problematises the release experiences of many of the men and women within this research. In particular, the structural and systematic obstacles to employment (identified in Chapter Two), together with the men's and women's perceptions and experiences of difficulties with employment (identified in Chapter Five), and damaged and/or minimal opportunities for meaningful relationships (outside of those bonded by drug use and offending) as raised in Chapter Six, challenge the men's and women's ability to engage with and utilise 'conventional (social) activities' as an interregnum to their drug use. Pereira (2002: 156) further speaks to these ideas, stating that 'while education, work and training can help users to redirect their lives and empower them in ways that won't put them in prison, this alone doesn't ensure the end of drug use'.

Cloud and Granfield's (2004) research contends that recovery does not happen on the back of individual will and determination alone. 'Rather, much of the impetus and motivation to change is associated with conditioning factors in the social environment that support desired change' (Cloud & Granfield, 2004: 194). Perceptions of drug court and supported accommodation as positive influences in the men's and women's lives, in the context of their drug use as discussed in Chapter Five, further support Cloud and Granfield's (2004) assertions. More generally, Bambi talks about the ways her incarceration and experiences within the penal system have become a powerful factor in
her decision to enter into and attempt commitment to her recovery. When asked what is keeping her going at the moment, in particular her dedication to changing her drug use, she asserted:

Knowing that that’s never going to change where I’ve been. I can always go back and it’s just so goddamn painful ... and the fact that I don’t want to go to jail again and I know that I’ll get back there really quick. Now that I’m out there in the open and that I’ve been to jail ... the judge’ll love to send me back ... and I just, I can’t go back on the street, I can’t do that anymore. I emotionally can’t and mentally can’t handle it, I’ve been there (Bambi).

Sharp ‘turning points’ were identified by the men and women who articulated that they had committed to their recovery. Cloud and Granfield (2004: 188) talk about such points as those ‘that sharply and dramatically disrupted their lives to the extent that they recognised that they were no longer themselves’. Additional studies in this area indicate that ‘turning points’ are likely to happen over time (see for example Clausen, 1990; McAdam, 1989, both in Cloud & Granfield, 2004). Like Nash and others suggested above, addiction and incarceration were considered for many as a part of their life that had to run its course. In this way, some indicated a perceived inability to individually inform and determine the course of their lives. Perceptions of powerlessness to change the direction of their lives penetrated their life experiences outside of those specific to addiction and incarceration. For example, several mothers perceived, despite their determination and efforts to ‘come good’ and turn their lives around, that social agents such as Department of Community Services would always govern their lives and their relationship with motherhood.

The most sonorous turning point or moment of change occurred for the women who sought to procure their roles as primary nurturers and caregivers to their children (Devlin, 2002). As identified above, the women’s return to drug use came at the expense of their children’s welfare and custodial arrangements. For many, pregnancy and newborn children provided (momentary) motivation to desist from drug use; however, in the face

22 For further discussion on life changes, turning points and life course desistance see for example Griffin and Armstrong (2003).
of release, recovery or other life challenges, they returned to drug use. Recognising the ways men and women use and understand their drug use\textsuperscript{23} enables an appreciation for the ways in which long-term commitment to sobriety and recovery may be unrealistic for some released prisoners. More importantly, it demonstrates the ways in which men and women may be competent actuaries within their drug use behaviour, yet, for a variety of reasons, are ineffective in their ability or capacity to manage and negotiate frameworks of drug use risk. These ideas are supported by discussions with the drug and support workers of the men and women within this research. Specifically, the workers identified that periods of treatment (and sobriety) often fail to effect long-term positive changes. Importantly, however, they believed that at some point, when the men and women are ready, they will draw from their experiences and learning within their treatment and therapeutic encounters. Such beliefs further support the idea of addiction and chronological maturation as a critical point of exiting drug use. Within these frames, we can understand the point at which a woman’s children become more than momentary motivation for exiting addiction.

Five of the women within this research spoke specifically about their children as the key factor informing their current (and future) space of recovery. These women differed from the others in the sense that they conveyed and engaged with their children as the most significant and critical aspects of their lives. Whilst all the women spoke of the unconditional love and dedication they had for their children, these five women had reached a point at which they: understood the nature of their relationship with illicit drugs; were beginning to address the underlying issues informing their past drug use, rather than the superficial aspects of day-to-day sobriety; conveyed a deeper appreciation and realisation for the ways in which their drug use, offending and incarceration had impacted the lives of their children; and, more particularly, understood that the importance of their children had transcended the importance of their drug use. Whilst they were unable to specifically identify what made this time (attempted recovery, and release) different from the others, they knew that they had to place the welfare and livelihood of their children above their drug use. At this point in their lives and

\textsuperscript{23} Considered in Chapter Six.
occupation as mothers, they regarded the risks of (continued) drug use to be too high. In doing so, they began to transcend the self-indulgent and isolative world of addiction and, in turn, the significance of addiction within their lives gave way to the brilliance and criticality of their children. These women spoke about their understandings of this space in the following ways:

At the moment it's not only me that I'm affecting. It's not about me anymore, it's about my unborn child, it's about my other six little ones, that depending on me you know, so it's not just about me and I can't be selfish in that way and that's why I try and keep communication with my kids. Circumstances can't permit me to have them and they realise that because I don't want them scared like I have been. They don't care how bad a parent you are, a kid loves you unconditionally ... it just makes your whole life worth living (Valora).

[Didn't use this time after being released] because my children were gone and that's what made me you know that's what made them get taken away was the drugs and I just couldn't do it to them, or myself anymore. Like I just don't want to be in [prison] anymore, it's horrible (Kyria).

I don't think I would survive [without my daughter], I really don't. I think I would end up just one big overdose. I have been pushed too far to my limit that I won't do it anymore (Kala).

I don't want to be that person no more, I do not want to be that person. And I don't want to scar my kids you know emotionally. Like you can get rid of your bruises and that but mentally you can't and that's the way I'm thinking. I don't want to mentally scar my kids. Thinking mum or dad doesn't want us, you know they think drugs are more important than us and I don't want that to happen (Valora).

These women's experiences are shared by Pereira (2002: 156): 'my main motivation to live a straight life was my need to repay my son for what he'd suffered on account of my incarceration'.

As they reflected on their experiences of treatment, networks of support and past sobriety, the men and women conveyed the ways they had to individually realise and
reach their own 'turning points'. Narratives such as those below were prominent in this regard:

Personally I couldn’t have learnt from someone else telling me not to do this and not to do that, which I wasn’t able to be told when I was younger. I would have saved a lot of … yeah … unhappy feelings (Daphne).

What I’ve learnt is people can’t make you do it, it’s your own choice in the long run, but um … there’s more to life in the long run than that (Kyria).

Unless you want to change, no no no, unless you’ve got the motivation to do it, it doesn’t matter who tells you what … it ain’t gonna happen (Plato).

I wouldn’t have listened to them. Many people have told me … you can only do that when you’re ready to do it … you have to have the willpower to want to do that, to change your life (Nash).

I said to the psychologist, how many psychologists does it take to change a light globe? One, but the light globe’s gotta want to change. They might provide the tools but you’re the one that’s gotta use it I mean they might be able to send you in the right direction but they can’t change you, you’ve gotta want to change yourself. No one is going to be able to say the magic spell or anything, I mean you gotta do it yourself (Ballard).

Daphne articulates the undertow of regret inherent to years of addiction and failed periods of sobriety. In line with the perceptions of so many of the men and women within this research, she highlights that despite the pain and torment consequential to addiction, the halting point within problematic drug use is powerfully the product of individual realisation. Within their past (and failed) endeavours to embrace recovery, the men and women correlated the risk of damaging relationships with families and partners as a momentary motivation, in the absence of their identification of risks specific to their individual lives. Whilst families\textsuperscript{24} provide incentives for drug-free lives, real long-term

\textsuperscript{24} Excluding children - the powerful influence children create for parents, particularly mothers, to motivate permanent and long-term recovery differs considerably from the influence of families more generally (Cloud and Granfield, 2004).
change requires and demands a greater internal responsibilisation. Percy further develops this idea:

It’s an individual decision, that’s it … for me anyway. I’ve had a couple of times actually doing the right thing and not using drugs but every time I’ve done it for somebody else, for me kids, me family or whatever … it’s not actually something I wanted to do, it was for someone else (Percy).

It basically comes down to the individual. If you want something bad enough you’ll get it, so if you want to stop using drugs, it might sound righteous but if you really want to stop using drugs you will (Percy).

The men’s and women’s narratives expressed the criticality of the individual want and desire to stop using drugs to impacting and informing real and significant long-term changes to drug use behaviour. In other words, the men and women demonstrated that the calculation and management of drug use risk was contingent upon their desire to become sober and/or enter recovery.

Despite perceptions about reaching a certain point in their lives or the culmination of their experiences to date, the men and women were not ignorant of the perennial navigation required to maintain their sobriety and recovery. Nash’s narrative most powerfully conveys the men’s and women’s appreciation in this regard:

It’s just in my own head, I have to just make a conscious decision I’m not going to do it anymore … and for the rest of me life. Any heroin addict’s that got any brains about them, that’s reformed or whatever will tell you the same … I can’t sit here and tell say to you I’ll never use heroin again and I can’t do that because I don’t know, I don’t know … I like to think I won’t (struggles to deliver the last few words) but it doesn’t mean that I won’t (Nash).

The men’s and women’s beliefs about their offending and drug use paralleled the findings of the HM Inspectorate of Prisons’ (2001: 66) research with released prisoners, which suggests that ‘as with offending, not all drug users were ready to modify their drug usage … some did not want to stop and others felt they were unable or unwilling to stop even when aware of the dangers’. Released prisoner narratives within Eaton’s (1993)
work further inform and support the experiences and beliefs of the men and women within this current research, as Alice comments, ‘they can send me to prison as many times as they like, it’s only me who can decide if I want to give up crime’. Indifferent or passive commitment to addiction recovery (and desistance from offending) have significant implications for the release environment, critically as the men and women attribute their offending and (re)incarceration to their addiction. Not only are these men and women competent actuaries within their drug use and addiction, they are also capable managers, negotiators and insurers of risk, when they decide to be.

Conclusion

When we talk about risk within criminological and penological frames we engage with the notions of public risk and prisoner risk in the context of reoffending and (re)incarceration and the threat such constructs create and pose for the security and safety of the broader social body. This analysis, in contrast, has considered notions of individualised risk, as identified by the men and women. This personal risk is the hinge on which the other risk – of unsuccessful release – pivots. That is why it has been important to explore these individual elements. Whilst the men and women perceive and understand themselves within the same elements of risk paradigms such as reoffending, reincarceration, return to drugs and the like, their narrations elevate critical undercurrents of deeper and more significant risk. By virtue of their return to drug use (during release periods) alone, the men and women are reoffending. The ways they understand and perceive their drug use, however, demonstrate that issues of reoffending are not merely issues of immorality, deviancy or specific intent. Current risk dialogue minimally engages with the individualised threads at the underbelly of our concerns for public safety and security. Moreover, it neglects to consider the notion of intentionality with regards to prison re-entry, and the reasons men and women return to drug use and/or offending – the latter primarily a by-product of the former. A greater appreciation for the ways drug use and risk play out in the individual lives of released men and women will better position criminology and penology more broadly to respond, rather than react, to released prisoners, particularly those struggling with addiction. Moreover, attention to and acknowledgement of the complexities of prison release enable an appreciation for the
ways in which released men and women are able and capable actuaries within their release settings, but often struggle with the role of responsible managers, containers and negotiators of their identified risk(s).
Restricted Flight #2, 2004
assemblage

(Restricted flight) Feathers symbolise freedom and wire doesn't - it symbolises being restricted and is harsh. Physically, mentally and emotionally confining. One can be bound in chains, but your mind has the ability to set you free. It's as simple or as complicated as that.

(Somebody's Daughter Theatre, 2005)
Chapter Nine

Conclusion

An orchestration of irony: the tenor of prison release

The first principle in the management of the guilty seems to me to be to treat them as men and women; which they were before they were guilty, and will be when they are no longer so; and which they are in the midst of it all. Their humanity is the principle thing about them; their guilt is a temporary state. When the keeper watches a hundred men herded together in virtue of the one common characteristic of their being criminals, the guilt becomes the prominent circumstance and there is an end of the brotherly faith in each, to which each must mainly owe his cure.

Harriet Martineau (1802-76)

* * *

Martineau’s (1838) quotation reminds us of the humanity inherent to each member of the social body, but, more particularly, that humanity remains constant and enduring through states of criminality, deviance and social transgression – a notion so often neglected in the penological creed. As prisoners leave the prison gates and (re)enter the social setting, they are freed from the architectural confines of the prison. As they begin to move and ‘fit’ within the social fabric, however, they remain forever bonded and shackled to the prison and the horror it represents. The irony of prison release is that there is no absolute release from prison. Like a scold on a hot plate, whilst the burning may be an immediate and relatively short-lived experience, the scar exists as an enduring reminder of what has passed.

The intention of this research was to explore the Australian release setting and what transpires as men and women leave the prison walls and (re)enter the ‘community’.

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2 This research is hesitant to engage with the social body, in its entirety, as a ‘community’. The men and women within this research indicate that the contemporary society at large is far from communal, in the
assumption that the process of prison release returned prisoners to their citizenship and individuality proved to be a naïve and utopianistic premise. Whilst the men and women resisted the notion of ‘once an addict, always an addict’, their narratives powerfully buttressed ‘once a prisoner, always a prisoner’. The occupation of ‘prisoner’, and ‘released prisoner’ status, each renders an individual abject and excluded from the broader collective in ways that are both translucent and opaque in kind. Structural barriers to ‘reintegration’ politicise the exclusion of offending bodies; concerns for broader public safety and security legitimise the exclusion of ‘released’ offending bodies; and current criminological rhetoric and practice, specifically the omission of release narratives, institutionalise the exclusion of released men and women.

Before bridging this research’s analysis to engage with the released body as an abject and excluded body, it is important to reflect on what the men and women within this research have brought to the Australian release table. Specifically, the ways the men and women have individualised areas of release challenges, need and risk speak to the underbelly of contemporary Australian criminological and penological discourses on prisoner release. The incorporation of the men’s and women’s narratives into discussions of release has provided critical insight into, and in turn a greater appreciation for, the ways in which dominant quantitative analysis on prison and release populations plays out in the life of the individual. Pursuant to the literature outlined in Chapter Two on the prison release setting, this section will appropriate the experiences of the men and women within this research within broader understandings of prisoner release. In recognition of the infancy of Australian research specific to release populations, outside of recidivism and re-entry data, international scholarship has dominated the ways we ‘know’ and currently understand the release setting. In this regard, considering the experiences of the men and women within this research within broader contemporary findings forges significant first steps in the Australian penological landscape. Not only does it make us more aware of what is happening in our own backyard, it furthers to facilitate sites at which we may

sense of their implicit and explicit experiences of rejection, isolation and exclusion. Their narratives are suggestive of smaller subsets of communities, such as prisoner communities, drug use communities and/or support communities. However, the landscape outside the prison walls is far from inclusionary in the traditional notions of community, belonging, accepting and the like.
learn and draw from international responses and programs addressing issues identified as critical concerns to released Australian men and women.

Dominant United States and United Kingdom scholarship has identified employment and employment opportunities as particularly challenging for released men and women. Moreover, employment has been illuminated as a companion piece for successful periods of release in the context of social inclusion, acceptance and validation (see for example Taxman, Young & Byrne, 2002b; Austin, Hardyman & Irwin, 2002; Dion et al., nd). The men and women within this research spoke directly to the obstacles inherent to employment following periods of incarceration and drug use. Whilst the men and women minimally (directly) spoke of their education and employment experiences prior to their (current) release, some identified their illiteracy and/or lack of vocational training prior to their incarceration. Further, a number of men in particular spoke of the ways in which their incarceration provided opportunities to gain literacy and broader vocational skills. Several spoke of their in-prison vocational training and, whilst they didn’t engage with the benefits of such experiences in the social setting, they conveyed the ways their employment gave them feelings of normality, routine, increased self-value and esteem, and a purpose to their time in prison. These benefits are critical and powerful tools that encourage and nurture imprisoned men and women to consider themselves outside of their offending and deviant labels. Problematically, most of the men and women within this research are short sentenced prisoners, so their opportunities for inclusion and the associated benefits of in-prison training and employment are particularly minimal. The men who had served lengthy sentences throughout their history of incarceration, in the vicinity of two to eight years at a time, most strongly emphasised the benefits of in-prison services.

Webster et al. (2001: v) argue that even the best of services in the prison will fail where men and women are returned to problematic release environments such as homelessness, drug use, poor social connections and the like. These ideas are certainly characteristic of

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3 Chapter Three identified the lengths of sentences the men and women served: whilst some had served sentences of five, six and eight years, the majority of the time, their sentences were for three to twelve months at a time.
the men and women within this research. Most directly, the men and women reflected on their past failed attempts at prison release and identified the challenges to success as contingent upon their return to old, particularly drug using, environments and relationships. These findings suggest it is critical to not only provide in-prison services but, more importantly, to attend to and support men and women in the release setting so the potential benefits, opportunities and value of such prison training are not invalidated as the prisoners leave the prison gates. Such assertions are further supported by current research that highlights the critical importance of follow-through and after-care for men and women in the context of both prison transition and health and addiction issues (see for example Fox et al., 2005; Walsh, 2004; Taxman, 1998).

Taxman (2002) argues that released prisoner perceptions of barriers to employment can be just as powerful as those actually imposed. This research powerfully supports Taxman’s assertion. A criminal record, both real and perceived, limited both the men’s and women’s inclination and opportunities to gain employment, as well as challenging their positions once employed. Rarely did the men and women within this research disclose their criminal records to potential employers. However, the decision to disclose or not to disclose was understood to be problematic in both cases. Specifically, they argued that if they negated the mention of their incarceration to employers, and employers subsequently found out, they were fired from their positions. On the other hand, if they revealed their criminal history to employers, they were not offered the job as referenced in Chapter Five. Such circumstances were understood by the men and women to be the product of their (offending) past, and the perceptions of how stigmatisation follows periods of incarceration, rather than related to their individual suitability for the job in question. Whether such limited employment opportunities are directly the result of the men’s and women’s convictions or completely different factors is unknown. What are most critical, however, are the men’s and women’s perceptions of the perennial burden and limitations their criminal records bring to their lives. Such perceptions limit the extent to which such men and women apply for jobs, and the kinds of roles for which they submit an application. The men and women limit themselves to manual and low-skill labour positions in an attempt to minimise the potential impact their
criminal record has in the context of employment. This is significant in two key ways. Firstly, applying for rudimentary positions such as office cleaning and kitchenhand work speaks of the ways men and women understand and value themselves as contributory and worthy members of the social body. In conjunction with feelings of low self-worth, considered in Chapters Six and Seven, such employment opportunities further validate and reinforce perceptions of uselessness and hopelessness. Many of the men spoke about being embarrassed and humiliated at taking positions such as office cleaning and the like, which were experienced as a further slap in the face when their criminal records affected the dismissal from such positions.

Secondly, the numerous barriers to seeking and holding employment thwarted many of the men and women from seeking employment in the first place. To save themselves the potential humiliation and rejection pursuant to their criminal records, some spoke about choosing to remain on welfare. The men within this research spoke most about their experiences with employment as the majority of women had young children, and were therefore primarily interested in being able to raise their children and care for them at home (when they regained custody). In Australia, the opportunities and options to remain on welfare, whilst increasingly more difficult, are real and utilised by many disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, particularly released men and women without employment and broader support networks. In America, however, legislation such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) restricts welfare benefits, specifically in relation to convicted men and women, and particularly in the context of drug-related offences (for further discussion see Travis, 2002; Travis, Solomon & Waul, 2001; Rubinstein, nd). Some states impose restrictions and time limits on access entitlement to welfare benefits and, in this regard, most prisoners fail to qualify for payments at the time of their release. In the context of drug-related offences, many prisoners are met with a lifetime ban on welfare and housing benefits. So, in this way, identifying the challenges for release employment, consistent in many Western countries (see for example Webster et al., 2001; Sarno et al., 2000a, 2000b; Dion et al., nd), appears critical to the ‘success’

4 Centrelink now imposes such initiations as ‘work for the dole’ and places various restrictions on recipients to the extent that welfare entitlement does not translate to ‘work free’ payments (for more details see http://www.centrelink.gov.au).
of many released prisoners. As the Australian welfare system tightens its strings and increasingly advances ‘work for the dole’ and other such schemes, it is possible that some released prisoners in Australia may face similar challenges to those in America in the future.

Obstacles to employment become more critical in the context of desistance from offending and drug use. Some of the men spoke about the boredom inherent to unemployment and idle time in the community following incarceration. Such time translates to increased associations, reliance and connections with other offenders and/or drug users, identified in Chapter Six as powerful factors supporting continued drug use and prison re-entry. Without employment and broader networks of support that nurture and encourage feelings of value, validation and acceptance, released men and women experience themselves as excluded from the social body and seek refuge in environments and relationships that are safe, familiar and accepting. Problematically, as Chapters Six and Seven reveal, such spaces typically include those conducive to drug use, offending and incarceration.

The prison of drug use, addiction and self-destruction

Considering areas of physical and mental illness more broadly, the men and women within this research did not go into great detail about their health-related concerns, save for their experiences with drug use and addiction. Within these limitations: one man identified himself as HCV positive; seven men and women had lost all or some of their teeth as a result of their drug use; and one man spoke of psoriasis of his liver subsequent to his years of alcoholism. In addition, three men and women spoke about the exacerbation of their mental health illnesses as a result of both incarceration and drug use, and one woman spoke about her baby’s addiction to heroin when she was born and the lengthy processes involved in breaking and reducing her daughter’s addiction through medication and intensive supervision.

Research has highlighted the prison as a key target opportunity for the diagnosis and management of health-related issues (see for example NCCHC, 2002; Gaughwin,
Douglas & Wodak, 1990). The men and women within this research supported these claims, particularly in the context of drug use and addiction. Specifically, periods of imprisonment for those with addictions were understood to: interrupt and/or break drug use patterns; extend opportunities for counselling; facilitate the removal from relationships and environments conducive to drug use; and provide access to methadone programs. Incarceration was further identified as ‘saving’ the lives of some of the men and women through interruptions to heavy drug use and alcohol consumption. These beliefs were often shared within drug-using circles more broadly. Addicts sent to prison were understood to be lucky to the extent that they were removed from drug-using environments and given avenues of help and support. Within these beliefs, the men’s and women’s (actual) participation in in-prison treatment programs supports the findings of Butler and Milner (2003), wherein whilst such therapeutic opportunities may be available during periods of incarceration, few actually engaged in such programs. More critically, few sought or were offered transition planning in the context of addiction recovery or prison release more broadly.

Whilst this research lends weight to the idea of the prison as a key and critical site for the treatment and assistance of health concerns, particularly in the context of drug addiction, the absence of efficient and adequate follow-through care renders such opportunities negligible in the release environment. As Travis, Solomon and Waul (2001) argue, released men and women face significant rates of relapse as a result of deficiencies in continuity of treatment from the prison to the community. This idea was most powerfully supported by the men and women as they narrated their previous failed attempts at prison release. Most directly, they correlated the multifarious nature of prison release challenges with their return to drug use, often despite their participation in various treatment and detoxification programs. The return to drug use always resulted in their return to offending and incarceration. The men and women spoke about the limited support and assistance they received during previous release periods and the ways such deficiencies were perceived to lead to their return to ‘safe’ and ‘familiar’ coping mechanisms such as drug use.
Whilst current literature identifies the critical dearth of follow-through treatment and transition plans for released men and women (see for example Rossman, 2002; Richie, 2001), it is important to recognise that all of the men and women within this research, most significantly amongst those who conveyed an active engagement with their addiction recovery, revealed their deliberate defiance, resistance and opposition to extensions of assistance and support when made. Goffman (1961: 319) speaks of such recalcitrance as an 'essential constitution of the self', wherein an individual resists the 'clutches of the institution', not so much as a 'mechanism of defence', but rather as the 'practice of reserving oneself from the [grasp of the] institution'. Chapter Eight spoke to the notion of treatment resistance in more detail, and whilst such self-imposed challenges problematise addiction recovery and broader release success, their recognition does not downplay the criticality of supporting the transition process for men and women, particularly those struggling with addiction issues. The need to address and attend to issues of release and addiction support becomes more critical as research highlights significant rates of drug-related post-release mortality (see for example Stewart et al., 2004; Home Office, 2003b; Sattar, 2001; Nelson & Trone, 2000).

The prevalence of problematic drug use and lengthy addiction within this research's collective supports findings of national and international research that highlights drug use to be a significant problem for prison and release populations (see for example QLD DCS, 2003; Butler & Milner, 2002; NSW DCS, 2002, 2003). The men and women spoke about lengthy histories of illicit and prescription drug abuse, both in and out of the prison, including injecting and unsafe drug use behaviours. Their narratives of the powerful link between drug use, offending and incarceration further support current literature on prison and release populations (see for example BJS, 2002a; Travis, Solomon and Waul, 2001). Chapter Two raised some critical questions in relation to the drug use behaviours of released men and women, specifically concerning the extent to which drug use informs and challenges opportunities for success in the release setting, and the ways addicted men and women use, understand and engage with their drug use. Further, it questioned the

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5 See Chapter Six for operational definitions of 'activity', 'passivity', 'sobriety' and 'recovery' within this research.
following: whether the nature of the release environment is conducive to maintaining/ed drug use; what the impediments are to sobriety; and why, in the face of (some) treatment options in and out of the prison, do men and women continue or return to drug use in their release environments? It argued that the exploration of these areas would provide critical insight into current understandings of release ‘success’ more broadly. The analysis on drug use behaviours in Chapters Six and Eight has shed important light on all of these questions. Specifically, these chapters have spoken to the ways addiction informs release and recovery success and, more critically, the ways men and women use and understand themselves within their drug use and addiction.

The questions raised in Chapter Two are explored at length in Chapters Six and Eight so their detailed repetition is not pertinent here. There are some key ideas, however, that speak to the broader processes and challenges of prisoner release. Firstly, the social worlds and experiences of the men and women narrow as their drug use culminates in a cycle of abuse and addiction. Over time, their social worlds become narrowed to those environments and relationships conducive to drug use and/or offending. In the process the men and women are excluded from familial and social structures, both intentionally and as a consequence of their drug use. Significant relationships outside drug use and criminality are crippled and fractured, sometimes irreparably. These social and relational manifestations of addiction powerfully challenge a released prisoner’s case of transition. Many find themselves with no networks of support or spaces of belonging outside of drug use and offending circles. In this way, their opportunities for successful release are detrimentally contingent upon their ability to avoid, resist or thwart these connections. Not only do many find themselves with limited support networks to assist in establishing themselves within social, political and economic frameworks, but, more problematically, the lack of such systems translates to significant social exclusion and isolation. In turn, their exclusion propels many to return to safe and familiar spaces that provide feelings of acceptance, belonging and comfort. Unfortunately, such spaces primarily include drug and offending circles, and the prison. The idea of intentionality in the context of prison re-entry is significant to understanding and interpreting recidivism and re-entry figures. Most critically, it demands that greater attention and resources be injected into the release
setting so men and women do not feel they need to, or can only, experience feelings of safety, security and acceptance within the prison setting.

Secondly, in Chapter Six, the men and women spoke about the emotional undercurrents initiating and sustaining their reliance and abuse of drugs and alcohol. Given the extensive awareness of abuse, trauma and difficult backgrounds plaguing prison and release populations, we can question why more attention has not been, and is not being, directed to addressing these issues? The men and women within this research correlated the onset of their drug use to experiences of physical, emotional, sexual and verbal abuse, traumatic childhoods and the like. Drug use was identified as an anaesthetic and mechanism of pain management. Over time, drug use became the most immediate, albeit temporary, alleviator of not only initial issues of abuse, but further collected broader life challenges. None of the men and women within this research had received counselling and/or treatment specific to their experiences of trauma or abuse. In this way, in the release setting they not only continued to be tormented by such experiences, but found that periods of imprisonment exacerbated these issues and brought with them many more traumas (such as lost custody of children). Understanding the ways men and women use and understand their drug use provides critical insight into the ways the release setting is and becomes conducive to maintaining drug use. We should not ask ‘Why’ as much as ‘Why don’t’ men and women retreat to and within their drug use in the release setting? From these understandings, significant attention and resources are needed to attend to not only supporting sobriety during and following incarceration, but, more importantly, addressing the critical and persistent issues underlying the onset, continuance and dominance of drug use amongst released men and women.

If we consider broader public safety, the economic and political aspects of repeat offending and prison re-entry, issues of drug use and challenges to sobriety become even more significant. This research lends support to current literature (see for example Goulding, 2004; Makkai & Payne, 2003b; Maxwell, 1998) highlighting the strong and/or causal relationship between drug use and offending. In this way, if the wellbeing, safety and peace of mind of released drug users are not important enough to warrant much
needed and increased attention and resources, the weight of drug use’s marriage to offending and subsequent incarceration certainly provides a more selfish motive for policy intervention and societal response.

Released but contained: the abject prisoner body

The return to regulative and punitive governance of released prisoners has been given much attention (see for example Petersilia, 2003; Garland, 2002). Debates surrounding prisoner risk and broader public safety have legitimised the resurgence of control and regulation of prisoner and released prisoner populations. At the same time, however, unprecedented numbers of prisoners being released into the social body has challenged society’s ability to respond to and support such a vulnerable and in-need population. The ways released men and women have been supervised and ‘surveilled’ within the release setting have traditionally called upon institutionalised agents such as probation and parole departments, and the police. The structural and systematic monitoring of released men and women within these institutions has significant implications for the ways we know and understand the released body. Whilst parole departments differentially engage with notions of structural support, they primarily concern themselves with the ways released men and women ‘conform’, ‘obey’ and ‘align’ themselves with the sensibilities of the broader moral collective. In doing so, they implicitly and explicitly engage with and structure the released body as deviant and transgressing, more particularly, in need of regulation and control. The police’s role in this area is to survey and capture repeat and persistent offenders. The men and women understood and identified themselves as repeat (albeit petty) offenders, and in this way the intensification of punitive police and parole surveillance was, a significant part of the time, invited and provoked. Whilst undoubtedly critical to the safety and wellbeing of society at large, as the men and women conveyed within this research, such performativities dominantly translate to experiences and perceptions of police harassment, disproportionate policing, and endless labelling of the offending body.

The need to follow and monitor men and women in their release environments is critical in a number of ways. Most immediately, whilst the Australian release setting itself is not
new, our knowledge and understanding of this environment is in its infancy. As such, the surveillance of released prisoners is imperative to developing an appreciation for areas of need, risk, safety and vulnerability. Given that most prisoners will one day return to society, such understandings are particularly critical. Further, in light of the numbers of violent and sexual offenders, particularly in the context of repeat violent and sexual offenders, the need to monitor and in some instances ‘contain’ this group of prisoners is unquestioned. This research acknowledges the significance of monitoring released men and women in the broader social world. The men and women within this research have provided important insights into the ways in which such surveillance and regulation is experienced, and the ways they resist, challenge, navigate or defy social technologies of control. In the context of prisoner release, it is not so much that released men and women are subject to surveillance and supervision that causes concern or negative experiences. Rather, the tendency for the specific surveillance of released bodies to engage and be dominated by punitive pretences serves to not only hold men and women within their offences, but also perennially locates them within social and political constructions of offending, deviance and otherness. Garland (2001: 178) argues that the ‘prison-community border is heavily patrolled and carefully monitored to prevent risks leaking out from one to the other’. As a result, he suggests the release setting lacks ‘much of the liberty that one associates with ‘normal life’ (Garland, 2001: 178).

The implications of such punitive performativities were most powerfully elevated within Chapter Five and its examination of release surveillance. In several key ways, this exploration shed light on how society predominantly constructs the ‘released prisoner’. Specifically, it argued that the justice system sets up a penal accountancy of offending men and women, to which each offence metes out a balance sheet of social transgression. The ways society currently knows and measures the performance of released men and women within the community are disproportionately grounded within disciplinary and penalising constructs. The concentration on recidivism, reoffending and prison re-entry inextricably focuses social attention on the deficiencies of the released body. As technological advancements have improved, the efficiency and immediacy of data collation, transference and retrieval – the ‘balance sheet’ or criminal records of the men
and women become not only permanent, but also widely accessible. With the example of barriers to employment following incarceration, Chapter Five engaged with the ways the ‘released’ prisoner is rendered a captive to their records. They are inseparable from their deviance. Unlike educational institutions wherein positive inputs are made to an individual’s record, the penological institution manufactures the released body as a body of transgression. The anchorages of power, according to Foucault (1977: 217), are not grounded in the ‘amputated, repressed, [or] altered’ individual, rather, ‘the individual is carefully fabricated in it’. In this sense, the position of ‘released prisoner’ is created as a by-product of social mechanisms of recording and non-recording (in the sense of employment histories etc.), inclusion and exclusion, and the perceptions inherent to the individual, through which they render themselves as different and abject.

Experiences with support organisations and drug court participation suggest there are opportunities, albeit narrow, for released men and women – particularly those struggling with drug and alcohol addiction – to not so much move beyond, but rather sideways, to their (socially recorded) deviance and transgression. In a multitude of ways the surveillance and regulation imposed by support groups and drug court on the one hand, and policing agents on the other differ in their application to the released body. The men and women within this research conveyed the ways the differential nature of surveillance played out in their lives and the implications such regulation had on both their lived experiences and their internal realities. Most powerfully flagged within Chapter Five was the criticality of contextualisation, more specifically, the recognition of the released prisoner as the culmination of so much more than their offending or incarceration. Whilst support groups and drug court utilised operational definitions of ‘success’ that included desistance from drug use, crime, prison re-entry and the like, it was their recognition of the men and women as a whole person, both within and without their offending and drug use, that enabled the men and women to challenge their identities as ‘prisoners’ and ‘offenders’. In contrast, experiences with police, parole departments, employment and the like, wherein (both real and perceived) references to criminal records are frequently made, rendered the men and women minimally empowered or enabled to negotiate and challenge their identities and status as an offending body.
The men and women within this research were all in contact and affiliated with some form of prisoner support agency. In this way, they had access to and were able to draw on resources that enabled them to begin to live, or consider themselves, beyond their incarceration. Unfortunately, as research has recognised, small portions of prisoner and release prisoner populations either have access to, or the inclination to engage with, support services. Moreover, there are significant numbers of automatically released prisoners about whom criminological and broader social agents have no knowledge, and thus cannot access. In turn, it is difficult to anticipate the experiences of significant numbers of released men and women. Save for strong familial and other social networks of support, however, there appear large numbers of men and women (re)entering the community after periods of incarceration who are minimally equipped, or extended the opportunity, to challenge the ways in which social registries and communities punitively respond and react towards the released prisoner. Given the requirements of legislation such as the Spent Convictions Act 1998, together with the likelihood of prison re-entry for released prisoners (see for example Home Office, 2003; BJS, 2002; Taxman, Young & Byrne, 2002a), it is safe to assume there are substantial numbers of men and women for whom criminal records will always exist. As one of the men in this research shared (in Chapter Five), the implications of offending records are not bound by temporal constraints. Here, Derrida’s (1966) notion of the ‘violence of the archive’ speaks most directly to the experiences of released prisoners, wherein the process and action of recording (and permanency of) criminal records fortifies the space of ‘offender’ and ‘deviant’. Recording and attention in this way means released men and women may never transcend their status of ‘prisoner’.

The irony of prisoner release is further demonstrated in Chapter Seven wherein the men and women engaged with personal and internal constructions of themselves as ‘prisoners’ and ‘offenders’. For many released prisoners material and social forms of identification are made invalid, lost or disqualified through and/or as a result of periods of

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6 Not disregarding the ways such prisoner affiliations were sometimes understood and experienced as continuations of the architecture of penalty.
incarceration. Men and women are physically and psychologically constructed as ‘prisoners’ as they enter the carceral. When they are returned to the community, however, the rights of passage from ‘prisoner’ to ‘citizen’ are nowhere to be found. The men and women within this research dominantly shared the experience of being released with no possessions and no social identification documentation. The absence of material possessions and reference points of belonging and citizenship are symbolic of the ways experiences of imprisonment invalidate an individual’s citizenship. Leaving the prison gates with a jail release slip as the dominant form of identification is further symbolic of an individual’s social identity being replaced by the institutionally issued position and role of ‘prisoner’. Here we can conceive of the released body – worn, manipulated and broken by the carceral – as an abject body. Structurally and systematically excluded from social, political and economic realms, the released prisoner represents the defilement of the moral social order. The expulsion and exclusion of the released prisoner solidifies the difference between the clean and moral social body, and the unclean – the offending/drug using social transgressor. Travis (2002: 33) writes:

In our assessment of the universe of invisible punishment, we see the creation of a large population of felons ... who are ‘marked’ and ‘monitored’ and cut off from the supports of modern society. We are creating deeper and longer-lasting distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

The erection of such definitive borders is evidenced in new legislation within Queensland, wherein ‘intelligence officers will help jail bosses spy on prisoners on parole under the toughest community corrections program in Australia’ (Parnell, 2006: 9). Sixteen intelligence officers will be deployed across the state to examine prisoner data and identify individuals who will be targeted for random drug and alcohol tests and close monitoring. Queensland Premier Mr Beattie made it clear the measures were designed to punish criminals and reassure the community, declaring court-ordered parole would effectively provide truth-in-sentencing’ (Parnell, 2006: 9). Prisoners Legal Service solicitor Matilda Alexander argued that ‘the Government should help provide rehabilitation and support, rather than perform purely a spying role that would just report on negative things that are going on in their lives’ (Parnell, 2006: 9).
Here the writings of Kristeva help elucidate the experiences of the released prisoner. Engaging with the social body as Kristeva engages with the human body, we can understand the ways society is challenged to (re)accept the released prisoner. Kristeva argues that identifying and excluding the abject maintains the cleanliness and purity of the body. Bodily waste is excreted so that the human body may live and remain healthy. As Kristeva considers the reacceptance of waste matter in the context of the physical body, we can engage with the plight of the released prisoner. The structural and systematic barriers and challenges that face released men and women operationalise in much the same way as the human body inhibits the reacceptance of its excrement. The prison defines and defiles the offending body, renders it unclean, improper and abject. More specifically, the prison constructs the prisoner as invalid, undeserving and unaccepted within the structures of the broader social body. The loss of democratic, employment, social and economic rights and points of inclusion and entitlement culminate to impose and effect a space of otherness. As Travis (2002: 19) argues, the ‘symbolic denunciation of criminals is politically rewarding ... in this brave new world, punishment for the original offence is no longer enough; one’s debt to society is never paid’. The inaugural loss of social status created the prisoner. Upon return to the social body, the ‘prisoner’ label is lost and citizenship is only ‘technically’ renewed. This combined loss creates the space and position of the ‘released prisoner’ – neither included nor completely rejected – a place and space of ambiguity and ambivalence.

The works of Kristeva (1982) and Douglas (1966) speak to the experiences of released prisoners in the context of ambiguity. If we consider the released prisoner existing in a space that is no longer ‘prisoner’, but not ‘citizen’, we see the culmination and birth of a middle ground, a purgatory-like state for the offending body, that sits structurally, but uncomfortably, in between ‘prisoner’ and ‘free citizen’. This space is elevated and specific to the released body. The status of ‘prisoner’ does not disband as a prisoner leaves the prison. Rather, it undergoes a reconstruction and morphosis to forge the positioning of ‘released prisoner’: not part of the prison institution, not part of the social framework. O’Brien (2001) cites research calling it a vacuum experience. Goffman
(1961) suggests displacement with role exit, and Foucault (1977) argues that the carceral continuum sustains the effects of disciplinary power not only within the broader community but, more particularly, specifically on the offending body. Whatever theoretical underpinnings one engages with or subscribes to, released men and women can be understood as occupying an abject and excluded position when they are released from prison: a purgatory in which they are not ‘in’ and not fully ‘out’ of the social framework – a hybrid position between the carceral and the social. Cohen (1985: 267) most aptly defines the excluded space of the ‘released prisoner’:

Exclusion means banishment and expulsion, segregation and isolation, designation and significiation, classification, stigmatisation. The nearest single word is ‘separation’, which conveys not just the sense of physical or social exclusion but also the setting up of a separate, that is ‘exclusive’ category.

Goffman (1963: 64) argues that ‘for the individual to have had what is called a “shady past” is an issue regarding his social identity: the way he handles information about his past is a question of personal identification’. The personal identity of the released prisoner is one of concealment, secrecy and non-disclosure. Forever bound by the stigma and the limitations inherent to the possession of an ‘offending’ and ‘incarcerated’ past, released prisoners further nurture their abject positioning. The released prisoner conceals experiences of incarceration that are not bound by temporal and spatial constraints. Rather, the periods of incarceration for which individual time is lost, invalidated and wasted forever mark the lives and social positioning of the individual. The absence of credit, employment, rental, democratic and other such records, for the period of incarceration, has the potential to discredit and invalidate full social participation and citizenship. Goffman (1963: 7) furthers that the standards an individual has:

incorporated from the wider society equip him to be intimately alive to what others see as his failing, inevitably causing him, if only for moments, to agree that he does indeed fall short of what he really ought to be. Shame becomes a central possibility.

Whilst the beginning of abjection is initiated by explicit social barriers, it becomes explicit as the men and women experience, understand and identify their abjection. In the
context of both drug use and broader life, they exclude, retract and isolate themselves from the social landscape. Such movements are both deliberate and intentional, and at the same time they are unconscious and discrete. In this way, the abject released body can also be understood as a docile body (Foucault, 1977) in the sense that the individual continues to reproduce manifestations of punishment through processes of individualised punishment and exclusion. Their retreat from the social world, more particularly, their retreat (and rejection) from full social participation, furthers their experiences of isolation, punishment and abjection. From such awareness, it can be understood that whilst technically ‘free’ from the arms of the justice machine, the emotional and psychological ‘hold’ and bondage to being a ‘prisoner’ fortifies the tenor of the irony of prison release – there is no (absolute) release from prison.


> Can freedom be a burden, too heavy for a man to bear, something he tries to escape from? Why then is it that freedom is for many a cherished goal and for others a threat?

This research has engaged with the structural burdens problematising the ‘freedom’ of released men and women. To fully embrace Fromm’s question, we need to consider the ways men and women experience and internalise the position and status of ‘offender’ and ‘prisoner’. The ascription of negative self-labelling is just as powerful in its hold and affect on the individual as socially ascribed categorisations. The men’s and women’s narratives elevated a space in-between ‘prisoner’ and ‘social citizen’. The social body rejects the released prisoner in such a way that negates the physicalities of walls or visible boundaries. As Foucault (1977) argues, the purity and supremacy of disciplinary power operates to infiltrate, permeate and infuse existing social boundaries and borders. Social exclusionary responses to released men and women transcend spatial and temporal localities; the ‘released’ body is not bound to a particular time, or visible space. Rather, the site of exclusion for the released body is located within existing structures and systems of order. The released prisoners’ abjection is not a visible manifestation of power, but rather exists as the internal reality for the men and women as they move
within and throughout the social world. Whether concealed or revealed to the broader collective, the internalisation of such social deficits demonstrates the infinitude of men’s and women’s experiences of imprisonment. They are a prisoner: to the carceral; to the moral sensibilities of the social fabric; and, in the end, a prisoner to themselves and the limitations they inflame within their exclusion. In this way, the released prisoner is an object of the burdens and limitations of social and internal perceptions of ‘freedom’.

Perhaps more fittingly, we can liken the positioning of the released prisoner to Goffman’s (1963: 90) Cinderella syndrome, or the practice of ‘living on a leash’, wherein rights of citizenship are contingent upon the activities and spaces in which released men and women locate themselves. The men and women spoke about their lives within the social body and the ways they allowed themselves to enter certain social realms, but remained lucid in their avoidance of other localities. In other words, in the example of employment, there were some roles and jobs (however rudimentary) where concerns and stigmatisations inherent to criminality were perceived to be minimised. Participation within these areas permitted a ‘passing’ for a ‘citizen’ positioning and, albeit sometimes momentary or limited, enabled the individual to engage with and wear the coat of untainted citizenship. On the other hand, there were specific areas, associations and social encounters, particularly with police, high policed areas and the like, wherein rights and entitlement to social citizenship gave way to the dominance of ‘prisoner’ and ‘offender’ stigmatisations. In this way, released prisoners can be understood to live on a leash to the extent that their movement within the social world becomes conditional on the real and perceived limitations their incarceration has imposed on their existence. Moreover, as the men and women raised within this research, belonging and acceptance within the community following incarceration are perceived to exist within small pockets of the social order. Released prisoners are thus bridled to these specific receptacles of the social body.

Released men and women need to be encouraged and nurtured into change in the context of their offending, drug use and/or (re)incarceration. They cannot be scared, threatened, humiliated or belittled into change. As this research has argued, released men and women
face significant obstacles and barriers with regards to their abilities to consider, identify with and belong to social identities outside of ‘offender’ and ‘prisoner’. Released prisoners, thus far, have largely been supervised, managed and institutionally regulated to change themselves and embrace the sensibilities of the broader social collective. In recognition of the limited support, services and resources directed to prisoner release (particularly in comparison to the money injected into the erection of new carceral facilities), it is understandable why the release setting has played out in the way that it has. Specifically, limited resources and manpower have translated to a tightening of finances and the elimination of a great deal of welfare, support and treatment programs (both within and outside of the prison).

Given the significant numbers of prisoners re-entering prison, often multiple times, it is fair to assume that social ‘scare’ tactics, in the release and prison context, have failed in both their application and outcome to effect law-abiding behavioural changes within offending men and women. If we examine the evaluation and success figures for various follow-through programs, treatment or counselling services, such literature suggests the critical value and benefit of such therapeutic and supportive interventions. Moreover, as Travis (2003: 8) argues, in consideration of release numbers, there is a ‘broad social obligation – to them [prisoners], families and communities – to ensure that every effort is made to connect them to the basics of life after prison’. This includes the provision of a safe and encouraging space for men and women to talk about their concerns and vulnerabilities.

Society needs to critically look at the system we have in place to deal with and respond to offending men and women. If we use the prison as a technician of punishment, then at the expiration of a prisoner’s prison term and/or parole period they have served their punishment. Is prison the punishment, or just a visual and tangible mechanism that signifies the beginning of punishment? As Ron, a prisoner in Tony Parker’s work, comments:
You’ve asked me what you should do with me: my answer boils down to “I don’t know, I think all you can do is give me the same treatment again until something changes”. But that something might not be in me after all: it might be I can’t change ever. In that case I think I’ve the right to put the same question: are you going to change either, in your methods of trying to deal with me? Or are we both — me as an individual and you as society — approaching the whole thing in completely the wrong way? (Soothill, 1999: 98)

As this research has highlighted, the implications and consequences of offending extend far beyond the experience of incarceration. Periods of imprisonment are just the beginning of a much larger and oblique journey of punishment throughout society. The men’s and women’s narratives within this research are certainly suggestive of their awareness of the elongation of punishment beyond the prison. So what is society really trying to do with its released men and women? As the men and women within this research have suggested, some take greater comfort in the prison than in society, as it is predictable, calculable and safe. Perhaps at the most basic and fundamental level, the face of punishment, within the prison, is known. In the social body, however, punishment masks itself and infiltrates private and public space, external and internal realities, and is not shackled by spatial or temporal limitations. The invisibility, obscurity and abstraction of the punishment that exists outside the realm of the carceral render freedom from imprisonment virtually impossible.
Appendix A

To Whom It May Concern:

Ms Jones commenced the Sunshine residential rehabilitation program on 2004. Ms Jones was referred to Sunshine by the Drug Court and remains here as a condition of her participation on the Drug Court program. Ms Jones was escorted from the Drug Court to Sunshine by a member of Sunshine staff after being introduced to Ms Jones by a Drug Court official.

Ms Jones is having difficulty obtaining sufficient identification documents to satisfy the requirements of Centrelink and has been notified that her Allowance payments have been suspended. Ms Jones possesses a keycard to access her bank account and various documents from the Drug Court which may assist in confirming her identity. I am happy to verify her identity based on her involvement with the Drug Court.

Whilst I am aware of the difficulties Centrelink face in such a matter, ongoing suspension of payments to Ms Jones places her at risk and it is hoped that the matter can be resolved as soon as possible.
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