

# **A Journey through the Prison Garden:**

## **Weeds in the Warehouse**

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This thesis fulfils the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Western Sydney

2008

# DEDICATION

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After completing this thesis, I remain even more aware than at its inception that the opportunity afforded me to conduct this research has been an enormous privilege.

*I therefore  
dedicate this thesis to the women  
who participated in this research.  
The belief and trust they gave me  
are gifts that I will take  
with me beyond  
this thesis.*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The development of the thesis would not have been possible without the professional and collegiate support of numerous individuals along the way. When I doubted myself, their belief in the value of this work has enabled me to complete the journey.

I particularly wish to acknowledge the members of my supervisor panel, Dr Zina O’Leary, Dr Andrew Broderick and Ms Debra Moodie-Bain, who have travelled the journey with me.

Dr Zina O’Leary, as my principal supervisor, encouraged me in my undertaking of this research, and has been pivotal to its progress from inception through to completion. Zina, your hard work in providing the supervision and encouragement I needed has been extra-ordinary. In particular, I appreciate the insights and clarity you brought to my confusion when I felt overwhelmed by the research. You always followed through and I am sure that this thesis would not have been completed without your diligent supervision throughout.

Ms Debra Moodie-Bain provided much encouragement through many impromptu discussions over coffee. I also appreciate your support, Debra, in technical matters that you willingly assisted me with even at the most inconvenient times. Dr Andrew Broderick provided the impetus for this research many years ago when as an undergraduate I discussed with him the possibility of combining my interest in marginalised populations with horticultural science. Andy, your initial encouragement in this area ultimately led to this research.

Equally, the support of the postgraduate researcher community at Hawkesbury, colloquially referred to by its members as ‘*The Backpassage*’, has provided much encouragement and on-going support throughout this research. We have shared the journey in many ways, and the opportunity to draw on your collective

and individual experience on numerous occasions has given me the courage to continue. Even through personally trying circumstances, the support of Mr Cessidio Parissi in assisting me co-ordinate the Postgraduate Researchers' Forum, has been inspirational. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the members of my Thesis Writing Circle who have read my 'stuff' and entered into numerous lively discussions about its content.

Administrative staff members in the School of Natural Sciences, particularly Mrs Grace Brown, have also provided the support necessary to conduct this research, answering my many queries and following up on numerous administrative issues. I also appreciate the support of various academic staff in the school who expressed interest in the research as it progressed.

While I cannot name them individually, I also wish to acknowledge the several New South Wales Department of Corrective Services staff members who assisted me throughout the conduct of the research. Their contribution, often under difficult and trying circumstances, has not been taken for granted.

This acknowledgement would not be complete without mentioning my family; my husband Lindsay, and our three amazing children, Alicia, Lauren and Kelven. You have each been instrumental in enabling me to continue with this research. Lindsay, I doubt you knew what you were in for when you encouraged me to proceed with this research. Alicia, Lauren and Kelven, you have each made me very proud as you progress with your own studies and careers into adult life. I must also include my sister, Carol, in this family section. Your willingness to allow me to voice my concerns on a regular basis has been integral to my staying on course. I look forward to a future of relaxing at our family dinners without thinking about '*the thesis*'.

# STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

.....  
Lillian M. Barry

.....  
Date

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## List of Abbreviations

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AMS	Another Member of Staff
biu	Behaviour Intervention Unit
HRM	Highly Ranked Member of Staff
MoS	Member of Staff
NSW	New South Wales
PWID	People with Intellectual Disability
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCCW	Remand Correctional Centre for Women
RNR	Risks, Needs and Responsivity
SMART	Self Management and Recovery Training
SM	Staff Member
USA	United States of America
WAP	Women's Action Plan
WTC	Women's Transitional Centre

# ABSTRACT

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Through the implementation of a garden project in two women-centred correctional facilities in New South Wales, this thesis explores tensions between punitive and rehabilitative goals. The impacts of these tensions on the garden project and the every-day lived experience for female inmates form the basis of the research. Initially, the research looked at the rehabilitative potential of a horticultural therapy program for female inmates. This focus correlated with the holistic rehabilitative rhetoric within women's prisons in New South Wales. Based on this, a small garden project of five months' duration was conducted in each of the two correctional facilities over a twelve month period in 2006. Through the implementation and evaluation of this research conflicts between hierarchical, dominating systems of the penal institution and holistic, rehabilitation goals of the garden project were exposed. Utilising qualitative data analysis embedded in critical ethnography, the garden project provided a 'key-hole' view of these conflicts within the penal environment. The collective data from open-ended interviews, semi-participatory observations and reflexive journaling was abstracted from raw data level through to theoretical constructs in combination with a further literature research. Foucault's penal justice critique, Weber's domination and Goffman's totalitarian discourses informed the development of deeper understandings that enlightened on-going explorations in the field. As a result, theoretical understandings identified a tension within the penal environment that appeared to neutralise, fragment and corrode the intended benefits for female inmates of the garden project. This tension was identified as an intangible force, or penal phantom, representing the effects of totalisation within the penal environment. Two streams of inquiry emerged exploring the effects of the total institution on how power is exercised over female inmates and the implications upon the holistic, rehabilitative aims of the garden project.

Findings from this research highlight the effects of the penal phantom upon female inmates' lived experiences, the working realities for prison staff and how these impact upon rehabilitative programs for women in prison. The thesis concludes by examining these effects in the continued marginalisation of the current female inmate population and recommends a review of incarcerative practices that continue to entangle women within criminal justice systems.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

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### **Beginning the Journey**

This thesis represents a journey; a journey that began with the concept of developing a horticulture therapy project for women in prison and ended with navigating and charting unfamiliar territory. The original concept of using horticulture as a rehabilitative tool for women in prison began with the premise of using a small garden as a means of engaging inmates in a rehabilitation program. This concept of employing horticulture as a form of rehabilitation was based on historical recognition that gardening offers numerous benefits for individuals and community groups (Lawson, 2005; Lewis, 1995, 1996). Research conducted with marginalised populations has shown that engagement with a natural environment, such as a small garden, offers restorative benefits for individuals that equate with well-being (R. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; 1995; S. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982; S. Kaplan & Talbot, 1983). Similarly, benefits gained from engaging with a garden can be seen in the establishment of community gardens in urban areas that foster community engagement and skill development, as well as recreation and enjoyment (Blewden, 2005; Grayson, 2000).

Utilising a small garden as a means of facilitating rehabilitation also drew on my experience of using horticulture as a form of therapy with other marginalised groups (L. Barry, 2004). The acknowledged social and economic marginalisation of a significant proportion of the female inmate population in Australia (Easteal, 2001a, 2001b) fit with other populations targeted in research into the beneficial effects of natural environments for the purpose of rehabilitation (S. Kaplan, 1995).

I therefore approached this research with the hope that a horticulture therapy project would provide a rehabilitative tool for women in prison commensurate with posited holistic aims of rehabilitation for female inmates in New South Wales (NSW) (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2000, 2005). The research project, known as the garden project, was designed to include the establishment of a small garden which could be adapted to various sites. As well, the collaborative focus of the garden project sought to engage female inmates in a process of designing and establishing a small garden that would provide opportunities for leisure and recreation, as well as skill development.

The garden project was subsequently approved for the purposes of research in two women's correctional facilities in NSW. The implementation of the garden project in the first facility, the Remand Correctional Centre for Women (RCCW), was completed before implementing the garden project in the second facility, the Women's Transitional Centre (WTC). Designed as two separate gardens, the garden project could be adapted to the particular needs and interests of each target population, namely female inmates in each of the two women-centred correctional facilities.

At the initiation of the garden project in the first facility, the RCCW, it became evident that systemic issues in the penal institution were impacting upon the project's rehabilitative aims. The expectation of providing women in prison with a rehabilitative garden project alongside the realities of attempting to establish the project within a correctional facility exposed disparate penal aims of rehabilitation and incarceration. Although these conflicting ideals were partially visible in the initial stages of the garden project's implementation, unveiling the extent of these tensions upon the garden project's rehabilitative aims required a period of sustained contact with each corrective facility. Establishing the garden in both facilities meant countering these conflicts in order to implement the rehabilitative aims of the project.

While the initial goal of delivering a garden project that offered rehabilitative opportunities for female inmates did not change, the research focus broadened. Establishing the garden project in both facilities necessitated an exploration of systemic issues impacting upon the project's rehabilitative aims for women within a penal institution. Therefore, the research drew on the every-day lived experiences of female inmate participants and my own experience of countering the penal environment in establishing the garden project. My exposure to this environment enabled a deeper insight into the realities of offering rehabilitation to female inmates within an institution that simultaneously contains, while purporting to offer inmates rehabilitative opportunities. It was this journey from the familiar to the unknown that marked out the research terrain.

### **Navigating the Journey**

Undertaking the research in an environment in which I had no previous experience proved a deeply personal challenge. My journey as a researcher, who perhaps naively endeavoured to offer rehabilitative opportunities for incarcerated women, elicited unexpected tensions. While I continued to believe that the garden project offered valid rehabilitative opportunities for female inmates, the personal toll of navigating penal mechanisms throughout its implementation wrought numerous conflicting emotions.

A personal encounter with penal systems stands out as signposting the every-day realities of incarceration for individual women. Whenever I entered the RCCW, my regular visitor status afforded no unusual security procedures, other than emptying my pockets, placing keys and the like in allocated lockers, signing in and walking through a security screen. On occasion this process would be accompanied by an exchange of pleasantries with individual security staff members, although I always complied with security procedures.



However, on one occasion in the RCCW, despite complying with the usual security procedures, I encountered conflicting requests from the security officer on duty. My questioning response to these unfamiliar requests resulted in being ordered to stand spreadeagled while the officer slowly and deliberately traced the perimeter of my body with a baton-like instrument.

Those familiar with penal environments may consider this procedure to be a mere inconvenience, yet the command to stand spreadeagled appeared to serve no purpose other than to appease an officer's sense of power. Although I proceeded to conduct the scheduled garden project session, this experience emitted such strong feelings of violation that I needed to debrief with colleagues after exiting the RCCW. While various other encounters with security procedures were conflicting and sometimes confusing, this encounter was unique in the sense of violation it wrought upon my person. And it foreshadowed a personal response after the completion of the field-work in both facilities that was unexpected in its intensity. As I drove past the RCCW, a travel routine I undertook regularly, I experienced an unprecedented, stomach-churning episode of anxiety that gave a deep personal insight into the stealth of the on-going effects of exposure to penal environments.

Throughout the course of conducting the garden project, the experience of regular contact with female inmates generally evoked a personal response of empathy. I was keenly aware that living for extended periods within a punitive environment contrasted markedly with my own experience where I was free to exit the facility in which I conducted the garden project. This contrast in experiences of the penal environment was later highlighted further through a comment from an inmate, Helen, in the WTC. Being of a similar age, our discussions resembled conversations I might have enjoyed with any member of the community. That we conversed in a setting such as the WTC layered our discussions with an irony that I did not at first fully appreciate. During the garden project sessions, Helen preferred to observe the group's activities rather than participate. As she watched, Helen often directed her comments to me and I noticed that she rarely talked directly to the other women in the group.

Most of the other members of the group appeared to co-operate with this by usually ignoring her comments. Later, during a more private discussion, Helen disclosed her profession which appeared to confirm my earlier impressions. It seemed that her background set Helen apart from the rest of the inmates in the WTC, which I felt might explain her aloofness from them.

My feelings of empathy toward Helen would nevertheless be jolted into facing the reality for her of incarceration. One morning during a regular garden project session, an ‘off the cuff’ comment from Helen startled me into reflecting on how she must view her own life path as a professional woman ‘doing time’ in prison. Together with five or so inmates, the garden project group had been working in the garden and as usual Helen decided to sit and watch the activities. Later, we moved to a shaded area where she joined us in working on a creative project associated with the garden. While the group discussed the minutiae of this activity, Helen made an unexpected comment directed toward me, “*you’ve done alright with **your** life*” (emphasis Helen’s). This was said in a manner that implied an indisputable statement of fact, yet appeared to signify the reality for Helen of the deep divide between being an ‘inmate’ and her perception of who I was, as someone who did not have this label. Despite our similarities, it was clear that any common ground we shared was markedly diminished within the penal environment. And this statement, made from one woman to another, exposed a momentary glimpse of a deep personal pain; I finally understood the reality of incarceration for her.

However, moments of insight and empathy conflicted with occasional feelings of enmity toward female inmates. Although I consciously attempted to suppress feelings of annoyance, frustration and impatience toward inmates, I nevertheless encountered these feelings from time to time throughout the field-work period. Equally, I observed prison staff members who alternatively demonstrated an apparent lack of empathy for inmates, or surprised me with their ability to offer support to inmates beyond their assigned roles. To my dismay, as the research progressed I found my own frustrations too closely resembled my observations of these conflicting behaviours.

It was only through undertaking a reflective process that I was able to assimilate these conflicts. Geertz (1993) expounds the interpretive process that I as researcher engaged with as a “thinking of thoughts” that explicates the surface appearance of social experiences and draws out deeper understandings. It is therefore through this aligning of my personal experiences as a researcher, or “finding (my) feet” (p. 13), within the context of female inmates that enabled a positioning of myself within their world. My own personal narrative as a result of this self-conscious reflexivity allowed me to participate in and with the lives of the women and staff I encountered in the prison system.

This reflective process then allowed my story within this context to become a reference point from which a broader audience may extract meaning and gain insights and understandings (Alexander, 2005). Geertz (1993) refers to this interpretive avenue as a means of “tak(ing) us into the heart” (p.18) of the lives of incarcerated women as they are lived. Broadening the general public’s understanding of the impacts of the corrective institution upon the everyday lives of incarcerated women and its impacts upon rehabilitation guides my purpose as a researcher.

## **Research Focus**

The initial research focussed on the benefits of natural environments for marginalised populations, such as women in prison. Other research with marginalised populations conducted by environmental psychologists (S. Kaplan, 1995; S. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982; S. Kaplan & Talbot, 1983) has indicated that engagement with natural environments provides benefits to emotional well-being. These benefits include relief from emotional pain that may be expressed through negative emotions and depressive symptoms. Symptoms of depression may be expressed primarily through feelings of sadness, along with other feelings such as self-directed hostility, shame, anger, fear and guilt (Carey, Finch, & Carey, 1991). In Differential Emotion Theory (Izard, 1994) emotions are defined in categories with related sub-categories of feelings.

Therefore, emotional well-being may be expressed through the primary emotion of joy and feelings of contentment, cheerfulness, delight and pleasure. These feelings may vary in intensity, commensurate with the degree to which an event is seen by a participant as desirable. Conversely, lack of well-being may be expressed through the primary emotion of distress with feelings of displeasure, loneliness, misery and regret that are reflective of symptoms of depression. Again, the degree to which an event is undesirable may affect the expressed intensity of these feelings (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988).

These discussions framed the initial research which sought to provide opportunities for women in prison to access a rehabilitative program through the establishment of the garden project. However, from its early implementation, attempts at delivering the garden project for incarcerated women exposed an apparent dichotomy between current rehabilitation rhetoric and the every-day reality of establishing a program within the prison environment. Early attempts to engage inmates in the garden project, particularly in the RCCW, triggered concerns regarding the limited discussion in women-focussed discourse regarding the effects of the prison environment on program delivery and engagement of inmates with in-prison programs.

Therefore, the dichotomy between the ‘exclusionary’ outcomes of imprisonment and attempts through in-prison programming and policies to integrate or ‘include’ female inmates in preparation for release progressively came into view. As a result, the research focus broadened to look at the role of the penal institution in the functioning and outcomes of the garden project within the current corrective system for women in NSW. Foucault’s (1977) penal justice critique, Weber’s domination (Brennan, 1997; Weber, 1978a), and Goffman’s (1961) totalitarian discourses provide theoretical frameworks which situate discussions around the enactment of power within penal environments, its impact upon female inmates and how these impacts effect rehabilitation.

This research then was premised on the goal of rehabilitation for women in prison that addresses issues related to women's disenfranchisement and social exclusion in Australia. This is in line with NSW Departmental discussions recognising that a significant proportion of female inmates in Australia has encountered poverty related issues in their every-day lives (Easteal, 2001b; N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services, 2000; NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2005). These issues relate to social and economic poverty, along with histories of abuse, and are more broadly seen as factors in the exposure of women to criminal activity (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Greene, Haney, & Hurtado, 2000; Hancock, 1995).

In addition to coping with issues that place women on the margins of society, women who are mothers often need to parent their children alone (Carlen, 1998; Ciabattari, 2007; Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Ferraro & Moe, 2003) which exposes them to risk of further disenfranchisement. Recognition then that the experience of women in prison is unique, and as such rehabilitative goals need to address women-specific contexts of offending, provided the research impetus to explore the holistic, rehabilitative benefits of engagement with a small garden for an already marginalised population.

## **Research Questions**

This research began with the question:

- Is it possible for rehabilitative programs such as the garden project to be used as a rehabilitative tool that provides holistic benefits for female inmates, such as a sense of well-being, as well as develop life skills that might assist in addressing women's contexts of offending?

However, after initiation of the garden project, this question broadened to include:

1. What are the effects of totalisation for women in prison and how is power exercised within the corrective facility?

and,

2. What are the implications of these effects on rehabilitative programs, such as the garden project?

## **Research Aims and Objectives**

The early research aims sought to explore the rehabilitative benefits for female inmates of engagement with a small garden. Given the acknowledged marginalisation of a significant proportion of the female inmate population in Australia, exploring the benefits of engagement with natural environments was felt to be appropriate for the targeted research population. In addition to this initial aim, the research included an exploration of the garden project's benefits upon female inmate's sense of well-being, expressed through feelings of satisfaction and enjoyment, as well as developing skills and leisure interests.

However, after implementation of the garden project, the initial aims broadened to include an exploration of the impacts of the penal system upon rehabilitation for women in prison through the implementation of a rehabilitative program, such as the garden project. The research objectives included exploring the effects of the penal system upon women's every-day lived experiences and how their experiences impacted upon rehabilitative opportunities offered in corrective facilities in NSW. In addition, the working realities for staff were explored through my own experience of working in the penal environment.

## **Thesis Structure**

The first three chapters of this thesis provide an overview of the factors that are critical to an understanding of why this research work was undertaken and the background to the concepts that inform the research questions. These are followed by Chapters Four and Five which outline the methodological context for the project design and emergent findings. Two discussion chapters follow which situate the emergent findings in a narrative charting the progress of the garden project. Finally, the conclusion chapter synthesises these discussions.

### ***Chapter One***

The first chapter sets the foundation, the ‘why’ and ‘how’ that underscored the initial background research. It also explores the research process from the point of view of the researcher, the interpretive journey of where I as researcher fit within a culture that is alien to my familiar world in accordance with Hertz’ premise that the ‘self’ of the researcher be made visible (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Chapter One also expounds the aims and goals of this thesis and raises the concepts that drove the initial field work and the later questions that formulated subsequent explorations in the field. Through background literature the rationale will position this thesis within the social contexts of current research. In addition, the rationale will briefly illuminate the current rhetoric that positions the “correction” practices that impact women today.

The purpose of this chapter then is to generate foundational understandings in the context of the thesis and raise issues that will take the reader through to Chapters Two and Three. In line with Geertz (1993), the reader is drawn into the heart of the research process through these foundational chapters that elucidate the methodologies and results chapters that follow.

## ***Chapter Two***

The role of Chapter Two provides an understanding of the women whose lived realities equate with poverty and marginalisation. This chapter draws on Foucault's (1977) construct of exclusionary processes instigated by the state to explore the social disenfranchisement of particular social groups, such as marginalised women, that labels them indigent. In exploring this construct, the chapter explores the ongoing role of familial abuse as a factor of poverty and touches on how these issues affect already marginalised groups of women.

Chapter Two discusses the current punitive practices that embrace welfare policies and how these may also act as pathways to prison for women and how these practices affect women differently to that of men. It finishes with insights into how socially imposed stigma contribute to on-going marginalisation for women.

## ***Chapter Three***

The initial focus for this chapter explores this construct that defines women in prison which in turn informs penal codes and practices for women. Within this context the chapter explores the historic role of punishment for women and the current enactment of control policies of punishment that drives women's incarceration. The policies of difference embedded within social and economic contexts of women's behaviours deemed 'criminal' and the effects upon women and their families are discussed.

Chapter Three goes on to discuss the gendering of current policies of control and the physical attributes of prisons that warehouse women as a result of gender-specific policies. The enactment of gender-specific policies and how they affect women with mental health issues in prison follows on from the previous discussion. Finally, discussions around rehabilitation for women in prison explores current rehabilitative rhetoric within NSW and more broadly.



This discussion concludes with an exploration of the ‘what works’ literature, highlighting issues around gendered classification processes that impact upon rehabilitation for women in prison.

#### ***Chapter Four***

Chapter Four gives an overview of the methodological contexts that informed the research terrain. It explores the interpretivist and critical paradigms used to gain insights into the complex and messy social world that was researched. It also discusses the role of ‘self’ for the researcher and how this is situated within the research processes.

The second part of the chapter discusses the genesis of the research and how this evolved to form the current research focus. The project design is detailed, with a description of the research population and ethical issues regarding research with vulnerable populations. The fieldwork settings are described in detail, along with interview processes, semi-participatory observation methods and reflexive tools used. The interpretive tools used to analyse the data are discussed at the conclusion of the chapter.

#### ***Chapter Five***

Chapter Five charts the processes of analysis that reveal the emergent findings and early categories of understanding. This includes re-stating the aims of the research, followed by an outline of the stages of analysis that bring the raw data to life. The stages of analysis define researcher perceptions; sort the data into relevant categories that enable categories of understanding to develop. These were Inmate Culture, Punitive Cycles, Surveillance Mechanisms and Architectures of Control.

Following these early stages, the emergent findings then formed the basis for thematic development that led to on-going theoretical explorations of Weberian and Foucauldian discourses, as well as Goffman’s totalisation discussions. This was followed by the formation of theory that related these discussions back to

the experience of implementing the garden project within the penal environment. As a result, the penal phantom is exposed and informs two streams of inquiry into its impacts on the female inmates and how power is exercised; and its impacts for female inmates and rehabilitation are exposed that shape the following discussions chapters.

### ***Chapter Six***

In line with the first stream of inquiry, this chapter highlights the effects of warehousing women labelled as ‘indigent’ in penal institutions and how power is enacted in the RCCW and the WTC. As a naïve researcher in this context my experiences of the penal environment throughout the conduct of the garden project expose these effects of totalisation. Set against the theoretical backdrop of Foucault’s ‘indigent’ construct, Weber’s domination and Goffman’s totalitarianism discourses, this chapter highlights the gradual exposure of gendered penal codes in NSW during the course of the research project.

The data texts illuminate the every-day lived experiences of incarceration for female inmates. This chapter also reflects on the role of the institution in conflicting staff behaviours towards inmates. My own responses to this environment highlight the role of the penal institution in the continued labelling of inmates.

### ***Chapter Seven***

The second stream of inquiry is discussed in this chapter through an exploration of the effects of warehousing on programs targeting incarcerated women. This discussion highlights the penally imposed burden of responsibility for rehabilitative progress on women in prison and the misfit between control policies and rehabilitation rhetoric. Inmates’ stories continue to be juxtaposed against my own experiences of the prison environment as a result of establishing the project in both the RCCW and the WTC. In addition, observations of staff behaviours as well as reflexive observations of my own illustrate on-going conflicts between control and rehabilitation rhetoric. Issues around the

gendering of classification processes seen through inmate stories of their incarcerative experiences further highlight these conflicts in attempting to address rehabilitative ideals for female inmates within a penal institution. This chapter exposes the neutralising, fragmenting and corroding impacts of the penal phantom on rehabilitation programs and outcomes for women in prison.

### ***Chapter Eight***

Chapter Eight concludes with a summation of the problematic of warehousing a population already marginalised and disenfranchised in a system that further excludes them. It suggests that women who have already experienced a range of poverty related issues are further entrenched into poverty as a result of incarceration. Further this chapter suggests that the majority of women in prison do not pose a security threat to the broader community, and as such incarcerative practices need to be re-thought. It points to the establishment of educational programs and support services for women within their communities as an alternative to imprisonment. This chapter concludes with the suggestion that along with alternatives to incarceration, early intervention in the form of multi-faceted educational and support programs need to be funded and established in marginalised communities within an integrative support network.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the genesis of the research that began with a concept of developing a horticulture therapy project for women in prison. The initial rehabilitative aim of the project drew on research that showed the benefits of natural environments in rehabilitation programs for marginalised populations. This fit with the concept of using horticulture as a rehabilitative tool that provided holistic benefits for female inmates, such as a sense of well-being, commensurate with departmental rehabilitative focus for female inmates.

However, tensions between rehabilitative rhetoric and the realities of establishing the garden project in two women's correctional facilities exposed the dichotomy between these ideals. Navigating this research terrain exposed personal insights into the reality of incarceration for women. As such, encounters with the penal environment in the early stages of initiating the garden project in the first correctional facility led to a broadening of the research focus. This included 1.) an exploration of the effects of totalisation for women in prison and how power is exercised with the corrective facility; and 2.) an exploration of the implications of these effects on rehabilitative programs, such as the garden project.

Finally, this chapter outlines inclusively each of the eight thesis chapters that form this written thesis. Each chapter is discussed sequentially, foreshadowing and giving shape to the on-going research, from discussions around poverty related issues for women, control and warehousing of women, methodologies, project design and emergent findings, through to two discussion chapters regarding the identified streams of inquiry and the final conclusion chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE INDIGENT WOMAN

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#### Mechanisms of Social Exclusion

*"I grew up in a little bush town in Queensland of 200 people  
and what this day says to Australian women and to Australian girls  
is that you can do anything, you can be anything ..."*

Comment from Quentin Bryce on her appointment as Australia's  
first female Governor General (Davis, 2008).

The purpose of this chapter is to situate women at risk of contact with criminal justice systems within their community and familial contexts. In attempting to refute the self-determinism of popular public rhetoric as reflected in the above quote, this chapter will seek to explore how some women are exposed to 'risk' of contact with the criminal justice system, and the developmental and social pathways that facilitate that risk. I use 'risk' in this context to refer specifically to the risk of exposure to criminal justice sanctions through the mechanisms of poverty for women, which contrasts with rhetorics around the 'risk' attributed to women in prison drawn from the Risk, Needs and Responsivity (RNR) literature (Martinson, 1974) that places a criminogenic lens over female inmates' needs.

For the purposes of clarity, 'mechanisms of poverty'<sup>1</sup> in the context of this chapter refers to the complexity of factors that are seen to contribute to economic and social poverty for women. These factors are numerous cited (Britton, 2004; Carlen, 1998; Easta, 2001a; Hancock, 1995; Richie, 2001) as including familial abuse in its variant forms, inadequate or unstable housing,

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<sup>1</sup> A definition of poverty is included in the segment titled 'Wives of Welfare' later in this chapter.

poor educational attainment, insubstantial employment opportunities, economic impoverishment and/or welfare dependency and social marginalisation.

In discussing ‘risk’ in the context of poverty and its oft associated outcomes, such as criminally sanctioned activities, it is necessary to explore the developmental and psycho-social conditioning that contributes to a common attribute of poverty; that is, abuse and victimisation of children and women. While abuse of women in the home is not peculiar to impoverished communities, for economically disadvantaged women issues of disempowerment and lack of economic opportunities increase the likelihood of on-going victimisation. For many women, the experience of familial abuse has been a reality of everyday life in their childhood which may then perpetuate into adult relationships. Research in Australia estimates that eighty-five per cent of female inmates have been victims of abuse prior to their imprisonment (Easteal, 2001b). Given the normative attitudes towards abuse (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2003) in some socio-economic and cultural contexts, this estimate may be conservative. This chapter asserts that exposure of women and children to abuse contribute to factors that increase the likelihood of their contact with the current criminal justice system.

Unlike some earlier streams of criminology which used pathologies of difference to construct the female inmate as ‘deviant’ (Lemert, 1967), this chapter seeks to explore the social and economic impacts of labelling, shaming, and marginalisation of women that contributes to their incarceration within the current judicial system. In addition, emancipation theories portray women committing more crime as a result of distorted interpretations of feminist emancipation (Chesney-Lind, 2006). However, other feminist criminologists refute this concept and indicate that women are more likely to become entangled with criminality as a victim of increasing economic and social marginalisation. Regardless, judicial attitudes reflecting emancipatory explanations of women’s criminal activities have been deemed to have served to increase incarcerative penalties against women, particularly those seen to contravene traditional stereotypes of womanhood (Britton, 2004).

The emphasis on treating women equally to men, with men's experiences forming a base line in much criminological theory, is slowly being supplanted by feminist theory that supports women's unique experiences as valid (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 2004). It is from this concept of women's experiences of prison as unique that have formed ideologies<sup>2</sup> which have contributed to current women-centred incarceration and are seen to be implicated in increases in punitive sentencing of women (Hannah-Moffat, 2004a). Given the complex social contexts associated with women's imprisonment, it would appear that increased incarceration rates for women does not ameliorate, but indeed contributes further to social and economic issues annexed to their incarceration.

### **Prison Recruits**

The "indigent" person in Foucauldian (1977) terms refers to the social construction of the individual who is facilitated along numerous pathways via social mechanisms, engendered through state institutions, towards the socially constructed model of "delinquency". For women whose social contexts fall outside accepted or ideological social models, this process is exemplified through practices of exclusion towards social and economic disenfranchisement. Therefore, the continuum of poverty from disarray and disorder toward transgression of laws and social rules represents a complex slide from living within socially acceptable order through to socially unacceptable rule breaking.

However, for women who have spent their important developmental years in abusive domestic habitats the slide from order to chaos may never be initiated from a starting point of order. Rather, the chaos and disorder that often accompanies abuse may be an entrenched and intrinsic component of every-day reality for many women and children. Further, women who have spent some of their important formative years in penal juvenile justice institutions may know only an ever consuming chaos that transports them beyond the boundaries of law (Howlett, 1995) without knowing or fully understanding the intricacies of

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<sup>2</sup> The ideologies that have contributed to women-centred incarceration will be discussed in Chapter 3.

societal expectations. It is these women who I see as being cast into roles as misfits inflicted upon them by state mechanisms, such as criminal justice systems.

Women who have been victimised and/or institutionalised may never be able to conform to or comply with acceptable roles expected of women within the wider community, a community that further broadens the divide between the acceptable and unacceptable through a variety of public discourses. Socially accepted models reflect dominant ideological roles of motherhood and faithfulness and contribute to the demonising of women who don't fit within these paradigms as neglectful, irresponsible (Hudson, 2002) and outcasts from, or at the very least, existing on the periphery of general society.

These images of 'fallen' women are parodied consistently in popular media, usually in reference to portrayals of sexual deviancy (Belknap, 2001) re-enforcing the image of some girls as bad (Easteal, 2001a). This imagery informs public discourse, often perpetuated by popular media, in reference to women who are deemed to have been active in socially aberrant behaviours. Illustrations of this in the media include the provocative use of headlines such as "black widow" when reporting on trials of women who are accused of murdering for gain (Grinberg, 2007) for instance.



A contemporary example of such portrayals was seen in a segment on the popular television program, *Dr Phil*, aired in Australia on 6 February, 2007 (McGraw, 2007). In this segment a young 'middle class' woman is berated for allowing herself to commit acts of prostitution in order to feed her alcohol addiction. As the program progressed it was revealed that this young woman had been raped as a teenager. However, throughout the program this fact is given scant attention. Equally, the men implicit in the woman's rape and prostitution are referred to only passingly. This is in line with Hudson (2002) who sees the female subject of such crimes attributed with public derision. The portrayal in this program fits with a public perception of responsibility for promiscuous or sexually 'deviant' behaviours that are cast upon the subject of the crime as opposed to the perpetrator. Garfinkel (1956) refers to this as a form of degradation where public perceptions of individuals are seen to fall outside socially acceptable imagery.

Such public imagery portrays women who are abused as somehow deserving of the abuse inflicted upon them (Crinall, 1999). The public forum that portrays a woman, in this instance, as one who apparently purposely 'turns her back' on a 'middle class' lifestyle and allows herself to become a prostitute in order to support her addiction feeds the concept that she is somehow inherently 'bad'. The concept of 'bad' is not attributed to the substance and its ability to entrap an individual in a cycle of addiction, but rather that the addict is 'bad' by debasing herself through the purportedly deviant acts necessary to support her addiction. Further, when the television studio audience is asked to participate in expressing their disapproval through raising their hands, this woman's humiliation is very publicly sealed. This public derision illustrates Garfinkel's (1956) degradation ceremony in action by re-enforcing the public perception of a 'bad girl' image for this woman. She is then expected to comply with the degradation ceremony by publicly acknowledging her 'badness' in order to seek the proffered rehabilitation that will correct her.

Carlen (1998) refers to the labelling of groups of women through public discourse as a type of branding. She illustrates this in an example of a publicly attributed label, such as "folk devils" in debates around punitive welfare

controls. Women who are categorised as ‘single mothers’ are “to be ‘deterred’ from the single state” by the infliction of punitive controls designed to purge society of this underclass (p.6). Rather than engendering empathy for the single mother’s economic deprivation and the effect of this for her children, the woman who dares to trespass beyond the boundaries of the public perception of traditional social roles of wife and mother may face severe public accusatory rhetoric that Britton (2004) sees as still re-enforcing public debates around economic sanctioning.

In categorising and labelling social groups or individuals, Crotty (1998) states that the label attributed to a group within a particular context provides greater insights into the society imposing particular labels, rather than the group that is labelled. From this standpoint it is possible to see how the paradox of a neo-liberalistic stance has come into play, with the labelling of particular groups of women in ways that purportedly remove their right to welfare (A. Barry, Osborne, & Rose, 1996), as in single mothers deemed undeserving of economic support. Labelling as such has enabled the removal of economic support in the form of welfare which in turn contributes to the economic exclusion of certain groups of women. Equally, labelling allows social exclusion processes to continue through the implementation of punitive controls enforced upon women who are deemed to have contravened their right to welfare support. Hirsch (2004), tables this as a form of shaming, where women on welfare who fail to provide sufficient information to authorities are questioned about their domestic situation.

In attempting to unpick some of these social constructs that target and label some groups of women, it is useful to look at how concepts of portrayals of ‘evil women’ are embedded within the collective social consciousness. None is more evocative than the imagery of ‘bad girls’ as women who, as we have seen, are publicly attributed with being the ‘cause’ of the physical and psycho-social harm inflicted upon them.

## **‘Bad Girls’**

The popular media imagery of ‘bad girls’ is integral to the abuse that many women in prison have experienced within and annexed to the family unit. Acts of violence committed within the familial context are often embedded in a rhetoric that skews blame for the act of violence upon the woman. A ‘she deserved’ attitude serves to deflect the responsibility for the act from the perpetrator to the victim. This attitude is clearly reflected in the code of silence that surrounds sexual abuse of children; a fear instilled into the abused child that if she breaks the unspoken code of silence and tells others, then she will be seen as the cause of trouble (Stubbs, 1997). Chenoweth (1997) depicts an extreme example of the effectiveness of this unexpressed code in the silence that surrounds and perpetuates the abuse of women with disabilities.

This code of silence, the explicit or implied instruction of ‘not to talk’ is seen by Eastal (2001a) as being passed from one victim to another of the same perpetrator. Equally, she states that this ‘code’ may be used as a means of coercion and control by numerous perpetrators of the same victim within a multi-generational family context. This accentuates the effect of the abuse on its victims by entangling them into a web of secrecy that has as its centre a deep core of shame. In the private domain, as in the public arena, this shame is not generally attached to the perpetrators of the abuse. Rather, the shame becomes attached to the victims of the abuse. The perpetrator of the abuse may consistently use manipulation of the victim’s shame (Stubbs, 1997) to enforce the code of silence in order to continue the abusive behaviour.

The concept of shame is a powerful emotion that may enshroud an individual’s everyday reality. Within psychological parameters, shame is defined as an emotional component of depression. In depressive symptoms, while sadness may be a primary emotion, shame is associated with self-directed hostility, anger, fear, guilt (Carey et al., 1991). A deep core of shame may be expressed by a victim of abuse through acts of self harm, the ultimate of which is suicide (De Bellis, 2005). At a *Women in Corrections* conference held in Victoria in

2000 it was cited that female inmate mental health is characterised by high rates of depression and anxiety symptoms. Female inmates report twice the rate of health problems to that of male prisoners, nationally and internationally (Armytage, Martyres, & Feiner, 2000). In the Australian context, screening for mental health of a sample of female inmates remanded into custody in the NSW correctional system found that ninety percent had suffered from mental ill health during the twelve months prior to screening (Report of the New South Wales Chief Health Officer, 2003). This correlates with the connection between ongoing health issues pertaining to a negative sense of self, anxiety, depression and even post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and child sexual abuse that is well recognised in psychological discourse (Islam-Zwart & Vik, 2004).

Studies looking at the universality of emotions across cultural lines have used facial expressions as a tool to gaining insights into the innateness of felt emotions (Izard, 1994). If facial and non-discursive dependent emotional expressions are innately understood then it is easy to see how shame, although never overtly expressed, may be used as a coercive force by the perpetrator within the familial or 'domestic' arena. The private and secret shame of the victim of childhood abuse and the public shame engendered as a result of incarceration may be enacted similarly, connected along a continuum of shameful feelings that may never be overtly expressed by a woman who finds herself caught up in the criminal justice system. Therefore, when an individual assumes the publicly imaged portrayal of herself as shameful, or 'deviant', then her internalised perception of self is markedly changed. As a result, Schur (1972) cites that an individual's responses are then shaped by their self-perceptions as a result of public shaming.

The labelling of run away girls who resort to living on the streets to escape victimisation at home as 'delinquents' is seen by Chesney-Lind (1997) as illustrating how completely the process of deflecting responsibility for the abuse from the perpetrator to the abused is accomplished. Because of her homelessness the female victim becomes the focus of authorities, not the perpetrator of the violence enacted against her. The state sanctioning of her as a 'delinquent' re-enforces the abuse she has endured as somehow being her fault

which Hancock (1995) sees as further endorsing the unspoken and unrecognised 'code of silence'.

Similarly, a woman who is sexually assaulted or raped by her partner may endure the shame and humiliation engendered by public perceptions of the rights of the male in a patriarchal marriage or relationship. The unspoken assumption that the victim must have provoked the perpetrator is a concept that still appears to permeate all layers of society. Easta (2001a) portrays how this can be seen in judicial attitudes, both past and present, where bias against the female victims imbues courtroom practices and outcomes. An example she gives may be the need to quantify what harm has been done to a woman in terms of violence before a claim of marital rape is recognised in a court of law. This implies that a woman has been compliant regarding the act if she has not fought back and disregards her lack of consent. Only recently have there been shifts in perception that are beginning to unmask the unwritten law of the 'code of silence' that has hidden marital rape and other violent acts towards women within the confines of marriage. However, these shifts in attitude may still be tempered with a view that women somehow contribute to the violence enacted against them and are exemplified by medicalised judicial comments that Scutt (1995) sees pertains to a woman's 'failing to cope' or acquiring a 'learned helplessness'. As such, the shaming or labelling of the female victim continues via legal sanctioning within the public forum. Coupled with Goulding's (2004) portrayal of the problems women exiting prison experience in re-entering community and family situations, social isolation as a result of their imprisonment remains a stark reality post-release. Dutreix (2000) in discussing a South Australian women's post release support service, states that practical and emotional support post-release for women remains integral to their successful re-entry into the general community. However, this is often countered by a social system that continues to enforce helplessness on women endeavouring to re-integrate into society.

In her depiction of women who have killed violent partners, Easta (2001a) reveals the primary role of shame in consuming, and thus maintaining control, over a woman who has been the subject of violent behaviour. Shame then becomes a powerful coercive tool that Stubbs (1997) states is used in the process

of psychologically crippling the victim of abuse so as to render that person incapable of helping themselves or extricating themselves from a violent and abusive situation.

In studies looking at the developmental impacts of abuse on child victims, components of neglect, both emotional and physical, are also defined as abuse. Neglect is posited as including factors such as exposure to violence, or domestic violence, while not being the direct target of such violence. Neglect also extends to not providing a child with access to proper medical attention and educational opportunities, abandonment, lack of supervision and not providing basic needs such as nutrition, clothing, hygiene and safety (De Bellis, 2005). Abuse as neglect may encompass all of the previously mentioned conditions as well as sexual and physical abuse. In children, the psychosocial and neuropsychological outcomes of such abuse may have detrimental impacts on developmental functioning. These may be marked by physical, behavioural, cognitive and emotional development impairments (De Bellis, 2005), as seen in victims of trauma or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Dalglish, 2004). It is not too difficult to see then how the psycho-socialising of a child victim of abuse may further contribute to a child's exposure to violence and trauma and how this may continue into adult relationships through what Chesney-Lind (1997) portrays as the cycle of violence that is further replicated as victim becomes perpetrator.

The 'code of silence' then becomes an all encompassing tool of abuse that contributes to the power of the perpetrator and depletes the victim of any conceptual or real 'power', if indeed they were in a position to possess such power previously. The use of coercion and control as a means of gaining abusive power and authority over victims is argued by Websdale(1998) as reflecting a use of patriarchal structures in the gaining of dominance. The broadly used terminology that describes familial abuse as 'domestic violence' points to a historically embedded social construct of rightful male dominance. That is, the 'domestic' sphere is the private domain of the adult male and anything that happens within that sphere remains 'private'. Further, Websdale (1998) argues that a patriarchal state sanctioning of the domestic home as a

‘man’s domain’ or ‘castle’ has contributed to the compartmentalising of familial abuse as being separate to and away from the public arena. Indeed, utilising this argument, it would appear that in patriarchal societies the public may be accused of being complicit in its preparedness to avert its gaze from activities that are deemed to be private and therefore beyond scrutiny.

Throughout his ethnographic study of rural American women, Websdale details the refusal of neighbours to acknowledge the plight of isolated rural women within their community whom they knew to have been subject to vicious beatings by their husbands. Thus the powerlessness of the women cited in his study within their domestic sphere is multiplied in their communities by the implicit denial of the abuse through the aversion of the public gaze from the violence enacted upon them. The ‘code of silence’ then extends into the broader community, further isolating victims of abuse.

Such examples illustrate how the ‘code of silence’ not only isolates victims, but also fractures and fragments familial relationships. Women (and children) who are abused may live a very isolated life, with fragmented and minimised connections to the wider community. Eastal (2001a) points to traditional familial roles in patriarchal societies that contribute to the subordination of a woman to the male abuser and other roles in the family, such as daughter or sister, further contributing to her isolation. The fracturing of family relationships is seen as extending to relationships in the broader community, with women in abusive relationships being separated out from any form of peer support or friendships. This isolation intensifies the abusive relationship, ensuring the woman is both socially and often economically dependent on her abuser. Isolation and shame may be intensified further when they are placed in culturally specific frameworks, particularly in terms of cultures that place high value on gender roles and privacy. The denial by the victims themselves, as well as relatives and community members, completes the circle of silence that encapsulates women and child victims of abuse.

This ‘code of silence’ engendered through shaming then may help to explain how the dependency of victims of violence on the perpetrator is fostered and the

privacy of the family is preserved in communities where the abuse is public knowledge. Even if the abuser is publicly exposed and the victim removed from his or her control, the social and economic sanctioning of abused women and/or their children is played out through the enactment of institutional interventions.



## Sanctioning the 'Bad' Girl

Carlen (1998) clearly depicts the role of public shaming (Sampson & Laub, 1993) in facilitating popular rhetoric around sanctioning individuals who are deemed as not conforming to social norms. While societal expectations of what is acceptable may change from era to era, outcasting or sanctioning particular individuals or groups from the broader social community reflects historical perspectives.

In Australia, the construction of the immoral female in mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century is historically depicted through stories of women who find themselves abandoned to poverty, becoming outcasts through a socially inscribed imposition of circumstances that prescribes long term impoverishment. From the goldrush era in Australia in the mid 1800's, documentation of women left behind to fend for themselves while their men were enticed off to the goldfields show that such women and their children were often reduced to desperate impoverishment (Hanslow, 2001). In an era where women's 'immorality' (Chesney-Lind, 1997) was judged harshly, women who were unable to support themselves were deemed as vagrants and could be imprisoned for periods of up to three months. After imprisonment it would be almost impossible for such women to be accepted back into society and find suitable work which could support themselves and their children. Women who were socially disenfranchised in this way were left few choices, resorting to criminally sanctioned behaviours such as prostitution in order to survive (Hanslow, 2001).

Even now, being the sole carer of her children may still complicate a woman's ability to provide for herself and her children, further contributing to her destitution (Ferraro & Moe, 2003). While the historical lens enables us to be shocked at unjust judicial responses to pre-21<sup>st</sup> Century women in poverty, current attitudes to 'bad girls' engender similar societal responses to that of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century 'immoral' female. The construct of the 'single mother' (Carlen, 1998) who is bringing up her multiple fathered children in relative poverty while purportedly deliberately draining the public coffers of pension or welfare

monies is not dissimilar to the construct of the 'immoral' 19<sup>th</sup> Century woman. According to Garfinkel (1956), attributing a label of condemnation to the targeted individual enables them to be objectified and as such identified as different and no longer belonging. This leads to self-perceptions of 'otherness' by individuals as a result of being labelled (Schur, 1972).

It is here then that the impacts of childhood developmental processes and societal judgements intersect. Collective moral indignation targeted toward individuals designated as 'others' culminates in acts of degradation that label and separate. In line with Garfinkel (1956), societal processes are enacted within a given society, purporting to transform individuals under the guise of rendering them into suitably acceptable citizens.

Therefore, while it is important to note the role of interrupted developmental processes during childhood as a result of on-going abuse (Carr, 2004), this explains only in part the pathways by which a woman may travel towards incarceration. Equally, issues that lead to economic and social marginalisation are nested in a milieu of social complexities. In discussions around pathways to crime, Sampson and Laub (1993) posit that stable social bonds in adulthood may assist in ameliorating the effects of childhood abuse. However, if childhood experiences extend into adulthood the continuance of the effects of the abuse for the victim may be increased. The nexus of complexity relating to exposure to familial criminal behaviours in the current punitive environment, may cloud the realities of children who are already exposed to various forms of abuse, whether they be within the spectrum of neglect (De Bellis, 2005), or more violent forms of abuse. As Davies (2005a) cites, the punitive state disempowerment of vulnerable individuals serves to legitimate their further exposure to professional interventions.

Although the detrimental effects of familial abuse on children are now recognised, the long term effects of institutionalised abuse at the hands of the state on children are only recently being brought into public debate (Senate Community Affairs Committee, 2003). The positioning of children and adolescents as victims of abuse which may have on-going effects in terms of

broad social impacts, individually and communally (Flavin, 2004), needs to include the on-going social costs of economic poverty for women and children. For instance, in terms of activities associated with prostitution, the relationship between sexual abuse, homelessness, drug dependency and subsistence employment in exchange for prostitution are clearly visible (Hancock, 1995). However, state interventions relating to the vulnerability or criminality of a child or adolescent who engages in prostitution pivots largely on the legally prescribed 'age of consent'. This in turn dictates the treatment or intervention she 'requires' at the hands of the intervening authority. If a young woman engaging in acts of prostitution is deemed to be under-age regarding sexual consent, this may automatically lead to an assumption by the state that she is participating in prostitution involuntarily in which case she would be defined as a victim and referred to the relevant welfare authority (Phoenix, 2002).

Conversely, if an individual involved in prostitution was deemed to be above the age of consent then she would be categorised as participating in illegal acts of prostitution voluntarily and referred on to the justice system. The codifying of prostitution then as an act of crime based on the supposed voluntary or involuntary involvement (Hancock, 1995; Phoenix, 2002) of an individual does not take into account factors such as the economic pressure placed upon a homeless<sup>3</sup> young woman, for instance, to engage in a form of activity that provides her with remuneration in order to survive. The reality for a young woman who may be homeless as a result of a complex nexus of abuse from which she was seeking to escape, does not appear to play any important role in amelioration of criminal sanctions against her for participating in acts of prostitution if she is over the legal age of consent. This is further complicated by interpretive and arbitrary complexities that relegates age related vulnerability to a unclear areas of grey (Hancock, 1995) which informs debates regarding the exploitative nature or otherwise of juvenile prostitution.

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<sup>3</sup> Homelessness in this context moves beyond just being poor and with no home – it relates to a disconnectedness and disengagement from all levels of society, such as local community, friends and family, and living without structure, usually in isolation (Hatty, 1997).

Indeed, some feminist criminologists point to the criminalising of only one participant in the prostitution act, and a paucity of convictions against clients and abusers involved in the procurement of children or youth for the purposes of prostitution (Hancock, 1995). The use of vulnerable women by pimps and those proffering illicit substances as a means of enticing and entangling women in criminal activities via prostitution suggests that voluntary entry into prostitution is a 'too simple' base line from which to judge a woman's criminality (Phoenix, 2002) or otherwise. Other feminist criminologists suggest that it is these mechanisms of classification grounded in constructs of gender idealism, classism and racism that criminalise aspects of women's poverty (Belknap, 2001). Such punitive classifications are therefore seen as further contributing to on-going cycles of marginalisation across a range of social and economic spheres for many women (Carlen, 1998).

The myriad social, health, and economic issues that are attached to women who find themselves in prisons arise often out of desperate and chaotic biographies. It is therefore possible to see how pathways to incarceration for many women have led variously through state punitive institutions and controls. As such, an accumulation of on-going and sustained issues further mark women on their way to contacts with punitive controls. Therefore, in order to cope with trauma related issues women may resort to alcohol and illicit substance abuse (Carlen, 1998), further exposing girls and women to entanglement with criminal activities (Johnson, 2004) and consequently more punitive controls in both juvenile justice and adult prison systems (Belenko, Sprott, & Petersen, 2004).

Although the presence of girls and women in drug related criminal cultures may have increased, some research has shown that their roles remain largely ancillary and genderised (Maher & Daly, 1996). Indeed, traditional views of female gender roles are still prevalent amongst disenfranchised girls and young women (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1998). As a consequence, women's involvement in criminal activities, such as the drug economy, generally has less status than men's involvement. Therefore, women are forced to rely on income generated from related activities such as sex work (Maher & Daly, 1996). This is in contrast to Carrington's (2006) discussion of the 'sisters in crime' theory

based on Adler's (1975) prediction that women's higher status generally would lead to their greater involvement in violent criminal activities. Rather, it would appear that the further involvement of girls and women in criminal activities has led to their being exposed to more victimisation and violence (Maher & Daly, 1996), as well as what Sampson & Laub (1993) see as increased punitive interventions, particularly for minority groups.

Within an Australian context, Johnson (2004) states that the role of illicit drugs in women's criminal activities, although recognised as a factor in the incarceration of women, is still not clearly understood and is subject to on-going research. However, Johnson recognises clear links for incarcerated women between familial abuse, involvement in sex trade activities, illicit drug use and mental health issues, as well as poor education levels and increased reliance on public housing or homelessness prior to their imprisonment. These factors expose social and economic marginality in particular communities, where Australian Indigenous women, for example, have higher representation of women living in public housing or on the street, entering the prison system at a younger age than the rest of the female prison population. Although the impacts on particular cultural groups are not explored in this research, their examples serve to illustrate how marginalisation exposes particular groups to punitively driven intervention.

Increased convictions of girls and young women for violent criminal activities within Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2005b) may at first appear to align with the 'sisters in crime' theory. However, Carrington (2006) states that upon review it is apparent that these offences are of a less violent nature than violent offences committed by boys. Certainly, despite the exponential increase in rates of imprisonment for women (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005), the number of women incarcerated for violent offences between 1993 and 2003 in Australia is still minimal when compared to the rest of the female inmate population (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2003)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> This will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

While statistics may partially answer the question of how increasing numbers of women have become involved with criminal justice systems, they do not illustrate the complexities of the numerous social and economic contexts within which these facts are embedded.

## **Anonymous Shadows**

In order to gain further insights into the societal impacts of economic marginalisation and increased incarceration rates for women, it is useful to look at the role state intervention in the care of children and adolescents plays in this process. The on-going punitiveness of child protection laws in Australia has been cited in recent reports tabled in the Australian Senate (Senate Community Affairs Committee, 2003; Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2005) as an archaic and often inappropriate role of the state regarding issues of childhood neglect and abuse. Such reports discuss the inappropriateness of institutional care for children. Equally, the role of children's courts that determine the criminality or welfarism of matters where children were placed in categories identifying them as juvenile offenders or neglected children was central to the administering of punitive regulations. One such report in 2003 (Senate Community Affairs Committee, 2003) states that laws which emanated largely from colonial Australian attitudes are still reflected in the 'ad hoc' rules and regulations that form current legislation and do not fully address the overall problems associated with neglected and abused children. This is exemplified in some 230 separate Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory pieces of legislation. A later Senate Report in 2005 (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2005) portrays these legislative laws as beset with inconsistent duplication and service gaps resulting in a complex web of disparate rules and regulations across all levels of government.

However, these reports also highlight the broad discretionary powers that carers have traditionally been given over children placed under their care within institutions and out-of-home or foster care. Governments and individual public servants were given power and control over every area of a child's daily life

which was seen as making them vulnerable to sustained abuse without accountability (Senate Community Affairs Committee, 2003). A child ‘charged’ with ‘neglect’ could be detained by police, and the Senate Report states that even as late as the 1980’s, girls were targeted for gender specific training that sought to regulate sexual behaviours. The vulnerability of such children to those who had complete and autonomous control over them has only recently been highlighted in the public arena as illustrated through the tabling of these reports in the Australian Parliament.

An example of institutional abuse is highlighted in a submission by one respondent to the Inquiry into children in institutional care. The report (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2005) cites the effects of the constant surveillance of the welfare system on a single parent family struggling to cope with poverty and children with disabilities as contributing to the family’s already significant problems. In this instance, the report cites the state as dealing with this family’s abuse and poverty issues by labelling the respondent (a daughter) as ‘uncontrollable’. She was subsequently placed in a sequence of institutions from the age of fourteen, exposing her to on-going institutionalised abuse.

The power of the state to declare children as ‘state wards’ due to their vulnerability or ‘uncontrollability’ until recently appears to have remained largely uninvestigated or questioned. State powers enabled the thrusting of ‘wardship’ onto children via the court system and imposing aspects of non-citizenship upon children. Bessant and Hil (2005) state that, as a result of their non-citizenship, children were further exposed to systems of regulatory and punitive controls. Therefore, children or adolescents were being incarcerated in punitive environments despite not having committed a criminal act. According to the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2003) these punitive actions were instituted up until the early 1990’s where children who were categorised as ‘wards’ of the state in Australia could be placed in custody.

Historically, we can see how the placement of children in state institutions as a consequence of forced removal from neglectful and abusive familial situations exposes already vulnerable children to a range of issues associated with enforced institutionalisation. Goffman's (1961) discussions on the characteristics of total institutions highlights the on-going impacts of placing already vulnerable children into an enclosed environment where most forms of social interaction with the broader community are limited or stifled. Although children may have been institutionalised in response to long-term exposure to abusive domestic environments, their social development in a total institution is subject to severe restrictions. Within the general community daily lives are compartmentalised, with designated places for different activities. Every-day activities such as sleeping and eating are usually conducted within a domestic environment, with schooling, work and play performed in different settings. Equally, leisure and sporting activities are often performed in separate physical domains, with travel to and from each of these places separating their physical space. Therefore, children who may have been marginalised as a consequence of poverty and/or abuse in the family home are further separated into a physical space where every separate activity is now conducted in a single environment from which there is little if any reprieve or escape. In addition, every activity is monitored and surveyed, where individuals are forced to comply with institutional rules and regulations.

The continuing generational consequences of totalised confinement are illustrated in on-going complex emotional, social and economic problems (Bessant & Hil, 2005). As such, problems associated with punitive and 'protective' institutionalisation (Goffman, 1961) are accentuated in children and young people from marginalised backgrounds (Bessant & Hil, 2005) compounding often already entrenched issues of social marginalisation and increased poverty.

The need to provide appropriate care and interventions for vulnerable children however, has further exposed the damaging effects of imposing criminal sanctions against such children under juvenile justice jurisdictions. While the connection between familial abuse, poverty, exposure to criminal activities and



subsequent juvenile criminality (Harris, 1989a) is well recognised, punitive responses ensure that children who are institutionalised and subsequently placed in juvenile justice correction centres will usually track onto adult correction centres. This punitive approach continues regardless of acknowledgement that institutionalisation, detention and imprisonment rarely offer rehabilitative options that might resolve or interrupt the imprisonment treadmill (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2003). The generational cycle of on-going poverty issues and entanglement with punitive state controls is thus instituted and on-going.

In a system that has been seen as historically failing to appropriately address issues of childhood neglect and abuse which have also been seen as contributing to adult incarceration (Bessant, Hil, & Watts, 2005; Harris, 1989a), the problematic of institutionalising girls and women with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues raises on-going concerns within the current criminal justice system. A recent report by the New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability (the Council) critiques the state government's attempts at addressing gaps in services for people with intellectual disabilities (PWID) within corrective services structures. While discussing some positive moves towards providing a network of support for PWID across several agencies in conjunction with the current judicial system, in their Framework Plus 5 report the Council highlights the current paucity of specific support services for female PWID in NSW prisons (NSW Council for Intellectual Disability, 2007). This report discusses the blanket of silence surrounding specific needs of women with intellectual disabilities that permeate services and institutions who house and support them. Chenoweth (1997) defines this as a paradox that while attempting to protect them, women with disabilities are generally separated out and hidden from general society through being placed in vulnerable situations within the institutions designed to protect them. She states that because of their disability women in group homes or institutions are often unable to communicate and voice the abuse they are suffering. Reflective of previous discussions on secrecy used as a tool of familial abuse, inability to communicate effectively is further compounded by the webs of secrecy that surround and enables abusive practices within institutions.

Just as institutionalised children are largely hidden from the general public, women with disabilities and women with mental health problems become shadows that are relegated to invisibility, both visually and vocally. In line with Garfinkel (1956) where particular individuals have been assigned a degraded public status, the on-going incarceration of women with disabilities in corrective institutions affirms and propagates the invisibility of such women.

The Framework Plus 5 report (NSW Council for Intellectual Disability, 2007) highlights that even with an awareness of the inappropriateness of imprisoning persons with disabilities as raised in the 1985 interdepartmental Missing Services Report, (Department of Corrective Services and Department of Youth and Community Services, 1985), support services that might assist in preventing entrenched offending behaviours and consequent incarceration are still incomplete.

Equally, the report tables the inappropriateness of placing mentally ill people and people with intellectual disabilities within same service provision, usually at the cost of further marginalising people with disabilities (NSW Council for Intellectual Disability, 2007). It can be seen how women who may suffer long-term mental health effects as a result of exposure to abuse, or women who have been exposed to abuse as a result of their disability or mental health, remain terminally vulnerable to socially inscribed separation and marginalisation.

### **Wives of Welfare**

The ‘public’ demonising or stigmatising of girls and women caught up in a milieu of complex poverty entrapment has economic effects that are deepened if a woman has been incarcerated (Laub & Sampson, 1995). The policies of inequity and exclusion embedded in gender, class and ethnicity that marginalise welfare recipients (Harris, 1989a; Power, 2005; Western, Dwan, & Kebonang, 2005) are emphasised further for women who have been imprisoned. As a result of incarceration a woman’s deeper reliance post-release on public welfare for

economic stability may further subscribe entrenched poverty. Poverty in this context is defined by a relative lack of resource that not only prevents participation within a given society, but may also include struggling to survive in terms of basic food and shelter (Harris, 1989a).<sup>5</sup> The burden of assisting women post-release to find shelter for them and their children and on-going support has often been placed onto voluntary non-government organisations who themselves are reliant on state funding (Hancock, 1995). More latterly, early intervention is seen as a pathway to prevention through initiatives such as the Australian Commonwealth funding provided to welfare sector agencies under the Stronger Families Stronger Communities (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2003). While this program funds multi-sectoral support services to vulnerable families with young children, it intersects with similar projects initiated at state level, such as the New South Wales Families First support service for parents and young children. Lack of communication between both government bodies and service providers may lead to inadequate provision of intervention support to those most in need of these services.

Coupled with inadequate or poorly administered support services, women may encounter punitive attitudes by state welfare authorities as evident in policies that impugn a woman through reducing or confiscating payments and/or bringing charges against her for perceived infractions. These may include not informing the state authority of changes in her personal and private life. For instance, a woman may have social service payments reduced or withdrawn as a consequence of not informing the welfare authority that her estranged partner has returned to live with her. Feminist criminologists discuss these state imposed sanctions as assumptions by welfare authorities based in established patriarchal attitudes (Easteal, 2001a). As a result of such embedded attitudes, if a male partner lives with his family, assumptions may be made that he will contribute economic support for the woman and her children (Papadakis, 1993). However, the responsibility for not informing the state authority of a change in domestic living arrangements is borne by the woman, regardless of whether she

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<sup>5</sup> Debates around definitions of poverty allude to distinctions between absolute and relative poverty (Western et al., 2005). For the purposes of this thesis poverty is discussed in the context of lack of inclusiveness and opportunity, both social and economic.

has willingly allowed her former partner to live with her or not. As such, the burden of the state imposition of invasive and punitive inquiries that places a microscope over personal relationships is borne by the woman also. Equally, the burden of proof that the relationship is not conjugal rests with the woman, rather than the state (Macintyre, 1999).

State imposed sanctions against a woman may be complicated further by a controlling and violent partner whom the woman lives in fear of, regardless of whether he lives with her or not. This fear adds layers of complexity to a woman's situation that are not easily stripped away in neat layers when reviewed by the state. Imposing punitive sanctions upon a woman in such a situation deepens the layers of complexity for the mother and her children (Hartman, 2005; Macintyre, 1999). The state sanctioned right of welfare agencies to withdraw economic support from 'bad' women who have contravened established ideals of femininity and womanhood (Chesney-Lind, 2006) and impose punitive consequences (Hartman, 2005) continues to be played out in Australia in public discourse, including the political arena. This is illustrated in a discussion regarding the use of taxpayer's money for welfare support through the following statement from a member of the Australian Senate,

“Senator Vanstone last week declared: I don't see why someone on a low income should work hard and have their taxes taken and watch as the Government doesn't exercise its full power to ensure those taxes are spent diligently” (Hartman, 2005).

Chesney-Lind (2006) highlights the media narratives that demonise women as prophecies of self-fulfilment where public rhetoric informs and justifies the increased incarceration of women which continues to be played out in the criminal justice system. Increased penal sanctioning of women incorporates the entangling of poor, socially disadvantaged women who may have fallen foul of the law through punitive welfare controls is rarely highlighted as an issue in the public discourse. Carlen (1998) states that women on welfare with children are often situated outside the dominant idealistic views of motherhood and hence social controls brought against them are disguised as sanctions warranted because of a woman's 'criminal' behaviours. Macintyre (1999) uses recent reforms set by the previous Howard government that regulated welfare payments for mothers and required them to return to the work force to underscore public expectations that something will be given in return for the welfare support 'they' provide. This obligatory 'pay back' is highlighted in an

example given by Easteal (2001a) of heavier penal sanctions brought against women convicted of welfare fraud for relatively minor amounts. These penalties are in stark contrast to the ‘slap on the wrist’ penalties given in this case to two male lawyers who received short suspended sentences for the ‘white collar’ crime of tax evasion worth many thousands of dollars.

State sanctions, such as criminalising welfare issues, contributes to the on-going marginalisation of women who fall within particular class, race and socio-economic status (Harris, 1989a) groups. The dumping of women into disenfranchised groups as separate to and somehow ‘different’ to mainstream society through the social discourse (Power, 2005), both media driven and politically agenda-ised (McCormack, 2005), ignores the complexities that define the lives of individual women and their families. Despite anti-welfare rhetoric that devalues the mothering done by mothers on welfare (McCormack, 2005), not all women living on welfare struggle with parenting issues all the time, or are incapable of providing stable home lives for their children. In fact, issues of abuse and violence within the home are not limited to a particular socio-economic group, just as not all Indigenous women or other<sup>6</sup>-ethnic women (Power, 2005) are struggling to bring up their children in homes where familial abuse and violence occur daily. A woman who relies on welfare provision for herself and her children may provide a stable and nurturing family environment that becomes de-stabilised by the unusual occurrence of trauma, such as a child becoming critically ill. However, in the public arena, such women are at risk of being labelled either as ‘victims’ or ‘perpetrators’ of dysfunctional families, based purely on the fact that they are recipients of on-going welfare support.

Poverty level welfare provision is seen by Harris (1989a) as placing women into an economically vulnerable position, exposing them to punitive controls that label them according to whether they fit a perception of women that she sees as aligned with the ‘good’ girl image of a subservient wife and nurturing mother. As with court processes for women involved in street-level criminal activities, Easteal (2001a) describes a form of chivalry played out in a court of law, where

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<sup>6</sup> “Other” in this context refers to those deemed to be less self-sufficient and able to appropriately live within a free (liberal) society without government impositions (Power, 2005).

a woman is given a more lenient sentence if she is seen, for instance, to be in a stable heterosexual relationship. However, Eastaer also states that this perception may also work against a woman in the form of more severe punitive sentencing if she is depicted as a member of a low socio-economic status group.

Indeed, in an age of increased cross-surveillance that acts as an interface between welfare and corrective institutions, the explicit exchange of information about welfare recipients and adults in penal institutions enhances the social control policies of the state. The punitive action that takes away welfare benefits from criminally convicted individuals further imposes poverty upon already economically vulnerable individuals, providing a ‘double whammy’ effect of punitive control superimposed upon punitive control (McCorkell, 2004). Inter-linked social marginalisation and demarcation fuses layers of complexity together, forming an almost impenetrable and insurmountable barrier to economic stability and broader social inclusion.

In line with Foucault (1977), it can be seen how a continuum of individual indigency is created through mechanisms of surveillance, such as the documenting, reporting and record keeping of every aspect of a welfare recipient’s private life. As a result, a continuous trail is formed out of which decision making processes are drawn, assuming a library of information about an individual that may be based purely upon the assumptions, speculations and personal prejudices of various institutional staff across a time frame. Equally, the cultural, social and inter-personal context of any individual situation may be lost in statistical data that is accumulated.

It is this record keeping that subsumes an individual's value and human worth through continuous observation that quantifies contextual data into categories of difference. Indeed, Davies (2005a) suggests this is similar to the eugenic spotlight that informed Darwin's explanations of difference and is still at work in the documenting of gender, social, cultural and economic difference. While this raises concerns regarding perceptions of applying lesser value upon particular groups as seen in Chenoweth's (1997) discussions on abuse of people with disability, Davies (2005a) suggests that increased social surveillance provides a new and acceptable means of purging society that aligns with her perceptions of Darwinian attitudes toward 'unfit' individuals.

Easteal (2001a) points to the self-determinism of popular public rhetoric that allows state interventions, suggesting that a woman reliant on welfare should be able to extract herself and her children from poverty by employing a few basic middle class tenets. These are cast by McCormack (2005) as working hard, gaining a good education and establishing a stable family life in order to achieve. Popular media continue to parade single faceted, simplistic images of achievement, using examples of individual women who have made millions by running businesses at home while still nurturing and caring for their children full time. Stories of women who have avoided relying on welfare by accumulating wealth are portrayed with televised slogans such as "Chicks in bricks: Savvy singles making millions" (A Current Affair, 2006). The inference appears to imply that single mothers can achieve financial stability regardless of educational background. The alternative suggestion is largely unspoken implying that relying on welfare is inappropriate and places a burden on society at large. An obligation placed on mothers receiving 'welfare to work' payments, however, does not take into account the realities of work in low paid jobs. Such jobs are generally inflexible in terms of time and paid leave that conflicts with the realities of mothering without social support (James, Johnson, & Raghavan, 2004; McCormack, 2005) for single mothers. Westernised consumerism (Baudrillard, 1998) and middle-class notions of motherhood linking symbols of prosperity and providing material goods for their children are given as evidence of good mothering (Amnesty International, 2005; Power, 2005). These expectations accentuate societal pressures for mothers struggling



to provide for their children on subsistence welfare. Such idealised expectations of providing for their children, as well as pragmatic factors associated with working and mothering have meant that some women resort to illegal forms of income in order to fulfil their roles as mother and sole provider for their children (McCormack, 2005).

Women who turn to illicit forms of income are therefore at further risk of being exposed to victimisation and violence. Involvement in illicit substance abuse and its associated criminal activities may result in women becoming secluded further from any form of social support from family or friends. Through social isolation women are made more vulnerable exposing them further to various forms of abuse (James et al., 2004) and inculcating them into a deepening cycle of poverty from which it becomes increasingly difficult to escape.

Therefore, the public acceptance of women and their children subsisting on welfare and being categorised under hierarchical headings of pathology and difference, can be seen as enabling state interventions at multiple points of intersection (Davies, 2005a, 2005b). Under current policies of control the final destination for many women appears increasingly to be incarceration within penal criminal justice institutions (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2005b; Garland, 2001b). As such, the act of being incarcerated places women into a construct of 'deviancy' which labels and delineates female inmates into categories of marginalisation and illegitimacy. Clearly, it is possible to see the role of 'welfarism' and 'institutionalisation' in stamping women and children as somehow 'different' to mainstream society which have entangled them into webs of societal dysfunction and dependency pushing them to the edges of society (Beckett & Western, 2001).

It is here on the crumbling margins of society that women 'offenders' remain largely invisible to the broader society, save for the statistical evidence of their existences (Feeley & Simon, 1996). From time to time, however, numerous lens are telescopically placed over them, variously resulting in public judgements being espoused about their illegitimacy. The result is that individuals are stigmatised, with public perceptions being in line with

Goffman's (1963) discussions on stigma that portrays them as no longer a "whole...person", but a "tainted, discounted one" (p.12). The effect of stigma on targeted individuals was illustrated in Goulding's (2004) Western Australia study into the impacts of imprisonment on women's social connectedness where a participant stated that she felt as though she was publicly marked as an ex-prisoner. The entanglement of women within the prison system contributes further to this tagging through continuing poverty (Hudson, 2002) and on-going exposure to abuse, both familial and extra-familial.

It can be seen that marginality in Foucauldian (1977) terms continues to be achieved through the attachment of a tag of 'illegitimacy' to women whose degraded status is publicly legitimised through the sanctions of the state. The targeted individual is now portrayed as a perpetrator, which separates her from an anonymous identity within a given community. Once separated out and identified as a perpetrator, women are re-allocated with a status that identifies them as extra-ordinary in the public consciousness. Marginalisation processes are enacted through ceremonies sanctioned by the state, such as courts of law, where individuals are publicly identified and denounced. The re-assigning of status is seen by Garfinkel (1956) as validated by socially sanctioned 'offices' where an individual is now imbued with characteristics that mark them as deserving of their publicly allocated degraded status.

This concept of the continuum of 'indigency' is embedded within a public tolerance to state imposed sanctions. Foucault (1977) cites the public acceptance of punitive consequences for individuals identified as illegitimate members of society as a response to the lowering of thresholds of tolerance for incarceration. Public sanctioning of state powers to incarcerate particular individuals arises out of concepts of punishment as a natural consequence of transgressing certain laws and regulations. The legitimacy then of the state power to punish individuals identified as extra-ordinary continues unfettered while public tolerance to incarceration remains.

## **Conclusion**

Signposts of indigency for women point the way along a continuum of state intersections across every aspect of their publicly sanctioned journey in and onto imprisonment. These intersections may be illustrated through a variety of marginalising mechanisms that label women as ‘bad’ that further exposes them to poverty and abuse that is further enforced through economic and social sanctioning. Equally, mechanisms of poverty may assist exposure to criminal activities such as illicit substance abuse and associated criminal activities. Further marginalisation may occur through disability, or belonging to a particular group, where on-going economic and social poverty exposes women to state institutional systems and punitively inscribed state welfare.

Interventions purported to assist vulnerable individuals throughout their life trajectory from childhood through to adolescence and adulthood relegates individuals into groups according to their criminal or neglected status. As such, a neglected or abused child is removed into state care that may expose them to juvenile justice systems that continue on to adult incarceration. The journey through to criminal justice systems is seemingly all too short. The complexities of such a trajectory for individual women, who are deemed to require state intervention, are complicated further when the journey includes imprisonment. The degraded status of individual women appears to be non-negotiable within the broader social arena where the identity of indigency is made publicly visible.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE WAREHOUSE

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*"We're like a store, a warehouse. You bring in the merchandise - when someone wants to parole it, we send it back out" (Fraser, 2003).*

#### **A Right to Punish**

This chapter builds on the concept of 'indigency' in action, as wrought in Foucault's (1977) depiction of the indigent individual where the role of policies and legislation deviates women through various mechanisms and structures into prison. Discussions on how this 'tag' of 'illegitimacy' (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001) continues to be acted upon women in prison, its impacts upon them individually and collectively, form the basis of this chapter.

The applications of structures of punishment and control have profound effects on female inmates. Garland (2001a) posits these structures as borne out of a post-modernist, liberal society that has yet to fully grapple with conflicts between adversarial and rehabilitative justice. Foucault (1977) describes the recruitment of the disenfranchised as a process of "exclusions and rejections" (p.393) which draws individuals out of mainstream society into the carceral of punishment mechanisms. In doing so, Foucault posits that through the provision of "services" on the one hand and withdrawing of "rights and privileges" on the other, the incarceration carceral attempts to "save", or warehouse, those which it "removes" from society (p.393).

Foucault's (1977) carceral mechanisms describes the utilisation of state powers in the processes of surveillance both inside and outside the incarcerative institution. In line with feminist critiques of patriarchal constructs, (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Papadakis, 1993) these powers are instituted through hierarchical, linear structures, based in patriarchally aligned state institutions. The right of the master to dominate and administer punishment to those within his domain has imbued bureaucratic processes with inviolable powers. It is these powers that are enacted through our western model of legal systems and processes which in turn objectify normative social rules within our society (Weber, 1978a).

These bureaucratic processes also enable the specialisation of professional knowledge, with boundaries of rules and regulations limiting the enactment of specific powers and decision making processes. Therefore, individuals enacting the rules of the state are bound by the hierarchical processes that tier them into linear and compartmentalized roles of power and duty. The institution then subjects its administrators and arbiters of rule enforcement to the inherent domination of the hierarchical structures that shape it (Weber, 1978a).

Equally, Goffman's (1961) discussions regarding the totalising effects of the penal institution upon inmates and Weber's (1978a) structures of a dominating, hierarchical institution give insights into inmates' every-day realities. Inmates' waking, eating and sleeping activities are conducted for extended periods of time within an institution that consumes every minute of their day. Each of these activities is continually monitored by a smaller specialised personnel or staff, with inmate autonomy being limited to incremental decision making processes, if at all. As a consequence of being the target of intense punitive scrutiny, inmates become objectified by a staff that sees them as inanimate, warehousable products, or 'ends to themselves', that need to be managed through punitively driven institutional systems.

The totalising effects of living continuously within a total institution then, particularly one inscribed with penal policies, involves rituals of mortification, dispossession of roles, colonisation and conversion to institutional ideals that employs behaviours not normally adhered to in the broader community. Although individual staff behaviours may be ameliorated somewhat by their ability to leave the workplace for rest and leisure, their working realities may still be consumed by obligations to totalised institutional ideals.

### **Policies of Control**

Despite penal institutions posturing as a rationalised, structured solution to criminal activities, their warehousing function is revealed in what Goffman (1961) terms as “storage dumps for inmates” (p.73). Turner (1993) posits that the Durkheimian social construction of conflicts between the laws of our society and the dangers posed by those who trespass these laws define our criminal code. However, an exploration of the female prison population reveals that the real ‘danger’ of violence to society from most female inmates is minimal. Recent studies, such as that conducted by Cropsey, Wexler, Melnick, Taxman and Young (2007) show that only a small proportion of women who are incarcerated are convicted for violent acts.

In Australia, the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), has released statistics for 2007 that illustrate women are incarcerated predominantly for non-violent crime. This is reflected in figures showing ten convictions of ‘manslaughter and driving causing death’ and 2,591 convictions of ‘assault and other acts intended to cause injury’ as compared to a total of 9,169 convictions in the category of ‘road traffic and motor vehicle regulatory offences’. Other categories, such as ‘deception and related offences’ show a total of 1,236 convictions against women, while ‘offences against justice procedures, government security and government operations’ total 1,684 convictions against women (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 2008). These figures are derived from a total of 21,909 convictions recorded against women in NSW during 2007. More broadly in Australia, female offender rates for 2005 to 2006

were highest in the categories of ‘other theft’ and ‘fraud/deception’ and lowest for ‘robbery’ and ‘homicide’ at less than 2 per 100,000 (AIC, 2008).

The ‘danger’ then to our society may be better seen as related to the increasing rates of incarceration for women. Their incarceration further de-stabilises a population that is already marginalised in the Foucauldian sense (1977), which has been shown to place them and their children at an even greater risk of re-incarceration (Casey-Acevedo, Bakken, & Karle, 2004; Corston, 2007; Ferraro & Moe, 2003; Greene et al., 2000; Radosh, 2004).

The conventional perception of ‘justice’ as it is currently enacted within our criminal justice system continues then to be viewed as retributive and adversarial (Steen & Bandy, 2007). As such, the public endorsement of state retribution embraces bringing the perpetrator of the crime to ‘justice’ in order to ‘pay’ for their wrong. Examples of public visibility given to this rhetoric within the broader discourse may be seen from time to time through pre-poll political promises espousing rhetorics of ‘getting tougher’ on crime and ‘waging a war’ on crime. Sherman and Strang (2007) state that these types of oppositional stances played out in the political arena effectively act to broaden the chasm between the public perception of the law abiding citizen and the law breaker or offender.

It would appear then that this divisional construct continues to be played out by the ever increasing incarceration of women in western societies (Cameron, 2001; Carrington, 2006; Chesney-Lind, 2006; Lowthian, 2002) with numbers of women in prison increasing exponentially in a little over a decade since the mid 1990’s. Increases in westernised countries’ incarceration rates for women reflect a trend which is extended to young women within juvenile justice systems (Carrington, 2006).<sup>7</sup> Internationally, responses to the resultant overcrowding of prisons housing female inmates has been exemplified by the

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<sup>7</sup> Although the trend in juvenile justice systems for girls and young women is increasingly reflective of adult incarceration, for the purposes of this thesis discussions will focus on women in adult prisons.

burgeoning rise in prison facilities built to house ever increasing inmate populations (Rafter, 1997).

In New South Wales (NSW), a report, 'The Women's Action Plan' (WAP) for 2003 to 2005, cites a 48.1 per cent increase in imprisonment rates of women for the period between 1994 and 1998, despite a drop in conviction rates. Rates of imprisonment for women have continued to rise in NSW, with further incarceration rate increases of 40.5 percent for the period 2000 to 2002. Overall, from 1995 to 2002, women's incarceration rates in Australia in NSW increased by 99 per cent. Equally, rises in women's imprisonment nationwide across Australia are similar, with an increase in incarceration rates of 90 per cent for the period between 1996 and 2006. These rapid rates of increased incarceration for women contrasts markedly with more sedate increases in male incarceration rates of 40 per cent nationwide in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006).



The WAP (N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services, 2000) attempts to temper these alarming increases in incarceration rates for women by stating that these statistics also include women held in prison on remand. Regardless of such distinctions between remandees and sentenced prisoners, the lived reality for an increasing number of women is their daily existence within a penal institution. For remandees, time spent awaiting trial is imbued with additional factors, such as uncertainty regarding outcomes of sentencing. However, the WAP report cites there is a “necessity for women convicted of serious crimes to be incarcerated” (pp.145-146) and suggests that attempts are made at ameliorating women’s disadvantage while in prison. These are provided through the delivery of policy, services and programs targeting female inmates contexts of offending. In line with this the WAP cites the use of “diversionary programs”, such as community service and supervised probation orders (p.138), as alternatives to women’s incarceration (N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services, 2000). However, despite a fall in convictions, the increasing rates of incarceration for women appear not to be ameliorated by such programs.

Belknap’s (2001) discussion around the chivalry hypothesis moots the concept that some women may be given more lenient sentences than men. This highlights factors around class where socially accepted roles of feminine behaviour may contribute to more lenient sentencing outcomes for women. However, the sharp increase in incarceration rates for women is more in line with Britton (2004) who indicates that a continuation of public perceptions of socially accepted roles for women is a contributing factor in the use of incarceration as a form of punishment for women deemed to have contravened such ideals. As such, feminist criminologists such as Carlen (1998) see the ever broadening web that entangles marginalised women within criminal justice systems as a return to the use of punitive controls that are validated by concepts of gender.

The use of penal controls in the containment, or warehousing of marginalised populations, has spawned mandatory sentencing legislation throughout western countries, with the exception of Canada (Roberts, 2003) for both genders. While each country and state legislates mandatory sentencing laws differently, the principle of removing judicial discretion (Downes, 2001) is variously enacted. According to Roberts (2003), the exportation of mandatory sentencing from the United States of America (USA), arising out of the 1980's war on drugs aligned with a zero tolerance that led to sharp increases in prison populations in the USA and Europe, have filtered through to Australia. Downes (2001) portrays the strong punitive focus of zero tolerance type policies in Britain's adoption of mandatory sentencing policies, such as 'three strikes' legislation that included the expulsion of *doli in capax* for minors under fourteen years of age who were previously presumed to have a lack of offending awareness. Further illustrative of mandatory sentencing in action in England and Wales are life sentences for a second serious offence, with mandatory seven year custodial sentences for third time drug dealing convictions (Roberts, 2003).

Sentencing jurisdictions in Australia are shared across different states and territories. As such, various mandatory sentencing legislative reforms have been introduced in Australia as a result of the 1988 Australian Law Reform Commission report that wrought the largest sentencing reforms in recent decades (Department of Justice Canada, 2005). An example of this was seen in the introduction of harsh punitive mandatory sentencing legislation in the Northern Territory in 1997 for property crimes. These were introduced via amendments to the Sentencing Act and the Juvenile Justice Act (Northern Territory Office of Crime Prevention, 2003) and comprised a 'three strike' policy, where penalties were imposed based upon the number of previous convictions. After a series of deaths in custody a groundswell of adverse public opinion led to the repeal of minimum sentencing for property offences in 2001. This was replaced with legislation for minimum terms of imprisonment for murder, violent offences and sex offences (Department of Justice Canada, 2005).

Across Australia other states have legislated a range of less severe forms of mandatory sentencing. For instance, in NSW ‘truth in sentencing’ has been legislated since 1999, where a significant proportion of a custodial sentence must be served in prison. As a result, overall time spent in custody in NSW for both genders has increased, with a number of prisoners who otherwise would have had their sentences commuted to community supervision being incarcerated (Department of Justice Canada, 2005).

Goulding’s (2004) study in Western Australia highlighted the impacts of mandatory sentencing for women, describing a respondent’s shock at being handed a prison sentence given her expectation of a fine or community service penalty as a first-time offender on advice from her lawyer. Before attending court, she had told her husband she was attending a doctor’s appointment. While judicial discretion between custodial and non-custodial sentencing remains intact to some extent in Australia (Department of Justice Canada, 2005) mandatory sentencing policies have still had a profound impact on women who might otherwise not receive a custodial sentence.

Ferraro and Moe (2003) see policies such as these as contributing to proportionately large increases in women sent to prison arising out of public perceptions of increased crime rates. Reactionary policies to ‘increased crime rates’ according to Garland (2001a) are driven by political agents, such as elected members of parliament. These in turn appear to be fed by the myriad of constructed crime stories demonizing women (Chesney-Lind, 2006; Worrall, 2002) for television. Expressions of outrage by elected state representatives against violent acts of crime, despite being non-representative of most crime, form the backdrop to such reactionary policy making (Garland, 2001a). As a consequence, the rights of the elected state to intercede and take retribution on behalf of ‘lawful’ citizens are codified and enacted.

## **Paying the Price of Incarceration**

Research (Belenko et al., 2004; Carlen, 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Ferraro & Moe, 2003) shows that women are largely involved in non-violent crime, such as minor property offences, in comparison to men's overall criminal activities. The gendered context of these crimes for women extends to prostitution, shop-lifting, welfare fraud, credit card fraud, larceny and drug possession, with the growth of women's criminal involvement more largely being in the area of low-level drug offences (Bush-Baskette, 2004; Ferraro & Moe, 2003). In particular, Carlen (1998) posits that sentencing policies remain based in crime specific approaches, without taking into account the qualitatively different contexts of women's recruitment and involvement in criminal activities.

Contexts of marginalisation and histories of violent abuse related to women's involvement in crime are now annexed to a gendered criminological focus (De Cou, 2002). Ferraro and Moe (2003) posit that paternalistic perspectives continue to portray women as passive and weak and negates a broader understanding of the role women may have played in any given criminal activity. As such, images of gendered weaknesses that reflect ideals of women's roles of womanhood and motherhood are being demonised within current justice systems.

Broader social costs of incarceration to women encompass a nexus of gender-specific issues. Perhaps none has more impact for women who are mothers or primary carers for their family than the collateral social costs of separation from their dependent children as a result of incarceration. The detrimental short-term and long-term effects of imprisoning a mother are documented in studies (Bremner, 2005; Carr, 2004; De Bellis, 2005; Lazarus, 1999) that show children may experience emotional trauma expressed through hyper-vigilance, fear, anxiety, physical aggression, and social withdrawal. This is complicated further in the context of Bush-Baskette (2004) research that shows incarcerated mothers are proportionately more likely to be their children's sole carer.

According to Ciabattari (2007) separation as a result of incarceration may result in inappropriate childhood and adolescent development, loss of social engagement and support networks and continued poverty for children of an incarcerated woman. Examples of the reality of child poverty and its broader social and economic losses are visible, for instance, in long-term unemployment. Such losses may extend beyond childhood and adolescence into adulthood, ultimately syphoning into cycles of on-going poverty (Harris, 1989b). A community support service for inmates (Community Restorative Centre Inc., 2005) within Australia estimates that for each person incarcerated approximately five family members are affected. Across Australia more than 60,000 children under the age of sixteen have experienced parental incarceration, with as many as half being under the age of five years.

While social capital losses of increased incarceration rates for women may be difficult to quantify, in economic terms the increased costs of imprisonment may be unsustainable in the long term (Steen & Bandy, 2007). The cost of housing imprisoned women appears disproportionate to the perceived 'benefit' to society of instituting 'justice'. In Australia, in the year 2003 to 2004, an estimated cost of A\$170 per individual per day was incurred for each person incarcerated (Community Restorative Centre Inc., 2005). This estimate varied within particular states or territories, such as the Australian Capital Territory, where over A\$250 per day for each individual was expended, and in Queensland with less than A\$150 incurred daily for each person incarcerated (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2005a).

Attempts at addressing issues of imprisonment through gender specific policies for women have led to the construction of purpose-built women's correctional centres (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2007), in NSW. A women-centred prison designed to house 200 women was opened in NSW in 2004 at a cost of \$A71.6 Million. Prisons such as this represent a shift to incarcerate women within women-centric correction centres.

## Gendering the Warehouse

The gendering of penal punishment has led to the establishment of women-centric prisons and women focussed programs. According to Hannah-Moffat (2004a) this shift arose out of a recognition that women-centred policies of rehabilitation and restoration were being subsumed by male-centric punitive structures. Carlen (1998) states that such reforms have arisen in response to a perception that women are “not men” (p.12), that align with early changes in policy recognising women’s different biological and social needs only in terms of their difference to men’s. Reforms encompassing women’s different needs, have been hampered by perceptions of women’s difference relative to men’s. As recently as 1995, Carlen (2002b) depicts the use of female inmate injuries recorded on a diagram of a male body in Britain’s largest women-only prison, Holloway.

As such, the gendering of women’s incarceration arising out of an acknowledgement of their different social and physical needs has been seen by Carlen (2002) to have led to a sexualising of women inmates particularly in regard to security controls where strip searching, physical restraint and surveillance scrutiny of female inmates continue to be used. She sees these as pervasive, contradictory forms of security control that violate personal and emotional privacy. Equally, Chesney-Lind (2006) points to the use of shackling women during childbirth in some instances in the United States of America as a control that de-contextualises gender and exposes incarcerated women to inappropriate procedures unrelated to real security risks.

The use of similarly invasive forms of security control on female inmate populations that Australian studies (Easteal, 1992, 2001b) shows has a high proportion of histories of childhood abuse, raises questions regarding disproportionate concerns around public safety. Easteal illustrates the disproportionate use of security procedures in an Australian prison, Fairlea in Victoria, in 1996 that confiscated only a very small amount of contraband from increased use of strip searches. Mandatory participation of female inmates in

invasive security measures is seen by Amnesty (Amnesty International, 2005) as transcending personal privacy in ways that would ordinarily be deemed as breaching their human rights. Equally, security processes such as strip-searching may be perceived as re-enforcing women's powerlessness or loss of agency within the prison setting (Garland, 2001b; Kilroy, 2004).

In addition to enduring strip searches and other forms of invasive controls, women prisoners are perpetually under the gaze of surveillance staff, both male and female, even when performing personal and private functions. Carlen (1998) cites an inmate's reference to the trauma of this perpetual gaze in instances where male officers during the course of their surveillance may view women inmates performing private functions, such as bathing. Carlen postulates that the exposure of women to such controls while in prison must reasonably lead to the conclusion that their use constitutes a form of abuse. Women's experiences of security controls that invade their personal and private spaces while in prison continue to mirror abuses many have received as children familiarly and/or while in the 'care' of other state institutions.

### **New-Generation Warehouse Structures**

While legislated penal policies serve to create extensive societal demarcations between inmates and 'law abiding' citizens, the physical barriers of prison architecture reinforce this separation. The walls and security systems that form the outer shell of most prison structures that Tartaro (2006) describes enshroud the inner prison in secrecy and withholds it from the public view, further alienating its inhabitants both physically and socially. It is this secrecy that Blom (1978) sees as perpetuating the mystique that surrounds the prison.

External prison structures largely remain similar to traditional prison structures of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, exemplified by high security fencing and walls. However, internal prison architecture is changing from traditional linear rows of individual cells to podular direct-supervision or new-generation models. Direct-supervision models arose out of recognition in the 1970's within the USA that

correctional facilities needed to provide more humane settings in which to house inmates. This was driven by insights into the oppressive and traumatic effects of traditional correctional facilities which had proven dangerous for both inmates and staff (Wener, Frazier, & Farbstein, 1985).

Surveillance and security features of direct-supervision models contrast with hard security features of traditional internal prison architecture, such as fixed bars and locked steel doors (Wener, 2006). The structure of direct-supervision/new-generation facilities comprise units which house clusters of single bedrooms, each with their own bed, toilet facilities and an outward facing window. Interconnected with the bedrooms are an adjoining living area consisting of dining, lounge and multi-purpose zones. This allowed for greater interaction between inmates and supervisory staff with a range of private and 'public' areas. These designs enabled movement away from direct situational surveillance to more remote surveillance, with officers being able to survey inmates within each pod/unit while still having access to their own work space. Earlier units were designed so that officers were locked in with inmates in each unit without their own desk or workspace (Wener et al., 1985). Variations within the podular modules facilitated different supervision and surveillance behaviours by prison staff and officers.

Assessments of earlier podular units revealed a reduction in inmate infractions involving assaults, suicides, vandalism and the like. However, inmates were locked within these units for periods that extended to weeks at a time and as a result inmates experienced monotony and considerable boredom. These issues were exacerbated by early designs which were multi-level, limiting outdoor access to virtually nil, particularly in winter (Wener et al., 1985). As the adoption of new-generation systems continued, central aspects of the original design were omitted, such as normalised living areas, resulting in ad hoc improvisation and incomplete and partial implementation. Other factors which precluded full implementation were the costs and time needed for training specialist staff required to manage the new-generation centres (Tartaro, 2006).



Research conducted in 1995 (Jackson & Stearns, 1995) which looked at how men and women adapted to new-generation jails, highlighted differing reactions to the prison environment between male and female inmates. While male inmates perceived the podular units as being positive improvements on the traditional rows of cells, women had a less positive response to living within these units. The response from women was unexpected, given the softer, more peaceful and relatively safer environment in the direct-supervision units and highlighted the need for women to interact in more family oriented units, in smaller numbers, that more closely resembled their family relationships outside of prison. Earlier podular units with as many as fifty private rooms (Wener et al., 1985), give rise to a larger population interacting within the allocated 'public' spaces. These findings led to insights of how direct-supervisory management of larger podular units impeded the forming of small family like relationships among female inmates (Jackson & Stearns, 1995).

In tandem with an international focus, in Australia there has been a growing recognition of the specific needs of women in prison in relation to their higher incidence of mental health and reproductive health needs (Jubb & Weigall, 2005). In NSW a new-generation style remand and correctional centre for women (RCCW) was purpose-built to resemble a 'campus-like' facility, with some inmates housed in smaller domestic type living units. In line with a women-centred focus, this design was aimed at reducing the impact of the prison environment on women and their visiting children and family members (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2007).

The explosive increase in women's incarceration within Australia has meant that increasingly other prisons originally built to house male inmates continue to be adapted to accommodate women. Therefore, a large proportion of women inmates in Australian prisons are still housed in adapted male prison facilities, which retain the architectural and security features of traditional prisons (Easteal, 2001b). However, Easteal (2001b) states that in recognition of women's needs in prison, some adaptations to prison complexes have been designed to assist specific target groups within the female inmate population. Targeted populations include mothers with children, women with mental health

issues and/or intellectual disabilities, and women with drug and alcohol problems. One such prison complex in NSW has been converted to a women-only facility since 1994 and now provides residential cottages that house women with dependent children in a live-in facility. During the year 2003 to 2004, twenty-five female inmates and twenty-six children were accommodated in this facility with fourteen of those children in custody with their mothers born in the complex during that time (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2005).

In NSW, further progress in women-centred correctional processes has been made with the introduction of Women's Transitional Centres (WTC). These centres are designed to provide a bridge for female inmates from prison back into the community. Residential buildings are adapted to accommodate women and women with small children and are located near or within established prison complexes (Carlen, 2002a; Lynch, 2000). WTC's provide supported accommodation and programs for an allocated transition period from prison to the community for selected women serving the last part of their prison sentence. Entry to a WTC for a female inmate is based on selective screening where appropriate classification and security clearances are allocated through a process of interviews and assessments by specialist professionals and staff (Lynch, 2000).

### **Containing the Warehouse**

While developments in internal prison structures are designed to minimise the impacts of prison environments for inmates (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2005), security surveillance systems remain integral to the overall correctional package that impacts on the everyday lives, week in and week out, of inmates. As a result, the observation of inmates by specialist officers and staff is no longer intermittent, but continuous. This fits with Foucault's (1977) critique of disciplinary surveillance where inmates may not always be able to see or know who is watching them, yet they are ever aware of being the objects of constant surveillance even though they may have no way of knowing when and by whom they are being observed. Further, during their incarceration in a

secure facility, inmates are constantly reminded of their status as prisoners by the presence of security features, such as locked gates, doors, and windows, closed off areas with limited or nil access, and high walls that obstruct views to other areas in or out of the prison complex. In addition to internal security structures, each secure complex or facility generally has multiple rows of high mesh fencing bounding the perimeter of the prison with the outer fence usually having an extra layer of razor wire as a last resort defence against inmate escapes. All of these security features are designed to keep prisoners inside the complex with minimal chances of escape (Wener, 2006).

These features continue to exist within new-generation style complexes built or adapted for female inmates within Australia, despite attempts at obscuring or minimising the presence of traditional security structures. The most obscured of these penal structures must be the solitary confinement cells. Easteal (2001b) refers to these cells as designed to separate and subdue inmates who are perceived to be a threat to themselves, other inmates or staff within the prison (Easteal, 2001b). However, there appears to be a paucity of literature describing these features within women-centred prison complexes in Australia. Descriptive information regarding women-centred correctional complexes focus on their softer architectural features, such as campus type grounds and family-like residential cottages (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2007), omitting references to penal security features.

However, the implementation of updated policies within NSW in the late 1990's around self-harm minimisation for prison inmates describes some aspects of the use of 'safe cells'. Safe cells, or 'Muirhead' cells generally supersede the use of 'strip cells' or 'wet cells' as a means of accommodating suicidal or self-harming inmates in Australian prisons (McArthur, Camilleri, & Webb, 1999). Strip or wet cells were previously used for the purposes of preventing inmates from harming themselves by the removal of all clothing before being placed into a confined cell. For women placed in strip cells, procedures entailed being strip searched, having their clothes removed and being issued with a replacement canvas gown without any underclothing (Jubb & Weigall, 2005). Inmates isolated in 'safe cells' are still issued with a form of clothing that restricts the

possibility of utilising it as a source of self harm. The occupants of the cell are monitored remotely by camera surveillance twenty-four hours continuously. Safe cells are constructed and designed to eliminate exposed bars and rails, light and plumbing fixtures, and potential 'hanging points'. McArthur, Camilleri and Webb (1999) describe the lack of internal fixtures in safe cells that allows for optimal vision without obstruction that enables maximum observation of the occupant at all times.

The practice of using safe cells as a means of subduing prisoners for purposes other than to contain violent inmates has been highlighted by some feminist criminologists as a cause for alarm. Eastaerl (2001b) points to the placement of women inmates in solitary confinement for punishment as a misuse of 'safe cells' and a harsh form of managing a largely minimum security population. Women who display symptoms of depression, such as sadness, may be placed in 'safe cells' rather than given access to support and counselling services. Given the well-known histories of physical, sexual and emotional abuse amongst female prisoners, Jubb and Weigall (2005) raise concerns that placing such inmates in wet, strip or safe cells exacerbates already existing mental health issues. According to a leading psychiatrist in Australia, Professor Mullens, (Senate Select Committee on Mental Health, 2006) the use of safe cells as a punitive means of managing prisoners with mental health issues is irreconcilable with their original purpose.

While architectural structures may be used in order to contain inmates, further systems of control (Garland, 2001a) are implemented in the overall management of prisoners. The surveillance and observation of prisoners is compartmentalised into categories of security risk that dictate the manner and extent to which inmates are controlled. As part of overall surveillance systems within prisons internationally, variations of similar classification systems are enacted, with security risk classifications being attributed to inmates as well as to prison facilities and sections within each facility. The nomenclature for codifying classifications is confusingly similar, with maximum, medium and minimum security being attributed to inmates as well as buildings. In attempts at clarity, numerical codes are variously attached to inmates in tandem with

general classifications according to their individual assessed security risk (Levinson & Gerard, 1986).

Although broadly there are different systems and applications, classification of inmates is a process with a series of stages. Initially inmates are assessed regarding their security risk. The assignment of a security risk classification to an inmate is founded in the level of risk they pose to the community if they were to escape, and to the prison community (Farr, 2000). The attributed security risk then should ideally equate with the security level of the facility to which they are consigned (Levinson & Gerard, 1986).

However, due to a lack of facilities for women, a greater proportion of female inmates with low security needs have been placed in maximum-medium security facilities (Easteal, 2001b). The shortage of prison facilities has also led to women on remand awaiting trial and sentencing outcomes being housed with sentenced inmates in medium-high security facilities (Easteal, 1992). As a result, inmates with no previous history of imprisonment are placed with inmates who may have established 'criminal' histories (Easteal, 2001b). The increase in convictions of women for crimes such as fraud and deception generally within Australia (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2004), illustrates the disparity of placing a population of non-violent women inmates in medium-maximum security facilities.

In NSW, it might be expected that developments in women-centred correctional policies recognising the need to house female inmates in purpose built women's prisons would point to a decrease in the use of medium-maximum security facilities for the larger female population (Easteal, 2001b). However, construction of a multi-classification facility for both men and women in Kempsey in country NSW (Woodham, 2003), defies the women-centric ethic purportedly espoused as the mandate driving women's imprisonment in the state of NSW (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2007).

Given the small number of women inmates in NSW charged with violent crimes<sup>8</sup>, continued housing of the majority of the female inmate population in medium-maximum security facilities appears to be in conflict with the women-centred philosophy of women's imprisonment within the NSW Correctional Services Department. The enactment of penal policies that allow the continued exposure of women inmates to incarcerative penal practices in conflict with a women-centred ethos remains problematic (Armstrong et al., 2004).

### **Criminalising Inmates' Needs**

The processes of classification for female inmates are enmeshed within criminological frameworks targeting women's individual 'needs'. Therefore, classification codes attributed to female inmates not only relate to her security risk, but to her individually ascribed criminogenic needs. This is based on the premise that risk, needs and responsivity (RNR) (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006; Andrews et al., 1995) supposes that an individual inmate's 'criminality' fits within a specific criminogenic framework. A woman's mental health or disability needs are therefore conflated within criminogenic frameworks, which inform her risk, needs and responsivity assessments. As such, the founding principal of a 'risk' assessment, for example, is based in the assertion that an inmate's propensity to re-offend can be predicted (Andrews et al., 1995). That is, the 'deficits' identified in the 'risk' assessment are related to the probability of an inmate continuing in their criminal behaviours, with the 'need' component referring to the degree to which a 'deficit' exists.

Taxman and Thanner (2006) explain that these tools initially assess an inmate's risk of re-offending and the predictor for success based on an inmate's prior arrest and incarceration histories, employment and education, as well as mental health and substance abuse assessments. Further, they explain that other elements used in this complex 'risk' assessment look at an inmate's attitude,

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<sup>8</sup> In NSW in 2003, eight women were charged with homicide. This action is often committed within the context of violent domestic abuse. Figures released by the NSW Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) 2002-3, stated that 67.1% of inquiries for housing assistance were from women seeking to escape domestic violence (Armstrong, Chartrand, & Baldry, 2004).

association with criminal peers, family dysfunction and other various aspects of psycho-social function. As a result, ascribed 'needs' classification labels in the RNR model are inter-linked with 'risk' components.

The assessment processes that identify the 'needs' of women are therefore founded in 'psychological' and scientific parameters. This process risks reducing inmates to numbered and categorised labels annexed with punitively inscribed, numbered categories. Cropsey et al (2007) acknowledge that although the high numbers of women with mental health issues in prison require sound psychological assessment and assistance, the punitive application of such assessments remains problematic. Herivel (2003) states that locating women's mental health needs under punitive labels has had severe consequences, with documentation of inmates in a women's prison in the USA committing suicide as a result of their symptoms being dismissed as manipulative or attention seeking behaviours.

As cited earlier in this chapter, feminist criminologists such as Blanchette (2004) have identified that attaching classification labels commensurate with men's offending to women fails to recognise the different contexts of women's offending and the usually less violent offences for which women are convicted. Therefore, classification codes attributed to female inmates on this basis are seen as not necessarily reflective of women's criminogenic needs or risks (Hannah-Moffat, 2004b; Harer & Langan, 2001). This issue has been addressed in some states in Australia, where in line with women-centric corrections, classification codes are differentiated between women and men, with different numerical codes attached accordingly. Risk factors for female inmates are therefore attributed based on gendered criminological needs that recognise women's offending behaviours as gender specific. In line with feminist criminologists' critiques (Hannah-Moffat, 2004b; Harer & Langan, 2001) that women's unique needs are not recognised in traditional classificatory systems, this gendered approach appears to be progressional. However, equating a female inmate's ascribed 'risk' with her identified 'need' converges disadvantage and risk into the same category. Kilroy (2004), an Australian advocate for female inmates, states that this process results in female inmates

with high levels of social disadvantage being attributed a high security risk classification. Equally, Donald (2004) asserts that women so classified may be placed in high needs with higher levels of security features that are not commensurate with their real security risk based on the type of crime for which they have been convicted.

Therefore needs based assessments attributed to women with special needs, such as women with intellectual disabilities, is highlighted as causing further disadvantage by some advocacy groups. In NSW, the prisoners' advocacy group, Beyond Bars, chaired by a leading Australian sociologist and prisoners' advocate, Dr Eileen Baldry (Armstrong et al., 2004), lodged a submission in 2004 to the NSW Anti Discrimination Commissioner seeking an inquiry into the treatment of women within the criminal justice system. Concerns raised in the 2004 submission highlight issues such as higher rates of women than men being placed in remand and the associated maximum security classification for remandees. Women on remand are therefore exposed to higher levels of surveillance and security resulting in loss of privileges such as visit entitlements and less personal property. Given the large number of remandees amongst female inmate populations, concerns were also raised about the elevated levels of self harm and suicide rates amongst remandees that are higher than in the general female inmate population.

Similar anti-discrimination submissions addressing the affects of a 'needs-based' classification system on issues for women in prison have been lodged in other Australian states of Queensland and Victoria (Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland, 2000.; Jubb & Weigall, 2005; Kilroy, 2004). These submissions also highlight issues for female inmates regarding current classification systems that include higher levels of surveillance and supervision, with impacts on access to visitors and treatment for health problems. In addition, they identify that as two-thirds of women's crimes are non-violent, the security risk most female inmates pose to the community is minimal, yet female inmates are generally more likely to be housed in maximum security prisons than men. Further, Kilroy (2004) raises questions regarding the use of a



classificatory system that is based in risk, given that most women in prison are usually incarcerated in the same facility regardless of their classification.

Despite the overall low security risk of the larger female inmate population, security and surveillance mechanisms are seen by Carlen (1998) as being more attuned to maximum security penal institutions and that these are maintained even within women-centric prisons. These security processes include lockdowns, where rooms or cells and all normally accessible buildings within the complex are locked and searched by uniformed prison officers. During this time, all visitors and inmates are secured within the prison and the normal flow of exits from and entry into the complex by other staff, personnel and visitors are ceased. McCorkell (2004) shows that such exercises regularly occur as a result of an actual or perceived security breach, as a random security exercise, or as part of a regulated regime of security processes.

Garland (2001a) cites punitive prison practices designed to incarcerate “incorrigible and dangerous offenders”(p.12) as now spilling over into usage within prison populations that are unlikely to pose a risk to the community. Further, he states that the rights of the public to protection are being forcefully enacted within the prison system out of proportion to the actual threat or risk from ever larger populations of minor offenders. Increasingly, the rights of prisoners to fair and equitable treatment, in short their civil liberties, are being further and further subsumed by policies of control. The enactment of such policies of control enables the continued warehousing of female inmates.

### **Warehouse Rehabilitation**

It is here at the juxtaposition between control and punishment, care and assistance that an increasingly larger conflict arises. At this juncture the ideals of welfarism and social reform as founding policies for rehabilitation appear to be supplanted by policies of social control founded in crime prevention. Consequently, Garland (2001a) sees that custody of offenders in the interests of public safety has increasingly become the dominant ethos of penal systems,

while rehabilitation of offenders as a primary goal of incarceration is dissipating.

The correctional model of rehabilitation, where inmates are expected to conform to a Foucauldian (1995) concept of societal norms by changing individual behaviours, places a greater emphasis on punitive programming. This has led to what Robinson and Raynor (2006) foreground as an inequity in service provision with inadequate support available for inmates as they attempt to re-enter their communities after prison. Indeed, Bazemore and Bell (2004) see that the process of rehabilitation requires that complex issues be addressed and requires more than re-defining inmates attitudes and behaviours. Addressing complex causal issues of poverty and childhood abuse raise societal dilemmas that would appear to fall beyond the scope of prisons and prison programs.

While Tonry (2001) argues that a ‘just deserts’ ethos, where inmates are viewed as deserving of punishment, may undergird a public acceptance of increasingly harsh penal controls. He sees this as arising out of a public debate that regards the primary purpose of prison is punishment, as opposed to offering rehabilitation. Chesney-Lind (2006) argues that any public disquiet regarding inappropriate punitive controls for inmates is perhaps assuaged through the implementation of rehabilitation programs in prison. However, Garland (2001a) suggests that the need for rehabilitation and vocational programs is increasingly being overshadowed by a perceived need to address issues for the greater good, such as public safety.

A public concern for safety can be seen in media generated discussions around the costs of housing criminals that invoke discussions around costs associated with rehabilitation programs. Fuelled by the sensationalising of certain inmate’s crimes (Grinberg, 2007; United States Court of Appeals, 1998), stories colour public perceptions of inmates receiving underserved privileges, such as access to ‘free’ educational programs and vocational training. This in turn raises public debates around perceptions of inequitable costs of inmate upkeep (The New York Times, 2007). However, Garland (2001b) posits that public debate rarely highlights the fiscal cost of providing prison programs in relation to an

exponential growth in expenditure on building more and larger prison complexes to house an ever growing prison population. Indeed, it would appear that larger budgetary allocations to building prisons at the cost of spending on public programs targeting social needs within impoverished communities rarely gain substantial public scrutiny.

Public debates that fuel concern around public safety at the cost of rehabilitation expenditure perhaps play a role in the increasing privatisation of prisons worldwide to off-set state costs of establishing and managing prison complexes. Genders (2002) equates this trend to privatisation with increasingly punitive penal policies in line with the ‘just deserts’ rhetoric. In Australia, despite localised pockets of protest against privatisation, such as in Victoria in 1996 (George, 2000), there appears to be little evidence of public disquiet at the handing over of state management of prisons, either partial or entire, to the private sector.

Private industry infiltration of a previously state sanctioned domain (Garland, 2001a) risks changing the role of rehabilitation and vocational programs for inmates. Ryan and Ward (1989) state that reforms to penal practice where engagement with the private sector allows the provision of vocational and rehabilitative programs initially appears to provide greater opportunities for ‘real-life’ training for inmates. However, they argue that the private sector management of rehabilitation and vocational programs, while still codified by the state, risk obfuscating rehabilitative outcomes for inmates with commercial interests. Wright (2003) utilises a basic economic tenet to illustrate that higher profit generation for corporations is dependent upon the use of a captive labour force with low rates of pay. Thus, according to Genders (2002), the reductionist end-goal of rehabilitation conflicts markedly with profit driven expansion; ever larger inmate populations being the driver for profit based productivity.

Ryan and Ward (1989) highlight similar concerns raised in Britain as early as 1989 over the growing British trend toward embracing American models of prison privatisation. Despite this, Australia has embraced the world-wide trend to privatisation, which includes out-sourcing of vocational and rehabilitation programs, by continuing to adopt private sector involvement in construction and management of prisons. Australia currently houses seventeen per cent of its prisoners in private prisons, which is a higher proportion of inmate populations than in both Britain and the United States of America (George, 2000; Roth, 2004). In 1993, NSW was the second state in Australia to legislate to allow privatisation of prisons. Despite this, there has been little research into the performance of private prisons in Australia, although George (2000) cites an example of one prison in Victoria being reclaimed by the state as a result of public agitation over the inappropriate treatment of inmates which led to an independent investigation.

The RCCW (in NSW) while not a privately owned prison, nevertheless run vocational programs for inmates that directly involve private industry. One of these 'industry' initiatives is a call centre where inmates are trained in aspects of marketing. Other industry initiatives involve the assembling and packaging of headphones for airline passengers, a repetitive task requiring minimal skills. More imaginative initiatives, such as a franchisee facilitated coffee shop in the prison's visitor section, involves the training of a small number of inmates into limited aspects of hospitality. These vocational training programs are linked to NSW tertiary (TAFE) accredited programs, where inmates may pursue training after their release (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2007). However, such vocational training that is available appears to be limited to minimal skill attainment. Thus, while attempting to channel women into training programs designed to transcend prison boundaries into the community, it appears that women are allocated into vocations that at best promise low-paying career prospects. Indeed, these programs equate with similar training offered to incarcerated women in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Hanslow, 2001).

## **‘What works’ in the Warehouse**

In addition to vocational programs run at the RCCW, workshops designed to address the social contexts of causes of criminal behaviour are offered to inmates. Based on cognitive behavioural therapy, Self Management and Recovery Training (SMART Recovery) programs target the identified ‘criminogenic needs’ of female inmates. Departmental publicity for these programs promotes them as targeting addictive behaviours such as drug, alcohol and gambling amid claims that these programs were designed in the United States of America with staff training provided accordingly (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2007). The USA derived content for these programs must then raise a concern about their effectiveness within an Australian context.

Equally, although such programs are purportedly designed to address issues relevant to female inmates’ offending contexts, their implementation might be more effective within a broader social context, where women convicted of non-violent offences might gain the benefit of programs that enable them to remain in their communities.

Carlen and Tombs (2006) suggest that although in-prison programs are enjoyable for women who may even find them beneficial, their rehabilitative purpose would be more effective in social settings. Despite research indicating in-prison programs in Britain do nothing to decrease re-offending, expenditure on such programs in prisons continues. As such, Carlen and Tombs state that the “myth of in-prison rehabilitation” parodies the continuing rhetoric around rehabilitation and its benefits to inmates (p. 339). There is a danger here of misinterpreting such observations. Indeed, they could provide a basis from which to dispense with rehabilitation altogether in line with Martinson’s (1974) ‘what works’ literature that questions whether ‘anything’ works in terms of prisoner rehabilitation.

However, Carlen and Tombs (2006) also state that psychologically inspired programs that appear to address issues of criminality for women obfuscate the license given to punitive controls linked with rehabilitation programming. This can be seen in the risk, needs and responsivity (RNR) (Andrews et al., 1995; Taxman & Thanner, 2006) rhetoric that continues to drive in-prison programming and inspires the ‘throughcare’ model of inmate management facilitated and administered via the classification system. Programs are integrally linked with ‘throughcare’ progression for inmates where successful completion of various rehabilitative and/or vocational programs facilitates women to their final release from prison. Therefore, in line with Taxman and Thanner (2006), ‘services’ are subsequently assigned to inmates with the neediest classification requiring the most intensive application of ‘services’. Ultimately, parole conditions are determined via the administration of ‘throughcare’, based in the RNR assessment tools. Inmates are thus identified, categorised and managed ‘through’ their incarceration and back into the community.

A gender-specific philosophy drives program implementation in women-centred prisons in NSW such as the RCCW, (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2005) with a focus on addressing the holistic needs of women during their time in prison. Gender-specific program implementation for women offenders accommodates the identified ‘needs and responsivity’ aspects of rehabilitative initiatives. NSW Departmental discussions (Department of Corrective Services, 2006) acknowledge the limited literature within an Australian context in this regard through on-going discussions around the different needs of female inmates; particularly in terms of the difficulties that face women after incarceration when released into the community. As such, current program delivery in NSW is provisioned in recognition of the need to address victimisation, self-esteem, family and parenting issues in specific programs for female inmates.

## Tensions in the Warehouse

Although increasing numbers of women in prison triggers concern in women-focussed discourse, there appears to be limited discussion regarding the effects of the prison environment on program delivery and engagement of inmates with in-prison programs in the Australian context. While attempts at delivering gender-specific programming for incarcerated women may appear to address offending behaviours, they nevertheless cloud a larger issue. That is, the dichotomy between the ‘marginalising’ effects of imprisonment and attempts through in-prison programming and policies to integrate or ‘include’ female inmates into communities post release.

Attempts at addressing this dichotomy can be seen in the implementation of the WTC residential programs for female inmates serving the last segment of their sentence. Rehabilitation programs are designed to provide opportunities for female inmates to learn skills designed to assist re-integration into the community. Lynch (2000) describes these as domestic skills such as budgeting and shopping skills and parenting classes, as well as access to community educational and vocational programs. Individual support from a specially trained WTC female only staff is also offered to inmates. In addition, female inmates with babies and small children are provided supported accommodation while being allowed to have their children living with them.

However, Lynch (2000) states that access to a WTC pre-release program is limited to a small proportion of female inmates who must undergo a process of rigorous screening. As a result, only inmates with a minimum security classification, with no active drug and alcohol problems, who have passed suitable medical assessment and have been assessed as suitable to live with children, are admitted into the program. Given the high proportion of women in the broader inmate population with complex problems, that Cropsey et al (2007) cite as including illicit drug use and alcohol addiction, a proportionately large number of women must be excluded from these programs as a result of the rigorous screening processes employed. Equally, the pseudo domestic style of

these residential programs limits the number of women that can be accommodated. For example, the full capacity of one WTC holds about twenty women (Lynch, 2000) that represents a very small proportion of women who can be accommodated at any one time. The number of women and their children housed in two WTC's in NSW totalled twenty-seven women for 2006. Of these, eighteen had no prior imprisonment, including remand which is non-representative of the broader female inmate population in NSW.

Census figures released by NSW Corrective Services for 2006 indicate the age breakdown of female inmates in NSW prisons generally is 42.4 per cent of the prison population between 25 to 34 years of age, and a lesser proportion of 38.4 per cent over the age of 35 years. In the WTC's, these figures are reversed, with the greater proportion of the WTC population being over 35 years of age (66.6 per cent) and 33.3 per cent of the WTC population being 25 to 34 years of age. There were no inmates in the 18 to 24 age bracket in the WTC, compared with 19.2 per cent of the female prison population in this age group in NSW (Corben, 2006).

Programs such as those used in the WTC are based on a premise of empowerment while addressing gender-specific issues for female inmates. The 'empowerment' model is used in terms of developing individual responsibility for skill attainment and appropriate decision making in re-dressing the complex nexus of issues for female inmates (Lynch, 2000). The compliance required by women inmates who are admitted into programs designed to 'empower' highlights the problematic that Chesney Lind & Daly (2004) see as having a one-dimensional 'victim' model attributed to all female inmates. Pickering and Alder (2000) also discuss the propensity to conceptualise female criminal behaviour in narrow psychological and pathological frameworks as problematic. This one-dimension framework does not allow for the dynamics of resistance and strategy that enables women to survive crime-related lifestyles that include violence and abuse. Resistance by female inmates is framed by Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) as a combative response that enables inmates to locate themselves within a model of resistance that ameliorates against overt power domination.



Therefore, questions remain as to the effectiveness of such programs conducted even within a softer punitive environment. The location of the WTC's in and near jail complexes embodies an everyday reality for inmates; that despite softer security controls they are still under the jurisdiction of a correctional state institution. That institutional hierarchical structures of domination and control (Weber, 1978b) remain engendered, where the WTC remains subject to the to penally imposed codes. In this environment, removal of privileges and punishments in line with penal codes continue to be meted out to inmates by the small cohort of staff who supervise inmates. Equally, as in the larger prison system, decisions regarding an inmate's access to work and educational programs remain vulnerable to arbitrary interpretations by staff who are themselves bound by institutional and hierarchical parameters (Kifer, Hemmens, & Stohr, 2003).

This fits with the tenets of totalising institutions, where Goffman (1961) cites the de-personalising effects of being confined to an institution on both inmates and staff. These include degradations and humiliations afforded to the inmate by the systematic stripping of stable social support within the broader community. As such, societal barriers that frame an individual's daily lived experiences such as demarcations of time and location between leisure, work and home, are removed in a total institution. Their removal leads to a disruption of role scheduling that continues without interruption in an inmate's every-day prison routine. Goffman sees this as a form of mortification, where daily prison life de-identifies an inmate. Any attempts by the institution to implement pseudo roles such as educational and vocational programs invoke a sense of worthlessness from the perspective of the inmate.

Equally, the disruption to normal societal roles results in what Goffman refers to as a disegregating process where separation of roles places staff in a position of unusual power over inmates. This can be played out numerously where behaviours that would not normally incite penalties in the community, such as sullenness or insolence, invoke punishment upon the inmate by staff members within a total institution.

For staff, the need to comply with institutional rules may mean that their ability to implement them brings them into conflict with a different institutional rule. Goffman (1961) cites the example of staff required to safe-guard a suicidal inmate which entails the use of continuous surveillance and physical restraints that in turn contravene normal societal boundaries. Further, he states that the requirements imposed upon staff by the (penal) institution necessitate the framing of prison staff roles as fitting within a “special moral climate” (p. 80) that essentially places staff and inmates in oppositional roles of enmity.

In line with Goffman (1961), the penal institution may present itself as providing opportunities for rehabilitation for inmates. However, the rationalising of its role as an agent of reform is disguised by its dominant, punitive objective of control; in short a “storage dump for inmates” (p.73). As a result, causal issues of poverty continue to remain largely unaddressed while ever punitive endeavours are utilised to contain and control already marginalized and excluded populations (Garland, 2001b). As such, the enactment of differentiation and separation policies continues to justify imprisonment in attempts at appeasing public concerns identifying a ‘need’ for social controls. The “therapeutic” prison (Carlen & Tombs, 2006) is therefore spawned, legitimising and continuing the inculcation of our western society’s poorer women (Stern, 1998) into warehouses of containment.

## **Conclusion**

The right to punish women is seen to be enabled through a recruitment process where the warehousing of women illustrates the ultimate exclusion of a population of disenfranchised and marginalised women. As such, the criminalising of poverty for a particular population continues to be engendered through current policies of control.

Equally, the gendering of institutions that purportedly recognise female specific gendered needs still employs invasive controls, such as strip-searching and perpetual surveillance. The building of new-generation structures where

inmates are accommodated in dwellings designed to minimise stress continue to utilise features, such as safe cells, as mechanisms of control used in traditional prison structures. Classification systems continue to label and brand female inmates. Female inmates' gendered needs are afforded a status commensurate with criminogenic labels that continue to define them as 'offenders'. Accordingly, women on remand find themselves assigned into prison facilities along with other sentenced inmates.

Rehabilitation for women in prison is also fraught with rhetorics that continue to conflate punishment with rehabilitation. The expansion of privately run prisons and vocational programs moots a worrying trend toward sustainability, where in economic terms inmates remain the driver for production and expansion of prison facilities and services. Concepts of 'what works' in terms of rehabilitation outcomes for women in prison are based on the risks, needs and responsivity framework (RNR) where inmates are identified, categorised and managed 'through' their incarceration. Programs and services assigned to individual female inmates in prison fit with the rhetoric of rehabilitation as addressing women's complex social and economic issues related to their 'offending' behaviours.

The increasing rates of incarceration for women raise concerns regarding the gendering of women's imprisonment that appears to appease the on-going containment of women in prison. Equally, the delivery of rehabilitative programs to women in prison ignores the impacts of prison in the on-going marginalisation of female inmates. The every-day realities for both inmates and staff that live and work within the total penal institution highlights associated issues around the delivery of in-prison care and rehabilitation by staff to inmates. In short, rhetorics of rehabilitation and punitive policies for women expose ripples of tension between these appositional policies that remain unanswered.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY & PROJECT DESIGN

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*Accident and happenstance shapes fieldworkers' studies as much as planning or foresight; numbing routine as much as living theatre; impulse as much as rational choice; mistaken judgement as much as accurate ones. This may not be the way fieldwork is reported, but it is the way it is done.*

(Van Maanen, 1988)

#### **Introduction**

This chapter charts the research project within its contextual backdrop in two parts. The first section includes an exploration of the methodological frameworks used in the inception of the research and situating my role as a researcher. Following this is a discussion detailing ethical considerations and the early genesis of the project.

The second part of this chapter defines the methods used in this research project. These include locating the research sites and participants, methods used for data collection and analysis through to developing categories of understanding. The emergent nature of this research highlights the process of planning and conceiving to accommodate messiness (Hyams, 2004). I use 'messiness' in this context to refer to the complexities of designing research that Guba and Lincoln (2005) portray as "human existence and the daily irritations and tragedies of living that existence" (p.211).

As a result of this situated complexity, the methodological framework used to inform the research project has allowed for disparate ontological and epistemological positions to be brought into play. It is the conjuncture and overlapping of these interpretive and critical frameworks which enables insights into complex social sites (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a). Indeed, the use of this multi-faceted methodological approach has enabled the navigating of a shifting, intangible and unknown research site.

### **Interpretive Paradigms**

The philosophical approach that shapes this research is based in apparently conflicting paradigms that seek to explore terrain in an interpretive and ultimately critical manner. The interpretivist approach seeks to gain understanding and insights into social phenomena within a given context. Crotty (1998) states that theoretical perspectives “provides ... context” (p.66) which is central to the methodological process. Any perspective is shaped by a nexus of assumptions, out of which a logical and logistic basis is derived. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) perceive this as arising out of a researcher’s own gendered, multi-social “set of ideas” (p.20) through which they frame their epistemology, methodology and ultimately analysis.

The researcher as interpretivist, therefore, seeks insights into the social world that are historically situated and culturally derived. As such, this perspective may be used to facilitate a largely uncritical approach. A critical inquiry focus, however, refuses to accept the status quo. As such, the social order evident within a particular socially situated context is subject to some form of criticism. Similarly to Crotty (1998), I employ this approach as critique directed toward institutions and social structures, rather than focussing on individuals.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005a) situate the current era of qualitative research (the 8<sup>th</sup> moment) as a site for critical discussions within the arenas of social sciences and humanities. These discussions encompass subjects such as race and gender, class and community, globalisation, democracy and freedom. Simultaneously,

other epistemological theories borrowed from paradigms such as traditional, modernist, and postmodernist perspectives overlap and interplay to form new qualitative interpretations. A fluid and complex range of qualitative fields provides the researcher with opportunities to draw from a variety of interpretative paradigms. This fits with Denzin and Lincoln's (2005a) description of borrowing from different disciplines as the 'bricoleur' approach. Much like quilt making, the bricoleur helps the researcher to piece together different genres in order to complete a picture, or tell a story. A researcher utilizing bricoleur methodologies employs different tools, practices and methods that best fit their complex context.

In order to utilise this approach, the researcher needs to undergo a process of education. This is a specific reference to the creation of something new, as opposed to mere training in the use of already existing methods (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). According to Bogdan and Taylor (1984), this approach was exemplified by C. Wright Mills who referred to the crafting process as avoiding "a rigid set of procedures. Above all seek to develop and .... use the sociological imagination" (p.126). This provides flexibility and enables a methodological approach to develop as the research progresses. The use then of multiple methods in qualitative research assists the researcher to draw together an in-depth understanding of complex and multi-faceted contexts. Equally, the combined use of different methods, such as Denzin and Lincoln's (2005a) 'bricoleur', supports a complex matrix of richness, depth and breadth that adds rigour to an inquiry.

It is this approach of 'borrowing' from different paradigms that enabled me to employ a range of methods in the crafting of the research design and inquiry process. In essence, it gave me permission to put together different approaches and methodologies that became the initial template for my research. Even as the research progressed, from design to implementation, from practice and in-field participation, through to adaptations within the field, I was able to re-align, build upon and adopt a variety of methods. I deployed the tools of an ethnographer, a semi-participant and observer, an advocate, narrator and critique, a specialist and a novice, as I weaved in and through a multi-dimensional process. Finally I

utilised the tools of reflexive narrative to enable me to make sense of a messy, often uncertain and sometimes confusing research milieu (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a). In short the interpretive stance that I have assumed encompasses a critical ontology, with a subjectivist epistemology and a transformative, ethnographic methodology (Denzin, 1998).

### **From Interpreter to Critique**

In order to critique a socially contextual site, interpretation of socially embedded constructs and symbols may need to take place first. In other words, critical methodology can make sense of, or contextualise, interpretivist findings (Dryzek, 1995). For Habermas, exploring social practices enables an understanding that leads to rich, critical insights into particular social contexts (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Habermas' (1998) life-world critical theory exposes normative assumptions embedded in public discourse. The speech act discloses subjective and normative values, intentions and actions that Habermas labels as "slices of non-objectified reality" (p. 91). Public communication discourse inherent within speech may therefore expose dominating and controlling social practices existing unquestioned in everyday social spheres (White, 1995). Hence, a framework for critical hermeneutics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005b) evolves, often through a process that Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) refer to as re-aligning initial assumptions and value-judgements.

Despite some tension between Habermas's pragmatic communication theory and Foucauldian genealogies of power (Kelly, 1994), the critical theory equally appropriate for this research is found in an exploration of the mediation between power and knowledge. Kelly (1994) states that a Foucauldian "hierarchy of knowledge" (p. 21) exposes those who are disqualified from contributing to knowledge that has implications for 'normalized' practices and discourse within a particular context (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). This is exemplified in a Foucauldian placement of human subjects within the domains of scientific discourse that objectifies individuals and categorises them, as seen in the labelling of inmates as criminals (Crinall, 1999). Indeed, Foucault's (1977)

criticisms of the “normalising power” (p.396) of the incarcerative institution that establishes it’s right to punish through a process of disciplinary action provides a perfect fit for this research context.

## **The Critical Ethnographer**

The critical ethnographer draws from critical theory to explore socially contextualised power relations. While the genres within trans-disciplinary qualitative inquiry (from which critical inquiry draws) are blurred, critical research generally remains within the context of empowerment of individuals. In line with Thomas (1993), critical theory then informs the on-going inquiry process for the critical ethnographer and shapes the researcher’s methodology, epistemology and ontology.

In contrast, traditional ethnographic practice, borne out of anthropology, explores cultural descriptions for the purpose of interpreting meanings. This type of inquiry is conducted while generally subverting the human agency of the researcher. Further, Thomas (1993) states that the traditional ethnographer uses a research or specialist voice, speaking about their research participants to other specialists. Ethnography then involves the task of studying the ordinary and common within naturalistic social settings in an effort to highlight social phenomena that may reveal the extra-ordinary and unusual (Stake, 2005). This must ultimately entail a process of deconstruction, where the assumptions of the researcher are exposed to scrutiny (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Critical ethnographers use their voice to speak as agents of change on behalf of their research participants. This voice is used deliberately by critical ethnographers as a tool of agency to empower participants. The aim of critical ethnographers is, according to Thomas (1993), to awaken social consciousness to a particular oppressed or marginalised social group and thereby activate change.



As ethnographers immerse themselves in social settings, their pre-conceived ideas of a specific context are “resisted” and made visible by the behaviours, attitudes and conversations of those from within that setting. This involves the researcher allowing themselves to be exposed to the pluralistic, partial, inconsistent, selective aspects of individuals within that setting (Grills, 1998). Therefore, the pragmatism of in-the-field work is a process of acquiring real living experiences that cannot be learned within a formal teaching environment. In short, the disparities between actual field work processes and formal ethnographic methodologies needs to be acknowledged (Shaffir, 1998).

Although Thomas (1993) suggests that the ultimate goal for critical ethnographers is emancipatory, this was not my initial goal of engaging in research with women in a penal setting. However, Thomas states that even in its least form, critical ethnographers seek to neutralise repressive research practices that have been acting to subvert and dominate a specific social group. Therefore, he sees a specific situational context is interpreted so as to illuminate symbolisms that may normally be hidden or subverted. This may be accomplished through hermeneutics which Crotty (1998) suggests entails the interpretation of symbolic meanings within the context of a social group, enabling these to be understood by another social group. Through this process the ‘status quo’ is questioned by critical ethnographers, causing ‘normative’ assumptions by a dominant group about a particular social context to be challenged.

As such, intuitive and subjective ways of knowing are currently accepted as valid and informative explorative tools within critical ethnography. Foley and Valenzuela (2005) situate the ethnographer in the field as neither “innocent (n)or politically neutral” (p. 218) which opens the way for reflexive explorations of the self and the other. This is explicated in the ethnographic narrative that usually results from fieldwork. Here then is a definition in part of the collaborator within the ethnographic field, as one who developed meaningful, trusting relationships with some of the subjects of the research.

## **Situating the Self – A Naïve Researcher**

Situating my ‘self’ within this research involved a process that Reinharz (1997) refers to as acknowledging the different selves I brought to the field. These included my multiple selves as an educated woman, mother, wife, sister and so on. Equally, other selves I brought to the research were intrinsic, sometimes conflicting parts of the ‘self’ in this research, such as being compassionate and caring, as well as feeling frustrated and emotionally drained. Therefore, I situated myself within this research recognising that I brought to the inquiry my own values and judgements.

In doing this, I belatedly acknowledge an emancipatory element of the latter stages of the research that Thomas (1993) refers to as being in itself a value-laden position. That my personal values and judgements were themselves challenged and then evolved as the research progressed served to highlight my pre-existing value-laden social ‘norms’. This was borne out with my initial expectations of assisting ‘indigent’ female inmates in a rehabilitative sense, and then progressively recognising that the corrective system challenges and conflicts with rehabilitative aims for both inmates as well as specialist staff.

As a novice in the social context and setting of the prison I latterly recognised that this social space would not slow down, nor as Grills (1998) suggests, allow room for my project. Indeed, it was this very issue that illuminated the confusing, chaotic social milieu into which I had naively dived. Equally, in order to navigate a mass of confusing, conflicting and unfamiliar concepts, I had to ‘cut the fat’ and focus on specific aspects of the social environment I was investigating. In line with Geertz (1993), focussing on the whole would obscure more than it would reveal.

As a result, the lens I chose focussed on the everyday experiences of the female inmate participants, their daily interactions with other inmates and prison staff, as well as with me. Equally, my own interactions as a semi-participant observer within the penal environment deepened this focal lens. As I observed and

became part of the web of social interactions (Geertz, 1993), in all their fragility and intangibility, my role as naive researcher metamorphosed and evolved. The interpretive stance that originated this research invoked a personal transformation from that of inquiry to one of critic. This has arisen out of my ethical commitment that acknowledges the human rights of women in prison as being intrinsically valid (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Indeed, my subjective position became further entrenched as the relationship between me and the women in this research developed. The women recognised this and began to ask me to tell their stories. They assumed some responsibility for this by informing their friends (in prison) about me, who in turn sought me out and asked if they too could share their stories. This reflects a shift in the power ratios of researcher and researched, where Thomas (1993) describes the research subjects as becoming “near equals in the project” sharing “knowledge” collectively (p.28). It is through this process then that the opaque curtains of oppression and domination concealed in what Bourdieu terms as a form of symbolic violence, is peeled back and revealed (Moore, 2004).

I take very seriously the stories these women have shared with me; the fragments of their lives, the personal insights and vulnerabilities they exposed to me. In fact, the responsibility of telling their stories weighs heavily, and I am still in an on-going process of learning how best to disseminate them. Guba and Lincoln (2005) legitimate this process as a “meaningful and important outcome of inquiry processes” (p. 201). However, I also need to acknowledge the intrinsically personal conflicts that arose out of this research. Often I felt enormous empathy for the female inmates as they shared their stories, while at other times I needed to conceal my feelings of annoyance and frustration when inmates acted in ways that appeared to take advantage of my time and presence in the penal environment.

## **A Theoretical Genesis**

As indicated in Chapter One, this research was borne out of a premise that interaction with natural environments, such as a garden, might provide benefits to individual well-being. This fits with research by Keaveny and Zauszniewski (1999) that recognises the role of well-being in the rehabilitative process for female inmates. Although psychological parameters for well-being for incarcerated women in the context of this thesis were not utilised, recognition that well-being may be undermined by the sense of personal pain and heartache that women in prison express as a result of their incarceration formed the basis of the initial research. Equally, as Cummins (2006) indicates, well-being for many women is seen as connected to their families and community and may be detrimentally impacted by being separated out from their family members. For women in particular, a sense of isolation and separation may be heightened by the separation from their children through being incarcerated, particularly as many women are their children's sole carers (Casey-Acevedo et al., 2004). Therefore, an impaired sense of well-being for incarcerated women may be expressed through a range of discrete emotions, such as anger, contempt, fear and shame (Izard, 1994).

Developing out of this premise then was a concept that recognised the role that natural environments played in allowing humans to find a place of peace and restoration that could benefit well-being. This was in line with research that recognises the role of natural environments in rehabilitation for disenfranchised populations and individuals (R. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989; S. Kaplan, 1995; S. Kaplan & Kaplan, 1982; S. Kaplan & Talbot, 1983; Ulrich, 1984). Their research highlights the human need for contact with the living world and that natural environments in the form of horticultural and gardening activities could fulfil this function.

This use of gardens as a rehabilitative tool can be seen in the use of healing and therapeutic gardens for with people with disabilities, people suffering from degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, mental health patients and patients recovering from surgery (Cooper Marcus & Barnes, 1999; Ferrini, 2002; Lewis, 1996; Ulrich, 1984). As well, community gardens, also known as allotment or neighbourhood gardens are examples of gardens functioning to benefit social, emotional, vocational and recreational needs within a community. They provide opportunities for individuals with varying interests and capabilities to engage with nature in a range of leisure and/or purposeful activities. Equally, the community garden may enable cohesive community engagement amongst otherwise socially marginalised individuals.

Models of community gardens vary in their application, adapting to the community in which they are established or to which they are targeted. They may allocate plots to an individual to grow produce, such as vegetables, herbs and small fruits as well as flowers or have plots that individuals work collectively on. Most community gardens have variations of a policy of sharing resources and produce. Local examples of community gardens designed to serve as cohesive social agents can be seen in Sydney in the Waterloo Public Housing Estate. These gardens have been found to help build a sense of community, as well as provide a place where individuals may spend time that is pleasurable (Bartolomei, Corkery, Judd, & Thompson, 2003).

The concept of a small garden that might act as a rehabilitative tool was derived largely from the community garden model and became the foundational model for the garden project. This fit with the early research goal of providing an adaptable, accessible, rehabilitative program for female inmates which would be known as 'the garden project'. The garden project's holistic objectives were to engage inmates in a small garden in order to gain creative and leisure skills, while providing them with opportunities to develop a sense of well-being.

## **First Contacts**

My first contact with Corrective Services came about in 2004 while I was completing my Honours thesis. I cold-called the Women's Transitional Centre (WTC) for female inmates described in this chapter in mid 2004. This was a tentative approach to determine future prospects for research at doctoral level. My approach was received with much enthusiasm from the then centre Manager, who recommended that I proceed with a research proposal and approach NSW Department of Corrective Services, Corporate Research (NSWCS/CR). As with most research proposals, this took some time and depended initially on my acceptance into the University of Western Sydney doctoral program. I maintained some limited contact with the manager during the six months prior to my acceptance to the doctoral research program. Another eighteen months would pass before I was able to enact the project, during which time the WTC management changed. I am grateful for the enthusiastic response initially afforded to me by this centre. It is as a result of this early encouragement that I proceeded with the research proposal.

## **The Initial Proposal**

The initial project proposal sought to provide opportunities for female inmates in the WTC to be involved in a process of designing and creating a small garden. NSWCS/CR suggested that this project be implemented in a second facility for female inmates north west of Sydney, the RCCW. I accepted this proposal, based on my understanding that the RCCW already had a community garden program in place. I felt that this would free me from needing to implement and facilitate a second garden project and enable me to focus my research on inmate participants. However, at the first meeting with Senior Management from the RCCW it was clear that their expectation was for me to implement a separate garden project in this facility. This would effectively double my workload where I needed to incorporate the implementation and establishment of a second garden project in the available time frame of twelve months allocated to the data collection phase.

As such, the research design needed to be re-framed to include the shorter time frame for each project, the additional physical effort of establishing a second garden project and the time needed to initiate the garden project and establish rapport with inmates in a separate facility. Equally, as I would need to divide my time between both facilities I recognised that this would limit the amount of time I could physically devote to each facility. After some deliberation regarding whether to run both projects in tandem, I decided to run each project sequentially, allowing me to focus all of my energies on one research site at a time.

The garden project was conducted in each of the two facilities separately for a period of five to six months, with the first project to be completed before the commencement of the second. This was based on pragmatic considerations such as concern for researcher fatigue, as well as allowing for research progression over a twelve month period. The garden project was established in the RCCW in the first half of 2006, and then in the WTC in the second half of 2006.

Despite these early changes, the project design remained founded in horticultural therapy and community garden principles. The principles of engaging the whole person in creative and productive activities co-related to individual participant's abilities and interests (Hewson, 1994) were central to the overall design throughout the progression of the project. In addition, the initial impetus underscoring the project concept of providing a program that might act as a rehabilitative tool remained. This concept included the provision of opportunities for participants to achieve at their own pace without fear of failure through building inmates' skills in areas of decision making, task orientation, expressing creativity, goal planning, co-operation, and so on. Planning a garden, preparing garden beds, planting seeds, nurturing seedlings to maturity, are examples of activities that were designed to give participants opportunities to gain confidence in a variety of tasks. That these tasks were applicable to different life skills was inherent to the overall project's concepts.

This holistic approach looks at both physical skill attainment as well as emotional and social engagement of the individual (Cooper Marcus & Barnes, 1995). While current rehabilitative programs for women in prison attempt to address educational, vocational and life skill deficiencies, the 2000-2003 Women's Action Plan (NSW Department of Corrective Services, 2000) recognises the need for holistic approaches to female inmate's wellbeing that should be reflected in the delivery of programs for inmates.

### **Broadening the Research Focus**

From the earliest days of implementing the project in the first site, the RCCW, institutional challenges arose in attempts at establishing the garden and engaging in a meaningful way with the inmates. The process of project implementation constantly needed to mitigate the punitive environment in order to make any progress with the garden. This was also reflected in the need to re-engage with inmates in order to gain consistent involvement of inmates with the garden. As the project progressed, it became increasingly evident that the use of a rehabilitative or restorative tool in the form of horticulture therapy was in conflict with the incarcerative system.

As a result, the focus for the horticulture therapy project broadened. It moved from a singular focus of inquiry into the project's benefits as a rehabilitative tool for female inmates, to a lens through which to view the impacts of the incarcerative penal system upon female inmates' experience of rehabilitation and program implementation. This broadened view allowed an exploration of the impacts of the penal system on female inmates which had implications for rehabilitative programs such as the garden project. My role as a researcher evolved from that of implementing a holistic rehabilitative program for female inmates to include the previously unforeseen role of negotiating the security, hierarchical and totalising impacts of the penal institution.

However, within this broadened research focus, I continued to implement the holistic aims of the horticultural therapy program in alignment with its



community garden model. This holistic focus aimed to continue to provide opportunities for inmates to access a project for the purpose of developing numerous skills and creative interests. Through the engagement with the inmates, as well as the necessary engagement with numerous prison staff and officers in the implementation of this project that the research focus broadened. As such, the practical aspects of the project design as initiated in the early stages were unchanged. Equally, the methodological and ethical philosophies underpinning the garden project's implementation in both facilities remained constant. That is, the holistic focus of the research project allowed an exploration of the impacts of the incarcerative environment upon women's every-day lives through their interaction with the garden project. This focus aligned with research cited in this thesis that shows that women's life histories impact upon their experience of prison and rehabilitation. It was through this exploration then that the every-day realities of incarceration for women and subsequent rehabilitative outcomes came to light.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Approvals for the conduct of this research were obtained from the University of Western Sydney, Human Ethics Committee and the NSW Department of Corrective Services, Research Department. These were granted for the research, the garden project, to be conducted in both the Remand and Correctional Centre for Women (RCCW) and the Women's Transitional Centre (WTC). Accordingly, inmate participants were given an information letter and consent form prior to engagement with the project. However, in response to my concern that some inmates were not fully aware of what giving consent meant, I chose to verbally remind them of their right to terminate or have excluded any part or all of their activities and interviews throughout the in-field research. Names and identifying information of all participants was coded in all of the diary notes and recorded audio-files.

I take very seriously the responsibilities and privileges afforded to me as a researcher in both of these environments. Equally, I have also endeavoured to

treat each of the female inmate participants with respect and sought to act in ways reflecting this approach. In addition, I have undertaken to ascribe each of the facilities in which I conducted the research with generic titles. While I acknowledge that these facilities are still recognisable, I have undertaken to maximise the privacy and anonymity of individual participants and staff members from both facilities.

In acknowledging the broadening of the research focus, for ethics purposes the scope of the study always included discussing aspects of women's incarceration and life history experiences. As such, topics of discussion that arose out of open and conversational interviews with participants in the garden project related to their every-day lived experiences as female inmates, as well as their roles as mothers, daughters, aunties, sisters, grand-daughters and so on. In short, their familial roles both before and during incarceration were integral to their discussions and were consequently highlighted throughout their interactions with the garden project. Their experience of prison included their relationships with other inmates as well as prison personnel. In the context of rehabilitation, these experiences were an important part of the whole that was explored throughout the holistic garden project.

## **Establishing the Fieldwork**

This section defines the methods used in this research project. These include locating the research sites and participants, methods used for data collection and analysis through to developing categories of understanding.

### ***Field Settings***

Consistent with the aim of this research, two locations were allocated as the sites of inquiry. Each of these was located within the jurisdiction of the NSW Department of Corrective Services, and as such, access to the general public is restricted. Through a process of research and ethics applications and approvals permission was granted for me to access each of these facilities. Equally, my actions were open to continuous scrutiny and surveillance whenever I was on location in each of these sites.

- ***The First Setting***

The first of the approved sites was in a women's correctional facility, northwest of Sydney, which I have named the Remand and Correctional Centre for Women (RCCW). This facility is a separate women-only correctional centre located within a larger correctional complex that houses a men-only correctional facility. The RCCW is a new facility designed to accommodate up to two hundred female inmates. At the time of the field-work, the RCCW housed approximately 160 inmates. The facility is set within campus-like grounds that accommodate various residential and facilitation complexes, such as security, administrative, educational and 'industrial' buildings. In addition to smaller residential cottages that house inmates classified as having 'low needs', larger residential blocks house inmates classified with 'medium needs'. These blocks appear to be adaptations of new-generational style residential buildings.

Uniformed officers were stationed in the 'medium needs' residential blocks I viewed, with their stations located behind glassed-in partitions adjacent to inmate recreational rooms. In addition, I was made aware of other secured residential blocks at the rear of the complex which house inmates classified with 'high needs', but did not view these buildings.

The RCCW is surrounded by two rows of high wire-meshed fencing and secured by a 'watch-tower' reception entrance. All staff, officers, inmates and visitors are subject to security restrictions enforced with security detection and surveillance systems, and gate-keeper staff as well as locked, centralised access gates. Different sections of the inner facility are additionally secured and contained. Internal locked gates, buildings and fences contain and segregate various groups of inmates, staff, visitors and officers. Family visitors see inmates in a designated visitors' area without access to the remainder of the facility.

The grounds within the RCCW are landscaped with open grassed areas, native tree and shrub plantings, and externally surrounded by remnant bushland. Some areas within the grounds are designated as gardens, with inmates actively encouraged to participate in grounds-keeping and gardening activities. Designated garden areas had previously formed part of a community garden teaching program in 2005, twelve months prior to my formal research in early 2006 within this facility. I first visited the prison in mid December 2005 in order to establish the garden project research. During a guided tour by a Senior Management Staff Member at this time, I was informed that only one or two inmates continued to actively cultivate gardens established in the previous teaching program.

I was given access to the grounds within the RCCW for the purpose of setting up a small garden with allocation for its location initially mooted by senior staff near 'low needs' residential cottages. However, specialist staff in program management and education/training sectors allocated a site for the garden within a confined, secured location. This area was a confined area with lockable gates

and regulated access to inmates. After spending time in this location these features and the implications for the garden project became evident.

I accessed the RCCW from December 2005 through to May 2006. Two visits per week were allocated for each garden project session, with the first session commencing in January 2006. The times scheduled were for 1.30 to 4.30 pm on each Tuesday and Wednesday. For security purposes a staff member was allocated to assist me with this project. Management staff timetabled the garden sessions to accommodate allocated staff rosters. As such, each session was timed to fit with the allocated staff member's weekly roster. In addition, the time and days allotted by management to the project were purportedly crafted to fit with inmate daily work activities conducted in morning sessions.

- ***The Second Setting***

The second fieldwork site was located within a Women's Transitional Centre (WTC). Again I have allotted this facility with a generic name for the purposes of protecting the privacy of both inmates and staff members. This facility has a community focus, with inmates living in a less overtly secured residence. The WTC is located within converted suburban homes on adjoining blocks, situated within a semi-industrial/residential suburb. The WTC is not signposted leaving the streetscape of the residence indistinguishable from adjacent homes and business premises. However, the centre is located opposite an established prison site that houses a separate prison population. The rear of the WTC has been converted to a parking area for staff and visitor cars which is not easily seen from the street. The leisure area for inmates is located in a joint rear yard located between the car park and the rear of the residences. The only visible security feature of the WTC is a child-safety gate to the rear yard.

The WTC accommodates inmates with a minimum security classification and who serve out the last of their sentence in this facility. Remaining sentences for inmates usually comprise various periods of six to twenty-four months. Inmates live full-time within the WTC. As part of the community focus inmates are expected to access part-time work, volunteer for community work, and/or access community vocation and education programs. Accommodation is also available for inmates' pre-school age children. Children residing with their mothers have access to local pre-schools or day care while their parent accesses the community for work or education purposes. Residents are required to obtain permission to leave the centre on weekends for home visits or to access the community for short shopping excursions and so on.

The WTC accommodates approximately twenty-one female inmates, but was not at full capacity during the time I conducted the garden project. To my knowledge approximately twelve to fifteen women were in residence throughout the time the garden project was conducted. Three or four staff members were generally present at the time of each session, with staff rosters requiring adjustment in accordance with security regulations.

I accessed the WTC from June 2006 through to November 2006, with once weekly visits. Sessions were of variable duration, but one morning session was allocated each week. The session period was officially limited by the timetable of the centre. However, I was informally advised by staff not to attend the centre before 10am in the morning as most residents would not be prepared and ready before this time. Equally, as the garden project progressed in the WTC most residents indicated they expected to have lunch by 12 noon and would often drift away from the session to accommodate this. In addition, availability of staff also impacted on the amount of time allocated to sessions in the WTC. As such these limits to the time I was able to spend in the WTC impacted upon the establishment and progress of the garden project itself, which is reflected in the findings.

### ***Participant Populations***

For the purposes of this research project there were two participant populations. These were located in 1) the first facility, the RCCW, where the project was facilitated and established from December 2005 through to May 2006, and 2) the second facility, the WTC, in which the garden project was conducted from June through to November 2006. As such, both of the target populations for the research project were female inmates.

#### ***1. First Garden Project – RCCW***

Participants in the RCCW totalled eighteen female inmates, with a core group of three to four inmates who consistently engaged with the garden project. The remand population of the RCCW meant that some participants engaged sporadically with the project. Other inmates in the RCCW visited the garden site and engaged casually with the garden project throughout its duration. However, these inmates declined to participate formally in the research project and have therefore not been included in the formal data collection.

- ***Making Contact with Inmate Participants in the RCCW***

The first point of contact with an inmate in the RCCW was initiated through a staff member who acted as a point of liaison for access to the prison and inmate population. This was established with a view to gaining further contacts with the broader inmate population. However, after initial forays in the field, this inmate contact and associated contacts disconnected from the garden project. After a period of fragmented and unsustainable contact with a small number of inmates, a separate group of younger women began to engage with the project. It was after a period of establishing a mutual rapport of trust that this group appointed themselves as key informants. Consequently, I did not play a direct role in the targeting and selection of inmates at any stage within the RCCW.

The core group of three to four inmates retained interest in and engaged with the project for most of its duration and it was through this group that many of the other participants became engaged in the project. Other inmates moved in and out of the project throughout its duration, forming satellite groups consisting variously of two or three inmates. They maintained a sporadic interest and visited the garden from time to time when I was present. These inmates appeared to be mostly in the youngest age group of inmates in the RCCW, i.e.) approximately twenty to thirty years of age. However, one or two apparently older inmates engaged with the project from time to time, occasionally engaging with the gardening activities, but preferring to discuss aspects of the garden project with me.

Towards the last few weeks of the project the core group of inmates was disbanded as a result of movements out of and through the RCCW. These movements resulted from inmates being re-classified and moved to different sections within the RCCW, or out of the RCCW to other corrective facilities. Other movements in and out of the garden project were as a result of inmates completing their sentence and being released, or inmates being required to access programs to comply with classification and parole requirements. At this latter stage, another core group of two or three inmates engaged enthusiastically with the garden project, while other inmates who had not previously engaged with the project began to sporadically visit the garden project. Consequently, there was a fluid interaction and exchange (that was sometimes confusing) between the garden project and the inmates throughout the duration of the project in the RCCW.

Throughout each phase of establishing and facilitating the garden project in the RCCW, I liaised with at least nine prison staff members of varying rank within the chain of command, in addition to security staff who facilitated my entry into and out of the RCCW. There were two or three key staff members whom I liaised with regularly regarding facilitating the garden project and accessing the prison site.



Prior to and throughout the course of the project demographic data such as ‘criminal histories’ of potential female inmate participants were never sought directly from inmates, staff nor documents. This complied with ethics approvals from both the University of Western Sydney and the Department of Corrective Services. However, my enduring endeavour was to minimise categorising women participants according to any pre-conceived assumptions.

## **2. *Second Garden Project – WTC***

At the conclusion of the first project, the second garden project was conducted in the WTC from June through to November 2006. The total number of female inmates who engaged with the project was twelve. At any one time five or six inmates engaged with the project. The core group of participants was relatively flexible, with some movement in and out as participants gained access to education and work opportunities.

- ***Making Contact with Inmate Participants in the WTC***

Staff members in the WTC were involved in directing inmates to the garden project. As a result, a group of five to six inmates engaged with the project at any one time with the number of key informants being about four inmates. As in the RCCW, key informants in the WTC were self-selecting. Throughout the five month period of the project some of these inmates were released from custody and left the centre. Other inmates who entered the WTC then joined the project. However, members of the core group of project participants had consistent contact with the project for periods of at least two to three months, with up to four inmates from this group having continuous contact throughout the duration of the project.

Given the small number of inmates in residence, and the special classification requirements of inmates, some general data about inmates was available prior to the commencement of the project. This information included the age range of residents and their classification status as having no on-going drug and alcohol dependencies, non-violent, and approved as child safe. Inmates in the WTC were serving out the last portion of their sentences prior to release from custody. Other identifying information about inmates, such as children residing with them in the residence, has been excluded from the research findings to protect their and their children's identities.

I engaged with approximately seven staff members in the WTC throughout the conduct of the garden project. These staff members consisted variously of management, administrative, social and education officers. The minimum number of staff members available on the days the garden project was conducted was two in accordance with security regulations. Staff assisted me in establishing contacts with inmates, sustaining these contacts and in facilitating with the garden project.

### **Data Collection Tools**

The data collection employed a number of tools. These were open-ended interviews with inmates, discussions with staff and prison personnel, semi-participant observation journaling, and reflexive notes. Although I obtained written permission from inmates at the beginning of their participation in the garden project, interviews were generally conducted after a period of getting to know inmates. As such, I also verbally reminded inmates of their right not to participate in or continue with an interview at any stage. In line with this, anonymity for each inmate participant was assured through ascribing pseudonym names.

***Interviews with Female Inmates***

The overall interview structure was open-ended and used with female inmates in both the RCCW and the WTC. This type of interview fit with the complexities of the research site where inmate movements and responses were not always predictable. Therefore, flexibility and spontaneity were features of many of the interviews conducted in both facilities. As the inmate participants developed a rapport with me the scope of the interviews broadened. Even when my researcher role overlapped with a facilitative role (Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillman-Healy, 1997) this process of interactive interview is reflective of how relationships in real life generally develop. These interactive interviews allowed the inmate participants being interviewed to determine the scope of the interview, its duration, and focus. Given the vulnerability of the inmate participants, this approach was adopted throughout the research process in both facilities. Burman (1994) documents this form of interview as an empowering exercise for disadvantaged groups which may validate and publicise their views.

As such, the open-ended interviews with inmate participants assumed various shapes within this research. This meant that the interview might be tentative, with non-invasive, open-ended questions asked of one participant individually, or two or more participants collectively. Sometimes participants indicated they did not wish to proceed with the interview by answering with very short replies. If this occurred I did not pursue the interview process. The gaps in inmates' responses, or their non-responses, forced me to 'listen' to their silences. In a social justice context, listening is seen by Hyams (2004) as hearing the silences of "subordinated others" as a means of "giving a voice" to or "privileging" the experiences of marginalised and oppressed women (p.105).

In line with narrative inquiry an interview might also be conversational, often spontaneous, and usually arose out of a general discussion with one or more participants. This multiple lensed approach often wrought unsolicited information and insights elicited through biographical details of women that fit within the social context of the study site (Chase, 2005). The length of these conversations varied, with some being mere 'sound-bites' or small snippets of

information, and others forming longer, more detailed discussions. Another form of interview used was semi-structured where inmates agreed to, or in some cases, volunteered to take part in an open-ended conversation. They chose the general topic of the discussion. Once we'd agreed on a topic, a discussion would then ensue with questions responding to a participant's theme of choice. As such, the context and scope of the interview was generally dictated by the participant. These interviews always took place after participants had come to know me and trust me.

This is not a definitive selection of interview styles conducted as the complexities of the social sites in both facilities required that overlapping variations of the interview processes needed to be employed from time to time. Indeed, interviews generally took on fluid shapes that more truly resembled every-day, ordinary conversations. These were borne out of engaging with the participants at their level of comfort, rather than more stylised question and answer interviews. This approach enabled participants to voice their opinions more openly, and assisted the development of rapport between myself and the participants. As a result, the power divide between us appeared to diminish with the participant gaining a measure of control over the interview process (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005). The interviews then became part of what Fontana and Frey (2005) refer to as the "active emergent process" (p.706).

In recording the interviews, I received NSW Department of Corrective Services permission to use a digital recorder. In the first facility, the RCCW, during the early phases of the research I asked inmates if they would agree to an interview using this device. Although some initially agreed to have their interviews audio-recorded, after showing the device they responded with fear and suspicion. Later as the garden project progressed and inmates grew to trust me their responses were less suspicious, with other inmates in the RCCW volunteering to have their interviews audio-recorded.

Due to this initial response from inmates in the RCCW I allowed discussions and conversations to generate more casually, taking written notes of the

interviews as soon as possible after leaving the RCCW. Equally, if I attempted to take written notes during an interview the interview process stalled as I lost

eye contact with the participants, interrupting the flow of our discussions. Only participants in the RCCW had interviews audio-recorded.

The inmate participants in the second facility, the WTC, also displayed a reluctance to have interviews audio-recorded. Similarly to the RCCW, participants in the WTC required a process of building a rapport of trust before engaging in individual one on one interviews. Despite this, no inmates in the WTC agreed to have their interviews audio-recorded. There were more group discussions with inmates in the WTC, with individual discussions being less frequent than in the RCCW. I again noted these interviews in writing as soon as possible after leaving the WTC.

In line with ethics approvals I did not undertake formal interviews with staff and officers, but drew on my own experiences of the penal environment. As such, my experience of the penal environment reflected issues around establishing the garden project and inmate participants.

### ***Semi-Participant Observations***

In both settings I undertook to enter the facilities with a ‘softly softly’ approach. In recognition of the disproportionate power distribution between myself and the inmates I deliberately acted as inoffensively as possible. That is, in accordance with Greer, (Greer in (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) I acted somewhat passively in an attempt to “feel out the situation” and “come on slow” (p.32). The role I undertook as facilitator and teacher of a garden project was affected by this approach. I had anticipated that I would need to be pro-active as a teacher of a gardening program, while also needing to approach the inmates with some humbleness. The manner in which I sought to resolve this was to indicate to inmates that as I was a novice in their world, they could teach me about their world. In exchange for this I undertook to pass on some of my knowledge and skills in horticulture. This approach generally worked well, with inmate participants becoming more willing to discuss their worlds as the project progressed. As the project in each facility developed, so rapport with some inmates increased. These inmates self-selected themselves as the core group of

inmates in each facility with key informants developing out of this group. The key informants from each setting were instrumental in ‘filling in the blanks’ of the inmate social contexts and interpreting some of the specific language used by inmates (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Negotiating the dual role of researcher and facilitator was surprisingly more difficult with some staff than with most inmates. Some prison staff expected to see actual and tangible results from the garden project, by which they determined the ‘success’ or otherwise of the project. This approach conflicted with my ethics of interacting with inmates at their own pace and individual comfort levels. Even so, tangible results from the garden project were visible and progressed throughout its implementation in both facilities. However, in apparent conflict with some staff expectations, management staff from time to time reminded me that establishing a rehabilitation project was expected to be problematic with slow progress. These tensions and conflicts that I encountered as a semi-participant observer form part of the findings.

From my observations I recorded detailed descriptive field notes of everyday activities and procedures, security procedures, as well as seasonal and timetabling information. In addition, I recorded my impressions of the visible architecture of each facility to which I had access. I included my impressions from discussions with participants alluding to parts of the prison that remained out of sight, as well as classification systems, security procedures, and everyday inmate and staff routines. Semi-participant information also included descriptions of the many and various interactions between me, inmate participants and staff while conducting the garden project. This included details of my experiences of interactions with the security systems and procedures on entry into, during and exiting both facilities.

My observations of the effects of the security and classification systems on the progression of the project, the inmates, staff, and officers were journaled. These everyday activities included a vast array of verbal statements, snippets of information, discussions and conversations of varied duration, as well as non-verbal cues and observations (O’Leary, 2005). With some events, such as

security procedures, it was not always possible to separate descriptive detail from my own reactions. Given that this research was conducted in penal environments which also impacted upon me during my time conducting the garden project, these reactions form part of the data and inform the findings (Liebling, 1999).

After every session in the field, I returned immediately to my office to write down the happenings of the day. The first notes to be written up were interviews, unless I had managed to audio-record these, followed by the day's events recorded in sequential order, including preparation prior to entering the field.

### ***Self Reflexivity***

After each session, as well as recording all observational and interview data, I recorded my reflections. Additional reflexive notes were written later when I had been able to mull over the day's events at more leisure. I was deeply aware of my 'situated self' in the field and that my experiences were interpretations as opposed to 'factual events' (Michalowski, 1997). Often my reflections remained cerebral, with themes emerging after several weeks as I continued to assimilate these and would feed into my reflexive notes as the fieldwork progressed. Indeed, throughout the fieldwork the cerebral process of induction remained continuous.

This routine became more demanding emotionally as I began to develop deeper understanding and insights into the inmates' worlds, particularly in the first facility in which the project was conducted, the RCCW. The bi-weekly visits in the RCCW also added to the emotional exhaustion as I needed to prepare two sessions back-to-back, as well as write up field notes. Equally, running consecutive projects in two separate facilities back-to-back contributed to this overall emotional load. Although I recognised the need to 'take a break' after completion of the first project, time constraints dictated that I continue immediately onto the second project. However, the emotional exhaustion of researching in a penal institution(s) formed part of the data and contributed to



the deep insights I gained. As a result I conceded that it would be difficult to maintain a research focus were I to continue the fieldwork indefinitely. Indeed, I was in danger of 'going native' (Liebling, 1999) in empathising with the inmates, which further illustrated the pressures and tensions I encountered in these environments.

## **Data Management**

The same procedure of data collection was followed for each research site. All descriptive data obtained through open-ended interviews, discussions, observations, semi-participant observations and personal experiences were recorded in a separate chronological diary for each site. Reflexive notes were also added to this diary chronologically. Recorded interviews were transcribed and attached as hard copies to the diary. A separate computer file was also created for audio-recordings. Locked and secured hard copies of all field notes were secured in my university office situated within a secured University of Western Sydney building. Computer files with password access secured all diaries, interview transcriptions and audio-files, observation and reflexive notes.

All data from the data files was coded with shorthand descriptors to identify the data source. Thus, a piece of data from diary notes in the RCCW would be coded as R = RCCW. This would be followed by the number of the week allotted sequentially. Therefore, Week Thirteen was recorded as W13. In the RCCW, there were two sessions each week so the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> day was recorded as D1 or D2. This was followed by a shorthand version of the month, such as January = Ja. The year following the month, i.e. 2006 became 6. The last digit to be included was the page number if applicable.

An example of the completed code for a piece of data found in the diary notes in the RCCW in Week 6, Day 2 in March, 2006, on page 7 would be coded as (RW6D2Mh6.7). If the data came from a separate interview, then it was differentiated from the diary notes by the capital I preceding the first initial locating the site. The date of the interview was recorded prior to the month. For example, data from an interview held in the RCCW on 21 March, 2006, page 8, became coded as (I.R/21Mh6.8).

For the WTC coding was similarly repeated, with the letter T denoting the site as the WTC to differentiate from the week number. As sessions in the WTC were only held on one day per week, the day was not included in the code. Thus codes for the WTC, on Week 5 in July, 2006 on page 9 read (T/W5Jy6.9)

### **Research Authenticity**

The methodological frameworks elicit conflicting views and disagreements even within interpretive and critical paradigms (Denzin, 1998). The question that arose as most relevant in terms of research validity, authenticity and integrity aligns with Guba and Lincoln (2005),

“can (this research) be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomenon?” (p.205).

Unlike triangulation, suggestive of a three sided rigidity with a fixed objective, validation for this research more readily took on the form of crystallisation. This is a process of acknowledging a complex multi-dimensional approach, where external experiences are refracted via internal domains such as gender and biography. However, just as a crystal is a solid, multi-dimensional object, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) suggest that this process is not amorphous, but a structured, accountable process of growth and change.

Equally, locating researcher epistemology via the mechanisms of reflexivity grounds the critical ethnographic inquiry. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) state that the generated data and processes of analysis through to inter-linkage with “macro-level social theories” (p.328) contributes to the on-going process of reflexion. The reflexive process exposed the preliminary normative assumptions of power and domination initiating the research which then underwent stages of development throughout the research process. In line with Guba and Lincoln’s (2005) definition, the criterion of authenticity, validity and integrity can be seen in the positioning of real life issues within a “practical philosophy” that can be enacted authentically within a particular social paradigm (p.206).

### **Dealing with Data Overload**

The sense that the complexities of the data generated from this study were overwhelming led to an initial temptation to present a clean, neatly descriptive overview of the data analysis processes. However, I acknowledged that this approach would blur the stages of analysis employed and subsequently fail to illustrate the processes of re-adjustment, reification, and intuitive re-thinking that informed all aspects of the data collection and analysis. In short, the intricate analytic processes became a progressively emergent feature of the on-going fieldwork. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) refer to the inseparability of data collection and analysis as going “hand-in-hand” (p.128). They suggest that the processes of participant observation, interviewing, induction of emergent and developing concepts re-inform the on-going research process. Only at the end of the fieldwork when all of the data ‘is in’ can more concrete steps of analysis be employed. These initial steps are outlined in the following sections.

***Making Sense of the Data***

Because of the rich, descriptive nature of the data (Geertz, 1993), making sense of it was a complex interpretive process. In fact, the collection of data presented a seemingly insurmountable morass of apparently mundane and banal data ‘bites’ or pieces. I have referred to ‘piece’ or ‘bite’ of data deliberately in contrast to the oft used ‘unit’ of data. A ‘unit’ of data seems to infer a sharply defined, self-contained unit, whereas ‘piece’ or ‘bite’ refers to different shaped and sized parts of a larger multi-dimensional, entwined whole, that reflect the messiness of the inquiry process.

Dealing with each data piece in this way appeared to be a more appropriate fit with the bricoleur approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005a). As such, the overall analysis of all of the data involved an interactive, messy process that required complete immersion in the data. This process of ‘getting my hands dirty’ and digging deep into the data employed cerebral and intuitive processes. Indeed, Denzin (1998) clearly highlights this issue and announces that “interpretation is an art that cannot be formalized” (p.338). Despite this acknowledgement, there is a paucity of literature outlining explicit and clear processes of analysis that accommodates messiness.

Grounded theory provides a useful process of placing like with like and comparing difference (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, in utilising a grounded theory approach to the data analysis, I have also drawn from O’Leary (2005) who transparently details the data analysis process in a series of steps or stages.

These were Stage One, Defining Researcher Perceptions; Stage Two, Sorting Relevant Categories; Stage Three, Identifying Categories of Understanding; Stage Four, Developing Themes and Stage Five, Generating Theory. Each of these stages of analysis provided a framework for the emergent findings. The development of each of these stages of analysis through to generating theory is discussed in depth in the following chapter.

## Writing up the Data

The final phase of the data analysis was writing up the data. Slaughter (1989) in Kincheloe & McLaren, (2005, p.321) states that researchers who engage in critical research need to “construct their perception of the world anew, not just in random ways but in a manner that undermines what appears natural, that opens to question what appears obvious.”

This final phase involved writing up the data as narrative which was an emergent and often painfully difficult process that exposed previously unclear and hidden insights. It was through this creative pursuit of narrative writing, or the writing of stories involving a critical reflexivity, that added richness and depth to the raw data (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Through the writing process the narratives unfolded revealing deep insights into the real-lived worlds of female inmates as they lived within the penal environments. Reflections of my own experiences within these environments were used to contextualise the story writing. These reflections acknowledged the world of the privileged ‘other’ in which I live. However, even as the writing progressed it was clear that the insights I gained into the world of the marginalized ‘other’ were only fractured and partial. Richardson (2005) describes the humanly sited ethnographic project as,

“always filtered through human eyes and human perceptions, and bearing both the limitations and the strengths of human feelings” (p.964).

In short, the ethnographical story cannot be separated from the ‘self’ of the researcher. It was through the writing of myself into stories and narratives then that contributed to ‘enlarged understandings’ (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). This is in line with O’Leary (2005) who states that the narrative text allows the story of the research project to unfold logically. As such the use of narrative charts the points of stagnation, and the fluidity of reversals and progressions that contributed to the overall research. It illustrated the use of data as a porthole from which to at once navigate, absorb and view the complex milieu of information, concepts and impressions portrayed in this research.

Therefore, as Charmaz and Mitchell (1997) illustrate, the ethnographic history of the research project is told from my eyewitness view, as a “narrator in the trenches” (p.199). It allows my voice as the researcher to add colour, shape and texture to the overall canvas. As such, throughout the text my feelings, thoughts and impressions as the researcher are voiced. This contrasts with empirical writing, where Green (2002) states that the “elimination of personal feeling” (p. 124) in ethnographic narrative risks stifling the text and denuding it of thickness and richness so prized by Geertz (1993). Therefore, I acknowledge Chase (2005) in the inclusion of my ‘researcher’ voice in the narrative text which validates my researcher role and debunks the mythology of the researcher as “the invisible omniscient author” (p.666). The written stories then provide a canvas in which to draw out the findings from this research.

## Conclusion

As this chapter has illustrated, research in the real-world requires flexible, multiple method approaches that have the ability to traverse and engage with complex, multi-dimensional, messy social issues. This has included a process of searching the literature for an appropriate methodological framework which allows a complete picture to unfold. The ‘bricoleur’ approach then enabled the employment of interpretative and critical paradigms for this research. Within this, critical ethnography allowed me to immerse myself in the hidden world of inmates, while acknowledging my role as a naïve researcher.

These philosophical frameworks enabled the design and implementation of the research project for female inmates in both corrective facilities, the RCCW and the WTC, to unfold. The initial focus of the project drew on research associating benefits of natural environments with well-being, and benefits of community and healing gardens for disenfranchised populations and individuals. These concepts provided the impetus for the horticultural therapy project to be established as a garden project. The implementation of the garden project in the first facility required an on-going process of navigating challenges which led to a broadening of the initial research focus. However, the initial focus of providing female inmates with a holistic, rehabilitative project remained.

Data collection techniques employed throughout the research phase over a twelve month period in both facilities included interviews, semi-participatory observations and reflexive journaling. Data analysis employed a five stage process based on grounded theory approaches that led to theory building. This was followed by the writing up phase that entailed on-going analysis.

As such, the following chapter records the complexities of these processes throughout the data analysis, thematic development and theory building phases. These phases then form the framework in which to situate the emergent findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### REVEALING THE PHANTOM

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#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the several processes used in analysis of the raw data through to theory building. As such, this chapter has been purposely positioned between the Methodologies and Discussions chapters, so as to provide an explication of the processes used in the various stages of analysis. I felt that the complexities of the data required that these stages be outlined more clearly in order to provide a navigatable pathway to the understandings gained. In navigating the data through the inductive stages of analysis, thematic insights emerged that might otherwise have been relegated to invisibility. These insights are used to foreground the emergent findings that then enabled the following discussion chapters to evolve.

In accordance with O’Leary (2005), I conducted the data analysis through a series of five stages. Stage One defines researcher perception and bias, and Stage Two enables the sorting of relevant categories, while Stage Three identifies the categories of understanding. These three stages then highlight the earlier processes of the data analysis employed throughout the data collection phase.

Stage Four enables developing themes to emerge and Stage Five generates the theory that foregrounded the emergent findings. These final stages of analysis provided a pathway illustrating the progression of the analysis through to theory generation. As a result, these stages of analysis have enabled two dominant streams of inquiry to emerge which then informed the writing up phase. The writing up phase allowed narratives around the major themes of Domination, Totalisation and Power to be brought to life. This crucial final phase is discussed at the end of this chapter.



## **Re-stating the Research Aims of the Garden Project**

Commensurate with holistic rehabilitative aims set out in the Women's Action Plan (N.S.W. Department of Corrective Services, 2000), the research project centred on exploring the potential benefits of interaction with natural environments for incarcerated women. As discussed in the previous chapter, the garden project was designed to act as a rehabilitative tool and provide opportunities for female inmates to engage with a natural environment in the form of a small garden. A garden project was established in each of two women's correctional facilities in New South Wales (NSW) over a twelve month period. The first project was conducted in a Remand and Corrective Centre for Women (RCCW) from December 2005 through to May 2006. The second project was established in a Women's Transitional Centre (WTC) from June through to November 2006.

In line with research aims, it was expected that potential benefits of engaging with the garden project for female inmates might be evidenced through expressed feelings of a sense of well-being along with the development of creative and recreational skills, basic horticultural and living skills. In addition, it was hoped that as a result of the research, the garden project might be adapted for use as an adjunct to other rehabilitation programs already conducted within the prison environment. Commensurate with the research design, all data collected through the implementation of a garden project in a RCCW and a WTC was subject to the following phases of analysis.

## **Identifying the Stages of Data Analysis**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the complex nature of the data led to a sense that I had lost sight of any meaningful data. To overcome this sense of feeling overwhelmed, I employed the stages of analysis highlighted below.

Table 5.1 - Stages of Data Analysis

Stage One	<i>Defining Researcher Perceptions</i>
Stage Two	<i>Sorting Relevant Categories</i>
Stage Three	<i>Identifying Categories of Understanding</i>
Stage Four	<i>Developing Themes</i>
Stage Five	<i>Developing Theory</i>

A largely grounded theory approach to analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) allowed me to overcome the sense of losing control of the data. As the stages of analysis began to reveal the emergent findings I saw that through the inductive, intuitive re-thinking employed throughout each stage the richness of the data had been retained. This then enabled me to see the processes of data collection and analysis as an integrative process (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) where emerging concepts and themes enabled the data to be brought to life. These stages of analysis then allowed for a framework in which to situate the emergent findings.

#### ***Stage One - Defining Researcher Perceptions***

In recognising the sensitive and contextually rich nature of the data, I needed to acknowledge subjective researcher perceptions emerging in the collective data. To address this, an inductive process of exploring researcher bias, both acknowledged and previously unacknowledged, was employed. This overcame my concern that subjective concepts and assumptions had emerged during the collection phase of the data.

In line with O’Leary’s (2005) discussions on defining researcher bias in qualitative inquiry, the inductive process elicited my own known and previously unrecognised bias and world view.

Table 5.2 - Defining Researcher Bias

<i>Rehabilitation</i>	that rehabilitation programs offer inmates opportunities for skill attainment that contribute to a reduction in recidivism.
<i>Inmates</i>	that inmates differ to the general populace in regards to life skills and other behaviours which lead to involvement in criminal activities.
<i>Inmates' Needs</i>	that female inmates require specialist intervention in developing necessary skills to overcome criminally based behaviours.
<i>Prisons</i>	are necessary institutions for the purpose of separating criminally involved individuals from the wider population.
<i>Prison Systems</i>	that punitive policies are necessary to secure the broader populace' general safety through the enactment of security processes.
<i>Prison Staff</i>	that all prison staff members undergo adequate training which skill them with insights into inmates' unique needs.
<i>Specialist Staff</i>	that specialist prison staff, such as psychologists and education providers, enable the functioning of support services that assist inmates overcome behaviours implicit in criminal activities.

After researcher perceptions had been defined the collected data was then explored for impressions and concepts drawn from the research site that might be reflected in the identified areas of researcher bias. This then allowed the capture of emotional contexts that related to my own responses throughout the research. As a result, the complexities of navigating the research site were brought into play through identifying the light and shade of various felt emotions that reflected emotions expressed by garden project participants and contributed to the complexities of the research.

In line with emotions identified by Ortony et al (1988) as relating to well-being, inmates expressed a range of emotions that alternatively indicated joy or distress. The following table illustrates the various emotions expressed by inmates in the data texts that have been placed within the emotional contexts of well-being in accordance with Ortony et al (1988).

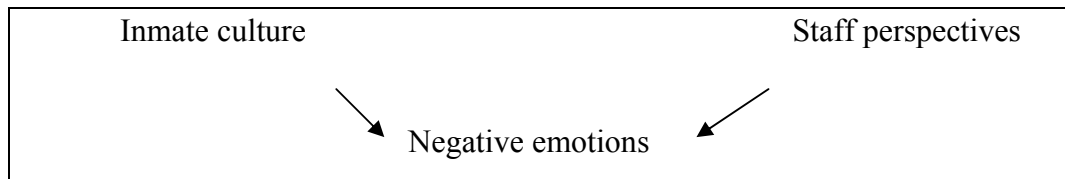
Table 5.3 – Inmates’ Expressed Emotions

<u>Distress Emotions</u>	<u>Joy Emotions</u>
Displeasure	Delight
Dissatisfied	Contented
Grief	Feeling good
Unhappy	Happy
Disappointment	Pleased
Sadness	Cheerful

These emotional responses were recorded throughout the process of implementing the garden project and engaging with participants in both the RCCW and the WTC. As a result, the exploration of various felt emotions expressed by project participants gave further insight into larger general impressions of the penal environment. These impressions highlighted the cultural framework exposed through the general prison discourse and rules of engagement specific to the prison environment. Set within this cultural framework, the varying emotional perspectives expressed by inmates also gave insights into the hierarchical construct of the prison culture.

This initial navigation of the data then provided a basis for early categories of exploration, such as *Inmate culture*, *Negative emotions* and *Staff perspectives* that illustrated the emotional conflicts inherent in these categories.

Table 5.4 – Early Categories of Exploration



### **Stage Two – Sorting Relevant Categories**

The grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) approach enabled an intense process of immersion in all of the collected data. Through this process of immersion, this approach provided a comparative method that compared pieces of data with other data, and category with category.

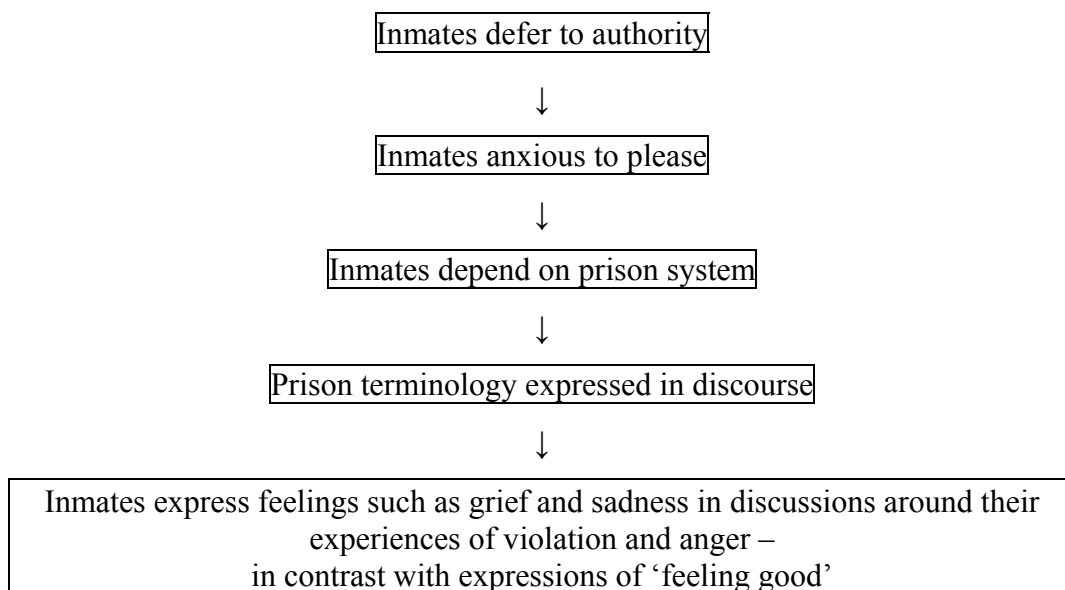
Reflecting Habermas' (1998) use of meaning as inter-subjective, fragments of conversation and observations, as well as larger portions of text, achieved validity as 'bites' or pieces of data. Each of these data 'bites' might variously consist of whole or partial sentences, statements, short phrases as well as whole paragraphs. The data, encompassing spoken words, observations and non-verbal cues enabled the coding of the collected data. Each piece of data was carefully examined from all of the collected sources, such as interviews, field notes, descriptive observational accounts of person to person interactions, experiential accounts and so on.

Key words were then able to be identified leading to a process of mind mapping. This enabled the linking of key words into groups from which categories of understanding began to emerge. This approach wrought a sense-making process that gave coherence to a complex and often overwhelming milieu of data. O'Leary (2005) states that examining the collective data in this way, enables the multi-layered, embedded meanings of everyday discussions and observations to be found in pieces of data, or "keywords in context" (p.258). These bites of data were allocated into broad categories for further exploration, which were *Inmate Behaviours*, *Staff Perspectives*, *Surveillance Systems*, *Researcher Response*. An example of this process, where identified behaviours were listed under the relevant category, *Inmate Behaviours*, follows.

Table 5.5 – Identifying Inmate Behaviours

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use formal language when addressing staff, “<i>Yes, miss; Excuse me, miss; Please miss</i>”</li> <li>• Waiting around, waiting for directions</li> <li>• Use prison related terminology, ‘screws, girls’</li> <li>• Express feelings in relation to their experiences of prison</li> </ul>
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These behaviours were then allocated to fit with concepts relating to the category of *Inmate Behaviours* through an illustrative diagram. This process highlighted some of the observable impacts of the penal environment on female inmates in response to the garden project.

Figure 5.1 – Diagrammatic Illustration of *Inmate Behaviours*

The diagram shows the developing insights into inmate behaviours that portrayed deference to authority through appearing anxious to please prison personnel by addressing individual staff members with “*Yes, miss, Please miss, Excuse me miss*”. These forms of address were often used by inmates towards me throughout the conduct of the garden project, particularly in the RCCW. Equally, inmates illustrated a dependency on the prison system through waiting

to be ‘called up’ to the garden project, despite sessions being allocated a regular time and day each week. Prison terminology infiltrated everyday language used by inmates, such as “*screws*” when referring to prison staff generally, or “*fresh meat*” in reference to new, younger inmates, or when calling other female inmates “*girls*” regardless of age. Inmates also expressed feelings of grief and sadness when discussing their experiences of the penal environment that contrasted with other less frequent expressions of “*feeling good*” in response to their participation in the garden project.

Each of the remaining categories, *Staff Perspectives*, *Surveillance Systems* and *Researcher Response* was similarly explored.

### ***Stage Three – Identifying Categories of Understanding***

These broad-brush categories were followed by a further process of intensive exploration of all data sources. This involved a detailed examination of fragments of text from conversations, discussions, interviews, semi-participant observations, and self-reflective notes. These data bites were again identified for sameness and comparison. An example follows which shows the process of taking raw data from different broad-brush categories and allocating the pieces of data into contextual categories.

Table 5.6 –Identifying Same and Comparative Categories

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<i>Contexts</i>	<i>Language used</i>	<i>Observation of Behaviours</i>
Inmates defer to staff members	Miss, Ma'am	Inmates anxious to please
Inmate movements restricted	Safe Cell	Inmates disappear, not visible
Dependency on prison personnel	Call-up	Inmates waiting for directions, lack of response
Inmate references to prison guard responses	Charge us	Inmates' attitudes of defiance to prison guard
Prison staff referring to female inmates	Girls	Giving directions, addressing inmates



Identifying concepts relating to data bites allowed for similar pieces of text from different sources to be placed into appropriate contexts. As a result, concepts emerged which allowed the contextually rich categories to develop. The text in the following table places words and phrases used by inmates within conceptual frames that differentiate them from words and phrases used by prison staff members. For example, verbal references to female inmates as ‘*girls*’ was used by both prison staff and inmates. Equally, ‘*call up*’ and ‘*safe cell*’ were interchangeably used by both groups. The phrase, ‘*Yes Ma’am*’, was used by staff lower down in the chain of command to address superior prison personnel, however, this form of address was also used by female inmates to prison staff.

Table 5.7– Identifying Concepts

<i>Words/phrases</i>	<i>Concept</i>	<i>Inmate Non-verbal Cues</i>
Yes Miss, Ma’am	Dominance	Eyes averted, head lowered
Safe cell	Fear	Silence, Non-responsive
Call-up	Control	Apathy, waiting around, bored
Charge us	Authority	Folded arms, defiant expression
Girls	Infantilisation	Compliance

As a result of this inductive analysis, the identification of concepts related to inmate responses to the penal environment allowed new categories of understanding to emerge. Concepts such as *fear* and *control* enabled understanding and insight into penal systems, such as *Surveillance Mechanisms*, while the concept of *authority* allowed for a further understanding of the role of *Architectures of Control*. Similarly the concept of *infantilisation* gave further insight into *Inmate Culture*, while *dominance* illuminates *Punitive Cycles*. As such, the Categories of Understanding that emerged were *Inmate Culture*, *Punitive Cycles*, *Surveillance Mechanisms*, *Architectures of Control*.

Table 5.8 – Categories of Understanding

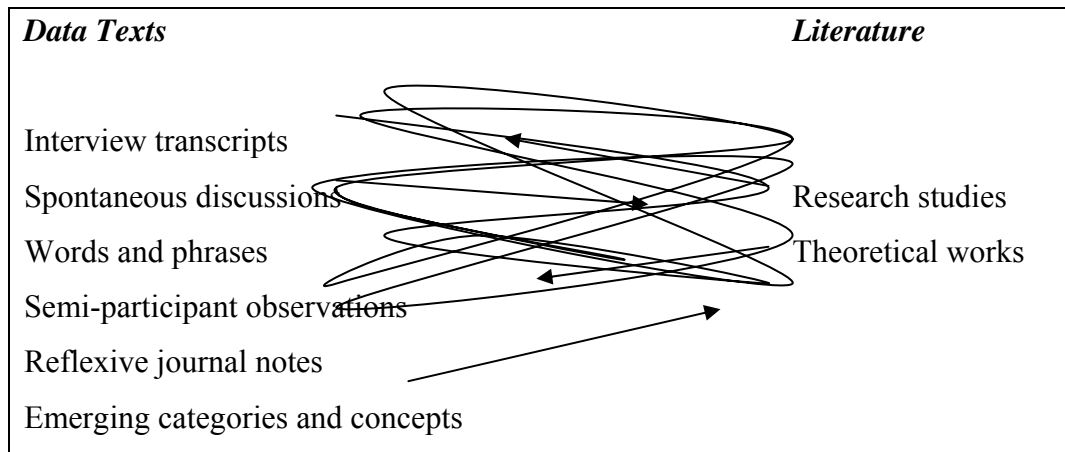
<i>Category</i>	<i>Concepts</i>
<i>Inmate Culture</i>	Infantilisation
<i>Punitive Cycles</i>	Dominance
<i>Surveillance Mechanisms</i>	Fear, Control
<i>Architectures of Control</i>	Authority

The concepts identified in these categories then allowed for on-going exploration as the fieldwork continued. While the complexity of the collective data remained, these categories allowed for the on-going development of insights into the concepts of *infantilisation*, *domination*, *fear* and *authority*.

#### **Stage Four - Developing Themes**

Having identified emergent categories of understanding new richness was brought to the collective data. To make better sense of the contextually rich categories of understanding now emerging the literature was searched to identify theories and research studies that might relate to the identified categories. This process was an explicit progression dialogue between data generated concepts, categories of understanding and the literature theory and research studies (Huberman & Miles, 1998).

Figure 5.2 - Simultaneous Engagement with Data Texts and Literature



Despite the abstraction necessary in this conceptual process, it was essential to continuously keep the data moving back and forth between the literature texts in an on-going dialogue. This movement enabled the development of deeper understandings and insights through exploring the light and shade of the tensions exposed in the data texts.

The juxtaposition between the literature and theory could be seen in how the categories of, say, *Punitive Cycles*, *Surveillance Mechanisms*, and *Architectures of Control* were given much greater depth when placed against Foucault's (1977) discussions around the imagery of state intervention and *control* of individuals deemed as indigent. This enabled an exploration of more recent literature on punitive policies that inculcates inmates into *systems of control* (Garland, 2001a). Equally, Weber's social theory of *domination* and discussions around hierarchical structures (Brennan, 1997; Weber, 1978b) gave richness to the category of *Inmate Culture* along with Goffman's (1961) work on total institutions.

Two examples of the juxtaposition of theoretical discussions from Goffman and Foucault, alongside concepts drawn from the categories, *Inmate Culture* and *Punitive Cycles*, follow:

Table 5.9 - An exploration of Inmate Culture

<p><b>Literature:</b>  <b>Goffman (1961), total institutions</b></p> <p>Verbal deference          Role dispossession          Mortification          Totalisation</p>	<p><b>Concept:</b>  <i>Infantilised responses to control systems</i></p> <p>“Yes, miss.”          “Couldn’t be bothered.”          “The best way to get through jail is lying on your back...”          “fresh meat”          “looked after”          “doing her time”</p>
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Table 5.10 - An exploration of Punitive Cycles

<p><b>Literature:</b>  <b>Foucault (1977), the indigent individual</b></p> <p>Power          Discipline          Punish          Punitive</p>	<p><b>Concepts:</b>    <i>Power, Control</i></p> <p>“when you depressed you don’t want to do anything’          “I was like that...they don’t help you”          “the psych’s don’t really help you in this jail”          “a friend who was depressed”          “They put her in safe cell”          “That wasn’t no good for her.”</p>
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It was through this process that thematic understandings emerged which became the dominant themes of *Totalitarianism*, *Power* and *Domination*. The following table illustrates how the texts and categories are now aligned with these themes.

Table 5.11 – Aligning Categories with Thematic Themes

<i>Category</i>	<i>Literature</i>	<i>Theme</i>
Inmate Culture	Goffman’s (1961), Total Institutions	Totalitarianism
Punitive Cycles	Foucault’s (1977), The Carceral	Power
Surveillance Mechanisms; Architectures of Control	Weber’s (1978b), Domination & Hierarchy	Domination

It was now possible to make sense of various apparently separate story-lines that had emerged from the data. The juxtaposition of story-lines that fit within the category of *Punitive Cycles* now linked the every-day experience of inmates in the RCCW with their experience of punitive systems.

Table 5.12 - Story-lines: *Punitive Cycles*

***Inmates refer to their experience of punitive systems***

**1.** Marie describes her experience of the punitive systems ... she was placed into a 'safe cell' where she was isolated from other inmates ... she was unable to get warm against the air-conditioning which had been set at cold. Marie also described how she had limited access to food ... "nothing but a carton of milk and some cereal".

**2.** More intimate experiences of the personal effects on inmates of the punitive environment are detailed by one inmate, Carol, who talked about the trauma of young women being strip searched "every time they had a visitor, or saw a solicitor", and that the girls "had to pull a med out in front of officers".

**3.** Carol then referred to a friend (another inmate) who, even though she was ill and had to be admitted to hospital, was strip searched and had to take a tampon out in front of officers and had handcuffs on the "whole time she was in hospital".

**4.** Stories are shared amongst inmates ... Marie talked about friends who had been put into a 'safe cell' when they have no history of self harming after crying when in session with a prison psychiatrist. Marie detailed how a friend "who's mother died 3 months after her grandmother had died and because she cried when she saw a psych she was put into a 'safe cell'. This was seen by the inmate as the "worst thing that could happen to her".

**5.** Another inmate detailed a similar experience. Fiona talked about how "the psych's don't really help you in ...jail". She and other inmates encouraged an inmate in her "house" who was depressed to see the prison psychiatrist. She explained that they had thought the prison "psych" might be able to help her friend with her depression. Fiona explained that the outcome of the session with the psychiatrist was that her friend was placed in a "safe cell", "that wasn't no good for her."

**6.** Fiona also detailed her experience of punitive consequences for not attending a series of classes for inmates with depression. Fiona admitted that she had been depressed and had wanted to attend these classes but because of the depression was unable to attend, describing in her own words, "when you depressed you don't want to do anything". When Fiona had finally attempted to attend the third class of this series, the psychologist had turned her away, stating that because she had not attended the first two sessions she would not be permitted to attend the remaining sessions.

Story-lines within the category of *Punitive Cycles* continued to evolve as a result of the juxtaposition of data detailing individual and collective inmates' experiences and the dominant thematic streams. The effects of *totalisation* for inmates were seen in stories of their experiences with prison staff and prison regulations. The process of placing stories within the category of Punitive Cycles for example, under emergent thematic titles is illustrated within the following initial thematic analysis of Totalisation.

Table 5.13 – Thematic Analysis: *Totalisation*

***Analysis within the context of Totalisation***

While the action of turning away an inmate attempting to access a program may highlight the misfit between program structure and delivery and inmate needs, it nevertheless illustrates the punitive environment that an inmate inhabits twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for the term of their sentence. The cumulative effect of punitive controls on the individual inmate also appears to have an impact on the broader inmate population. Carol talked about her knowledge and experience of the traumatic effect of punitive actions taken against individual inmates on inmates collectively. Carol referred to prison rules and regulations as 'archaic stuff', such as 'yes miss, no miss' that didn't taken into account the effect this had on individual women and consequently how that affected everyone. Carol then talked about how badly women treated other women in the jail, "stuff I didn't think other women could do to other women". While Carol did not want to detail these behaviours to me, she went onto describe how she had to be strong and stand up to the other women because if she felt that if she gave into them they would "stand-over" her.

In line with Geertz (1993) thick, multi-layered descriptions of events enabled rich story-lines to emerge from the data. Contextually rich stories include numerous layers of complex concepts that may be entangled one within another, making them often inexplicit and difficult to relate as a single-stranded and coherent whole. This can be seen in Carol's story, where she offers multi-stranded, intertwined story-lines that eventually form into a rich story-line supported within the theme of *Totalitarianism*. Similarly, other story-lines are formed within the themes of *Domination* and *Power*. The related concepts and categories drawn from the raw data texts were now identifiable under thematic headings.

For instance, within the theme of *Totalitarianism* it was possible to see a dependency on the institutional structures. This dependency was visible in both inmate and staff responses to the penal environment.

Table 5.14 - Development of story-lines within the theme of *Totalitarianism*

<b>Theme</b>	<i>Totalitarianism</i>
<b>Concepts</b>	Dependency on the penal institution
	<u>Inmate responses to the penal institution</u>
	Rely on public announcements to call them to specific programs.
	Apathy toward available programs designed to assist skill development.
	Non-attendance at voluntary programs,
	<i>"I don't want to do any jobs ... except to progress in this place."</i>
	<u>Staff responses to the penal institution</u>
	Low expectation by staff of inmate participation in programs,
	<i>They (inmates) have good days and bad days</i>
	<i>This is like a holiday camp (for inmates).</i>
	Low expectation of project progress,
	<i>It's not slow in prison terms, Brick walls</i>
	Acceptance of program implementation in name-only,
	<i>This is the way it is.</i>
	<i>That's what they (prison management) expect, to see programs.</i>

Under the theme of *Domination*, the impact of hierarchical structures on the lived experience of inmates was revealed in the language and behaviours of inmates and prison staff.

Table 5.15 - Placing data within the theme of *Domination*

<b>Theme</b>	<i>Domination</i>
<b>Concepts</b>	Hierarchical structures
	<u>Inmate every-day use of language enforces their lowered status</u>
	<i>Girls, screws, miss, ma'am".</i>
	<u>Observations of inmate behaviours towards prison staff</u>
	<i>Lowered eyes, head bowed, folded arms, avoidance, submission, defiance.</i>
	<u>Staff use of every-day language enforces hierarchical structures.</u>
	Inmates addressed as " <i>girls</i> " ( <i>regardless of age</i> ),
	Inmates categorised " <i>as second-generation unemployed</i> ",
	Inmates' needs minimised, " <i>they're different, they whinge</i> ".
	<u>Observations of staff behaviours towards inmates.</u>
	<i>Demanding, infantilising, belittling, advocating for,</i>



Data illustrating the impacts on inmates of systems of control highlight the thematic development of concepts relating to Power.

Table 5.16 - Thematic Development of *Power*

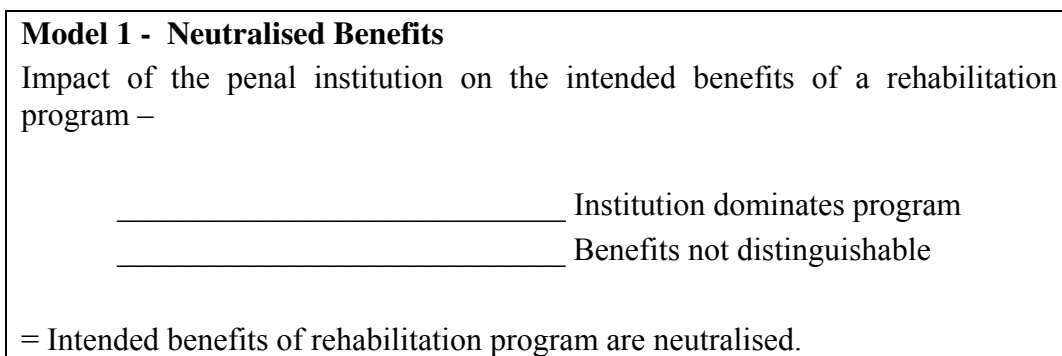
<i>Theme</i>	<i>Power</i>
<b><i>Concept</i></b>	Systems of control
	<u>Covert Control</u>
	Giving responsibility to inmates, i.e. expected to follow through with programs
	Taking responsibility from inmates through enactment of conflicting schedules and security regimes.
	Arbitrary rule enforcement
	Inappropriate or insufficient programming.
	<u>Overt Control</u>
	Inmates classified according to criminogenic ‘needs’, i.e., low needs, medium needs, high needs.
	High needs inmates placed in high security dwellings.
	Inmates showing depressive symptoms placed in segro or biu.
	Inmate movements restricted by security mechanisms

### ***Stage Five - Generating Theory***

Analysis might have finished at the previous stage. However, there was an underlying sense of dissatisfaction where I felt the diverse and complex tensions amongst the themes did not clearly relate to the garden project. Therefore, I felt these tensions needed further exploration in order to connect the real-lived experiences of inmates with broader global theory found in the literature. This involved a process of abstraction of concepts previously identified within the developed themes. As a result, fundamental tensions relating to implementing the garden project within the penal environment were identified. These further exposed contradictions between rhetorics of rehabilitation and systems of control and surveillance within the total institution (Foucault, 1977; Goffman, 1961).

These identified tensions led to the development of three theoretical streams. These streams explore the intersection of the penal institution with interventions intended to provide benefits for female inmates through rehabilitative, therapeutic and/or re-education programs. Each of these streams illustrates the impacts of institutional interventions on intended program benefits for female inmates individually and collectively. Each of the three streams was conceptualised as a model.

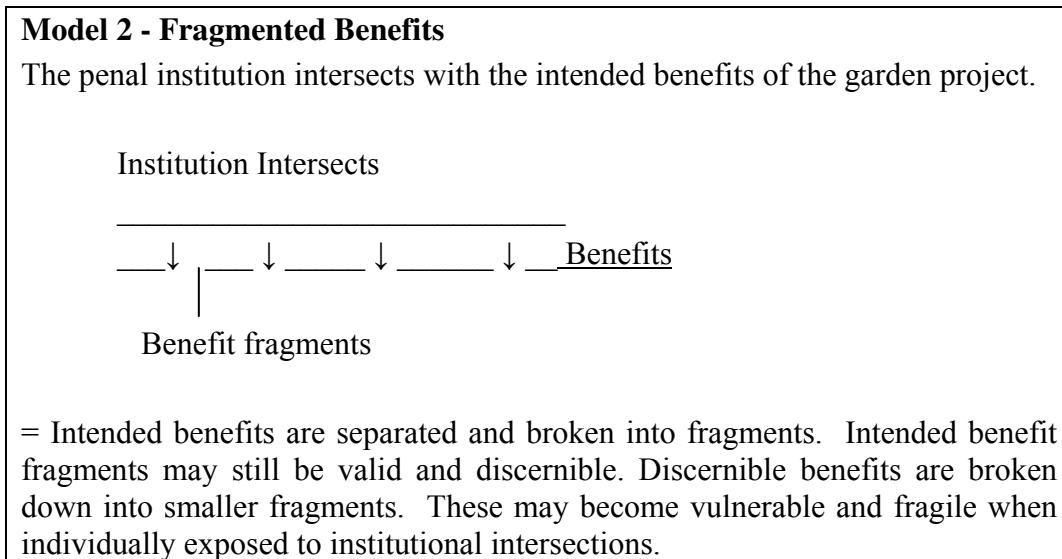
Figure 5.3 - Model One: Neutralised Benefits



Model One - Neutralised Benefits, portrays the impact of the penal institution on the intended benefits of a rehabilitation program. The penal institution was seen as dominating, subsuming and neutralising intended benefits within the aims of the garden project. As a result of the effects of *Totalisation* then, the intended benefits of a rehabilitative intervention were no longer clearly visible. For example, the collaborative aims of garden design and creation, intended to provide a sense of purpose, validity and ownership for inmates, were subsumed by institutional goals. These then acted to neutralise intended garden project benefits for individual inmates. This process could be seen as frustrations emerged amongst inmates when collaborative garden concepts conflicted with institutional goals of control. As a result, the garden project began to resemble similar programs already in place within the institution. The initial goal of collaborative design for the project was now negated by the impacts of the penal institution resulting in no discernable benefits to inmates involved in the collaborative process of design.

The second model illustrates the impact of the penal institutional interventions that isolated the intended benefits of the garden project for individual participants.

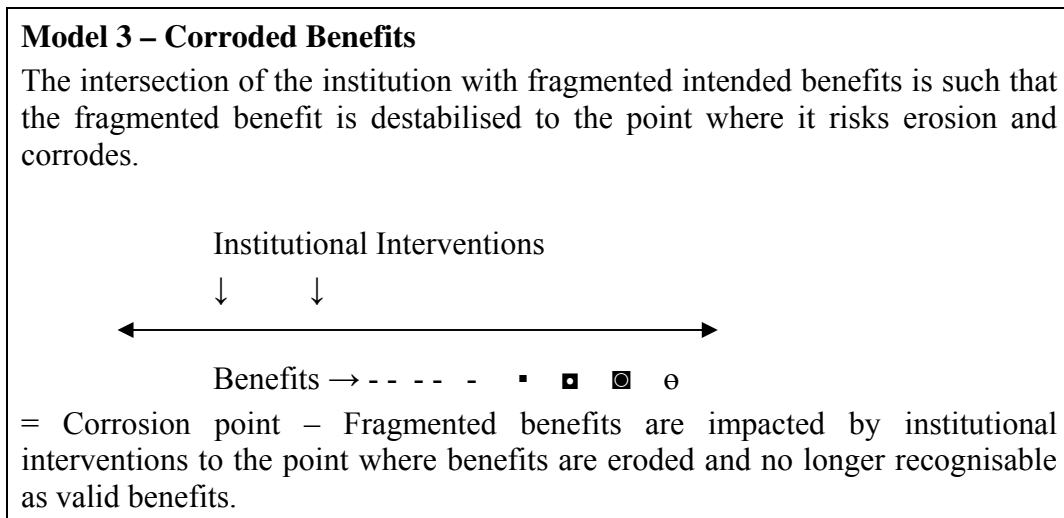
Figure 5.4 - Model Two: Fragmented Benefits



Model Two - Fragmented Benefits, illustrates how the impact of the penal institution may intersect with the garden project's intended benefits, isolating them from other complementary benefits within the garden project. Therefore, the effects of *Domination* could be seen in the experience of a project participant in the RCCW, Fiona. As a result of her engagement with the garden project, she demonstrated the development of a sense of purpose and achievement and talked about how the project had assisted with alleviating aspects of her depressive symptoms and '*feeling good*'. The fragmentation of these benefits for her was seen as a result of prison staff not involved in the garden project criticising her participation in the project, devaluing her contribution and causing her to question her involvement.

The fragmentation of benefits of the garden project for inmates was seen as a contributing factor to the outcomes illustrated in the third model.

Figure 5.5 - Model Three: Corroded Benefits



Model Three – Corroded Benefits, highlights the destabilising and corrosion of the intended benefits of the garden project through the enactment of institutional interventions. Destabilising already fragmented benefits from the garden project were seen to result in the progressive erosion of valid benefits for some inmates. This ultimately led to an apparent corrosion of intended benefits for individual garden project participants that no longer correlated with rehabilitative aims. The impact of the enactment of institutional *power* was seen in the experience of the inmate in the RCCW, Fiona, who was criticised by prison staff for her participation in the garden project. These comments resulted in earlier benefits of the garden project for Fiona, such as *'feeling good'* and assistance in coping with her depressive symptoms, being subject to punitive consequences that saw her isolated and transferred away from the garden project.

The exercise of assigning these models to the three theoretical streams was a useful tool in gaining insight into thematic tensions within the collective data. Given the richness of the ethnographic data I initially held concerns that these theoretical models did not fully convey the complexities of tensions between institutional goals of control and surveillance and the garden project's rehabilitative goals of providing a holistic rehabilitation program for female inmates.

Equally, I held concerns that similar themes, such as totalisation, have been identified in other research into incarcerative systems. However, an exploration of these themes in the context of developing the holistic aims of the garden project was significant in terms of highlighting the realities of prison for women attempting to gain rehabilitative benefits from similar garden projects. Despite these early concerns the theoretical models enabled the themes of *domination*, *power* and *totalisation* to be seen in the context of the implementation of the garden project in both facilities. The models allowed me to explore tensions that had previously appeared intangible; the disparity between implementing rehabilitation in a penal environment and expectations that programs such as the garden project provide rehabilitative benefits for inmates. As a result, these conflicts began to take shape as an enigmatic tension that imbued the penal environment with a punitive focus, enveloping the rehabilitative aims of the garden project.

### **The Broadening Focus of the Research Project**

As a result of the emerging exposure of conflicts between the rehabilitative aims of the project with the penal environment, the research focus broadened. The broadened focus of the research project included an exploration of the impacts of the penal institution on:

- implementation of the garden project in both facilities;
- female inmates' lived experiences in prison;
- female inmates' experiences of rehabilitation in prison.

While the initial aim of providing a garden project as a rehabilitative tool continued, the broader focus of the study enabled deeper insights relating to female inmates' lived experiences of incarceration and implications for rehabilitation to be explored. The tension exposed as a result of theoretical exploration was viewed as an enigmatic force that enveloped all aspects of the garden project implementation within the penal environment. To assist further exploration and for purposes of clarity, this tension was labelled in accordance

with its intangible presence as a type of phantom, or penal phantom. As such, the penal phantom became emblematic of the totalising effects of the penal institution, where domination and power were seen as instruments of control that impacted upon intended benefits of the garden project for individual participants.

This was evidenced through stories told by individual participants in the garden project in both the RCCW and the WTC. Despite the small cohort, the garden project allowed participant's individual stories to be captured, illustrating the impacts of the penal phantom upon all aspects of their everyday lived experience throughout their incarceration. These individual stories align with research literature cited in this thesis that highlight pathways to incarceration via personal histories of abuse, marginalisation and poverty. As a consequence, tensions impacting upon rehabilitation for individual participants are exposed. Equally, the process of establishing and facilitating the garden project in both facilities exposed the impact of thematic tensions upon my ability to fulfil the holistic, rehabilitative aims of the garden project. These tensions provided valuable insights into the difficulties individual corrective services staff members encounter as a result of their unique workplace environment.

As a result of the theoretical exploration two dominant streams of inquiry emerged. These became,

1. What are the effects of totalisation for women in prison and how is power exercised within the corrective facility?

and,

2. What are the implications of these effects on rehabilitative programs, such as the garden project?

## **The Writing Phase**

While these streams of inquiry now informed the writing process, writing up the findings nevertheless entailed an on-going process of intuitive engagement with the emergent themes and data. In line with Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), this process included exploring my perception of what appeared to be the now obvious impacts of the penal environment upon individual inmates and rehabilitative aims of the garden project. This meant that as I approached the writing phase I initially grappled with feelings that the data texts provided little in the way of new insights in relation to the theoretical texts previously explored in the analysis process.

The effects of these concerns were visible as I began the process of writing to the first stream of inquiry; What are the effects of totalisation on women in prison and how is power exercised within the corrective facility? As a consequence, I initially felt that Weber's discussions on hierarchy and domination (Weber, 1978b) might not address the light and shade of how I had observed power being exercised and that as such the data texts were at risk of being relegated to linear dimensions. However, as I explored the effects of the now visible penal phantom under the theme of domination, the stories I had initially disregarded came to life in the narrative texts. The idiographic nature of these stories enabled me to more clearly see the everyday realities of prison life for each of the women participants.

This could be seen in my initial under-estimation of the punitive aspects of the architectural facades of both facilities and the impact of these upon inmates. Through the process of writing, concepts exploring architectures of control were brought forward in the narrative of my experience of implementing the garden project in both the RCCW and later in the WTC. Equally, staff actions and responses were illuminated through the writing process which revealed more clearly the hierarchical interplay amongst staff and inmates within the top-down structure of the penal institution.

Later, as I recounted how inmates re-acted to staff interventions in the implementation of the garden project within the RCCW and the WTC, themes of domination and loss of power came to life. These themes allowed me to explore the intersection of the penal phantom with stories of inmates acting to regain a sense of self within the confines of both penal institutions. Insights gained through the writing up of inmates' every-day lived experiences were given greater richness and depth than if they had been left merely as pieces of data under thematic headings. The writing of the narratives of inmates' experiences gave resonance to their feelings of loss of status and vulnerability that further exposed the role of power within the total institution.

Writing about the mothering and infantilising behaviours I witnessed in staff responses to inmates brought forward my own reactions to inmates in the penal environment. This enabled confronting insights relating to my responses to inmates to be seen in the context of the totalising environment. As such, data bites of 'bad girls' or 'good girls' were given rich context, enabling deeper insights into the role of the penal phantom and its impacts on the working realities of staff. In this way, inmates' stories also came to life as I re-told their experiences of institutional controls and interventions.



Through the writing of the narrative text it became progressively clearer why I was seeing the apparent conflicts in my own, staff and inmates' responses to the penal environment. The themes of power, domination and totalisation were contextualised through the narrative writing process, and allowed for discussions around architectures of control, penal mechanisms, inmate activism, loss of status and infantilisation. These narratives then informed the first of the two discussions chapters, *The Thumbprint of the Phantom*.

The second discussion chapter, *Rehabilitation in the Warehouse*, continued the themes of domination, power and totalisation. This chapter explores what the implications are of these effects on rehabilitative programs. Writing about individual inmates' experiences of policies of control allowed me to explore the burden of responsibility imposed upon inmates for their own rehabilitation. Relating my own encounters with invisible institutional 'brick walls' as I implemented the garden project identified the implications of the effects of the penal phantom for both inmates and staff. Narratives of inmate stories of their experiences of program implementation exposed the disjuncture between rehabilitative rhetoric and the every-day realities for both staff and inmates. Exploring inmates' responses of apparent apathy to the garden project enabled inmates' narratives of frustration and protective behaviours to come to the fore.

Insights into inmate culture were given context when framed against classification processes and gendered policies of control. Narrating inmates' stories of living under the punitive gaze of the penal phantom enabled their stories of resistance to rise to the surface. These also gave insights into staff attitudes that labelled inmates in accordance with Foucault's discussions on indigency (Foucault, 1977). As a result, greater insights into the impacts of totalisation for inmates were gleaned that reflect Goffman's (1961) discussions around mortification. In this context inmates talked about being subject to archaic systems of control that enacted invasive practices that highlighted the implications of these practices for individual inmates.

It was through this intuitive, inductive and difficult process of ‘writing up’ that narratives relating to the implementation of the garden project in both the RCCW and the WTC revealed the impacts of the penal phantom on the garden project. Without this process, individual inmate’s stories, staff responses and my own responses might have been lost in the broader narrative.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that each stage of analysis has enabled the data to be managed in a way that allowed rich concepts to be brought forward. The emergent findings as outlined have retained the complexities of the ethnographic data, allaying my early concerns that the light and shade of the data texts might be lost.

Through a process of engaging simultaneously with the literature and the data, conceptually rich themes of *Domination*, *Totalisation* and *Power* emerged. These themes then enabled theoretical models that relate to the implementation of the garden project to be generated. Theoretical concepts illustrating institutional impacts upon the intended benefits of the garden project were explored. The tension exposed as a result of this theoretical exploration was revealed as an enigmatic force that enveloped all aspects of the garden project implementation within the penal environment. As such, the penal phantom was brought forth and given life through the final phase of writing up.

Two dominant streams of inquiry have therefore emerged; the first exploring the effects of totalisation on women in prison and how power is exercised in the corrective institution, with the second stream exploring the implications of these effects on rehabilitative programs such as the garden project within the corrective facility. As a result, each of these streams of inquiry shape the following two Discussion chapters under the headings of *The Thumbprint of the Phantom* and *Rehabilitation in the Warehouse*.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE THUMBPRINT OF INTRANSIGENCY

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*The officer said, “they’re **different**, they **think differently**”.*

(R/W8D2Mh6)

#### **Introduction**

In line with the first stream of inquiry regarding the effects of totalisation and the role of power within the corrective institution, this chapter explores these effects for female inmates in the Remand and Correctional Centre for Women (RCCW) and the Women’s Transitional Centre (WTC). Drawing on thematic tensions that expose the dominating, oppressive and totalising effects of the penal environment upon inmates, these reflections and insights expose the process of peeling away apparently normalised (Foucault, 1977) facades of women-centric correctional facilities. Insights gained through the implementation of the garden project in both facilities eventually led to a deeper understanding of what, Carlen (2004) describes as “the punitive function of the prison [that] has been multiply veiled ...especially women’s prisons ...for something other than punishment” (p.116). It was through this research that my own awareness of the inherent penalty of each corrective facility in which the garden project was implemented was gradually and progressively exposed.

The data in this chapter reveals my initial naiveté in dealing with the penal environment as embarrassingly gauche, yet it resulted in the layers of normality falling away to reveal each institution’s stark penalty. This penalty and its effects were progressively made visible as I pursued the goal of establishing a garden project within each facility. The realities of living within this environment for female inmates alongside the working realities for prison staff came to light as I stumbled my way through the murky, contradictory mire of the prison environment.

It was during the fieldwork phase of the research that I began to recognise the totalising impacts of the penal institution as a type of illusionary presence; uninvited and yet to be fully unrecognised. As the emergent findings have shown, exposure to the dominant and oppressive focus of each corrective facility revealed a previously unrecognised intangible force, which was later given life as the ‘penal phantom’. Indeed, only after a period of deep reflection is it possible to recognise that even as I conducted the research project this presence, the penal phantom, overshadowed every aspect of implementing the garden project. However, through the early stages of implementing the project I was only able to partially glimpse the penal phantom’s intransigent presence in the stories of women’s experiences of the prison environment. As female inmates shared their stories of enduring the hidden inner sanctums of the RCCW that hauntingly exposed their isolation and shame, the penal phantom came to life.

Equally, reflection after the conclusion of the field-work has shown that this presence had already attached itself to me. This was evident as I considered how I had been caught in conflicting moments of resentment and annoyance toward inmates when they appeared to disregard or dismiss my efforts in facilitating the garden project in both facilities. Sympathy for staff and the frustrations they encountered in their roles was at times tempered by my own response to the penal environment. The penal phantom was indeed present, insinuating itself into my attitudes and actions throughout my time in both the RCCW and the WTC.

### **Entering the Warehouse – A Naïve View**

As a novice in penal settings, my first impressions of the interior of the RCCW highlighted the prison’s façade of normality in its seeming every-day-ness. This was sketched out by the architecture of the prison buildings and the larger green-scaped areas in between. The perception of normalcy was further enforced by a sense of orderliness and even an atmosphere of calmness throughout my first guided tour of this prison for women. The penal focus of the prison and its role

in the warehousing of ‘indigent’ women, remained obscured from view; partially hidden, but yet uncompromisingly present. Indeed, the apparent naturalness and sense of normality that pervaded this women-centric correctional facility appeared at first sight to resemble more benign institutions, such as a large educational institution. As an uninitiated or novice observer, the women-centred design served to blanket and soften less picturesque concepts of what I expected a prison might look like from within its high security fences. My perception had been assisted by a walking tour of the RCCW by a Highly Ranked Member of staff (HRM) who acted as my guide around the open landscaped areas adjacent to residential cottages.

*I commented to the HRM escorting me through the RCCW that the grounds reminded me of a sort of “holiday resort”. She quietly responded that it had been designed to resemble “a university campus”. (R/D05.)*

From its’ landscape and architecture the RCCW fit with the women-centric focus<sup>9</sup> of a women’s prison in Canada described by Hannah-Moffat (2004a) where women are housed in residential style cottages. In the RCCW, this focus was clearly apparent with the careful arrangement of buildings seen in the cluster of residential cottages for inmates. After entering the RCCW grounds through a security gated section, these residential style dwellings served to veil and soften the harsher penal aspects of an institution that incarcerated women. That these residential cottages were locked and inaccessible for extended periods during the day was not immediately apparent on my initial tour of the RCCW.

The scattering of residential cottages were enhanced by the grounds of the RCCW which were open and landscaped with remnant native vegetation on the perimeters. The green-scaped areas also acted to soften the presence of tall, meshed security fences that encompassed the entire complex. The prison buildings housing offices and functional sectors blended pleasantly into the

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 3 for a discussion on women-centred focus.

softer landscape. Apart from the smaller residential cottages dotting a portion of the prison landscape, other L-shaped, single story buildings that housed larger groups of inmates were situated in the broader landscape. Curved pathways swept around pockets of native trees interconnecting the residential and functional areas of the prison interior.

However, as my initial tour of the RCCW had been limited to the more pleasant open ‘common’ areas the purpose of other buildings towards the rear of the RCCW was not clear. It was only after spending some time in the RCCW during the facilitation of the garden project that I gleaned a limited knowledge of their purpose as living quarters for ‘high needs’ inmates. My first insight regarding high needs inmates housed in these quarters was through a staff member casually referring to the purpose of these facilities as, “*that’s where the bad girls live*”.<sup>10</sup>

These initial observations of the RCCW mirrored Hannah-Moffat’s (2001) description of women-centric prisons as “architecturally beautiful” (p.4) structures. The green-scaped, architectural attractiveness of the RCCW at first sight imbued an atmosphere of benevolence, obfuscating its primary intent of penalty from my naïve view. It was this sense of visual orderliness made up of well designed buildings and grounds posing as a prison that allowed for an initial sense of ‘calmness’. However, after subsequent visits to the RCCW I became aware of an accompanying feeling of disquiet that was difficult to identify or isolate. On several occasions after exiting the RCCW at the conclusion of a garden project session, I brushed off a continuing sense of disquiet as being due to my previous lack of exposure to penal environments.

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<sup>10</sup> See the section under ‘Mothering and Infantilising’ in this chapter.

As I continued to implement the project, the inherent punitive function of the RCCW became clearer. Snippets of dialogue, such as a brief discussion with an officer in early implementation stages of the project, began to pierce perceptions of the women-centred façade of the RCCW. The officer escorted me towards the security tower before my exit at the conclusion of a garden project session when he referred to the softer landscape of the RCCW.

*He (the officer) says “it’s not really a jail”. I say, “yeah, it seems like it isn’t, but it is”. He says, “it doesn’t act as a deterrent”. There’s no time for me to respond to this as the security door opens and I have to leave.*

(R/W4D2F6.45)

A separate snippet of conversation with another officer in the RCCW had echoed these sentiments, where in reference to the projected benefits of the garden project for female inmates, he stated that *“I don’t think they deserve anything”* (R/W2D2F6.2).

Two facets of these exchanges stood out as signposting the dominant penalty of the RCCW. Attitudes towards ‘deterrence’ and ‘deserving’ infer a view that prison for women should be a place of punishment. Equally, the imposition of a security procedure that prevented me from exploring the first officer’s comments highlighted the dominance of security features that impacted upon every-day activities, even spontaneous, ordinary conversations. An early journal entry highlights my broadening understanding of the dominant penalty of the RCCW.

*The RCCW reflects the ‘new’ approach to treating women prisoners, recognising their specific gender needs, and while the grounds reflect this new attitude with lots of open space, small individual cottages for living, access to work and development programs, there are still strong restrictions with an emphasis on security.*

(R/W1D1Ja6.14)

Even after completing the garden project in the RCCW, this underlying sense of disquiet continued to accompany me as I conducted the project in the WTC. The WTC had no obvious security structures with women inmates housed in residential homes converted to accommodate several women and their small children. Even staff offices were disguised behind a residential façade amongst homes situated side by side in a suburban street, with no signage to distinguish the WTC. At the rear of these facilities a small backyard and garden acted as a common meeting and activity area for the inmates. The only visible form of ‘security’ was a childproof gate that allowed access to the WTC from the rear.

The largely residential street-scape accommodating the WTC appeared to hold no relationship to the adjacent prison complex. However, it was in the WTC that the presence of the penal phantom was brought into view through a personal epiphany. As a result, I gained further insights into the dominating and totalising effects of obfuscated surveillance architecture on inmates and staff. This event occurred during the course of a garden project session with female inmates in the common courtyard of the WTC. In a moment of inattention I looked up from the activities and caught my breath in surprise. For the first time I recognised that we were clearly visible from the guard tower stationed on the perimeter of the adjacent prison complex.

My journal notes describe this event,

*I was not aware until this point that the guards had such a vantage point which looked directly into the yard where the women often sit and relax. This appears to be a direct intrusion into the private activities of the women. I was also very aware that my activities could easily be observed. I made a mental note to be more aware of this in future.*

(T/W6Jy6.13)



Prior to this point the separate prison complex had not appeared to bear any relationship to or intrude upon the every-day experiences of inmates in the WTC. Equally, any dual security function it might serve had never been mentioned by any staff member or indeed, any inmate. However, after this observation, its presence served as a reminder of the dominant penalty of the WTC, despite the centre's softer security and 'normalising' community focus.

As a result of this observation the security architecture that appeared to facilitate a separate corrective structure gained steep prominence whenever I conducted garden project sessions in the WTC. It was now signified as an ever-present surveillance mechanism attached to an apparently benign setting. Indeed, it was becoming clearer that the normalising features of the WTC through the use of domestic architecture had initially obscured my perception of its continuing punitive function in the every-day experiences of both inmates and staff members.

## **Encounters with Penal Mechanisms**

Implementing the garden project in each facility progressively exposed the enactment of penal mechanisms through hierarchical constructs. As such, their visibility illuminated the interplay between corrective, management and specialist staff, including visiting 'specialists' such as myself, and the lowered status of women inmates.

An early example of this was seen in my initial attempts at establishing the garden project in the first facility, the RCCW. Through a series of encounters with the institutional hierarchy I became aware of their role in the enactment of security systems within the prison complex. My initial guided walking tour of the RCCW with a Highly Ranked Member of staff (HRM) had included a visit to the communal kitchen where cooking classes for inmates were conducted. At the conclusion of this tour I was introduced to a member of staff (MoS) who would act as the prison liaison through whom I would initiate the project and engage with the inmates in the RCCW.

After an initial introduction by the HRM to the MoS, a short discussion and exchange of information followed, which included a brief re-capping of the research aims of the garden project for the benefit of the MoS. To clarify the proposed benefits and goals of the garden project I again discussed its holistic rehabilitative focus. My earlier discussions with the HRM had elicited positive and encouraging support for the project which appeared to continue in her presence in our initial discussions with the MoS. In line with the holistic aims of the garden project, the HRM discussed the contribution the garden project could make to existing programs currently run within the prison.

*The HRM said, "To get them (inmates) to the point where working was a normal part of their day was a big hurdle." The provision of a program that also showed them "that recreation involved more than watching TV, such as working in the garden" was also a benefit to the inmates and other programs provided by the RCCW.*

(R/D5. 2)

While I had concerns about the inferred collective 'indigency' of female inmates from a senior member of staff, I concluded that at least these comments appeared to be supportive of the project. The HRM then left me alone with the MoS to continue our discussions around implementing the garden project. It was here that the tone of the discussion with the MoS changed markedly and it soon became apparent that expectations for the project in this sector of the prison were very low.

As I continued to discuss the garden project with the MoS, this attitude was re-enforced non-verbally through folded arms and a stern facial expression. My journal notes record my impressions of this encounter,

*I explained to the MoS the initial holistic rehabilitative aim of the garden project. I said that I wanted to see if engaging with the garden provided a sense of calm and peace and that the women may then be motivated to move onto other educational and vocational programs. I said that I expected that the women would engage at their own levels of ability and interest, such as if they had a disability...*

*The MoS seemed less than enthusiastic and said that “this was what the other horticulture program had done with the inmates” and “that it had not really achieved much ...the group started off with about 20 (inmates) and eventually dropped down to 2 or 3”.*

(R/W0D0D5.3)

The MoS continued to discuss the project as if it was unlikely to succeed, citing again the limited involvement of inmates with other horticultural programs, and indicated that despite utilising large expenditure, there had been spasmodic participation from inmates along with minimal garden development. Similarly negative comments referring to the previous horticultural program were reiterated from time to time in later discussions with other staff members. When I questioned these negative attitudes, explaining their potential to impact upon the garden project I was conducting, I was informed that reasons for these attitudes were very complex and none of my concern.

These strongly negative comments and attitudes were unexpected after the initial enthusiasm of the HRM for the garden project. Their impact upon my own enthusiasm for the garden project was unnerving, requiring an almost physical effort to resist. My diary notes record my concerns about these staff attitudes toward the previous horticultural program and how this might translate to the project I proposed,

*I wonder if this attitude is based on a [quantitative] results ethos. I believe the expectations of the [previous garden] group may have been a bit high, but as I have not had the opportunity to discuss the previous program with the facilitator who conducts this I am unable to judge at this time. I gather that motivating the women will be an issue, but this will be made harder if staff are not supportive. Given how encouraging and supportive the HRM was, it is a bit disappointing that staff do not carry it [the supportive attitude] through.*

(R/DW0D05.3)

However, despite this initial negative response from the MoS our discussion around establishing the garden project continued. The MoS indicated that s/he would “*get together 4 or 5 leaders within the inmate community who may then pass on the information to others*” (R/W0D0D5.3) as a way of generating interest amongst inmates. We agreed on a date for an orientation session with inmates in the following January, by which date it was suggested that most staff would have returned from taking annual leave.

This discussion was my first glimpse of the hierarchical interplay between staff at the top of the hierarchical structure and staff or ‘specialists’ at the middle strata of the hierarchical pyramid. The shift from a posited attitude of support for the garden project to an attitude of negative expectations was as sharply delineated as night and day. Reflected in this shift was a resigned acquiescence to the imposition of an order upon the MoS. Brennan (1997) refers to this as a Weberian aspect of domination that imposes an order on another individual without their “voluntary personal agreement” and to which they have “no alternative but to capitulate” (p.82). Weber (1978b) clarifies the power relationship of domination as one “by virtue of authority, i.e. power to command and duty to obey regardless of personal motives or interests” (p.943).

It appeared that it was the latter reference to the “duty to obey, regardless of personal motives or interests” (p.943) that was enacted in this scenario by the MoS. Within the ‘duty to obey’ there is a duality of power that Weber sees as having fluidity. In Weberian terms, it was implicitly understood that the MoS would follow through on the order passed down. This is in line with the reciprocity of a ‘specialist’ role. Despite the MoS’ negative response, participation in carrying out the imposed order indicated a compliance and acceptance of the continuation and perpetuation of the institution’s top-down hierarchical structure (p.947). Therefore the validity of the existing system, as expressed via the use of rules, becomes rationalised as a function of every-day procedures. The normalising of hierarchical systems is therefore legitimated and bound within the framework of acceptance of authoritative power relationships between players within the hierarchical system (Weber, 1978b) (p.955).

However, despite the appearance of perpetuating normalising technologies such as hierarchical systems, the attitudes of the MoS may be seen as actions that minimised the project's potential. This may indicate a more covert form of resistance to the dominant prison structures. Brennan (1997) posits that Weber's concept of inferred personal agency within a dual power relationship needs to be contextually understood within the framework in which it is constrained. Power within this framework may therefore be understood as a form of capacity. In other words, the resource, status and capacity of individual actors within this paradigm may determine the amount of agency with which compliance and/or resistance may be enacted.

The different levels of agency an individual is able to enact in a hierarchical structure may therefore be attributed to their status level within the hierarchical pyramid. This was cogently illustrated in the early design phase of the project at the RCCW. An inmate who had been assigned a 'leader' status within the inmate community by the educational sector staff at the RCCW was involved in this early stage of the garden project design. Prior to the commencement and implementation of the project, I was asked to speak to this inmate during a telephone call. I had initiated this call with the MoS in order to discuss details about the planned orientation session. The MoS interrupted our discussion to ask that I take the opportunity to discuss the garden project with an inmate who happened to be in the office at that time.

The MoS introduced the inmate as being "*passionate and interested in gardening and would be the person to inform other inmates*" (D/5.4) and indicated that a discussion with this inmate would facilitate dissemination of the garden project to the broader inmate population. While the inclusion of inmates in discussions around garden design fit with a research goal of collaborative design, this unsolicited call with an inmate left me feeling uneasy.

Therefore, I have tabled only my response to this impromptu discussion.

*This [telephone conversation] was initiated without any prior discussion and I had no forewarning or preparation for this phone call – I assumed that what the inmate proposed was okay with the MoS but still felt put on the spot in terms of regulations....*

(R/D5.4)

However, our discussion generated the concept of establishing the garden project as a kitchen garden that would provide a focus of growing vegetables for the prison kitchen. At the conclusion of the discussion with the inmate, I resumed my discussion with the MoS and indicated that I would proceed with preparations for the garden project as a kitchen garden and we discussed a date for the orientation session where the project would be discussed with interested inmates. As well as the requisite information letters and informed consent forms, I planned colourful posters, handouts and a general discussion question/answer session in which I hoped to engage inmates in the further design and creation of the kitchen garden.

After arriving at the RCCW for the orientation session I was introduced by staff to the inmate I had spoken to on the telephone who proudly displayed a thick folder that she had compiled for the garden project. It was apparent that these preparations had taken considerable time to prepare, reflecting her enthusiasm for the garden project. However, prior to commencing the orientation session I was hurriedly summoned to speak with another member of staff (AMS) whom I had not previously met. Indeed, earlier discussions with the HRM and MoS had given no indication that I was required to liaise with yet another member of staff in order to establish the garden project. However, during this meeting it became evident that the AMS had final jurisdiction regarding design, time-tabling and allocation of a site for the garden project, negating much of the initial preparation. I recorded my response to the sudden overturning of the garden project's collaborative concept of a kitchen garden.

*After a brief discussion, the AMS overturned the concept of a kitchen garden for the project. The reasons given were the security risks posed by “growing rows and rows of vegetables”. The purported security risk included the possibility that inmates might use the vegetables to make alcohol. Vegetables such as tomatoes were deemed to be a particularly strong risk and could not be allowed for this reason. I was taken back by this concept of tomatoes being a security risk, as at no time during my discussions with the HRM and MoS had this issue been raised.*

(R/W0D1Ja6.5)

Equally, a discussion at this unscheduled meeting evolved around prison staff promoting the garden project to inmates as a leisure activity so that expectations of payment for ‘work’ would be removed. Conversely, the concept of associating garden crafts and cooking activities with the gardening activities was vetoed, ostensibly for similar security concerns expressed around tomato growing. This veto regarding garden crafts and cooking was carried despite my protestations that earlier discussions with the HRM and MoS included these leisure focussed concepts. I would discover later that inmates at the RCCW decried the lack of opportunities for creative and leisure activities<sup>11</sup>. By contrast, at the WTC where there was some freedom to introduce craft components into the garden project, the inmates expressed an appreciation for these activities.

In order to salvage some aspects of the kitchen garden concept I explained to the AMS that a kitchen garden did not necessarily mean growing ‘rows and rows of vegetables’, but could include culinary herbs and edible flowers as well. This alternative option was apparently acceptable in terms of the deemed security risks and we agreed to develop the kitchen garden for the purpose of growing herbs and the like.

In addition to overturning initial concepts for the kitchen garden, the ‘site’ for the garden project was allocated in an area that had never been indicated as a

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<sup>11</sup> See Nerida’s comments in the chapter, Rehabilitation in the Warehouse

potential site in the first tour of the RCCW. The site's horticultural suitability appeared to be a minor concern. This contrasted markedly with my guided tour with the HRM who had pointed out several potential sites for the garden near the residential cottages. The site allocated by the AMS was within a secured area that I later discovered was often inaccessible to inmates at various times during the week and in particular on weekends.

Despite my dismay at hours of preparation for the kitchen garden concept being summarily dismissed, I felt some relief that at least part of the original garden concept had been salvaged. Despite my visitor status, it appeared that as a 'specialist' who loosely fitted within the middle strata of the prison hierarchy, I had been able to resist the arbitrary imposition of rules. It seemed that this 'privileged' position had enabled me to retain some of the original design concepts.

I entered the orientation session immediately after this meeting.

*Six inmates attended, with 2 arriving late and leaving early. I learned that it was the allocated 'buy up' timeslot, where inmates have the opportunity to buy personal supplies. This clash of schedules had not been mentioned when I organised the day and time of the orientation session.*

(R.W0D1Ja6.6)

An officer, J., sat in on the orientation session. Another member of staff from the training sector also sat in on the session, but remained fairly aloof throughout. As the session progressed, I discussed the concept of the kitchen garden using the herbs, but naively neglected to inform the inmates that the change of focus was as a result of intervention by a senior staff member on the grounds of security concerns. The key inmate, Rowena, who had initially proposed the project, voiced her concerns about the change of focus for the garden project at the orientation session.



*The inmate said that she thought that the garden would be providing vegetables for the kitchen. Her emphatic manner indicated her concern that this would no longer occur. Officer J. had to step in and explain that this would not be the case, but did not disclose the security aspects around this. Apparently she has been coming to him with lists of plants, measurements and calculations for quantities of compost.*

(R.Ja6.6)

From her closed facial expression and limited engagement in on-going group discussions it was evident that the inmate's earlier enthusiasm for the project had now dissipated as a result of these unheralded changes to the original concept. Other inmates' queries regarding the garden project were more general and reflected the fluidity of the remand inmate population of the RCCW, with concerns around time lines for participation in the project.

*One of the inmates asked if she could still join the group as she would be leaving within six months. I explained that it didn't matter when they were leaving as they could still join the group, even if it was for only one month.*

(R.Ja6.6)

No other inmates commented regarding the change in the initial design concept which I took as a general indication of acceptance. At the end of the session Rowena left quickly without explanation, leaving no opportunity for me to talk further with her. Officer J. and I discussed details for the first project session with some of the inmates who remained behind. During this discussion, an inmate observed Rowena's apparently unusual lack of involvement in the discussions. J. replied that he thought Rowena's silence showed "*she was disappointed*" (R/W0D1Ja6.6). I was to find that this 'disappointment' would be evidenced more strongly at early garden project sessions and have lasting implications regarding its implementation in the RCCW.

## **Inmate Activism and Self Agency**

The first garden project sessions at the RCCW were memorable for the lack of response from inmates. This was accompanied by an apparent lack of co-operation and co-ordination between different sectors involved in the establishment of the garden project within the prison. Despite maintaining contact with staff assigned to assist with the project, complying with requests for detailed program outlines and the like, there appeared to be little dissemination of information about the project between prison sectors and to the inmate population.

This became clear at the first garden project session in the RCCW when it was evident that inmates had received scant, if any, information about the project from staff engaged in its implementation. At first this seemed to explain the non-appearance of inmates for the first session. Early reflective notes record,

*I am rather surprised at the ad hoc manner in which inmates have been 'recruited' to the project – there has been no structure in the process and staff have relied on an inmate spokesperson (Rowena) to promote the project. Now that the issue over not being able to grow vegetables has arisen, it appears the inmate spokesperson who was initially interested no longer wants to be involved ....*

(R/W1D1Ja6.8)

However, while I initially attributed this lack of information as the key reason behind inmate non-involvement, it became evident that lack of inmate participation might be linked to inmate activism. This was loudly brought to my attention toward the end of the first session,

*While Officer J. and I were inspecting the garden site one of the inmates walked past us at a small distance away. She had her head down and was intent on continuing to walk, but she acknowledged J. He asked her if she was going to join the project. She replied, without stopping, that*

*“It was MY idea to grow vegetables and they want to grow herbs –  
WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH HERBS IN THE KITCHEN?”*

*This last phrase was said emphatically and it seemed apparent from her  
tone of offence that she took the issue very personally.*

(R/W1D1Ja6.9)

The statement that growing vegetables for the kitchen garden was her idea was something of a surprise for me. Her angry facial demeanour and body language indicated her statement was directed at me, as there was no one else in the immediate vicinity, other than J, and she had greeted him in a friendly manner. It would seem from these comments that I alone was credited with changing the original kitchen garden concept from growing vegetables to growing herbs. Clearly, from this inmate’s perspective I was just another actor in the intransigent penal code of the prison.

This activism or resistance also took on another more covert form through avoidance. The non appearance of Rowena to the first or any subsequent session sent a clear message of her resistance to the imposed changes in the original kitchen garden concept. Later during my term conducting the project in the RCCW it would be revealed that Rowena and other inmates not involved in the project were growing ‘rows and rows of vegetables’, such as tomatoes, in a separate garden and in much greater volume than proposed for the kitchen garden. Contrary to initial ‘security concerns’, these vegetables were grown in a sector of the prison close to the inmate residential cottages and in full view of prison staff.

Covert resistance by inmates to the project took on a more targeted and personal form during a subsequent session. By this stage a different cohort of younger inmates had begun to show interest in the project. Due to their younger age (largely early to mid twenties), I referred to these inmates in my notes as ‘girls’.

It would seem that through referring to inmates as ‘girls’ I had even at this early stage of project implementation unconsciously imbibed institutional roles that highlighted my relative position of power. Despite my attempts to position myself as someone without authority, my use of the term ‘girls’ in reference to female inmate participants nevertheless invoked my role in the Weberian sense as a dominant actor (Brennan, 1997) within the penal domain. In conflict with my goal of empowering inmates through engagement with the garden project, I had assumed the role of an individual who is in a position to exercise domination for my own purposes (Weber, 1978b), i.e. for the purposes of research.

The following incident took place after I had spent a session with a new group of inmates. The action taken by the inmate who had previously targeted me verbally exemplifies how she has constructed herself as an agent of resistance to the imposition of dominance by an individual of perceived authority. Reinforcing her previously expressed disapproval of the change in the kitchen garden concept it could be seen that her actions were an attempt to resist an imposition of authority through attempting to subvert (Bosworth & Carrabine, 2001) the garden project.

*The inmate walked toward the group of girls and a few greeting words were exchanged. As she approached she appeared very purposeful and with a set facial expression. Her facial expression softened (when she greeted the group) and she smiled slightly at the girls.*

*When she moved (in my direction) her facial expression hardened and she walked towards me and moved closely to me – she did not make eye contact but held her body very erect. She walked more closely to me than was necessary (invading my personal space) but did not stop and continued around the corner of the building. I got the distinct impression she was trying to intimidate me.*

(R/WD2F6.12)

As such, it can be seen that the need to maintain personal agency through a sense of individual autonomy is considerably heightened within the prison context. Seemingly mundane activities become imbued with greater importance than they might if conducted within the general community beyond the confines of the prison walls. In this setting the balance of power might be seen to be skewed toward the prison staff. However, in accordance with Foucault's (1998) technologies of self, an awareness of self may be an important factor in the acting out of individual agency despite its appearance as a form of resistance.

Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) illustrate this self agency in the example of a female inmate who objects to being taken off her medication on admission to prison. After suffering withdrawal symptoms and threatening to "kicking the f... out of someone to take the frustration out of my body" she is re-prescribed the medication. Ultimately she decides, after two days of re-taking the medication, that she no longer wants to take the drug. After the doctor attempts to prevent this, the inmate lodges an official complaint. This "combative response" by the inmate is seen by Bosworth and Carrabine as a process of "redefining the situation and present(ing) herself as the winner" (p.504).

Similarly, the rejection of the modified kitchen garden by Rowena, who had first suggested the original kitchen garden concept, may be seen as more than a simple rejection and then resistance response. The later development of a vegetable garden in another section of the prison indicated firstly, recognition of self agency followed by an active expression of personal autonomy. The actions of the inmate in attempting to intimidate me aligns with Farrant (2006) who indicates that a need to express and act out her personal agency is enacted in response to penal mechanisms that threaten to overwhelm and constrain this sense of individual agency.

These actions of the inmates appeared to be reflective of the coercive and intransigent penal context. The arbitrary, yet uncompromising enactment of punitive rules in regard to inmate activities appeared to have a marked affect on individual agency and was evidenced by inmates resorting to subversive and covert forms of expression. As well, the distortion and magnified importance

given to ordinary, every-day activities may be equally attributable to the totalising effects of the closed penal environment. This overwhelming of self, or violation of territories of self, within the total institution (Goffman, 1961) may in turn be somewhat mitigated by employing individual acts of self agency as in covert forms of activism.

Interestingly, towards the end of the project in the RCCW, I too would engage in a form of covert activism. This occurred after I had viewed the vegetable garden in a different sector of the prison, replete with the prohibited 'rows and rows of vegetables'. When discussing future plantings, a different cohort of inmates engaged in the garden project indicated they would like to grow vegetables such as tomatoes in the garden. In response to these requests, I supplied heritage tomato plants for the garden. In contrast to earlier edicts that tomatoes could not be grown in the garden project, the tomato plants drew no adverse comments from any prison staff during the final phases of the project at the RCCW. Given that the garden site was in a sector of the prison accessed regularly by specialist and security staff, the lack of concern regarding purported security risks of growing vegetables such as tomatoes endorsed my observations of the conflicting, arbitrary enactment and interpretation of security regulations.

While these details of implementing the garden project in the RCCW may appear to be petty and inconsequential, at the WTC the effects of penal rules and regulations also impacted upon inmate behaviours in the garden project. Their responses to arbitrary enactment of regulations, such as not being allowed to water the garden with a hose but failing to supply suitable watering cans, resulted in inmates secretly removing plants from the garden project. As the garden project progressed in the WTC it became evident that plants were taken by inmates not directly involved in the garden project. Plants designated for the garden would appear in pots as decorative additions to inmates' residential porches and outside areas.

As a result, it came to my attention that inmates at the WTC had become possessive about certain segments of the garden. This was despite my attempts at emphasising the communal focus of the garden.

*I noticed that some more of the plants had been removed from the garden and that other plants had been moved around. It became obvious as we worked that some of the women had claimed various plots as their own. Susanna came out into the garden and told me that she had moved some of the plants into another bed. She asked if she could use some of the compost on that garden bed and began to work on the bed as if it were her own. She did not work on the other beds, just on her 'own'. The other women seemed to acknowledge that this was Susanna's garden plot when they referred to that garden bed.*

(T/W18O6.2)

This possessive behaviour extended to other inmates who secretly took plants from the garden in the WTC and used them for their own purposes.

*I noticed that one of the marigold plants that had originally been planted in the kitchen garden was blooming beautifully in a pot outside the women's residence.*

(T/W20O6.13)

Possessiveness towards certain plants might be seen as a form of self-agency which countered restrictions placed upon inmates by the WTC regulations regarding watering can use for the garden project. However, an inmate perspective enlightens this apparent possessiveness towards the garden.

*Susanna indicated that she was upset because one of the women had helped themselves to vegetables but had not helped at all in the gardening. She pointed to where some cabbages had been cut and taken from the garden. Susanna said that she was very busy all day and that she found it hard to keep up with watering the garden because no one else would do it.*

(T/W23N6.7)

Issues of self-agency exacerbated tensions between inmates in the WTC. I attempted to alleviate these issues relating to ownership of plants in the garden project. With Susannah's permission I asked the other inmates not pick the herbs before they were ready in order to allow the plants to grow to full size.

*Susanna had earlier pointed out to me the issue with the mint and other small herbs being picked while they were still small. This prevented them from growing and was a continuing issue. Susanna said that she didn't want to keep the herbs for herself but that if they were allowed to grow bigger then there would be plenty for everybody.*

*I asked Susannah if she wanted me to say something to the other inmates about sharing the plants. She said "yes please".*

*I took Veronica and the others over to look at the herbs and told them that if they were not picked for a while and allowed to grow tall (using my hands to indicate a height of approx. 12 – 18 inches) then there would be more for everyone to enjoy. Veronica replied "okay, we won't pick them any more". I had not wanted to single anyone out and had hoped that the whole group could take this on board, but obviously I had unwittingly spoken to the main culprits in this issue.*

(T/W24N6.12)

I learned later that inmates acted out revenge against Susannah in response to my request by pouring boiling water over 'her' plants.

*Susanna showed me the garden where the mint had been growing. She told me that after I had spoken to the young women about letting the mint grow someone came later that day and poured boiling water over the mint, killing it off to the ground. The mint was now re-sprouting, but Susanna said she was very angry when she first found this and that the other women said that the sun must have burnt the mint ... it was evident that the mint had been deliberately targeted from the remnants of the burnt leaves.*

(T/DW26N6.19)



Staff at the WTC indicated their awareness of these issues, but I saw no evidence of staff intervention in regard to the work-load left to one inmate or acts of revenge taken against her during the time the project was conducted.

*The staff commented how Susanna always does the work and that it's not fair because she is the oldest resident in the WTC and does all the work.*

(T/W23N6.8)

*I took the opportunity to mention to a senior staff member the dilemma of the younger women's treatment of Susanna, in particular the hot water incident. The staff member assured me they were aware of it...*

(T/W26N6.20)

Rather, it appeared that staff concerns around such issues were subsumed by their responsibility to comply with security restrictions. This was brought to light in a slightly comical episode when a staff member in the WTC silently and urgently motioned for me to inspect a pot plant that had been secreted behind a utility outbuilding. She asked me what this plant was, saying that "*I thought they were 'tomatoes'*" (T/W17S6.21). The emphasis she used on the word 'tomato' appeared to imply a concern that it might be a prohibited plant, such as cannabis, hidden by an inmate. Given the vague similarity of the plant to cannabis this was a reasonable concern. When I told the staff member that it was a harmless marigold plant, she laughed nervously, but did not comment further.

Despite my empathy for inmate's issues regarding the garden, and the need to 'own' a piece of it, I was not immune to feelings of anger and disappointment. After a difficult session, where I had discovered more instances of missing materials and countered staff concerns about 'illicit' plants, my reaction was unexpected.

*I was very angry and felt very used by the women today. It appears very much that it's all about getting what you can for yourself and they obviously see me as part of the system. I was surprised by how angry I*

*felt and how I had absolutely no empathy today for the women in their situation. If I worked as staff with the women I know I would become very cynical toward them.*

(T/W17S6.21)

My experience of attempts at alleviating inmate concerns regarding issues over ownership and possessiveness in the garden project activities had unleashed conflicting emotions. These illustrated the effects of the penal phantom upon my own experience of working within the penal environment. Despite my position of relative power within the penal institution, I found that I too responded to an institutional violation of my perceptions of self (Goffman, 1961) with alternate and conflicting emotions of anger, empathy and cynicism.

### **Loss of Status and Vulnerabilities**

The clearest observable marker of the deep hierarchical divide between prison staff and inmates was evident in the use of uniforms. Inmates in the RCCW were consigned to wear a green tracksuit throughout the term of their imprisonment. By contrast, officers wore the standard blue uniform of a correctional officer and other specialist staff wore normal clothes, which by their variety, clearly announced them as non prisoners. In line with Goffman (1961), the assigning of a uniform highlighted a loss of status as an inmate which equated with loss of control over appearance. This visible demarcation that defined status allows insights into the totalising effects of the institution for female inmates, where they no longer have the ability to determine how they appear before others.

Again, in line with the effects of totalisation, these observable differences in rank between staff and inmates were enforced through everyday verbal and non-verbal exchanges that signify status. On my initial and subsequent visits to the RCCW, I observed the subservient body language of inmates when addressing staff members, particularly more highly ranked members of staff. In addition to the use of language, the body language of inmates added an extra dimension.

During my initial guided tour of the prison I observed an exchange between the HRM and an inmate who expressed an interest in the garden project.

*An inmate who was working in an established garden interrupted the HRM on our tour and expressed her agitation about someone chopping off sunflower heads in her garden. She wanted to clarify whether they (the inmates) were allowed to grow sunflowers and also embarked on a statement that the gardens should have a watering system installed, instead of using watering cans. It was the middle of summer and very hot. I noticed that this inmate, although emphatic about her concerns, was also very diffident when talking to the HRM, addressing her as “Ma’am” and lowering her eyes and head slightly as she talked. I was reminded of a serf pulling her forelock in deference to the presence of a feudal lord.*

(R/W0D0D5.4)

I was to learn that this inmate, as an educated woman, was atypical of the majority of the inmates I met at the RCCW and even in the WTC. This knowledge only served to mark observations of her exchange with the HRM as even more poignant. It illustrated not only the sharp demarcation in status between the HRM and inmate, but perhaps an even greater loss of status for this particular inmate enforced upon her within the totalised environment of the penal institution.

Inmates in the WTC were not required to wear prison ‘greens’ with the consequence that hierarchy of status between WTC staff and inmates was not so clearly delineated by uniform as in the RCCW. Staff members in the WTC did not wear correctional officer uniforms, but wore every day clothes and were therefore not as easily distinguishable from inmates wearing general clothing. However, closer observation revealed that inmates in the WTC wore more casual clothes than the all-female staff members. After spending time in the WTC it became evident that staff enforced their hierarchical status through other verbal and non-verbal actions. The most observable of these actions was the manner in which staff talked to and interacted with inmates. Staff members in

the WTC might address inmates in a curt and demanding manner, which differed markedly from the manner in which I was addressed by staff.

For example, when inmates were locked outside of the administrative areas of the WTC during staff meetings, they would be met with sharp comments telling them to wait if they attempted to interrupt staff. This area also housed a general common and recreation room for inmates, which became inaccessible during these times. Although I too frustratingly encountered locked access to staff offices on occasion, I was not dismissed or treated rudely when I attempted to interrupt staff members. Equally, on mornings when I arrived at the WTC to run the garden project, staff would summon the women inmates to join the project by telling them to be “quick” and “hurry”. At the same time staff would smile at me and roll their eyes as if to indicate they were talking to children. These reflect behaviours that Goffman (1961) sees as illustrating the assumed right by staff to address inmates in a manner commensurate with their elevated hierarchical role within the totalised environment.

The on-going effect of the demarcation in status between staff and inmates was further illustrated in a discussion with inmates in the WTC. During a regular session the impact upon inmates’ felt loss of status through wearing a prison uniform prior to their entry into the WTC was revealed. It was a rainy day and I had organised an indoor craft session painting ceramic pots as an alternative to working in the garden.

*At one point, I tell Joy that the colour green she has mixed is a nice shade, and Lola says “I used to like green, but I don’t anymore”. I completely miss what she is trying to say and I ask her why. The other women laugh and Lola explains to me about the fact they have to wear prison greens. I apologise for being so dumb and the women laugh again. Lola’s expression is serious and it’s apparent that she is (very) serious when she says she does not like green. Each of the women’s immediate response and acknowledgement of Lola’s dislike of green re-enforces what an effect the wearing of prison greens has had on each of the women.*

(T/W13At6.18)

On another occasion, two of the inmates at the WTC described the on-going impacts of this loss of status on their every-day lived experience. They talked about wearing clothes they would not normally wear if they were living in the community.

*She (Lola) looked down at her tracksuit pants and said “you don’t have to wear prison colours, so?” and shrugged her shoulders. She said “I don’t dress like this at home”, (indicating that she wouldn’t wear the style of clothing she wore in here normally). Helen agreed with her and commented about her clothes (again tracksuit pants and t-shirt) “I wouldn’t dress like this at home, no way. My mother would kill me if I dressed like this at home”.*

(T/W8Jy6.21)

From these disclosures by inmates it appeared that wearing a style of clothing they would not normally have chosen had a profound effect on their sense of individual status. While the enforcement of hierarchical roles, and hence status, within prison was symbolically illustrated through the wearing of differentiating clothing, it was apparent that the loss of control over their appearance continued to have an impact for inmates in the WTC.

The pervading sense of a loss of control over their appearance for female inmates impacted upon their felt loss of status beyond the WTC. Rather than diminish their apparent loss of control, this sense of loss may have been accentuated by the ‘grey area’ they now occupied as neither an inmate in a secured prison facility, or a free member of their communities. The sense of their diminished status appeared to attach itself to inmates in the WTC as they attempted to bridge the divide between prison and the community and could be seen in how family members now perceived them. One inmate in the WTC, Karen, revealed this personal dilemma in a discussion about inmates’ children, when she described the damage to her status from her teenaged son’s perspective.

*They (the inmates) both talked about how the residents' children suffered from their mothers being incarcerated and indicated that the cycle continued because the children were affected. Karen said, "most of them in here, you know, their children are all in DOCS [Department of Community Services]". This was said in an almost despondent tone, as if there was no hope for these children. Karen mentioned her own son, "at least he's 19, he's not small."*

*She then went onto say that her son didn't work much. She wanted more for him but how could she enforce anything with him when she was in here (jail/WTC). She said she had lost his respect by doing what she did and she couldn't tell him how to do anything any more. She said "I suppose he'll have to learn by his own mistakes now".*

(I.T/2A6.2)

In Karen's view it was apparent that her son's loss of respect for her diminished her role as a mother. Because of this loss she felt she was no longer able to use her previous status as a mother to discipline and guide him in the way she may have before she went to prison. In a different social context, Karen's acceptance of letting her son make his "*own mistakes now*" may merely be interpreted as a mother's reference to her son's age. However, in the context of the WTC, this phrase indicated Karen's resigned acceptance to a shift in her role as a mother as a direct result of her incarceration. Equally, Karen's reference to her son's future without her guidance signalled that both she and her son did not consider this change in her status as a mother to be redeemable. Carlen (1998) refers to the extra-ordinary familial concerns that women carry with them as being directly related to their feelings of guilt for their incarceration. This sense of guilt and remorse is further compounded by the effects of their incarceration on their family's welfare and well-being.

Another inmate at the WTC, Cheryl, highlighted the loss of status with her adult siblings when she talked about her need to live with a sibling after her release.

*Cheryl then went onto talk about having to live with her sister and “biting my lip” and doing as she was told while she was there. She had had to give Parole her sister’s address as her accommodation. She said she had 3 older sisters and a younger sister who was a high school teacher. So they were all bossy and she wasn’t looking forward to having to live with them when she was used to living on her own before she went to prison.*

Perhaps Cheryl’s fall in status is greater given that her siblings had not expected her to go to prison,

*Cheryl said that when she was going through her court case only one of her sisters talked to her about the possibility of going to prison and had told her that “they don’t send people like you to prison”.*

(T/W23N6.2)

### **Assimilating Public Perceptions of Inmates**

Women that I spoke to at the WTC were acutely aware of public perceptions of female inmates. In a group discussion, where it became clear that some of female inmates had never been incarcerated before, they indicated that their perception of inmates had been in line with popular stereotypes. Cheryl illustrated this when she talked about some of the younger inmates she had met.

*Cheryl said that she wondered what the public perception of the prison population was because most of the girls shouldn’t even be in prison, they were just ordinary everyday people like us. She indicated she was surprised at this – it wasn’t her expectation at all. She referred to male inmates who had been incarcerated for a violent murder<sup>12</sup> and said that this was her expectation of what a criminal was like.*

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<sup>12</sup> This was in reference to a particularly violent murder committed in Australia in 1986. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anita\\_Cobby\\_murder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anita_Cobby_murder), accessed 19 February, 2008.

In this discussion, Karen endorsed this pre-conception but indicated that her experience of prison had softened this stereotypical perception of inmates.

*Karen said that she thought most people (in the community) thought that you were a criminal when you went to prison and that you had done something really bad. She said that didn't seem to be the case at all and that the women she had come across were just normal people.*

(T/W23N6.4)

As members of the broader community with no prior exposure to incarceration, each of these women apparently felt the imposed stigma (Goffman, 1963) of their imprisonment keenly. While both Cheryl and Karen indicated they still maintained close ties with family members, this contact appeared to serve as a reminder of their loss of status now that they were classed as 'inmates'. In line with a study on inmate re-integration into their communities, (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001), Cheryl and Karen's recognition of this loss in status aligns with public disapproval and perceptions of being a responsible citizen. In particular, these public perceptions are linked to societal definitions of being a woman and mother as defined by Karen's discussion about her teenaged son.

Equally, earlier discussions with inmates at the RCCW illustrated that loss of status also exposed inmates further; making them more vulnerable to the vagaries of a system that controlled their every waking and sleeping moment. During an interview at the RCCW, Belinda contrasted my 'softly softly' approach with inmates to her experiences of some officer's attitudes and behaviours towards her.

*Belinda: Yeah, like if you have a run in with one of them [an officer], its all good for them to like charge us, what they think of us, but if they do something to us that's not right, its not, we can't, ahm, like we say to them we can put them on paper and stuff, then they just ride us and make our time harder.*



*Researcher: So even though on paper it looks like whatever they've done has been addressed, it's not actually happening?*

*Belinda: Yeah because I mean they do things like we're entitled to something and they don't let us have it, you know, they'll ramp our room and leave our rooms really messy and stuff and if we complain about it they'll just make it messier next time.*

*Researcher: Oh, okay.*

*Belinda: Yeah, like that.*

*Researcher: That's not good.*

*Belinda: So sometimes I think their attitude, like the prisoners' attitudes are only that way because of the way they've been treated by the officers.*

The felt loss of status by inmates appeared to expose them to perceptions of abuse of power by some prison staff.

*Researcher: Yeah, so that sort of..*

*Belinda: 'Cause you'd know personally, like us girls we never rude to you.*

*Researcher: No.*

*Belinda: But you're never rude to us. You know you don't judge us, you don't ask us questions why we're here or , so only if we wish to talk to you then you're willing to listen to us and that's how it really should be too. Like, they have the power to go onto the computers. They can check up not only on us but our family members and things like that and that's not fair.*

*Researcher: So do you feel, sort of vulnerable because they can do that?*

Despite some reservations regarding an inmate perhaps attempting to ‘score points’, it was gratifying to know that inmates’ appreciated my attempts at respecting their right to privacy. However, a spontaneous interruption by another inmate, Rebecca, who had been given permission by Belinda to sit in on our discussion, gave me a deep insight into an inmate’s sense of powerlessness as a result of their loss of status.

*Rebecca who is still listening intently to our discussion, nods and says quietly, but pointedly, “violated”.*

*Belinda: Yeah, more violated than vulnerable. Yeah, that’s true.*

This was a poignant moment, because up until this interview Rebecca had revealed very little about her own feelings. Her instant reaction to our discussion illustrated to me how deeply affected she was by her experiences of prison.

*Belinda: Because you know we might have made mistakes and stuff but I think all of us really this is not the life that we choose or want for ourselves.*

*Researcher: Everyone makes mistakes. Yeah that gives me a really good insight because I’ve seen that sort of thing. I’ve seen that when I come here things don’t happen like they say they’re going to happen. There’s often a change of rules and things like that so I’ve noticed that’s had an effect on me, so if you’re living in that it must be much harder, having to deal with that every day.*

*Belinda: Yeah, its just like you know they lock us out in the heat, they lock us out in the rain, then they lock us in again. So we’re either locked out or locked in. I understand it’s jail, you know, I’ve been here*

*for punishment or discipline or whatever, but I just think that when its raining the girls shouldn't ...not the whole jail doesn't work, so there's no need for anyone else to be locked out in the rain.*

(I.R/15Mh6)

The doubled-edged sword of loss of status and feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness were powerfully portrayed in this interview. The discussion with its unexpected interruption deepened and broadened my understanding and insights into both inmate and corrective staff attitudes in both facilities. It would explain in part the infantilising attitudes of officers and staff towards inmates, alongside examples of staff mothering behaviours towards inmates in both facilities. Uncomfortably, despite Belinda's acknowledgement of my 'softly softly' approach, the interview also foreshadowed my own attitudes and behaviours as the research progressed from one facility to the next.

### **Mothering and Infantilising Behaviours**

Unlike previous forms of resistance to an imposed status within the hierarchical system while in prison, this perceived shift in status relative to their families and community appeared to meet with little on-going resistance from the inmates. The apparent shift from resistance to acquiescence may be one facet of the continued infantilisation of inmates that appeared to accompany much of prison rule enforcement by staff. At the WTC, towards the close of an interview with Helen and Karen, Helen referred to the way staff 'punished' them for small infractions.

*Helen said the "workers" [WTC staff] spent most of their time punishing you for small things, like smoking inside. How stupid, they talk to you like you're idiots."*

*I said I had noticed and mentioned to Helen about the time I witnessed one of the staff tell her off for smoking under cover last week*

*Helen said she didn't remember and then said, "but, you get used to it after a while. You don't even notice."*

(I.T/2A6)

As indicated in this exchange I had observed the way in which staff sometimes referred to the women in the WTC. My notes reflect these observations, and, equally, indicate their negative impact on my own behaviour and attitudes.

*Throughout the entire session I continued to make encouraging comments to the women individually and collectively. This is just how I work when I'm attempting to engage a group in an activity, particularly a group of vulnerable individuals. However, this (encouragement) is continually undermined by the very negative attitudes and comments made to the women by the staff. I personally find the attitudes and some of the comments offensive, but also recognise that maybe I'm noticing them from an outsider's perspective, where I don't have to deal with the daily routines that both staff and residents live.*

*Nevertheless, it is very disappointing to see and I am even more aware now of how small a drop in the ocean my 'encouraging' comments are. I wonder if the women see and feel these (negative staff) comments as starkly as I see them, or if staff are aware of the negative tones they use with and to the women. These individual and collective staff voices are different to what I first encountered on my initial contacts with the WTC, and are in contrast to the supposed ethos of the centre.*

(T/W6Jy6.19)

This reflection after a morning session in the WTC may appear to be somewhat self-righteous. Yet it was an honest response to a tiring session in which I again had to negotiate between staff requirements and inmate needs. The effort expended to stay positive and enthusiastic in this environment was exhausting and reflected similar behaviours I observed from both staff members and inmates.

This sustained effort to resist the coercive penal environment may also be seen in the reactive responses by both staff and inmates toward each other. Reactive responses appeared to be somewhat cyclical, with staff responding to inmates and inmates reacting to staff. While the manner in which these responses are acted out by members of each group may differ, they appeared to feed off each other in a respond-react cycle that was perpetuated by the penal codes of the facility. An example of this reactive loop was illustrated in another discussion I had with Helen and Lola about residents' living quarters at the WTC.

*I asked Helen if she had her own bedroom [at the WTC], and she said "yes" as if it was a stupid question. I then asked if they had a common living area, and she again said "yes" as if I was a bit of a moron (from her facial expression and voice tone).*

*Lola then said "haven't you seen our houses?" When I said I hadn't, she said "You should ask 'them' to let you have a look". By 'them' I gather she meant the manager and staff. I said I didn't want to invade their privacy, and Lola said "it's just like a house, just like visiting your own house, like if I invite you over for coffee". Her tone indicated she thought my concern was a bit silly.*

*Lola continued her statement about getting 'them' to take me around by saying "but not today, don't ask them today, a bit cranky".*

*I asked her “why ‘they’ (the staff) would be cranky, had anything happened to make them cranky?”, and the other women in the group began to laugh, as if this was a private joke amongst them.*

*Lola said, “nothing has happened to make them cranky, just little things, little things become big things, they’re just cranky”.*

(T/W6Jy6.12)

Lola, a middle aged woman, identifies the staff in a manner indicative of a parental role. This is exemplified by the inmates in the WTC modifying their behaviours and actions on a given day in accordance with perceived staff mood. It was clear that the unspoken penalty of the WTC had an impact on every-day activities which in turn impacted inmates’ individual and collective actions. That inmates appeared to accept this as an integral part of their daily lives, modifying their actions accordingly, illustrates what Islam-Zwart and Vik (2004) see as the almost imperceptible pervasiveness of the overarching penal code.

This deference by inmates in the WTC to staff moods was illustrated on a further occasion. I had been working in the garden with the inmates without access to garden supplies that remained locked away. It appeared that the WTC was short-staffed on this morning as it took some time before a staff member was free to come outside and unlock the tool shed in which garden supplies were stored.

*The staff member came out and opened the tool shed. I was standing with the women a short distance away looking at and talking about the garden. I noticed the staff member brusquely grunt at the women, and wave her arm in a demanding manner.*

*The women [inmates] immediately stopped what they were doing and walked quickly over to the tool shed.*

*The staff member stood at the doorway and as the women walked into the shed, looked over her shoulder and asked “are there any more of you menaces?”*

*This was not said in a jovial, joking manner, but in a manner that was derogatory and rude, as if she were talking to deviant animals. I was personally surprised and affronted by her manner and had to bite my tongue.*

*The women meekly entered the shed and collected the compost bags.*  
(T/W15S6.11)

It is simplistic to view the staff member in this instance as just perpetuating the penal code through her ‘infantilizing’ attitude toward the inmates. I had witnessed this particular staff member previously display empathy and concern for individual inmates. However, the inmates’ immediate and unquestioning response to her demands suggests that this outburst was not an isolated incident. Her actions may be seen as a response to the pressures under which she worked despite her role as ‘mentor’ in fulfilment of the ethos of the WTC (Lynch, 2000). When the staff member’s actions are therefore seen within the context of staff shortages amid the pressures of penal responsibilities and expectations, insights into the impacts of the penal environment on staff become clearer. Such pressures placed on prison staff members are commensurate with Carlen’s (1998) insights into issues of staff turnover and shortages that relate to rapidly increasing rates of women’s incarceration.

While my earlier responses to inmates in the RCCW mirrored observations of staff behaviours, they were also reflective of inmate responses to the garden project. This could be seen in conflicting attitudes by inmates towards the garden project that led to a generally inconsistent engagement. This was reflected in episodes of enthusiasm alongside episodes of apathy and disinterest. It was clear now that the effects of the penal code had equally seeped into my own actions and attitudes. I had earlier reflected that some of my annoyance and frustration were as a result of exposure to the more secure environment of

the RCCW. However, I had not expected to encounter similar conflicting emotions in the softer penal environment of the WTC. As a result, I found my own behaviours difficult to reconcile with my personal ethos of treating inmates with unconditional respect.

On one occasion in the WTC I had expended considerable effort in collecting materials prior to a morning session. This preparation time was compounded when promises from Corrective Services to supply compost for the garden had not materialised. To overcome this shortage I purchased additional supplies and brought them with me to the morning sessions. The inmates in the WTC would generally volunteer in assisting me carry supplies for the garden project a short distance from my car boot to the garden site. However, on this occasion it was clearly evident that they were reluctant to help me. The following notes describe my personal frustrations.

*I encountered Meryl and two of the (other) women. I told them I had some compost in the boot of my car and could they help me get it out. Meryl went ahead of me and returned with a bag of compost. I walked toward my car after asking the (other) women (inmates) to follow me, but returned with two bags of compost before they made any effort to assist me.*

*I found myself being rather annoyed at this, as the apathy toward the program (today) from the women is almost palpable. I determined to remain enthusiastic regardless of the response I received from the women.*

(T/S6.10)

It was becoming clear that I too was now being caught up in the reactive loop. Having already concluded that my frustrations with inmates in the RCCW must be as a result of that penal environment, to find I had a similar response within a 'softer' environment such as the WTC was confusing. My disappointment at discovering that infantilising attitudes of staff towards inmates existed in the WTC compounded my own reactions to this environment. Added to this sense



of disappointment was the knowledge that my actions profoundly conflicted with the purported ethos of the WTC as well as the garden project's holistic rehabilitative aims.

To gain an insight into these infantilising attitudes that, despite my best intentions, pervaded my own actions, it is useful to reflect on earlier observations of staff behaviour at the RCCW. The infantilising attitudes towards women inmates at the RCCW were part of the everyday language by officers and members of staff at all levels. On a daily basis I would hear officers and staff referring to female inmates as 'girls', regardless of their age.

To my dismay I found myself using this terminology in the RCCW. I initially excused my use of 'girls' as a means of identifying the younger inmates' age group, comparative to older inmates. However, as I became more familiar with the penal environment, I began to use the term 'girls' generically to identify all female inmates, regardless of age. Equally, inmates I spoke with referred to all other female inmates within the broader inmate population as 'girls'. While I had expected to be able to resist the dominating effects of the penal environment to some extent, I was initially unaware of how unsuccessful my attempts at resisting the totalising effects of the penal institution had been. I had now taken up the stance of other staff members within both corrective facilities who, in line with impacts of totalisation (Goffman, 1961), had assumed a form of address toward inmates that replaced more formal verbal exchanges employed within the broader community.

Equally, the generic referencing of female inmates as 'girls' in the RCCW was observed in instances where inmates were treated as errant children by staff members. An example of this in the RCCW was illustrated when an inmate had apparently transgressed general societal rules. In this instance an officer reprimanded an inmate who had left the Orientation session at the commencement of the garden project without excusing herself.

*J. (officer) ... talked about one of the 'girls' who had attended the Orientation session, arriving partway through the talk and rushing out again halfway through. He said that he had spoken to her after the Orientation session about "how rude she had been."*

(R/W0D1Ja6. 9)

In another instance I observed an officer take aside a female inmate and reprimand her for apparently not complying with his orders. It's difficult to imagine adult women being publicly chastised for being 'rude' in other social contexts. However, the parental role assumed by some prison staff appeared to permit a close focus on all aspects of women's behaviours while in the prison environment, regardless of how minor the perceived infraction. My observations of staff reprimanding female inmates' minor behaviours reflect Chesney-Lind's (2006) discussions where incarceration allows chastisement as a penally imposed form of 'saving' inmates.

Other observations of parental attitudes of prison staff toward inmates appeared to assume parental rights reminiscent of a family group. On one occasion in the RCCW an officer escorting me through the prison grounds pointed out an area that he "*and his 'girls' worked on in the morning*" (R/W4D1F6.35). This attitude of ownership towards "*his girls*" under his jurisdiction was accompanied with a minimal expectation that inmates fulfil assigned work duties on certain days. This minimised expectation was explained in a discussion about how he overcame a conflict between scheduled times for inmates to buy weekly supplies and assigned work duties for inmates.

*J. (officer) ... said that on Friday mornings, when the women are supposed to be working at their assigned positions (8 – 11.30 am) 'buy up' is also held. He said inmates will often not work on that day as a result and just won't turn up. He said he expects Fridays to have lots of 'no shows' and is not too hard on them because it is 'buy up'.*

(R/W1D1F6.14)

Here we see an officer utilising his own agency in resisting (Farrant, 2006; Foucault, 1998) the penal environment through acting to minimise the consequences for “*his girls*” of an arbitrarily inflicted conflict. However, in contrast with these accommodating actions, this officer used derogatory terminology when he labelled inmates generically as ‘girls’, and in particular, inmates in high security as ‘bad girls’. Used colloquially by both staff and inmates this labelling of particular female inmates reflected the assimilation of the dominant discourse of the penal environment into every-day language usage (Farrant, 2006). An officer unselfconsciously gave me an insight into institutional attitudes towards “*bad girls*” and a related acceptance of their restricted freedom of movement in every-day functions.

*“... ‘high needs’ where each inmate has a room with a bathroom and toilet where they can be locked in separately if needed. He (officer) said “they can just give them their food and they’re right”*

(R/ W5D2Mh6.2).

Reflections of my own contradictory behaviours in both the RCCW and the WTC uncomfortably align with the alternatively parenting and disciplinary actions of prison staff. My frustrations with the imposition of penal codes on my movements in and out of the RCCW invited empathy for inmates’ daily encounters with the security procedures. On occasion I took this empathy further and moved into a nurturing role of ‘mothering’ some of the younger inmates. I would advise them to rest after bouts of physical exertion in the garden project, or intervene if I felt they were attempting physical activities beyond their strength. Equally, these responses were tempered by reactions of annoyance with inmates who appeared to take advantage of my endeavours to facilitate the garden project in each of the correctional facilities.

Although it is now clear that I had assimilated the dominating discourse into my everyday language and actions, my expectations at the time of conducting the garden project were that my partial exposure to the penal environment would limit its effects on my attitudes. However, unseen and unrecognised, the intransigent spectre of penalty infiltrated my behaviour and attitudes. Indeed,

in the Weberian sense of domination and authority as being legitimised (Brennan, 1997), my behaviour could be seen as reflective of broader societal attitudes of acceptance towards authoritative power used to incarcerate particular groups of women. Only after deep reflection and a prolonged period away from the penal environment was I able to see how deeply the penal codes of power and domination had become embedded in my own actions within this environment.

### **Bad 'Girls' and 'Bad' Behaviours**

With later insights into my own behaviours it is necessary to place my observations of prison staff labelling inmates as 'bad girls' within the context of the penal environment. The socially legitimised penal attitudes towards female inmates appear to overshadow and attach to all those, staff and inmates, who live and work within the prison environment. As a result, the personal empathy I observed prison staff displaying toward individual inmates appeared to be subject to the on-going every-day reality for staff of working within the penal environment. This is seen in the almost off-handed manner in which staff might refer to individual female inmates.

Commentary around inmates as 'bad girls', referred to in the context of 'high needs' inmates who apparently required only minimum requirements of food and shelter, continue to be reflective of broader societal attitudes towards punishing women in prison (Britton, 2004). Casual references by prison staff to female inmates as 'bad girls' seem to reflect a societal attitude that Carlen (2004) states views women in prison as having invited punishment through acting and behaving badly. Equally, Chesney-Lind and Eliason (2006) see this portrayal of female inmates as 'bad girls' as reflective of societal perceptions of womanhood where women in prison are seen to have contravened ideals around femininity. The invisibility of women in prison, other than as 'bad girls', to the broader public is perhaps assured as a result.

The labelling of female inmates as ‘bad’ in every-day language within the prison cogently illustrates the legitimisation of the power enacted to punish them. However, the use of the term, ‘bad girls’, by prison staff suggests that female inmates have individual autonomy in regard to their ability to make choices commensurate with public ideals of femininity. Bosworth and Carrabine (2001) refer to the struggle inmates undergo to maintain a sense of autonomy within the penal environment in response to their situations of relative powerlessness. A struggle for a sense of autonomy takes place within an environment that dominates and controls every waking and sleeping moment where the lived reality for female inmates enforces their loss of choices in regard to the controls placed upon them. This is reflected in Garland’s (2001a) discussions indicating an emphasis on the enforcement of control upon inmate populations in response to a movement towards expectations that inmates exercise individual self-control.

Therefore, inmates who are unable to comply with the expectation of self-control are deemed as having brought further punishment upon themselves. As such, the lived experience for individual female inmates of the effects of ‘punishment’ for ‘bad’ behaviour are subsumed beneath an invisible sheath of penally imposed expectations that they acquiesce to the controls placed upon them. The effect of the every-day reality for individual female inmates of living beneath these expectations was graphically portrayed by an inmate in the RCCW, Rebecca. During an early garden session, Rebecca acted out a macabre charade in response to an unextraordinary gardening activity.

*When I mentioned we would be laying out blood and bone first, Rebecca commented emphatically that she could make blood and bone, “just give me a machete” and danced around the garden plot in an imaginary attempt at chopping someone up with the ‘machete’. She appeared to be angry but without threatening anyone present. It was as if she was acting out her anger on an imaginary foe, unnamed and not present. Fiona (inmate) watched her closely and maintained occasional eye contact with Rebecca. Fiona seemed to understand the reason for this display but did not verbalise this. Rebecca re-iterated her verbal*

*response again as we began the process of spreading out the blood 'n bone and wanted to have the sole task of spreading out the powdered blood 'n bone.*

(R/W2D2F6.19)

This impromptu pantomime was my first insight into inmate perceptions of physical punishment imposed against women who contravene penal codes. From later comments I discovered that Rebecca had been exposed to episodes of confinement and punishment that she believed had been applied unfairly and arbitrarily. Rebecca described an incident where she was placed in “*segro*” for addressing a senior staff member disrespectfully at “*call up*”. Rebecca said she had commented to a neighbouring inmate that the staff member’s clothing looked as though it had been spattered with what resembled bird droppings. For this comment, Rebecca said she was placed in isolation for a period of three days. This incident had clearly coloured her attitude towards correctional staff and could be seen in her initial closed attitude and reluctance to talk to me in the early stages of the garden project in the RCCW.

I was given further revelations of the effects of inflicting penal codes against inmates during a joint discussion with a RCCW staff member and inmate. On this occasion during my visit the prison had gone into lock-down. I was told that this was due to an infraction between inmates and as a consequence most of the inmates were locked in. Because I was unable to conduct the garden project or leave the prison I had the unusual opportunity to just sit and talk with a staff member without having my attention distracted by numerous activities related to the garden project. I asked the staff member (SM) what would happen to the inmates involved in the incident.

*I ask the SM, “What consequences do the inmates involved in the bashings have to face?” The SM tells me that they either have to go into “segro”, or “biu” (behaviour intervention unit) and points out the location of the cell. The SM says, “They are locked up there with practically concrete to sleep on”.*

This information disturbed me, because on my entry to the prison that afternoon I thought I had heard some muffled screaming, but brushed it off as my too-vivid imagination. These comments, however, sent a wave of recognition down my spine giving me cause to re-consider what I had heard earlier as the behaviour intervention unit (biu) pointed out to me by the SM appeared to be loosely near the source of the screams. The conversation continued,

*The SM continued to explain “they put together an ‘intel’ group who’ll find out what went on and who was involved”. The incident is noted on the inmates’ behavioural record and it may affect their sentence length. I ask whether the ‘girls’ involved ever get counselling and the SM says “yes, there are psychs”*

It was at this stage in our discussion that a few ‘low needs’ inmates began to appear after apparently being allowed limited movement within some areas of the prison. One of the inmates, Marie who was engaged in the garden project, sat and joined the discussion.

*Marie says that nobody wants to see a psych because “if they cry” they are immediately put into a “safe cell” (her name for b.i.u). She said they are given a white jumpsuit with a zip up the back and “nothing else”. They have a bed to sleep on, but no sheets, just a “safe blanket”. I ask what a ‘safe blanket’ is and she explains it is a small blanket made out of very thick material so it can’t be ripped.*

*Marie explained that she had friends put in ‘safe cell’ even when they have never self harmed or cut themselves, “if you cry you’ll be put into safe cell”.*

*I ask about counselling, but Marie said there is no counselling other than the jail psych who has to report to prison authorities. “You can request your own outside psych but they still have to report to prison authorities.” She knew of girls who did have their own outside psych that they saw in jail. She did not know if n.a. (narcotics anonymous) or a.a. (alcoholics anon) was available any more, but said even if they were they still had to report to authorities.*

*She said she knew of a friend whose mother died 3 months after her grandmother and because she cried when she saw a psych she was put into a ‘safe cell’. “This was the worst thing that could have happened to her”. Another friend won’t see a psych because she’s afraid she’ll cry and then be put into safe cell.*

While this discussion had begun as a brief conversation around punitive consequences for inmate infractions, it highlighted the trauma of punitive responses and treatment for women with existing mental health issues. In addition, it showcased the further traumatisation of women who sought assistance in coping with episodes of grief or sadness such as might result from the death of a family member. It was clear that treatment by a prison psychiatrist was seen here by Marie as a contributing factor to inmate’s traumatic experiences, rather than as a source of assistance.

*Marie then went onto tell about a friend here [RCCW] who was on “psych meds” (medication) on the outside but had not been given any since being in RCCW for 5 or 6 months. Her own psych has been into see her 2 or 3 times and requested her meds “be written up, but it hasn’t happened yet”. I asked about psychs here [RCCW] and she said there was only “1 psych to 150 girls here and how can 1 person look after so many girls?”*

(R/W4D1F6.37-39)



Inmates in the WTC, Karen and Helen, referred to the use of medications as a general panacea for female inmates. They drew on their experiences as novitiates in prison where they were exposed to behaviours they had not previously witnessed prior to being moved to the WTC. Karen premised her naiveté with a comical aside that nevertheless revealed prison practices.

*Karen described how when she first was sent to M...(a separate prison facility to the WTC) she asked the officers if there was anything she should know about because this was her first time in jail.*

*The officers said to her, “just be here at 11 o’clock for a head check.”*

*Karen said she was mortified and told the officer that she’d never had lice in her life. She said the officers fell about laughing because they were referring to a head count.*

*Karen said another officer asked her who her “slottie” was. She said that she wasn’t a lesbian, and the officer replied that he was asking her who her room mate would be.*

*Karen said she was “so embarrassed.” She said there were other words like “gronk” that she didn’t have a clue about and that they should issue a book to first timers in jail “so they could understand the ‘lingo’”.*

*I asked Karen what a “gronk” was and she said it was “a ‘first-timer’ who didn’t have a clue”.*

(T/W16O6.3)

While this story was told as an amusing anecdote by Karen, it illustrates the trauma of entering into a hidden world where rules and regulations are not clearly articulated for the uninitiated. In a more serious vein however, Helen’s story relating to her lack of understanding regarding drug use in prison illustrates the potential for serious consequences to individual inmates who may be preyed upon by other traumatised inmates seeking relief.

*Helen said she had been threatened by another inmate when she first came to jail when they asked her for a “fix”. She said she didn’t even know what a “fix” was before she came into jail.*

Both inmates talked about witnessing women walking around in a zombie-like state in prison. Karen then talked about her experience of treatment for depression in prison.

*Karen said that when she first went to jail, she was offered methadone. When she objected and asked why they were giving her this, she was told that she had had an alcohol problem. She asked them what that had to do with methadone. She said the only reason she’d had a problem with alcohol was because she knew she was going to jail and she was “shittin’ myself about going to jail”.*

*Karen said that she was on anti-depressants for a while when she first came to jail. This was because she had been in such a mess with her ...addiction and that she had self-esteem issues because of the terrible things that had been happening in her life.*

*Karen said that she was on a mild anti-depressant when she first went into jail, but that she was then put on Prozac. She said after six weeks, she ... stopped taking the Prozac but was still being issued with the tablets. She said that after a week she took all her pills to the officer who had been issuing them and gave them back to her. She said to the officer, “Do you want me to get bashed for these when someone tries to take them off me?” After this she was not issued with anymore anti-depressant medications.*

*Karen then went onto describe how inmates were often prescribed psych medications that made them into zombies, “just to sedate them”. She said “there’s so much psych meds given out in jail.” She said “at 6 O’clock every day they would all stagger around”. She then imitated a person in a zombie-like state.*

(T/W16O6.10-11)

## **A Sense of Betrayal**

The dual carriage-way of inmates’ seeking assistance and penal responses also impacts upon inmates who seek assistance through less formal prison channels of support. This can be seen in how Marie referred to her distrust of not only prison specialist staff, but other staff who act in less defined supportive roles. In this discussion, Marie specifically referred to the prison chaplain, saying, “*you can’t even trust the chappy*” to keep inmate confidences related during episodes of distress. I understood from this admission that the prison chaplain was expected by inmates to be separate to prison systems and therefore trustworthy, but had been seen by inmates to have betrayed that trust.

In the RCCW, another example of punitive responses to inmates who sought support for their expressed depression and sadness was highlighted in a brief conversation with an inmate, Fiona. Despite her reluctance to talk in the early stages of the garden project, Fiona became one of a core group of three to five young women who engaged consistently with the garden project over an extended period of four months. During this time a rapport of trust developed between us, with Fiona tentatively confiding some of her experiences and feelings. On one occasion Fiona began to talk about her own and other inmates’ experiences with the prison psychiatrist.

*...the psych's and psychologists "don't really help you in this jail". She had a friend in her house [at the RCCW] who was depressed and they all thought (her friends in the house) the psychologist might be able to help her so they told her to see him. She said, "they put her in safe cell. **That wasn't no good for her.**"*

This experience was mirrored by Fiona's attempts at seeking assistance for her own depression. During this discussion Fiona kept her voice quiet as if she didn't want anyone to overhear her, and she bowed her head as she talked. However, these actions could not disguise the pain in her voice and facial expression as she talked.

*Fiona said "the psych had a class for depression, but ...if you don't go to the first session then you can't go at all"...You know, when you depressed you don't want to do anything?" ...I was like that, I didn't go to the first two sessions and he [the psychiatrist] just closed it down." "They don't help you, Lillian." Her tone, despite being quiet was plaintive and emphatic.*

(Emphasis Fiona's)

(R/W4D2F6.40)

Despite Fiona's halting attempts to overcome her depression, being turned away from a series of sessions designed to assist inmates with symptoms of depression appeared to have an on-going impact upon her. Although Fiona's non-attendance at the first two sessions in this series may have been interpreted as non-compliance by facilitating staff, the rebuttal of her attempts to attend a subsequent session appeared to confirm Fiona's sense of the futility at seeking assistance for her depression from prison 'specialist' staff.

Fiona's experience aligns with Goulding's (2004) Australian study of female inmates,

“...I was scared to ask for help because of the way they treat you...when I first got there they had me in a strait-jacket in a padded cell basically. And I was locked up like that for 24 hours a day” (p. 32)

where assistance for female inmates with symptoms of depression were seen as inappropriate. Women inmates seeking assistance for issues relating to mental health from prison counsellors or psychiatrists may receive ‘treatments’ that further exacerbate their problems. In Britain, the Corston Report (Corston, 2007) highlighted that women were more likely to self-harm during early imprisonment and that some of these deaths had occurred while in segregation. Equally, another British inquiry identified segregation as a significant risk for self-inflicted deaths of women prisoners in one British prison, Styal (Shaw, 2007). Other contributory factors included a systemic failure to respond to women inmates’ mental health issues.

A state inquiry in a Washington women’s prison (Herivel, 2003) found that punitive treatment, such as seclusion and restraint, meted out to women inmates threatening self-harm resulted in re-traumatisation or even death. A psychiatrist in the Washington prison estimated that ninety-five per cent of the women inmates she saw had histories of abuse, making punishment for women seeking assistance particularly traumatic. In the same prison, an inmate who noted that women were placed in isolation without any type of counselling was told by the prison counsellor, “They don’t want to make it a reward process....” (p. 177).

While the parameters of this research exclude an exploration of garden project participant’s mental health, their stories nevertheless illustrate the overarching penalty imposed upon their attempts to seek assistance and support during their incarceration. Indeed, it appears that Carlen’s (1998) discussions relating to the historical continuance of degradation and humiliation as penal concepts remain conflated within current disciplinary processes even within women’s prisons in NSW.

## Conclusion

The penal phantom was gradually exposed in this research as an omniscient presence instituted through the totalising effects of carceral surveillance and architectures of control. Equally, power and status is allocated to individuals within the penal institution according to its hierarchical structure that proscribes the dominant penal discourse of the corrective institution.

As such, the penal phantom was given visibility in this research as an uncompromising, yet intangible presence whose shadow touched and tainted each of the multitudinous minutiae of daily life for inmates and working realities for staff. Its presence is also reflected through the imprisonment of women in softer environments that more discretely enact our society's perceived right to punish women who have transgressed the law of the day. Therefore, in line with Foucault's (1977) disciplinary continuum, the technologies of discipline employed to contain incarcerated women have now become such normalised components of our criminal justice system as to be rendered natural, and therefore invisible.

Through eventually recognising the penal phantom, I was able to see that despite the softening of architectural and landscape features of women's prisons, the historical spectres of degradation and humiliation as penal concepts continue to be conflated with current disciplinary processes within women-centric prisons. It was evident that, through the inherent penally instituted constructs of hierarchy and totalisation, the corrective system continues to delineate women offenders by casting them as indigents in need of incarcerative constraints. This casting and re-casting of women inmates as somehow different to women outside of prison, or by contrast as 'devilish' (Carlen, 1998), enables the continuation of punitive practices of alienation.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### REHABILITATION IN THE WAREHOUSE

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*Karen said, "There's no rehabilitation in jail.  
The only rehabilitation I've had I've done myself."  
(Interview with an inmate – WTC, 2 August, 2006)*

#### **Introduction**

The second stream of inquiry, exploring the effects of the penal phantom on rehabilitation programs, such as the garden project, draws on the theoretical model outlined in Chapter Five. The theoretical model illustrates various effects of the penal phantom on rehabilitative programs that impact rehabilitative benefits to female inmates. Therefore, through the implementation of the garden project this chapter discusses the effects of the penal phantom on the rehabilitative landscape within two New South Wales (NSW) correctional facilities for women, the Remand and Correctional Centre for Women (RCCW) and the Women's Transitional Centre (WTC).

The data in this chapter shows that rehabilitation programs for women in prison are in many ways set up to fail and are subject to penal codes enforced through hierarchical prison structures. Rehabilitation programs may be linked with punitive regulations that expose them to the effects of totalisation, such as arbitrary enactment of rules and regulations.

As such, the provision of prison programs relegates inmates to navigating a system that often counters their efforts to access programs. This in turn may replicate forms of emotional and physical abuse many women have already encountered prior to entering the prison system.

The data, collected from some of the inmates introduced in the previous chapter, is therefore discussed in relation to the provision of rehabilitation programs, such as the garden project, in corrective facilities for women. The discussion is set against evolving ideologies in the sphere of women-centric corrections that continue to direct policies of control along a continuum of rehabilitative progression for individual inmates. Prison program delivery for female inmates is aligned with attributed labels of ‘responsivity’ that impose measures of ‘risk and needs’ (RNR) (Andrews et al., 1995) upon individual inmates. Therefore, female inmate ‘needs’ often arising out of poverty that equates with inequitable access to educational and vocational training, give traction to the terrain of attributed criminogenic ‘risks’ for inmates.

In this context the rehabilitative landscape is subject to the impacts of the penal phantom that dominates and controls every aspect of the incarcerative environment. Within this environment, rehabilitation programs are administered by individual prison staff members who must continue to resist the oppressive and dominating penal phantom and who are also subject to disciplinary consequences. As members of a small group of individuals in positions of power beyond the gaze of the general public, individual staff members are therefore not immune to the impacts of the penal environment. The effects of these pressures on the implementation and facilitation of rehabilitative programs in prison were reflected in my own experiences as I too needed to comply with and at times resist penal pressures on my role as a ‘specialist’ visitor in both corrective facilities.



This chapter then explores the effects of the penal phantom on the delivery and outcomes of prison programs, such as the garden project, that might negate, fragment and even corrode any rehabilitative benefits for female inmates. These effects were seen through the implementation and facilitation of the garden project in both women-centred corrective facilities, the RCCW and the WTC.

### **The Burden of Responsibility**

Pat Carlen (1998) states that rehabilitation programs impose on women in prison twin loads of responsibility; “breaking the law” and “being in prison” (p.73). This can be seen amid a corrective system where inmates are obliged to ‘work’ their way through the hierarchical prison classification system towards parole and release (Hannah-Moffat, 1999, 2002, 2004b). The individual burden of rehabilitative progression allocated to inmates who must navigate the classification system was succinctly explained to me by an officer in the RCCW,

*“...if an inmate is in low needs, works well, but tests positive for drugs from a urine test, then she is put back into high needs and starts again on the highest security classification working through to the level at which she is allowed to work again.”*

(R/W5D2Mh6.2)

As such, rehabilitative interventions for inmates in ‘low needs’ are tailored to the level of intervention they are deemed to require, in accordance with penal codes. Therefore, ‘low needs’ classified inmates attract less rehabilitative interventions than inmates classified with ‘high needs’. I observed the effects of these differentiating codes when inmates classified with ‘low needs’ in the RCCW were given greater freedom of movement within the prison environment that enabled them to more freely engage with the garden project.

Conflictingly, classificatory labels impose a requirement that inmates exhibit rehabilitative progress in order to progress through the penal system towards parole. This requirement that inmates work on their rehabilitation appeared to be complicated by an apparent arbitrary acceptance of inmates into programs that might assist their progression through the prison classification milieu.

These complexities seemed to be further problematised by a box-ticking approach that was apparent during my time establishing and conducting the garden project in the RCCW. This approach to program implementation was highlighted in a brief discussion with an inmate in the RCCW, Mary. Mary had briefly engaged with the garden project during its early stages in the RCCW. During this period she had enthusiastically expressed interest in the creative aspects of the garden project, suggesting numerous detailed garden designs. However, after this initial engagement Mary excused herself from further participation.

*Mary said to me that she was unable to attend today as she had 'hairdressing' and 'job search' skills to attend. I asked her if she was interested in hairdressing and she said that she was getting out in a month's time and "had to do something". I asked her if she knew what she would have to do in the 'job search' program and she was unclear about what it involved.*

(R/W2D1F6.25)

From this discussion I gained the strong impression that Mary's compliance with these programs was related to an imposed need for her to accommodate ascribed conditions linked to her nearing release date. Mary's acquisition of employable skills through attending a vocational program appeared to be secondary to a systemic need to tick the correct box. The incongruousness of an inmate commencing a vocational program just one month before her release was seemingly not queried by either Mary or prison staff facilitating the program.

This apparent lack of appropriate programming seemed to be in conflict with what might be expected to be a reasonable goal for a vocational program, such as equipping an inmate with employable skills. The disjuncture here between program goals and institutional expectations suggests that progress through the classification system within prison towards parole via rehabilitation programs required that another ‘box’ be ticked.

The box-ticking approach to program implementation that I witnessed in the RCCW and later in the WTC is reflective of Carlen’s (1998) observations of new initiatives in women’s prisons in the United Kingdom. New vocational and educational initiatives that appear to be worthwhile continue to exist “in name only” (p.100). Programs appear to be implemented on paper, but their continued implementation is fractured by interruptions to daily routines through the enactment of security codes and the like. Equally, the effects of penal interventions appear to exacerbate staff pressures and contribute to the partial and unsustainable implementation of programs. As a result, the institutional effect seen in different sectors within the prison environment appear to subvert any real benefits of such programs for inmates.

I encountered a further feature of box-ticking that illustrated the impacts of institutional demands on program provision in the RCCW. A requirement that rehabilitation programs in the RCCW be visible was illustrated during a routine discussion with an officer around planning tasks associated with implementing the garden project. During this discussion, the officer indicated that official visitors were scheduled to be shown the garden project in an official tour of the prison. The officer stated,

*“That’s what [management] wants, to show them [visitors] that there are different projects going on.”*

(R/W3D2F6.33)

As the garden project progressed in the RCCW it became progressively clearer that its implementation fit neatly within this ‘system’ of box-ticking. However, my experience of establishing the garden project highlighted that, despite their

visibility, the provision of prison programs could be undermined by a systemic lack of support within the prison. This became frustratingly clear during the garden project's implementation stage in very hot weather in the summer months of 2006. Due to an apparent lack of watering, many of the plants that I supplied for the garden project in the RCCW were shrivelling and dying between assigned sessions. This was despite project participants' voluntarily undertaking responsibility for watering the garden between the twice-weekly sessions. After witnessing dead and dying plants on several occasions, I might have been excused for assuming that inmates were not taking this responsibility seriously. However, it became clear that the issue was related to a lack of access to water for the garden that was beyond their control. This had become a key issue of frustration for inmates in the RCCW who were unable to gain regular access to water for the garden between sessions. My diary notes record one of the inmate's frustrations in the early stages of the garden project.

*The issue of water was raised again and the three inmates working on the garden expressed their frustration at the garden not being able to be watered. Fiona said to me that she thought it was a waste of my time going and getting the plants and their time planting them when they couldn't water them. I agreed with her. She said she couldn't see why the groundsman didn't put the sprinkler on the garden when they used it on the grass "that doesn't need it". She seemed quite emphatic about this and I can see that this is a real issue for her and the other inmates. Everyone (staff and other inmates) who visits the garden while inmates are working in it make similar comments about the futility of doing the garden when there is no water.*

*Fiona in particular seems very upset about the lack of follow through with watering and says, "it's like this all the time in this jail".*

(R/W4D4F6.41)

I too empathised with this sense of frustrated futility in establishing the garden project and had recorded my reflections about this earlier.

*J. [an officer] appeared with the wheelbarrow full of tools and the pot plants that had been left there from the previous week. They were nearly dead and had obviously been left in the tool shed without being watered!! These were plants that had been collected from the university nursery and would cost a substantial amount to replace.*

*Obviously the issue of watering is going to be problematic. If J. [officer] who has access to and control over the tools and hoses is unable to access water, what hope do the inmates have...? It is no good giving me lip service and verbal support if this is not followed up with practical application. If designated staff apparently are powerless to overcome deficits in the system, such as water access, then how are the inmates to...?*

(R/W3D1F6.27,28.)

As a result, I expressed my concerns to staff members in the training sector of the RCCW about the lack of access to water and the effects this appeared to have on inmate participation in the garden project. Although at this stage of implementing the garden project I was still concerned about the small number of inmates engaged in the project, my discussion with the staff highlighted their minimised expectations of inmate involvement with prison programs generally. It also became clear throughout our discussion that staff attributed the responsibility for lack of engagement with prison programs to inmates, rather than to any systemic barriers within the prison.

*The staff members ask how the project is going and I say it is going slowly and explain the 'ad hoc' interest from inmates. I say that the watering of the plants is an issue for me and for the inmates. I explain that some of the inmates are interested but are frustrated at the lack of access to watering equipment. I say that some of the inmates have shown initiative in organising a sort of watering regime where they can access water from a cleaning room and some of them have done this. I say I don't know how to overcome the spasmodic interest although there is a core group of 3 to 5 [inmates] that show up weekly.*

*The staff I spoke with do not seem surprised at this limited interest and say they experience this type of thing with the programs they run. One staff member says that a TAFE Horticulture Certificate 2 that started with about 13 inmates fizzled down to none. One staff member asks me what sort of incentives I am using to motivate the inmates to participate in the garden project. I briefly state that the ethics approvals to conduct the garden project stipulate that I am not to offer incentives to inmates.*

*There is no response to this from staff members.*

(R/W5D1F6.45,46)

In this discussion staff seemed to overlook my comments about inmates' frustrations and skewed the conversation towards attributing inmates' lack of interest as a common feature of inmate non-engagement with other prison programs. In addition, questions raised by staff regarding incentives for inmates ignored my explanations that ethics approvals for this research project prohibited this. Inherent in this discussion was an apparent unwillingness by staff members to explore the effects of the prison system on inmate participation in programs.

Later, as the garden project continued in the RCCW, I learned that inmates often had restricted access to the garden site on weekends. It was apparent that access to water for the garden was restricted on numerous levels. These restrictions included inmates not always being able to use garden hoses or watering cans, as well as access to water being restricted through further security procedures, such as the removal of tap heads. Even if an inmate had access to the garden project site, the provision of a watering can did not always coincide with access to taps located in the vicinity. I gathered from inmates' anecdotal comments that they overcame this issue by confiscating and then hiding tap heads, which put them at risk of disciplinary consequences. However, the final hurdle regarding inmate access to water for the garden was a recycling system that restricted water release, even during very hot weather.

None of these restrictive practices was mentioned by the staff in my discussion regarding limited inmate engagement with the garden project, even though I knew they would be aware of these issues.

The impact of these restrictive practices, however, had not been evident to me on my first visit to the RCCW. During my first visit to the RCCW to look at suitable sites for the garden project, a senior staff member indicated that restricted access to water and watering implements was part of the prison ethos that sought to prevent inmates becoming accustomed to having access to expensive watering systems and the like. I initially indicated that I agreed with an ethos where inmates could gain skills from the garden project in sustainable practices such as re-cycling that didn't rely on expensive equipment. However, the practical application of this ethos within a restricted security environment had outcomes that I had not initially foreseen. As the garden project progressed in the RCCW, prison restrictions on water use and access to the garden project site, alongside variable staff attempts at facilitating institutional requirements, had on-going impacts upon inmate engagement with the garden project.

### **Encountering Brick Walls**

My continuing frustrations in the RCCW regarding water access and the effect this had on the garden project's progress gave me some insight into the impacts upon rehabilitation programs of systemic interruptions. It was apparent that institutional interruptions to programs were such an integral part of the prison environment that they seemed to be generally ignored by staff. In turn, their impact as a contributing factor to inmate non-engagement with programs appeared to be over-looked. This attitude of staff acceptance toward systemic interruptions to prison life was illustrated when an officer attempted to divert my attention away from the effects of the prison system on the garden project progress that I had earlier tried to discuss.

On this occasion, the officer escorted me to view a tiny contemplation garden, attached to the prison chapel. This was presented as a successful small garden which had become a place of respite and was maintained by one or two inmates. After being introduced to the Chaplain, she talked about how she encouraged inmates to enjoy the garden to relax.

*The Chaplain showed us (the staff member and me) ... the garden. She said approx 50/60 inmates visit the garden and chapel weekly just to contemplate. They say it is peaceful and calm and they often just sit in the small area. The Chaplain said she often puts on relaxing music and the inmates pull out a mat and lie down. The Chaplain talked about one inmate who came to the chapel and said she was glad she had been moved from B prison (where apparently she had been disciplined for behavioural issues) because they don't have anything like this (the contemplation garden) at B prison.*

*After our visit, the staff member who introduced me to the Chaplain says that I seemed frustrated when I first came to talk to her, especially about the watering and says she doesn't "want anyone leaving here frustrated".*

(R/W5D1F6.47)

The staff member's attempt at diverting my attention toward a seemingly 'successful' garden was apparently borne out of a genuine desire to assist my efforts in establishing the garden project. Although I viewed this as an act of encouragement designed to assist me reach a point of acceptance regarding the garden project's slow and often faltering progress, it clearly illustrated for me the impact of the penal environment on staff expectations for prison program outcomes. This contrasted with a separate discussion with another officer revealing an unusually frank acknowledgement that systemic conflicts and interruptions, which he referred to as "*brick walls*", were a part of the every-day working reality for staff in the RCCW. The officer stated that "*this is the nature of what happens in here*" (R/W3D2F6.34) in a manner and tone that indicated there was no option but acceptance of this status quo.



However, it became obvious that the prison environment impacted upon this officer's ability to assist with the garden project in accordance with his work duties. Throughout my time in the RCCW I observed how he also had to cope with daily frustrations related to levels of work-load that appeared to substantially increase during the five months in which I facilitated the garden project. More and more throughout this time I observed that he was frequently called upon to interrupt his regular duties and attend to extra demands. I mentioned my observation of this to him and

*“he agreed ...that sometimes they [his superiors] expected him to have twenty pairs of hands.”* As if to confirm this statement, *“a call comes over his intercom.”* Without finishing his current task, the officer moves on to the next task as requested.

(R/W5D2, Mh6.3)

The effects of increased demands on prison staff were played out constantly throughout the conduct of the garden project, particularly in the RCCW. On numerous occasions the promised delivery of garden materials for the garden project was delayed or failed to eventuate, with staff explanations of busyness, *“we've been too busy to organise it”* (R/W3D2F6.30). My observations of staff work loads complies with other studies which indicate staff-inmate ratios are often inadequate, leading to ad hoc implementation of services and programs for inmates (Cropsey et al., 2007). Earlier reflective notes from the RCCW reveal my growing insight into how penal pressures for staff may have a flow-on effect to the delivery of in-prison programs.

*I can see that individual staff members [that I've encountered at the RCCW] are dedicated and trying to make a difference. J. [officer] in particular goes out of his way to assist me each time I come to the jail and staff are almost always unfailingly polite and helpful. It seems that the prison system, whilst needing to enforce security, also enforces and re-enforces learned helplessness and neediness on the inmates as well as staff who are only able to work within the strict parameters of the prison system, counterproductive and conflictive though they are.*

(R/W5D1, F6.48)

As a consequence it would appear that the ability of staff and visiting 'specialist' staff to deliver programs and services, such as counselling, medical assistance, substance-abuse, as well as self-development, vocational and educational programs are continually undermined by the expectations of the penal institution (Cropsey et al., 2007). Inmates ultimately paid the price for these shortfalls in service and program delivery. In the RCCW this was exemplified when an officer talked about how the "girls" would be "whinging" because the medical rooms were closed for the day due to a medical staff shortage. When I questioned the officer about what would happen to the women who needed medical assistance, he shrugged his shoulders and said that "*they would just have to put up with it.*" (R/W3D1F6.30). On another occasion, a security guard explained the purpose of a building I had observed vacant situated at the entrance of the RCCW. The security guard said, "*it was purpose-built to accommodate inmates who worked outside, but it wasn't in use and was empty*" (R/W6D1Mh6.2), although she was unable to give me an explanation for the facility remaining empty.

## Neutralising Impacts of Penal Policies on Programs

In line with the first theoretical model that illustrates the neutralising impacts of the penal phantom on prison program outcomes, the systemic ‘brick walls’ that impeded program delivery along with the arbitrary application of penal regulations appeared to further limit inmate access to rehabilitation programs. I observed this in the RCCW when inmate access to the garden project was regularly fore-stalled by systemic processes. For instance, access to the garden project at allocated session times for inmates might be delayed or denied through the enactment of sudden prison ‘lock-downs’, conflicts with other program schedules, arbitrary regulation enforcement, and staff shortages.

An interview with an inmate, Nerida, revealed her frustrations at an apparent lack of education and recreation programs, and an under use of educational facilities for inmates in the RCCW.

*“There are three classrooms sitting up there [at the RCCW] that are empty. Girls cry out for something to do, they would like to do anything, a simple art and craft course, even more so than a big structured course but just something simple like putting cards together, something for their own little bit of sanity, a little bit of creativity, for a little bit of self-esteem. When it comes time they get so frustrated not being able to do stuff. When stuff becomes available they’re at the stage where they’re so disillusioned, so discouraged, that they become depressed and fight, and all sorts of things happen here, and girls then don’t participate because they’re at that rock bottom level, they just don’t wanna do anything. So it’s a very frustrating, very frustrating situation.*”

However, Nerida did acknowledge that the prison system had an effect on prison staff members regarding their ability to implement programs within the penal system, as well as inmates’ ability to access programs.

*I gather that it's frustrating for the education staff that do want to ah, facilitate a program and frustrating for the girls who do it, who do want to participate as well because, ahm, then its difficult to get the numbers together to start a class."*

(I.R/21Mh6)

Nerida's portrayal illustrated inmate perceptions that both staff implementation of programs and inmate program participation were limited as a result of being impeded by penal policies. It was clear that she saw that both staff and inmates were doomed to frustration as a result of punitive policies that continually interfered with program implementation and participation.

As such, a perception by inmates that programs and support services at the RCCW and the WTC were inadequate is accentuated by linking punitive goals with the programs that are in place. This perception was highlighted in a discussion with another inmate, Belinda, who talked about the punitive consequences of program non-compliance for inmates.

*Belinda: "Before I came in I didn't really have the skills to, to, ahm, communicate properly on an intelligent level. But, ahm, I've done some pretty good courses through the jail here. Some things I'd say work. Some things don't work and it definitely depends on if the inmates are prepared to learn it. Like if we're being made to do it for, ahm, for any other reason than wanting to do it, then you won't really get anything from the courses that they run through the centre. ....*

*These kind of things (pointing to the garden project) are great for the girls, you know gardening and that kind of stuff. If only we had access to the water and things like that it would, ahm, make it a lot easier, ahm.....*

*I don't think it works when girls are made to do courses for the parole, ahm, because you're only basically sitting there because you have to be there. Ahm, volunteer stuff works because that's obviously something the girls want to do and the things I'd say don't really work, well (pause) nothing works here, yeah?"*

*(Laughter from some of the inmates listening in the background).*

I notice at this point that Rebecca, one of the key inmates in the early stages of the garden project in the RCCW, is listening intently to this conversation. Belinda continues, detailing some of the institutional interruptions linked to punitive consequences that impede inmate program participation.

*"I guess what makes it difficult is the structure of the days aren't ever the same one day from the next day. Things are always different. One day they'll say every second Thursday they'll do lock down, but next time, like you're locked in all night and all day, you know.*

Belinda goes onto discuss how some of the punishments inmates receive may be arbitrarily inscribed, and their effect on not only inmates, but their families, particularly if they have small children.

*Researcher: So they don't give you a reason for that, they just decide to do it?*

*Belinda: No they never give us reasons. Same, like, ah, you know some of the punishment they give are pretty unfair, you know, ah.*

*Researcher: Can you think of an example?*

*Belinda: Yeah, like being taken off 'buy ups' I think's not really fair. You know, unless you're off buy ups more than a month you're not entitled to toiletries and stuff like that. Which for hygiene purposes is really important that girls have access to toiletries, like shampoo,*

*conditioner, soap, toothpaste, that stuff. It's almost inhumane that kind of treatment. Being taken off phone calls, like, fair enough if you've done the wrong thing you know there needs to be a punishment but to what extent. I mean being taken off phone calls and not being able to contact your family or your children and things like that. That kind of punishes them as well as you."*

(I.R/15Mh.6)

Hannah-Moffat (2002) refers to the punitive consequences for program non-compliance as an aspect of self-responsibility imposed upon inmates for their self improvement. However, this movement to responsabilising rehabilitation from the prison institution to inmates fails to recognise factors that problematise rehabilitation for inmates, such as arbitrary rule and security enforcements. Therefore, inmates expected to follow through with a program continually appeared to encounter conflicting schedules and security procedures, such as 'lock down'.

Another inmate's experience, Rebecca, typifies the effect of arbitrary interpretation of security rules and regulations on inmate engagement with prison programs. Despite consistently engaging with the garden project Rebecca had shown a reluctance to share her experiences of prison with me and generally kept our discussions related to matters regarding the garden. However, when I witnessed Rebecca act in a derisive manner (from a safe distance) by with another inmate towards a visiting member of staff I took the opportunity to explore Rebecca's experiences with program staff.

*Rebecca is standing nearby and by her negative facial expressions I gauge she must have heard some of our conversation.*

*I go over to her and ask her if she "has much to do with any of the program staff"?*

*Rebecca says "na, I couldn't be bothered."*

*I ask her if she's ever done any classes and Rebecca tells me that she "has put her name down for some, but they always tell her 'next time, put your name down for next time', but then other people who have come in later always get in".*

*I ask Rebecca if they ever tell her why this happens. She says "no", she "doesn't see the point now" and "keeps away from them".*

(R/W8D2Mh6.29)

The futility inmates apparently felt towards program attendance was echoed by another inmate in the RCCW. I had previously spoken with Nerida in an earlier interview about her perceptions of an apparent lack of access for inmates to prison programs.

*Nerida talk(s) about the lack of classes at the [RCCW]; there are no classes and in a jail of 156 inmates they only take 20 at a time.*

*Nerida: "it's a crock of shit, I'm trying to get out of here". She then talks about how she wants to go to Mullawa because at least "you know where you stand" and "time passes more quickly, not like here".*

*Nerida: "I'm told that I must participate in programs, courses and classes to be eligible for parol, but when I try and sign onto those courses there is nothing available. You can put your name down on the list and then you have to wait a certain amount of time until there is placement available in that class. They have very few educators, very few teachers. They only accept about 20 girls in each class at a time. Once that course is finished for that 20 girls then there's a new class or a new course starting so then the next lot of girls move in. Sometimes it takes up to several months before you are actually able to begin that course and in the meantime nothing is happening.*

*This place [RCCW] is a multi-million dollar, new age, looks good, nothing available jail. There's a lot of potential here but nothing is being facilitated. Here there's a lot of buck passing (by staff) and you know, 'that's not my position, somebody else can', ra ra ra."*

(I.R/21Mh6.1)

This view regarding an apparent lack of programs for inmates within a facility designed as an educational corrective facility equated with similar comments from inmates in the WTC regarding the paucity of programs for inmates.

*Helen said, "There are no programs for inmates in here (WTC)...There's no structure ... the days just drag with nothing to do...They really need rehabilitation programs."*

(I.T/2At6.1&6)

*Karen said, "There's no rehabilitation in jail. The only rehabilitation I've had I've done myself."*

(I.T/ 2At6.4)

Inmates in the WTC were keen to express their concerns regarding their perceptions of the paucity of suitable program opportunities offered to women in prison to overcome lack of education as a result of abuse histories.

*Allison said that "literacy" programs were needed. I asked Allison if she thought this was just with people who had English as a second language and she said "no, even if they spoke English as their first language, a lot of them needed literacy skills training". She said "a lot of them had left school at 14 years old and that they probably had a lot of truancy before that, so their schooling was badly interrupted".*

*Cheryl said "you know over 80% of women in prison have been abused, either sexually, or verbally, or physically or something". Cheryl said "a lot of the young women went from prison back to terrible situations".*

(I.T/8N6.4)



*Karen said, “a lot of them have had horrible things happen to them in their lives, horrific childhoods.” She then went onto mention the name of an inmate she knew who had just been released and whose life had been horrific.*

(I.T/2At.6)

It was clear that their concerns for other inmates were in recognition of the need to address poverty related issues for women in prison. An interview I had with a young inmate, Jo, in the RCCW exemplified their concerns. Jo had talked to me about her abusive relationship with her boyfriend that led to her being sexually assaulted.

*Jo referred to a sexual assault incident that was “because of him” (her boyfriend) where apparently he knew the assault was going to take place but did nothing to prevent it and stayed away from their place on the night it took place. She then went on to tell me about a previous boyfriend who was physically violent with her but didn’t manipulate her as much as this boyfriend. She told me the violent boyfriend had lines that he wouldn’t cross (in reference to how he assaulted her) by not using a closed fist when he hit her. She talked in a way that almost excused him from his assaults on her by concluding with “he wasn’t really violent”.*

Jo also described how her involvement in an abusive relationship ended with her being charged and then incarcerated.

*She said that [the charges were] “robbery and concealment” and that she had done this with her boyfriend at the time. That she had been brought up on his charges and because she didn’t say anything against him, she ended up serving time. She said that she felt she was being loyal to him by not saying anything against him, but that he had turned against her and twisted everything telling them [the police] that she had organised the robbery and that it was her idea. She said he got bail until*

*his trial but that she didn't. She said though that now he was in jail too, and because she was in jail, that was the only way she could have gotten away from him because he manipulated her a lot, and his family would ask her to come over to the house if he got upset.*

Jo pre-empted this information with a brief discussion about the programs she had done at the RCCW that served to illustrate how few programs she had participated in throughout her incarceration at the RCCW.

*She told me she had done the 'momentum program' and that was good and had some good components in it. She hadn't done any other programs and then referred to the garden project as the only other program she had done in [the RCCW]. She said she liked doing the garden project, but I didn't pursue this as I think this was mainly for my benefit.*

When I asked Jo about other programs she would like to pursue while in the RCCW, rather than answer directly she referred to her experiences outside of prison.

*I asked her if there were any programs she would like to do while she was in here and she mentioned she had done 'all but 3 months of her hairdressing apprentice' when she stopped work and 'that was a bit stupid', but she'd like to get back to that. She also mentioned tourism and hospitality and said she had gone on holidays with her family up north to a beautiful spot with lovely scenery. She said that it really helped her cope with her 'drugs' and that she had gone 'cold turkey' but it hadn't really bothered her because of where she was, and again indicated how the beautiful place had helped her.*

As I questioned Jo about how she coped with her substance abuse, she indicated that she had received no assistance for this during her time in the RCCW.

*I asked Jo to tell me a bit about how she coped inside with drugs, and she said that she tried not to worry about it, even tho there were still some drugs inside, “there’s a bit of stuff in here”. She referred to rehab that she had done before, and said that when she was in jail on previous occasions she didn’t worry about the drugs, because she knew she would be inside and have a break from them. I gather from the way she talked about rehab that this was something she did outside of her jail time.*

*I asked her if there were any programs in here [the RCCW] that could help her deal with that and she said “no”.*

Our discussion continued where Jo revealed that her multiple experiences of the prison environment had not resulted in any substantial assistance in coping with sexual abuse and substance abuse issues. While she had found the ‘Momentum’ program offered in the RCCW helpful, it seemed that it had not reduced her expectation that she needed to rely on her own resources to overcome her substance and sexual abuse histories when her sentence was completed.

*She said that on previous times when she’d been in jail, that she didn’t think about what she would do when she got out, that she just thought to herself that she would worry about it when she got out. Now she was thinking about what she would do when she got out. I asked her if they were helped with that in here, say in the ‘momentum’ program. She said that ‘in here’ they weren’t given a plan or anything to help them with what they would do once they got out. I asked her if anyone had sat down with her and worked on a plan individually for her for when she was released. She said that in the momentum program they were given a booklet that they had to tick boxes in and that’s all.*

*I asked her if they had a self help group in jail, where a group of the inmates could sit and talk confidentially about their issues, if that would help. She didn’t seem to think so and said that she was ‘pretty good’ at thinking about stuff in her own mind and that she didn’t need anything like that. But she did tell about when she talked about her own sexual*

*assault in the ‘momentum’ program that other inmates came over to her later and said how brave she was and how that had helped them. She again referred to how she was able to think about stuff for herself, and that she had been to enough rehab places to ‘know it all’ by now, it was just having to put it into practice.*

The following comment highlighted Jo’s perceptions of betrayals from prison specialist staff that supported her felt need to employ self-protective mechanisms of self-reliance.

*Jo said she had also had some bad experiences with counsellors and that some of them had betrayed her confidences.*

(I.R/17 My6.18-19)

Jo’s experience of prison programs fit with inmates in the WTC, Helen and Karen, who talked about their observations of the lack of assistance offered through prison programs for young women like Jo. As middle-aged women, who had never been to prison before, their observations confirmed their perceptions that there was little hope of younger women who had experienced sexual and physical abuse receiving assistance from prison programs. In a discussion about the need for prison programs for young women like Jo, Helen said,

*“the system doesn’t work, there’s something wrong with it.”*

In response to this comment, I asked Helen and Karen what they thought would help women in prison most.

*Together in unison, they replied, “education”. Karen said, “They need programs. A lot of these girls don’t have any skills, they’ve never had a job, or had to pay bills like we have (here she pointed to herself and Helen). They’ve never had proper lives. They just run the streets.”*

During this interview both Karen and Helen talked about their observations of a lack of rehabilitation programs for female inmates in the WTC.

*Helen began to talk about how there were no programs in the WTC. She said she thought that the women who had been in jail for five or six years should come to the WTC, not someone like her who'd only spent a few months in jail before coming to the WTC. Helen said it took her a week to get used to everything again after being in jail when she came to the WTC, "like just hearing the cars and everything. If it took me a week to get used to everything it would take others [those who'd been in jail longer] a month to get used to everything".*

*Karen then went onto describe how the WTC was supposed to provide a structure to their days. She said the previous [senior staff member] had put in place lots of programs that had been fun as well as instructive and that it had meant that the women all worked together. "It was great".*  
(T/W8At6.31)

Comments from individual inmates about the lack of availability of prison programs conflicted with some staff efforts to show me that numerous programs were available, particularly during the time I conducted the project in the RCCW. In line with rehabilitation rhetoric that I had encountered on my initial tour of the RCCW regarding prison programs, staff told me about the implementation of personal development programs for inmates in early 2006. Some of these prison programs were "Interpersonal Relationships", "Women's Positive" and "Life Management" introduced as trial programs during the time I spent at the RCCW. These programs even appeared to be popular with some inmates, as one inmate who had previous contact with the garden project commented about how helpful these life skill programs were for her.

Belinda talked about the benefit of these programs for some, but not all, inmates. Belinda had earlier indicated her frustration at being unable to join the garden project as she was already engaged in a prison vocational program which clashed with the allocated time for the garden project. However, she visited the garden project regularly during her breaks.

*Belinda tells me how she's learnt a lot while she's been in jail. She's done lots of TAFE courses and names three Certificate courses she has done, one of which is a Small Business Course. She then tells me about the personal development course she is doing now, "Think First", and says that "it's really good" and she's "learning lots from it, like not acting impulsively, and thinking about the effect on her victims".*

*Belinda said, "this jail (RCCW) runs good courses and it's up to you" (to attend).*

*I ask her if she would have been able to do the personal development course when she first came to jail?*

*Belinda replied, "no way, I wasn't ready yet".*

*I ask her how long she's been working in the [vocational program]*

*Belinda says, "10 months, since it started. I did a training course for three months first".*

At this point Belinda highlights the reality for inmates of accessing programs linked with compulsory prison throughcare processes.

*I ask her, "how many are in the course?"*

*Belinda says, "20, but some of them have been made to do it because of parole...they don't really get anything from it because they've been made to do it, they just sit there ...there is homework you have to do, questionnaires and scales that you have to answer."*

Belinda went on to talk about the impacts upon program provision when inmates are seen as not complying with prison regulations.

*Belinda said “they’ve just closed the [vocational program] down now because one of the inmates made personal calls from there... some of the inmates don’t get much money and don’t have enough money to make phone calls. All the inmates who did the right thing have been found other jobs in the jail...I hope I can put everything I’ve learnt into action when I leave.”*

*I said, “it’s a process”.*

*Belinda said, “yes, just little ‘fairy’ steps.” This comment was made in reference to what she had learnt in the life skills course.*

*(R/W6D2Mh6.7-10)*

It’s clear from Belinda’s portrayal of her experiences with rehabilitation programs that the intersection of classification systems with penal systems underscores prison program provision. As such, the penally imposed personal responsibility upon inmates in terms of rehabilitative outcomes is clearly defined as a component of prison programs. Penally imposed self-responsibility on inmates in program provision had direct consequences on inmate access to the garden project in the RCCW. An example of this was illustrated when an inmate in the RCCW, Fiona, explained to me why two inmates, Sandra and Nora, who had earlier engaged with the garden project, were no longer able to participate.

*Fiona told me confidentially (in a whispering voice when no one was around) that two of the inmates who were interested in the garden project “wouldn’t be able to come any more because one of them, Sandra, got into trouble because of the way she had spoken to one of the female officers.”*

*Fiona said the officer had filed a complaint and said she had “felt threatened”. Now Sandra and Nora were no longer allowed “in this area”. (The site of the garden project in the RCCW.)*

*Fiona said she “couldn’t stand up for them (the inmates) and say something in their defence because they (the staff) would say ‘who are you, you’re just from b.i.u.’ [Behavioural intervention unit].”*

(R/W6D2Mh6.7)

Sandra and Nora had engaged with the garden project after its early establishment phase and had indicated a strong desire to continue with the project. However, Fiona’s explanation of their non-attendance at the garden project sessions appeared to indicate how the intersection of classification systems with rehabilitation programs, such as the garden project, had prohibited further access for these inmates. As a result of Sandra and Nora’s banishment from the ‘low needs’ area in which the garden project was situated, I had no further opportunity to speak with either inmate again during my time in the RCCW. Equally, Fiona’s explanation that she was unable to intervene on their behalf highlights her perceptions of penal attitudes that directly related to her status as an inmate.

In an environment where rehabilitation was posited as a penal goal, Fiona described some of the risks that inmates took to access the garden project site between scheduled sessions in the RCCW.

*Fiona also mentioned again that the officers put the water sprinkler on the grass next to, but not on the garden. She said she and Rebecca moved the sprinkler closer to the garden while no one was watching, but she said they didn’t want to get ‘charged’ because they were not supposed to be in that area at that time of day.*

(R/W6D2Mh6.7)

As a consequence, inmate perceptions of arbitrary rule enforcement by individual officers and prison staff appeared to play a role in how inmate’s interacted with the garden project. In line with Cameron (2001) who states that “it is very hard to rehabilitate a person in the prison environment” (p.5), this effect then brought inmates into further potential conflict with penal policies, despite access to programs such as the garden project being posited as a goal of



corrective facilities for women. These risk-taking behaviours served to highlight conflicts between the rehabilitative aims of the garden project with penal policies that continued to impact upon inmate engagement with the garden project. As a result of encountering these conflicts in the RCCW, the neutralising impacts of the penal phantom on the rehabilitative aims of the garden project, such as engaging inmates in the design of the garden, were progressively brought into clearer focus.

### **Fragmenting Rehabilitative Aims**

As the garden project continued in the RCCW it came to my attention that arbitrary security regulations continued to have an affect on the delivery of other vocational and community programs. From time to time an ‘employment day’ was held at the RCCW, where community groups set up stalls within the prison grounds that gave inmates access to information about vocational and employment opportunities post-release. In line with rehabilitative focus of women-centred corrections, these ‘job fairs’ are purportedly in place to enable inmates opportunities to undergo pseudo job interviews in preparation for release (Cameron, 2001).

However, on one occasion in the RCCW such opportunities for inmates to gain information that might have assisted in their rehabilitation were denied them as a result of the intersection of penal systems with rehabilitative goals.

*He (officer) says that “it’s community access ... today was employment day, but now the ‘girls’ are in lockdown they won’t be able to do anything.”*

(R/W5D1Mh6.2)

I did not learn whether this event was re-scheduled for another day. However, it was clear that the penal focus of the corrective institution had at least limited inmate access to programs, particularly given the transient nature of the remand population in the RCCW.

In the WTC where community access for inmates was purportedly a primary objective (Lynch, 2000), the fragmenting effects of a penal focus on program access were obscured by the more covert security codes. However, similar effects on inmate access to programs became visible as the garden project progressed in the WTC. Kate revealed her frustrations over the implementation of arbitrary regulations that prevented her from accessing a work opportunity within the community.

*Kate talked about her experience at the WTC and said that the inconsistencies there had a detrimental effect on her and that it was not preparing her for entering the community again.*

*Kate said she had about five and a half months left of her sentence and had found herself a job a month ago, but had been told by staff that she needed to attend a life skills course before she could get a job or do any study. Kate said she had enrolled in an OTEN [distance education] course but because they were not allowed to access the internet she wasn't able to continue with this. She said that she did get family to print out information from the internet but that this was difficult to keep going over the length of the course and she would wait now until she got out before she did any further study.*

*Kate said that the life skills course was for a 2 hour session once a week over a six week period and wasn't due to start for another month. She said that the rest of the time she was expected to just sit around the centre doing nothing with her time. She said she had lined up this job and felt that working in the community would be helpful for her as far as integrating her into the community. She thought that being made to wait and spending so much time unoccupied was not helpful for her at all....*

*Kate then talked about the inconsistencies in the staff because she had just recently talked to the manager and she had indicated to Kate that it was fine for her to work and do the life skills course at the same time which was contrary to what she had initially been told. Kate felt*

*frustrated because the job she had lined up a month ago was now gone and she would have to find something else now. Kate said that the WTC was supposed to help them integrate into the community but “did nothing” to help them in this regard.*

(I.T/11O6.2)

Kate’s experience illustrated how individual staff members were placed in a position of enforcing penal codes that limited program access for inmates. Given the community access focus of the WTC the impacts of penal codes on program access were surprising. The primacy of penalty over program participation was clearly not limited to the RCCW. Equally, the actions of the single staff member in the WTC were perhaps an indication of the pressures under which staff members are placed in terms of enacting penal codes.

That inmates, such as Kate, were frustrated in their attempts to access programs, even in the WTC, continues to enforce to inmates the primary function of the corrective facility; that is, it’s dominant penalty which Carlen and Tombs (2006) define as a “punishing carceral” (p.339). It is this dominant punitive role, administered by individual staff members that continued to undermine and fragment the implementation of programs designed to assist women in their rehabilitation.

Perhaps the dominant role of penalty in rehabilitation is more clearly seen in the criminogenic status afforded to rehabilitative interventions for female inmates. This link between rehabilitation and criminal status of ‘inmate needs’ translates to inmates feeling a need to work in order to ‘progress’ through the prison system. An example of inmate attitudes to this was loudly brought to my attention in the RCCW.

*There is...another announcement over the p.a. for “any interested inmates in the garden project to come to the ... now”. The inmates [near where I am sitting and waiting] hear this and one says to the other “are you interested in gardens?” The other inmate replies in a loud and disgusted tone, “NO WAY, I DON’T WANT TO DO ANY JOBS THAT I DON’T HAVE TO EXCEPT TO PROGRESS IN THIS PLACE!!”*  
(Inmate’s emphasis)  
(R/W16D2My6.22)

Programs, or ‘services’ linked to inmate progression through the prison system towards release are determined by an inmate’s attributed risk-need-responsivity (RNR). That is, professional assessment based on the principles of RNR (Andrews et al., 2006), determine an inmate’s initial and on-going classification while in prison. However, the gendering of risk has resulted in women with histories of victims of violent abuse being targeted for greater correctional intervention (Pollack, 2007). As a result, ‘risk’ and ‘needs’ for female inmates are super-imposed one upon the other, with assessed needs appearing to pre-determine an inmate’s assigned ‘risk’ and ‘responsivity’. A woman’s assessed ‘needs’ may therefore be located with her past victimisation or abuse history, resulting in her ‘needs’ being afforded a criminogenic status (Hannah-Moffat, 2004b).

The collapsing of ‘risks’ and ‘needs’ then provides the impetus for the institutional imposition of individual responsibility upon a female inmate for her own rehabilitation. Hannah-Moffat (2004) indicates that the gendering of risk and needs has imposed a greater responsibility upon female inmates for their own abuse history. Inmates assessed as having ‘high needs’ as a result of their past history of abuse are attributed with responsibility for their previous victimisation. This assumes that women have chosen to play a role that has contributed to their own abuse. The individualisation of causal factors for a woman’s victimisation aligns with state expectations that women in prison must ‘work’ to gain insights into their abuse and act to overcome this.

The institutional assumption that individual choice is a determining factor in women inmates' victimisation is enacted through the classification system for women in prison. Feminist criminology discourse highlights that within the corrective paradigm, 'needs' are psychologised and removed from any socio-economic context. This is reflected in prison programming, where self-regulation is conflated with risk management and reduction (Pollack, 2007).

There is an irony here where female victims of abuse find themselves exposed to regulations and procedures within the prison environment that preclude individual choice. The classification system as enacted through prison security procedures appears to more closely serve to perpetuate women's victimisation histories while removing any real individual processes of choice for inmates. The pseudo choices offered in prison to women are constrained by security procedures that impose restrictions on their personhood in a variety of ways. These include not only containment behind security walls and within cells and rooms, but the use of solitary confinement as a form of individual punishment (Easteal, 2001b).

Despite these concerns raised by feminist criminologists, the protagonists of RNR continue to promote objective processes of classification for women based on gender-risk assessment tools. While Andrews and Bonta (2006) maintain that RNR assessment processes can retain integrity (in part) through staff supervision and training, the arbitrary application of regulations witnessed in the RCCW and the WTC give cause for some concern in this regard. This additional factor of arbitrary rule enforcement and its impacts on prison rehabilitation processes was not a subject that was easily discussed with staff in either facility. My specialist 'visitor' status appeared to limit how far I could explore such issues with staff (Owen, 1998), particularly staff in middle to upper management. Equally, I did not wish to risk losing front-line staff support for the project, or expose individual staff members in either facility to disciplinary interventions by pursuing this matter.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> My 'visitor' status may have changed had I been able to spend longer periods in each facility.

While staff members were reticent to discuss this issue with me, some inmates at the RCCW, after referrals from inmates involved in the project, were keen to express their views in this regard. Nerida was one such inmate. In my interview with her, Nerida revealed how the perceived arbitrary application of penal consequences quashed inmate concerns about their needs underground.

Following on from our earlier discussion about the lack of programs available to inmates in the RCCW, Nerida voiced her concerns regarding the dominance of penalty that she believed interfered with female inmates' rehabilitative progress.

*Researcher: If you wanted to talk to someone about your concerns who would you need to talk to. Is there anyone available here? You were talking earlier about an ombudsman.*

*Nerida: You could go and see the training officer, but everything in here is correctional service controlled. The education officers used to be outside the services. We now find out here it's all Corrective Services controlled. The welfare officers are correction service officers. The programs managers are correctional service officers. So you've got no outlet to speak to somebody apart from corrective services. And because it's in[side] they can do whatever with it they want.*

Nerida highlights the limited options available to inmates seeking independent advice and assistance during their incarceration.

*Nerida: An ombudsman should visit regularly and in other jails they go once a week. Here I think the next ombudsman's visit has been gazetted for the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, which is a couple of months away and then you have to put your name on a list to see that ombudsman or the visitor that's from the ombudsman's office. If an issue arises for you between now and then and you're name isn't on that list, too bad, then you have to put your name down for the next visit which will be after the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, and you put it down for the next visit. So they're only once every couple of months.*

*Researcher: So there's no one else other than your legal person that you can speak to.*

*Nerida: You can speak to your solicitors. Then it depends on how good your solicitors are and whether or not they're going to take on that issue because once you've been to court and once you're legal situation has been dealt with then its not really a legal matter. Its just that they are the only other person that you can turn to and hopefully they will take it upon themselves to try and help you out in that area. But the ombudsman particularly is the only other avenue that we have to ahm bring up all these issues with.*

*Researcher: So if you don't have a good relationship with your legal person you really don't have any other recall other than the ombudsman and they're not accessible?*

*Nerida: That's right, that's right.*

Nerida continued her discussion which highlighted the impacts of penal consequences for inmates deemed as non-compliant by prison personnel.

*Researcher: And you mentioned something about not being able to make phone calls from here.*

*Nerida: There is an ombudsman's hot line which you're ahm...encouraged, even, to call. "Well if you have a complaint, go and ring the ombudsman". But if you complain to the ombudsman about certain issues that they disapprove or disagree with, then it comes around to harassment from the officers, "oh you didn't strip your bed this morning, therefore you're gonna get charged, or you didn't do ..." that sort of thing, so you really, its not as available, as readily available that service as what they tell you it is.*

(I.R/21Mh6.b)

Initially I felt any connection between Nerida's concern about seeking intervention in issues directly related to her incarceration and the provision of rehabilitation programs, such as the garden project, was somewhat obscure. However, Nerida was clearly pre-occupied with her concerns about resolving issues related to her incarceration. This in turn appeared to have the effect of limiting her engagement with the garden project. The rehabilitative focus of the RCCW had apparently not mitigated its penalty for Nerida. Resolution of issues related to incarceration from Nerida's perspective appeared to over-ride and fragment her engagement in programs, such as the garden project.

After establishing the garden project in each facility it was apparent that the conflation of rehabilitation with inmate classification and security regulations appeared to have a fragmenting effect on inmate engagement with programs. From inmate stories of their experiences of penal consequences and regulations, the benefits of rehabilitation programs for inmates were seemingly obscured by the effect of both facilities' overarching and dominating penal policies. Indeed, the penal phantom was clearly leaving its stamp upon the rehabilitation programs that were visible in both facilities. None was more evident than its impact upon the garden project.

### **Fiona's Story**

An example of the impacts of the penal phantom on the rehabilitative aims of the garden project was the continuing story of Fiona. As discussed in the previous chapter, Fiona, a younger inmate in the RCCW, had engaged with the garden project from its early stages. She became a key informant and it was through her engagement with the project that other inmates also began to engage with the garden project.



Fiona came every week to the twice weekly sessions, often waiting for me to arrive at the garden site. Sometimes she would sit and wait for the beginning of the session with friends, other times she would wait alone. Later, I would often find Fiona working in the garden when I arrived. On these occasions she would proudly show me what she had accomplished between scheduled sessions.

In the early stages of the project in the RCCW Fiona had indicated she had not participated in other prison programs. Her lack of participation in other programs would play an important role in my understanding of the importance of the garden project to her. While I did not initially appreciate the importance of this for her, I would later gain insights into the strong significance her engagement with the garden project held for her.

*Fiona said she “liked doing the garden. It made her feel good”. This was the first time she had done any work. She has not done any other work than this. Although this isn’t really work, it’s still the “first work I’ve done”. I asked Fiona how long she had “been in here” and she said “2 years”.*

(I.R/8 F6.22)

As Fiona continued to engage with the garden project, I became aware that Fiona was being targeted by officers and staff who were noticing her consistent efforts in the garden.

*Fiona came over and told me how she had been “talking to her case manager”. She said he had asked her “why she wasn’t working (in a job) in the jail”. Fiona said she had told him that she “loves working in the garden”, that “the lady was open and didn’t tell her what to do all the time” and that she was “happy just to work in the garden”.*

*I told Fiona how hard she had worked in the garden and she should tell her case manager that.*

*Fiona replied, “ he probably wouldn’t believe me.”*

*I said, “he should talk to me then.”*

*(I noticed throughout this conversation that Fiona was smiling and talking in a happy tone of voice.)*

*I asked her if her case manager was okay and*

*Fiona said, “yes, he was young and nice”.*

*(It appeared to me from this conversation that her case worker doesn't take her work seriously in the garden.)*

*(R/W7D1Mh6.11)*

It was apparent that Fiona's continued and consistent engagement with the project had gained the 'attention' of some prison staff, and had apparently become an issue of contention for them. In light of her obvious progress and the posited goal of rehabilitation for the garden project, I found this attitude difficult to understand. However, Fiona's unofficial status as a target for derision by certain prison personnel was highlighted further in a discussion with her friends in the RCCW. This featured in an interview with another inmate, Belinda, about the manner in which some prison staff treated certain inmates. As I began to record this interview, Belinda requested that Fiona and Rebecca sit in and listen to our interview

*Belinda: “Yeah, like I know we have it better than some countries but still I wouldn't like my child or my mum to be treated that way.*

*Researcher: Yeah, so there's a lack of respect?*

*Belinda: Yeah, on their behalf to us, like we're expected to say, you know, 'please and thank you'. Be grateful for everything what we're entitled. They don't give us anything we're not entitled to but we're expected to be grateful for what we get which most of us are. But sometimes it's really frustrating you know that in return if we do the right thing we don't (pause) you can do a hundred things right but if you do one thing wrong it takes over everything you've done right.*

*Researcher: Hmm, that gives me a really good insight ...*

*Belinda: I think this project's really good for the girls. I know my sister (pointing to Fiona), she loves it, and ah even some of the (looking at Fiona), you don't mind me saying this, hey?*

*Fiona: Go ahead.*

*Belinda: Like, ahm, some of the officers that say, 'why do you want to do this for free you know, you don't want to work for us for, for money', and she (Fiona) just says she just prefers to work here with you and at least knows she gets appreciated."*

(I.R/15 Mh6.5)

The last few comments in this interview may be attributed to an inmate attempting to appease and flatter me. While this may be true, I had also witnessed instances where individual staff members appeared to treat some of the younger, less compliant inmates, with apparent contempt. My first experience of this was in the early stages of implementing the project in the RCCW. On this occasion I was disturbed by an exchange that I witnessed between an officer and Fiona. At this stage I was unaware of Fiona's 'reputation' regarding her previous placements in biu, or 'segro'. All of my observations of Fiona indicated that she was a quiet, shy young woman who was keen to be involved in the garden project. At the time of this incident I had been left alone with Fiona under the supervision of an officer who did not normally work with the garden project. In order to access materials for the garden we had been given permission to enter an obscure 'secure' area of the prison complex where there was no other staff member present; a type of no-man's land.

*Officer B. came over and started talking to us. While we shovelled soil in the wheelbarrow, he came over close to Fiona focussing his attention on her and asking if she was a person he thought she resembled in the jail. Fiona said "no, that's my cousin" ... officer B. kept questioning her about her relative and asked several more questions that I could not hear. I tried to divert attention away from Fiona by making a stupid*

*comment here and there because I personally felt this officer was almost intimidating this girl. He continued to stay close to her and ignored me.*

*... [As Fiona pushed the wheelbarrow] Officer B. walked close to her and continued to talk to her.*

*... I felt uncomfortable with this officer's behaviour towards Fiona.*

(R/W4D2F6.41)

It's difficult to portray through words on a page the unspoken veiled malice implied through the actions of the officer; walking very close to Fiona, much closer than was necessary, and the persistent manner in which he continued to question her despite her attempts at diverting his attention by giving him short answers. My unsuccessful attempts to draw his attention away from Fiona rose out of an intuitive response to the obscure menace in his actions and words.

The consequences for inmates who transgress unspoken and spoken prison codes can be severe. In the context of the prison environment, rehabilitation outcomes for inmates can be eroded through the implementation of consequences, as Fiona's experience would eventually illustrate. I had observed Fiona develop in confidence and self-assurance throughout the project's progress in the RCCW. Her confidence was evident in the way she followed through with tasks in the garden, and took great pride in often providing me with a guided tour of the improvements she had made to the garden between sessions. Fiona began to take responsibility for more and more tasks. She began to initiate new tasks, later progressing to delegating them to friends who joined her from time to time in the garden. I observed her achievements as time progressed and was encouraged by her continued development. Later I began to understand that this was no inconsiderable achievement for Fiona, particularly given the negative attention her progress had begun to draw from some prison staff.

After a period of three months, the project in the RCCW was now established, with a core group of three to five inmates engaging regularly with the garden and two or more satellite groups of two to three inmates intermittently interacting with the garden. Additional inmate visitors to the garden engaged with some of the inmates and with me from time to time. Because of this

progress I felt reasonably confident in absencing myself from the project for two weeks to present at an international conference. I informed the participants in the project, and key staff involved in its progress who assured me of the project's continuance during my absence. On reflection my naiveté in accepting these assurances is disconcerting.

On my first scheduled return to the RCCW, I was prevented from entering the facility as it had gone into lock-down mode. My next attempt at re-entry the following day was postponed for another week, purportedly due to staff shortages. When I was eventually able to access the RCCW I was dismayed to discover that Fiona had unexpectedly and suddenly been re-located to another prison on the previous weekend. The institutional delays to my return to the garden project meant that I had missed Fiona by only a few days.

*As we walk towards the garden officer J. tells me Fiona has been transferred to ... jail just the weekend before. He indicated that she must have "sorted someone out, so that's why they moved her".*

(R/W15D1My6.5)

This was shocking and disappointing news as out of all of the inmates involved in the project in the RCCW I considered that Fiona had demonstrated the greatest progress. Fiona had gone from initially being reluctant to share her feelings and experiences, to confiding in me about her battle with depression. Equally, her enthusiasm for the garden project reflected a sense of fulfilment and enjoyment and I was hopeful she would share more as the project progressed to its conclusion.

My initial disappointment at Fiona's sudden transfer deepened to concern regarding the effects on benefits she had gained from the garden project when I encountered a pall of silence surrounding the circumstances behind Fiona's re-location. Neither the inmates engaged in the garden project nor staff I had worked with appeared willing to discuss the circumstances behind her transfer. I attempted to discover more from other inmates who also knew Fiona, but they too appeared reluctant to share further information. Given the relatively small

inmate population of approximately 160 at the time I conducted the garden project in the RCCW, it seemed unusual that the general inmate population had little knowledge about the circumstances behind Fiona's removal to another prison.

Eventually, a group of inmates who had not worked with Fiona previously in the garden project gave me some limited insights that left me feeling even more uneasy about Fiona's current situation.

*As they [the inmates] worked in the garden I mentioned Fiona's name and asked if they knew why she had been moved to another jail. The inmates said they didn't know and that no one seemed to know why (I'm not sure that I believe them ... but didn't say anything). The inmates said "she's gone to K... hasn't she?" and I said "that's what I've heard". Jo [an inmate] said "K... 's awful, just red dirt and nothing else". She also said it's "so far away" [from Fiona's family] and ... "it's like a punishment jail. That's where they sent me once".*

(R/W16D2My6.13)

When I made enquiries about contacting Fiona from staff at the RCCW, I was informed that I could request permission from the management hierarchy at the prison she had been sent to regarding contact arrangements. Given the negative focus on Fiona in the RCCW annexed to her engagement in the garden project, I decided not to pursue any on-going contact with her. I did, however, forward a Certificate of Participation to her in the hope that she would feel as though her contribution to the garden project was valued. I have no knowledge of whether she received it or not.

My concern for Fiona remains. The difference in the level of interest in the garden project displayed by Fiona initially and her enthusiasm and confidence later was clearly apparent. When I first met Fiona, she shielded her vulnerability with a veneer of indifference. However, during the time she engaged with the garden project she progressed to enthusiastically recruiting other inmates to the garden, happily delegating small tasks as well as initiating new ones.

After completing this research I still have unanswered questions regarding Fiona's future. Because of her experiences of prison programs will she allow herself to engage with other rehabilitation programs? Has she added more layers of indifference to cover her vulnerabilities; indifference that may lead to more conflicts with penal codes? Will she continue to circulate through the prison system? Based on what I had observed, Fiona's attempts to engage with the garden project were subsumed by the impacts of the penal environment that appeared to fragment any benefits she appeared to gain from the garden project.

Rather than gaining rehabilitative benefits from in-prison programs, it appeared that the impacts of penal codes on inmates forces them to rely on their own resources to mitigate the effects of incarceration on their own and other inmates' behaviours. Playful comments from Rebecca and Fiona illustrated this,

*Rebecca and Fiona start to lay the newspapers [over weeds in the garden]. While they do this the papers start to blow away. Rebecca says to Fiona, she could lie on them, and then laughs and says "what's the saying? The best way to get through jail is lying on your back?" Both she and Fiona laugh at this comment.*

(R/W6D2Mh6.6)

The protective veneer of indifference that I observed Fiona and Rebecca employ in their early engagement with the garden project appeared to be reflective of other inmate behaviours in response to the penal environment that limited their engagement with the garden project. I also observed how multiple members of families serving sentences in prison sought familial support as a protective factor against the penal environment. Helga, another inmate in the RCCW, talked about asking for a transfer to another prison facility so that she could assist her niece "do her time" (R/W12/D2A6.2) as she served her first prison sentence.

Although I found these behaviours frustrating in terms of engaging inmates in the project, it was evident that inmates felt the need to employ these behaviours to supplement the limited support available from those prison programs that were available. Goffman (1961) states that protective mechanisms employed by inmates through a charade of “playing it cool” effectively enables an inmate to “do (her) time” within the totalising institution with as little physical and psychological damage as possible (p.64). It was clear that the impact of penal codes on program access was eroding any benefits gained by inmates from the garden project.

My own experiences of dealing with the penal environment gave me further insights into the need for inmates to assume a protective veneer that limited engagement with prison programs. After the conclusion of the twelve month fieldwork, when I no longer had any contact with either prison facility, I recorded this unexpected incident.

*I was about to drive past the prison where I conducted my first research project. I recognised a feeling of dread. My pulse began to race and my stomach began to churn. There was no apparent cause for these reactions - the sensations had come on unexpectedly and rapidly. I realised my anxiety attack was associated with my experiences of attending this jail twice-weekly for several months.*

*I allowed myself to explore the feelings that I had suppressed each time I attended this jail during the project. I visualised myself driving into the prison grounds and going through the process of suppressing my anxiety and preparing myself for the prison environment. The preparation consisted of adjusting my emotions to not respond to the “other world” and steeling myself to repress all negative responses and emotions. I also attempted to put on a professional veneer to protect myself. It was at this point that I realised fully for the first time how much effort I had put into coping with these visits and the emotional and physical toll they had taken on me.*

(R/W40Ja7.2)



Needing to protect myself against the effects of penal codes highlights the difficulty of realising rehabilitative aims within a penal environment. A discussion with an inmate in the WTC exposes the on-going impact of the penal phantom that continues even after leaving the stricter penal environment of the RCCW behind for the softer environment of the WTC.

Helen, an older inmate in the WTC talked about this need to protect herself from the realities of the effects of penal codes. The contrast between prison life and life 'outside' is perhaps clearer for Helen as she had not previously had any contact with the criminal justice system.

*Helen said she learnt a lot in jail about being a criminal. She said she didn't know anything about it before, "now I know all about drugs, all the names and everything."*

*Helen said one thing that she had gotten out of being in jail was that "she learnt to be patient and to keep quiet. I used to talk a lot, now I don't say anything to anyone, in here. But when I go home I talk all the time, you can't shut me up."*

(I.T/2Ag.4)

Rather than gaining any rehabilitative benefit from in-prison programs, Helen highlighted that she had gained knowledge during her incarceration that would not fit with rehabilitative aims. Helen, as an older inmate with a professional background, drew on her own resources to assume a veneer of isolative protection around herself. It was evident from Helen's comments that penal codes played a larger role in 'educating' inmates than access to rehabilitation programs. Indeed, Helen expressed her concern that the prison environment did not provide opportunities for rehabilitation for younger inmates whom she observed as needing education.

*Helen then went onto talk about the other [younger] women she had come into contact with in the prison.*

*Helen said, "They need education. A lot of them just need love."*

*She mentioned how some of them had "nowhere to go after they left prison. Didn't they [the prison authorities] notice this, that something's not right?"*

(I.T/2A6.3)

The dominance of penal codes appeared to have obfuscated access to rehabilitative programs for inmates in both the RCCW and the WTC. An earlier discussion I had with an inmate in the RCCW, Nerida, about the consequences to inmates of non-compliance with penal codes illustrated the fragmenting and eroding impact of the penal phantom on rehabilitative outcomes for inmates.

*Researcher: Do you feel that by speaking up you're going to be targeted in any way? Do you feel at all concerned about what repercussions there may be for you from saying things?*

*Nerida: Not for myself, no and not for, No I'm not, only because I don't care. I'm 43 years old and they can do whatever they want with me, I don't care. They will never – I'm strong within myself – they will never, ahm, push my self-esteem or make me a timid person. ...for most girls though, they're young, they don't want to speak up. They know that there will be repercussions and so they don't voice their opinion.*

Clearly, the penal environment inflicts a need for inmates to be self-sufficient and self-reliant in a manner that conflicts with institutional rehabilitative aims, particularly in the RCCW. Even though Nerida alluded to the fact that the RCCW is an educational facility, her frustration that this was only an illusory "looks good" facade is evident.

*Nerida: I'm an opinionated person and I'm loud and I'm outspoken, so – and very few will actually say anything. But I don't care, I'll tell them whatever they want to know, 'cause that's the way it is. I'm very frustrated, I'm not even classified to this jail. I'm classified to [a country jail], because I come from a long way a way from here, I don't get family visits. I'm told I'm in transit, I've been shanghaied here and left to stay here and nothing has been said about my move at all. So that's very frustrating where I'm even cut off from my family. In that respect they've put me in this 'looks good' jail but its, ahm, its just not working.*

(I.R/21Mh6.4)

From Nerida's comments it appears that the penal phantom has imposed upon inmates a need to survive a system through whatever means they might have. The posturing of a corrective facility such as the RCCW as an educational facility with a rehabilitative focus is in clear conflict with its penalty. This can be seen in the frustration inmates expressed in attempting to defray these penal impacts; impacts that cut across and erode those rehabilitative opportunities that are offered. The effects of the penal phantom then appeared to transgress the boundaries between the secure environment of the RCCW and the community focussed environment of the WTC. This appeared to be in line with Carlen and Tombs (2006), who state that transcarceration is seen when the effects of dominant penalty, such as in the RCCW, are transferred across to the environment of softer facilities, such as the WTC.

### **Corrosion of Rehabilitative Outcomes**

The punitive gaze that accompanied the provision of rehabilitation programs in both the RCCW and the WTC regarded inmates as targets for rehabilitation in line with penal criteria and appeared to infiltrate staff attitudes toward individual inmates. This aligns with Goffman (1961) who states that the objectifying of inmates by staff within totalised environments enables the identification of inmates with labels that conform to penal goals.

Such categorising of inmates as subjects for rehabilitation was exemplified by comments from a senior staff member at the RCCW who commented that,

*“ ...many of the inmates were second generation welfare recipients and ... they had problems with getting ready to work by 8 a.m. and ... all they knew to do was to sit around watching television all day.”*

(R/W0D5.2).

I again observed this institutionalised attitude that air-brushed inmates collectively as targets of rehabilitation during a brief discussion with a member of staff at the WTC. This discussion arose out of my frustration at being unable to overcome some of the inmates’ apparent reluctance to engage with the garden between the once-weekly sessions. As encouragement of continued engagement with the garden was a factor in the garden project’s rehabilitative aim of leisure activities for inmates, I attempted to highlight the lack of program continuity between the weekly garden project sessions as a contributory factor to inmates’ apparent apathy between sessions. However, the staff member was unwilling to discuss this aspect in regard to my concerns.

*The staff member said that she had found there was a lot of apathy in lots of areas of the transition centre, that it had “a holiday camp feel about it” and that the women had “gotten into the habit of sitting around the heaters in their houses”. She said she hoped “the warmer weather would help to change this”.*

(T/W14S6.1)

This discussion clearly echoed similar sentiments from senior staff at the RCCW regarding the perceived lack of inmate motivation to engage with programs. In the discussion with the WTC staff member, it was apparent that this focus belied an apparent paucity of WTC programs and lack of daily structure.

This was in line with the silent resistance that had met my stated preference for conducting twice-weekly sessions in initial discussions about implementing the garden project in the WTC. Although I gathered that staff shortages might be a reason for this, it was never clearly articulated why more than one session was not accommodated. I did not pursue this issue as I felt that I might jeopardise the already relatively limited access I had to the inmates in the WTC.

However, the impact of such penal attitudes on prison staff members towards inmates was illustrated when Helen, an inmate in the WTC, expressed attitudes towards WTC staff that revealed the converse side of this equation. Despite the strongly rehabilitative focus of the WTC, Helen's perception of staff members was that they were generally indifferent to the individual needs of inmates. During our discussion Helen and I were seated where we could clearly view any traffic entering and exiting the WTC.

*Helen said the "workers weren't interested in you as people. They're just there to get their fat pay and that's all. They don't make any difference."*

*A car drove out of the driveway and Helen said, "See, they've just gone out to buy their lunch, that's all they're interested in."*

Helen was expressing the flip-side of an attitude that reflected Goffman (1961) in the objectification of inmates commensurate with punitive goals that enabled staff to perceive individual inmates as "ends in themselves" (p.75) or entities that needed managing or rehabilitating within institutional confines. However, there were some exceptions to this apparent indifference by prison staff generally, where individual staff members resisted overarching punitive attitudes and attempted to divert the punitive gaze of the institution from individual inmates. This might take the form of attempting to intervene to prevent punitive consequences being enacted against an inmate.

An inmate in the WTC observed, however, that individual staff members who engaged in these activities appeared to take some personal risk. In our discussion, Helen referred to a staff member in the WTC who had attempted to mitigate the effects of the prison environment for inmates.

*Helen said, "There was one worker ... that had tried to advocate for the girls, but she got into trouble from the department."*

(I.T/2A6.5)

A staff member whom I worked with during my time in the RCCW spontaneously gave me some insight into these individual staff attempts to mitigate the punitive gaze for inmates. He talked about his attempt at assisting an inmate whom he saw as being harshly treated by a 'specialist' member of staff.

*The staff member said "I have to write a report for one of the inmates." She had asked him to "write a report for her as she wants to be transferred to ...[another prison]." He says that "the case worker she has is abusive and not very good with her, so I'm putting in a good word for her."*

(R/W5D2Mh6.1)

This corroborated with observations in both the RCCW and the WTC of exchanges between individual staff members and inmates that apparently exhibited a deep rapport and even affection. Some of these exchanges were in the form of friendly verbal banter, but in the WTC where all staff members are female, I witnessed physical displays of support and comfort.

*...there was an affectionate exchange between Myra [staff member] and Rachel, [one of the younger inmates]. They hugged ... at one point with an apparent display of camaraderie, much as you would hug your friend or older sister.*

(T/W26N6.18)

However, these isolated attempts by individual staff members to minimise the effects of the penal environment for inmates, that in turn might enhance rehabilitative outcomes, were in stark conflict with the dominant penal codes of control within each of the penal environments. As with the effects of totalisation (Goffman, 1961), these attempts by individual staff members appeared to have little effect in minimising the collective objectification of inmates as targets of rehabilitation implemented at the behest of the penal phantom. Indeed, their experiences served only to re-enforce the fragility of my own attempts at mitigating the penal environment for inmates like Fiona who had demonstrated gaining some benefits from engagement in the garden project.

Such stories of isolated attempts by individual staff members to mediate between penal processes and classification/rehabilitation outcomes for inmates continued to be staccatoed with stories from inmates about their experiences of the dominant penalty of facilities such as the RCCW. The penal processes employed in their control were seen by some inmates who engaged in the garden project as unnecessary and degrading. Indeed, their experiences of the security processes employed in their containment conflicted starkly with the purported rehabilitative focus of the RCCW.

One inmate in the RCCW, Carol, talked about her experiences and observations of penal security processes.

*Carol said, “they had to be strip searched every time they had a visitor, or saw a solicitor”, and that “the girls had to pull a med out in front of officers” and said “how awful” it was and talked about a friend who recently had to go to hospital and had to be strip searched and had to “take a tampon out in front of officers”, and how “she had handcuffs on the whole time she was in hospital”. She [Carol] questioned “what are they going to put up there?”*

*Carol then went on to talk about “such a strange idea” of putting maximum and medium security together in the one jail. That maybe they should just separate women who have done violent crimes, rather than have them all together in the one jail. Carol talked about this in reference to the “strip search” procedure, indicating that without maximum security this might not need to happen.*

*She then went onto detail how when she goes to court she will be housed in J..., which is a male jail, in a cell with no windows and “you can only have five minute breaks outside 3 times a day.”*

*Carol said, “I’ve been here [in the RCCW] 3 months and there’s so much archaic stuff. I had no idea. I didn’t have a clue. To do anything is ‘yes, sir, no sir’.”*

Later, Carol talked about her experience of security processes when being transferred from one prison to another.

*Carol described how “they would take 10 or more ‘girls’ handcuffed into a truck and you would have to sit there handcuffed all the time. You were given only a sandwich and a piece of fruit, no drinks, not even a cup of coffee or juice. When you were put in the cell [after you arrived at the prison] there was a tap so you could drink water from that but that was all.”*

(I.R/17My6.19)

The provision of rehabilitation programs designed to assist women overcome issues relating to their abuse histories are clearly subjugated by such stridently penal security processes. Equally, inmates’ responses to the onslaught of punitive controls as well as additional factors of arbitrary enactment of many of these controls may elicit actions of retribution and even violence. In turn, these responses by inmates enable the enactment of further punitive processes against them.



In contrast with rehabilitation aims of corrections facilities like the RCCW, such inmate experiences are commensurate with Goffman's (1961) discussions on the mortification of inmates, where they are no longer identifiable in their former roles as women, mothers, sisters, daughters and so on. Inmate stories of the physical indignity of being subject to strip-searches and being transported in 'trucks' from one prison to another equates with Vinson's (2008) discussion around the historical spectres of earlier 'transportation' stories of convict women being transported to Australia for extended periods of time in the hulls of convict ships. Despite contemporary claims of providing rehabilitative opportunities for female inmates, their incarceration continues to be enmeshed with poverty and abuse histories that echo these historical ghosts of penalty.

The every-day lived reality for female inmates that illustrated the magnification of these effects on rehabilitation outcomes was played out in the final day of the garden project in the RCCW. In its initial stages of implementation, RCCW staff had suggested that at the garden project's conclusion they would support a special celebration for inmates in the form of a barbeque. As the last day loomed it was evident that this support was not forth-coming, so I organised to bring in a special afternoon tea and present inmates with certificates. Although inmates engaged in the last sessions were excited about this event, many of those involved in the earlier stages of the garden project were not present to receive their certificates.

*As I hand out the certificates, calling out individual names, it is apparent that many of the women I have prepared the certificates for have been moved onto other locations. With each name that I call, many are greeted with, "oh, she's not here any more", or "she's been moved to...."*

I called out an inmate's name, Leanne, who after engaging with the project in its early phases in the RCCW, had drifted away. I had later seen her briefly from time to time when she visited the other inmates still engaged in the project. However, a succinct comment by an officer in response to Leanne's name being called highlighted the fragility and corrosion of rehabilitative benefits for inmates within the penal environment.

*When I call out Leanne's name, one of the inmates says, "She's in high needs". At my enquiring look towards the overseeing officer, (because I know Leanne was previously in 'medium' needs) the officer says, "She's been moved to maximum security", then hesitates and says rather slowly, "she thought she was Mike Tyson". It is apparent from the officer's tone that I am not able to question her further about this incident.*

(R/W18My6.36)

The officer's comment referring to Leanne acting as though she was "Mike Tyson" evoked images of Fiona's experience in the RCCW. Although mystery continued to surround the circumstances behind Fiona's transfer to a 'punishment prison', there was an apparent similarity between these inmate responses that brought them into conflict with penal controls. I had seen glimpses of these conflicts earlier when Fiona had occasionally referred to her experiences of the behavioural intervention unit. These experiences in turn appeared to have an effect on how she responded to staff comments about her involvement in the garden project. Similarly, Rebecca had also referred to being placed in 'segro' for apparent misdemeanours at the discretion of prison staff and these too appeared to impact upon her responses to prison personnel. The actions of these inmates appeared to be in direct response to the physical and verbal humiliations they had experienced during their incarceration.

Goffman (1961) states that part of the mortification that an inmate endures within a total institution is constituted through being presented with “discreditable facts about oneself that are ordinarily concealed” (p.32). As a result, the private sphere of ‘self’ is violated not just through physical humiliation, but through information about oneself being construed in a manner that re-categorises ‘self’ into the domain of penalty.

Therefore, the penal institution now has the right to use this ‘new’ information to uphold expectations that an inmate re-align their behaviours commensurate with the intervention ascribed to them. In short, a violation of self is necessary in order for an inmate to attain the rehabilitation outcomes set out by the penal institution. As Carlen and Tombs (2006) state, any isolated rehabilitative intervention is “inevitably undermined by the punishing carceral context” (p.339). It would seem then that even though some inmates gained benefits from engaging with the garden project, as when Fiona expressed that the garden helped her to feel “good”, such gains appeared to be ultimately subsumed by the over-arching penalty of both facilities. While I still have hope that some rehabilitative benefits for inmates who engaged in the garden project might be retained, it’s clear that any benefits gained are at risk of being neutralised, or rendered vulnerable and fragile, or perhaps even fragmented and corroded after exposure to the penal phantom.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that in line with the three theoretical models, the effects of the penal environment on prison programs, such as the garden project, had various effects that might neutralise, fragment and even corrode any rehabilitative benefits gained by inmates. Although this effect was particularly evident in the RCCW, there also appeared to be a similar impact on rehabilitative benefits to inmates in the WTC. The garden project’s implementation and progression in both facilities also highlighted penally imposed institutional pressures on prison staff members who are required to facilitate and support rehabilitative programs while adhering to punitively

inscribed goals. These pressures were seen to be enacted upon both staff and individual inmates through the omniscient presence of the penal phantom. As such, the provision of prison programs that aim to engage female inmates appears to be overshadowed by a primary need to comply with penal codes. This then conflicts with institutional expectations that inmates assume responsibility for engaging with rehabilitation programs, such as the garden project, and appeared to place an inequitable burden of rehabilitative progress upon inmate participants in the garden project.

The effects of the presence of the penal phantom on the garden project's rehabilitative aims for some inmates were visible in the example of Fiona, whose engagement with the garden project was subject to the dominant penalty of the corrective institution. It was clear that the punitive gaze of the penal environment wrought inmates as mere targets for rehabilitation that fulfilled penal goals; goals instituted through penal codes that in turn placed pressure on the holistic, rehabilitative aims of the garden project. The enacting of penal codes embedded in historical spectres of incarceration for female inmates conflict starkly with the rehabilitative aims of programs designed to assist women with life-histories of poverty and often abuse. As such, the mortification processes that attempt to render inmates compliant with penal goals deny incarcerative goals of rehabilitation.

This research has therefore exposed a disjuncture between systems of control and rehabilitative rhetoric; a rhetoric that posited support for the garden project's holistic, rehabilitative aims while simultaneously enforcing penal goals. Even in the WTC with its community focus, the tentacles of the penal phantom reached beyond the stricter security facilities such as the RCCW and continued to entangle penal codes with rehabilitative aims. As such, any rehabilitative benefits gained by inmates from the garden project were seen as subject to the penal phantom. This resulted in such benefits being rendered neutral with little visible benefit to the individual inmate, or fragmented where benefits were isolated and made vulnerable to the dominant penal code. Eventually fragmented benefits might be eroded by the impacts of the penal phantom, ultimately corroding any beneficial shreds that remained.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONSIDERING THE WAREHOUSING OF FEMALE INMATES

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*"A leading prison reform expert, Dr Eileen Baldry, said building prisons was a costly and short-term response to the problem of overcrowded facilities. The \$54 million spent on building the new prison for women would have been much better directed towards funding alternatives to custody"*  
(Kennedy, 2004)

#### **A Naïve Sojourn**

This research journey began with the premise that horticulture therapy might act as a rehabilitative tool for women in prison. My experience of horticultural therapy as a restorative tool with marginalised groups supported this premise, along with research (S. Kaplan, 1995; S. Kaplan & Talbot, 1983; Lewis, 1996) highlighting the rehabilitative and therapeutic benefits of engagement with natural environments for disenfranchised populations. In line with this literature and anecdotal stories that highlight the benefits of community gardens for vulnerable communities, the natural environment that I brought to this study was a small garden project that could be adapted for use in the prison environment.

From the outset I acknowledged that my researcher status was naïve in terms of my experience of incarcerative environments. I sought to utilise this status to engage with the women in the prison environment with as little criminological rhetoric as possible. This fit with a personal ethos of not labelling individual members of vulnerable populations so as to interact with each of them in as non-judgemental and respectful manner as possible. As such, I resisted questioning women inmates about the 'charges' that brought them into prison and allowed them to only divulge this information voluntarily, if at all. Consequently, in the early stages of my contacts with women in prison I initially felt that I may have failed to produce valuable data. However, as I persisted in this approach the

women I engaged with through the garden project began to show a level of trust that enabled them to talk about issues relevant for them. Through this engagement rich data from interviews, snippets of informal and spontaneous discussions, as well as semi-participant observations began to fill my journal pages. Added to these were my reflexive notes that chartered a deeply personal and often challenging journey through a research terrain unlike anything I had previously navigated.

It was this journey that informed the ongoing research project and steered me on a course of exploring the penal setting in which I laboured to establish a horticultural therapy project for women in prison. During initial phases, as the project in the first corrective centre, the Remand and Correctional Centre for Women (RCCW), faltered I could no longer ignore the institutional barriers that continued to impede the establishment of the garden project. Despite attempting to overcome these impediments, I eventually conceded that I was powerless to resist their intrusion into every facet of the project's establishment. Indeed, as I progressed along this research journey, ever more aware of my naivety, I succumbed to the all-encompassing penal institution and turned my focus to exploring how this environment impacted upon the establishment of the garden project. It was from here that the research focus broadened to exploring the impacts of the penal institution upon women's lived experiences and their attempts, if at all, at rehabilitation throughout their incarceration. My own experience of this environment then led to an exploration of the impacts of the penal institution on the working realities for individuals who staffed the corrective facilities in this study.

## **'Indigency' in Action**

Throughout this research I have illustrated the Foucauldian construct of the 'indigent' individual who treads a pre-determined life-course of social exclusion from infancy through to adulthood. This form of social exclusion is embedded within the stories of women's lived experiences of prison in this research. Their stories have illustrated that incarceration in Australia for women in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is still played out against a backdrop of social and economic poverty symptomised by factors such as unemployment and poor education. However, intrinsic to these women's self-told stories of social poverty are references to histories of violence and abuse which are seen to act as agencies of entanglement with criminal justice systems. The warehousing of women away from the broader community is viewed in this research as the culmination of exclusionary practices of social control evidenced through the continued social and economic poverty of women in prison. To complete their disenfranchisement, the incarceration of female inmates in penally driven total institutions remains veiled in mystique (Blom-Cooper, 1978), sequestered away from the public gaze.

Indeed, despite current recognition of the complexities of women's 'offending' contexts the rapid increase in women's imprisonment, particularly in New South Wales (NSW), continues to be inscribed with policies of control. These policies based in gendered ideologies act to effectively place irreconcilable borders of segregation around women 'offenders' and further ratify women's incarceration. As a result, gender-specific policies, borne out of reforms that recognise women's 'needs' during their imprisonment as unique, have given rise to the 'new permission' to incarcerate women.

At the inception of this research I conceded that factors such as social and economic poverty significantly relate to men's incarceration as well as women's. Equally, I recognise that many of the findings in this research may be relevant to men's incarcerative experiences. Despite this, I acknowledge that gender-specificity for female inmates represent beneficial impacts upon corrective approaches which at least give recognition to the complex contexts of women's contacts with criminal justice systems.

However, as I conducted the project within two women-centred corrective centres, parameters categorising women's 'criminality' as the basis of current gender-specific policies became significant components of this research. These gendered shifts determine the current classification labels attributed to women identifying their criminal status and have a significant impact upon their incarceration. Their attributed criminal status is therefore reflected in the security processes enacted to contain female inmates and determine multiple facets of a woman's experience in prison.

The implementation of gendered security processes within punitively driven total institutions appears to have resulted in an apparent disruption to the original intent of gender-specific ideologies. This can be seen in the window dressing of penal practices in women's incarceration that appear to comply with the genderised approach to incarceration for women. The architectural softening of women-centred prison façades in accordance with gender-specific policies was seen in this research as not significantly minimising or limiting the intrusion of the total institution's penal mechanisms into an inmate's daily living experiences. This was seen when the aesthetics of the new generation women's prison, the Remand Corrective Centre for Women (RCCW), which initially acted to impede my view of its rigid penalty, was still unable to ameliorate the punitive effects of the penal phantom for female inmates.



The targeting of penal processes towards women suggests that issues related to women's offending behaviours are being addressed during their incarceration. This has resulted in a perception of a greater acceptance of imprisonment for women which appears to have given permission for the on-going and increasing incarceration of a growing cohort of women 'offenders'. The new 'permission to imprison' has been seen in this research as having the effect of broadening the criminal justice net to include more women whose crimes continue to be borne largely out of poverty related issues.

Situated within this new permission to incarcerate women are rhetorics of targeting women's offending behaviours through the implementation of prison programs. These programs are purportedly designed to address the gendered contexts of women's offending behaviours. While this research has not sought to critique specific prison programs, the establishment of the garden project has shown that the implementation of programs within a corrective setting encounters contradictory aims of rehabilitation and incarceration. In addition, the incarcerative goals of the penal institution continue to accommodate the punitive surveillance and observation of women inmates by a smaller number of staff and officers. These staff members who fit within the rigid hierarchical structure that allocates their roles as agents of the totalised penal institution are placed in extra-ordinary positions of power and privilege over female inmates.

In line with Weber's hierarchical construct of domination and oppression, it was evident in this research that female inmates are afforded a status commensurate with their relegated position at the lowest end of the hierarchical gradient. Within this lower stratum inmates are further clustered into groups that identify them according to a particular criminogenically inscribed category. These categories are informed by the gendering of women's criminality with the utilisation of classification tools ascribed as risk, needs and responsivity (RNR) for individual inmates.

The classification labels attributed to each inmate was seen to bind them into the hierarchical structure of the total institution and determined levels of individual freedom and autonomy. Women then became individually numbered cogs around which the organism of the total institution is activated via the penal mechanisms that drive it. Thus, the penal phantom is given life; a life that once activated permeates every facet of the total institution, in a self-perpetuating cycle.

Commensurate with Goffman's discussions identifying totalising institutional impacts on inmates, the effects of the total institution visible in this research included the sustained loss of self-determination and autonomy for individual inmates. In response to this loss, some inmates illustrated a form of self agency which was expressed on occasion in the form of covert and overt activism. This activism was exemplified when the first inmates I came into contact with during the establishment of the garden project in the first facility, the RCCW, either deliberately avoided the garden project or sought to act in ways intended to disrupt its establishment. Even with the absence of overt penal structures within the Women's Transitional Centre (WTC) these effects were still evident. It was shown in this research that individual acts of self-agency by inmates conflicted with incarcerative goals often resulting in punitive consequences.

As a result, every-day living activities for women in penal institutions were seen in this research as being imbued with the need to cope with and ultimately survive the oppressive and dominating environment. The totalizing effects of the penal environment were seen to consume every aspect of a female inmates' lived experience. Each detail of an inmate's private and public activity is monitored via the penal lens which affords a criminogenic status. Privacy becomes obsolete for inmates, particularly those who are perceived to be at a high risk of contravening institutional rules and regulations.

Women's intimate personal activities, normally 'off limits' as subjects of observation or intervention outside prison, become normalised targets for intervention while-ever inmates live within a prison. Inmates in this research told of visits to hospital and visits from family or even legal professionals becoming annexed with invasive body searches instituted by the penal mechanisms of the total institution.

Equally, the stripping of individual decision making processes regarding personal appearance became another observable feature of the totalised institution which acted as a daily reminder for inmates of their loss of status. The wearing of 'greens' daily accentuated this loss, distinguishing inmates from every other person within the total institution. Their status as inmates was also seen in this research as being re-enforced further through the use of deferential language and body movements that evoke social symbols of hierarchy. Examples of these were seen in the RCCW when inmates were observed addressing female prison staff as "ma'am" or "miss", and lowering their countenance in deference to a staff member's status. This was further illustrated by the need for inmates to seek permission to access utilities that might reasonably be taken for granted, such as water necessary for garden activities. Locking inmates out of their private sleeping space and allowing access only at allocated times highlights the institution's total domination of individual personal autonomy.

This loss of individual autonomy continued to have a significant effect upon inmates even when they had progressed through classification processes to the WTC as echoed in inmates' discussions regarding their choice of every-day clothing. Indeed, the WTC inmates appeared to have gained a heightened awareness of their sustained loss of status during their twilight existence as inmates living in a 'community' setting. WTC inmates' limited access to the general community appeared to accentuate the humiliation of being an inmate which was seen to be re-enforced through staff continuing to infantilise them by limiting their individual choices.

## **Exposing Rehabilitative Rhetoric**

It is clear from the data that women in prison encounter numerous impediments to rehabilitative outcomes throughout their incarceration. Even in the WTC it was evident that an inmate's self agency or decision-making ability, such as initiating employment, continued to be subject to institutional hierarchical interventions. These interventions enacted by staff members conflicted with posited WTC goals of community engagement for inmates within its jurisdiction. Within the RCCW, in order to comply with the gendered RNR classification processes for female inmates, prison administrative and corrective staff members were observed employing a 'box-ticking' approach when implementing and facilitating prison programs. Such inconsistencies in systemic processes contributed further to rehabilitation programs being implemented on paper only. The resultant inmate frustration and 'apathy' was evident in their non-adherence and non-compliance with numerous programs, other than those legally required to fulfil inmate 'throughcare' classification requirements.

This research has shown that many of the obstacles to rehabilitation that women in prison face are punitively inscribed and are therefore seen to have a detrimental effect upon rehabilitative outcomes for individual inmates. Equally, the alignment of these obstacles with classification and labelling processes appeared to indelibly mark women in prison according to their ascribed 'criminality'. These labels, bound within gender-specific ascriptions, further marked women in prison as somehow deficient and therefore in need of rehabilitation. In Foucauldian terms, the current categorising of women 'offenders' continues to exist in response to historical movements of penal policy for women from punishment to one that purportedly accommodates 'rehabilitation'.

In line with feminist criminologists cited throughout this thesis, the research has identified that labelling groups of women as having ‘high needs’ in terms of their abuse histories, limited education, and so on, echoes exclusionary practices used historically to control women. As such, inmates in the RCCW labelled as ‘high needs’ appeared to be excluded from engaging with prison programs such as the garden project. The use of gendered classificatory tools in terms of rehabilitation attached to throughcare and parole processes endowed with ‘best practice’ policies was seen to define the management of inmates within the corrective women-centric facilities in this research. Subsequently it was my observations of this control over all aspects of inmates’ lives in this research that aligned with Hannah-Moffatt’s observation that female inmates have been attributed with not taking responsibility for their offending behaviours.

The realities of these effects of ‘correction’ for women in prison were exposed through inmates’ stories of their experiences of being locked up in ‘behavioural intervention units’ or ‘segro’. ‘Corrective’ consequences enacted in response to inmates’ confessions of feelings of sadness that might be more appropriately treated with counselling are examples of the over-arching punitiveness of the prison environment. Despite its window dressing inmates’ lived experience of the penalty of the RCCW, alongside the covert penalty of the WTC, continued to be told in their stories of attempts to cope with these oppressive environments in which they lived their every-day lives. This was poignantly illustrated in Fiona’s story, where her attempts at coping with symptoms of depression resulted in punitive responses enacted within the penal institution. Stories of the institutional quashing of inmate responses through the use of punitive consequences emphasised the harsh realities for female inmates of living in women-centred correctional facilities. Inmates’ stories exposing their fears of these punitive mechanisms, such as ‘segro’, heartbreakingly illustrate their emotional anguish amidst their experiences of physical confinement.

## Staffing Conflicts

My own experiences of encounters with penal mechanisms in these environments aided the unfolding of my understandings of the effects of the penal institution on staff, officers and specialist staff, as well as inmates. As I negotiated with gate-keeper staff within the RCCW in the early stages of implementing the project, the mechanisms employed to activate penal systems within the total institution gradually unfolded. Consequently I gained disturbing insights into the effects of the total institution upon individual staff members, as well as visiting 'specialists', such as myself. Throughout the research the complexities of these responses by staff in the RCCW and the WTC continued to be illustrated in seemingly every-day activities and behaviours. These included conflicting responses of staff acting alternatively to mother and infantilise female inmates within their jurisdiction that reflected my own behaviours in this environment.

However, it became increasingly clear throughout the research that these actions of staff were seen in response to penal institutional pressures as reflected in my own responses to the penal environment. Indeed, it was evident that some staff who acted according to institutional impositions did so in conflict with their individual ethos. I observed this with examples of staff members in both facilities acting to minimise the effects of the penal institution for individual inmates. As a result, I recognised my own behaviours that vaulted from feelings of empathy for female inmates to feelings of annoyance and irritation that conflicted starkly with my personal ethos of treating women in prison with a non-judgemental respect.

The impact of the penal phantom on my behaviours was also evident when I too resisted security regulations after observing the arbitrary manner in which they were enacted by various staff within the chain of command. To my discomfort this personal response was particularly evident in the RCCW, but continued even in my interactions with both staff and inmates in the 'softer' WTC environment. After agonising self-reflection, I came to the conclusion that my

own reactions to female inmates within both corrective facilities were reminiscent of my observations of staff behaviours within both facilities. I concluded that my responses resulted directly from the oppressive and dominating impacts of the penal institution. Indeed, my personal epiphany was that if I were to remain working within the penal institution I would continue to react and respond in ways that conflicted with my individual ethics. I conceded that I would be unable to avoid conflicts with punitive mechanisms and that any attempts to resist this would be unsustainable. I therefore acknowledge the numerous staff members I encountered during this research who continued to work under extra-ordinary pressures within this environment in order to provide support to the women warehoused within prison.

### **Dilemmas in the Field**

I resisted locating this research within any criminological theoretical framework in attempts at aligning my personal ethos of not labelling women in prison within a criminogenically inscribed framework. However, the nature of this research has dictated that I refer often to feminist criminology in order to find descriptors that fit with the population I was exploring. Equally, for purposes of clarification I have resorted to referring to women in prison as inmates throughout this thesis. While this was borne initially out of locating women within a particular context, it has had the unfortunate effect of also acting as a descriptive label.

Having initially entered the prison setting to explore the benefits of a horticultural therapy program for women in prison, my previous lack of exposure to women's prisons may be viewed as having limited my exploration, observations and analysis of the field site. However, I aspired to entering the field with as fresh a lens as possible, borne out of a desire to explore women's lived experiences unfettered with criminological rhetoric. Nevertheless, I concede that my individual world view and life experience shaped the lens through which I explored women's stories and experiences, colouring my view and experience of the incarcerative institution.

This research ultimately attempts to highlight the impact of the penal environment upon women in prison and recognises that the small number of women overall in this research have enabled a key-hole view into their lived realities. In addition, while inmates' well-being has been referred to occasionally in this thesis, this research did not undertake to explore these effects for women in prison within any psychological parameters. Rather, in line with critical methods of inquiry it sought to highlight the lived experiences of incarceration for women through the telling of individual inmate's stories. As a result, their stories revealed a diversity of experiences that were commonly woven with threads of anxiety, frustration, humiliation and vulnerability.

As the research progressed knowledge amongst inmates of my empathy for their stories may have acted as a form of selection which elicited and encouraged individual women to come forward and recount stories of their prison experience. However, the garden project provided opportunities for inmates to gain some holistic benefits as well as a space in which they could discuss their experiences.

## **Moving Forward**

This research has highlighted contradictions and conflicts between the rhetoric of rehabilitative goals for female inmates and control policies of the penal institution. These have been revealed in the every-day lived realities for female inmates engaged in the garden project. While the engendering of policies that recognise the complexities of women's offending behaviours are reformatory in nature, their genesis within women's incarceration is clearly problematic. Given that poverty, particularly for women, has been continually cited in this research as an important element of exposure to criminal justice systems, the targeting of rehabilitative programs to incarcerated populations appears to be at the expense of similar programs within the broader community.

Although post-release issues are beyond the scope of this study, it has been suggested throughout this thesis that incarceration acts to further problematise



numerous poverty related issues for women. A lack of educational opportunities for marginalised women was identified by inmates in this research as a significant contribution to women's incarceration. As such, this research suggests an exploration of opportunities for the provision of community based projects targeting equitable access to education for marginalised women. Given the complexities of the contexts of women's contacts with criminal justice systems, this research would by definition need to encompass a comprehensive project sustained over an extended period. Identifying and targeting vulnerable women within marginalised communities should form the nexus of this project and include annexed programs that provide familial support services.

In addition, it is the premise of this research that the current ideologies which utilise incarceration as a social control mechanism, particularly in NSW, need to be explored. Alternatives to custody, including remand, aimed at directing women away from the penal institution into community based programs needs exploration. This would necessitate a seismic shift and restructure of current incarceration policies which would entail a target of reducing incarceration rates for women in prison.

### **Fault-lines and Conflicts**

This research illustrates the fault-lines exposed by inherent conflicts within a punitive system promulgating rehabilitation while at the same time attempting to dispense and appease public (mis)conceptions of law and order. It is the collision between these conflicts of control and rehabilitation that highlight the dominating and oppressive effects of a system which totalises and consumes all within its confines. That women who are imprisoned have somehow earned their status as 'indigent' through the mechanisms of social exclusion appears to afford a right to enact their punishment. This perception of women in prison is imbued with a mystique that continues to be propagated by the exclusionary processes used to control them.

Within the context of rehabilitation the experience of incarceration for many women in prison replicates the marginalisation and exclusion experienced in their pre-prison existence. As has been discussed extensively in this thesis, a large proportion of women in prison, whose experience of trauma via abuse and other poverty related issues prior to incarceration, are exposed to punitive practices that further echo these experiences. Although the experience of mothers in prison has not been fully explored in this thesis, it is apparent that their experience of prison increases the intensity of parental anxieties about their children. These and similar concerns for women, who may be primary carers for their families, further problematise their on-going incarceration and rehabilitation outcomes.

The daily lived experiences of women in prison are dominated by the top-down hierarchical structures of the prison environment inculcating them into a web of surveillance and control. Women in prison are exposed to punitive consequences which may extend to punishment for perceived non-compliance in program participation. It is in this all-consuming punitive ether that the provision of programs encounters blocks to rehabilitation which have a profound impact upon outcomes for women in prison. This research has shown that the effects of punitive controls on inmates juxtaposed against state expectations of self responsibility exposes jagged clefts of conflict that may have irreconcilable outcomes for women in prison. In terms of women's lived experiences in prison these effects may ultimately subjugate any benefits gained by inmates from rehabilitation programs during their incarceration.

Indeed, it may be seen from this research that any benefits to inmates from rehabilitation programs become vulnerable, making them fragile and unstable when exposed to the on-going impacts of the penal environment. Such benefits that may be tangible for inmates may eventually erode as they continue to be intersected by the penal phantom.

Rather than offering opportunities for rehabilitation, the prison environment's overarching impact on inmates, individually and collectively, appeared to emphasise the need for inmates to conform to penal codes. As such, the ultimate goal of incarceration appeared to align with achieving a level of conformity that enabled inmates to adjust to living within the punitive environment; a conformity that conflicted with posited rehabilitative program goals.

The criminalising of poverty has been seen in this research as removing the responsibility from the state in addressing issues of inadequate education and employment opportunities for marginalised women and their families in our society. The removal of this responsibility of state shifts the focus away from 'poverty' and into the realm of 'criminality'. I believe that policies of control illustrated in this research highlight how the public gaze has been shuttered and averted from the realities of every-day poverty for marginalised women. As a result, this gaze has been re-directed to state engendered policies that 'address' the rising 'need to correct' women engaged in activities labelled as criminal.

Further, it has been shown in this research that the gendering of correctionally driven ideologies has fragmented rehabilitation opportunities for women living within a punitive facility. This was evident within the more secure environment of the RCCW, but even within the community focussed WTC conflicts that fragmented rehabilitation aims for women remained. The ever-increasing rate of women in prison in NSW gives the obvious lie to the rehabilitative effect of prison programs.

## **Dismantling the Warehouse**

This research has found that rehabilitation in prison for women is something of an oxy-moron; that the two ideologies of control and rehabilitation are directly oppositional and profoundly incompatible. However, this research does not advocate removing rehabilitation programs from prison, but rather increasing rehabilitative and educational programs not annexed to punitive policies of control. This equates with the research findings that the gendering of women's risk, needs and responsivity, used in identifying rehabilitative targets, has been utilised to further inflict punitive consequences for women.

Equally, the research has illustrated that a rhetoric suggesting incarceration offers women opportunities for rehabilitation and purportedly targets gendered contexts of 'offending' behaviours is clearly problematic. The warehousing of an already marginalised population in penally inscribed institutions under the guise of 'rehabilitation' continues to channel women, and by consequence their children, into further marginalisation and entrenched poverty. Therefore, it is the recommendation of this study that ideologies recognising the contexts of women's engagement with criminal justice systems are re-directed to establish educational, vocational and life skill programs for women within their communities outside of incarcerative institutions.

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