

INSIDE OUT, UPSIDE DOWN: PRISON, THE MILITARY AND THE EFFECTS OF PARENTAL SEPARATION ON CHILDREN

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the impact of parental separation on children's wellbeing. Specifically, it will investigate the adverse behavioural and psychological effects of parental separation on children's wellbeing, the possible explanations for these effects and the trauma it elicits in the lives of affected children. It does this by comparing children separated from their parents because of imprisonment with children separated because of military deployment. In doing so, this dissertation aims to ascertain whether parental imprisonment poses a unique threat to children's wellbeing, distinct from other forms of separation. It found that parental imprisonment could be understood to pose a unique threat to children's wellbeing on the basis that the prison context has an exclusive set of factors which adversely affect children's wellbeing. These include issues of stigma and visitation difficulties, although casual inference is difficult to determine given that the effects could be attributed to pre-existing disadvantages in children's lives prior to the separation and not the separation itself. It is argued that certain similarities exist between both the prison and military contexts such as the ambiguous and repetitive nature of the loss which casts doubt on the uniqueness of the prison context in affecting children's wellbeing. Ultimately, this dissertation considers that parental imprisonment does pose a unique threat to children's wellbeing.

¹ Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the final requirements of the BA Honours degree in Criminology; April 2014, The University of Winchester

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who have supported me during the preparation and research for this dissertation.

In particular I would like to thank my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Ben Hunter, for his invaluable advice, expertise and forbearance throughout the process and throughout my second and third year.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for their endless support and encouragement.

Introduction: The impact of parental separation on children

Sara was the wife of Mark, who had been a heroin addict for over 15 years and was sentenced to 54 months in prison for burglary in 2008, as documented in the short film 'Down the Line: The Journey for Prisoners' Families' (2010). The couple have four children; Charlie (15), Sophie (13), Lucy (4) and Demi (3). Sara looked after the children alone after Mark's conviction. She herself is troubled, and is also a taker of suboxone, a heroin substitute.

During Mark's sentence, the family unit deteriorated and the children exhibited psychological and behavioural problems. Charlie (15) began to offend regularly; he became a regular drug user, committed a burglary in the local neighbourhood and threatened the neighbours with weapons ('Down the Line', 2010). After numerous court appearances and several months of prolific offending, Charlie began a 12 month prison sentence, following in his father's footsteps. As Mark confesses, 'I hate to say this but I was exactly the same...doing exactly the same as wot he done...[he's] a carbon copy of me' ('Down the Line', 2010).

Sophie (13) also displayed an array of problems. Whilst she was not in trouble with the law like her older brother, her physical and mental health was a cause of considerable concern to her mother, Sara, who was at a loss with how to deal with her behaviour. Sophie became depressed, ran away from home on a number of occasions and isolated herself from her family ('Down the Line', 2010). Furthermore, she became intolerant towards human contact and displays of affection and had poor eating habits. On the rare occasion that she did interact with her mother, Sophie became frustrated and angrier than she had been prior to her father's imprisonment, and had frequent arguments with her mother.

Prior to her husband's imprisonment, Sara describes her family as a strong unit; they were all happy and the children were doing well in school. Both she and her husband had jobs, she was a cleaner and Mark was a self-employed plasterer ('Down the Line', 2010). By all intents and purposes they were a 'normal' content family. This changed following Mark's prison sentence and his subsequent separation from his family, which caused the family unit to rupture as they struggled to come to terms with their loss. As demonstrated, the separation had a profound effect on all of the remaining family members, particularly the children, such as Charlie and Sophie who displayed behavioural and psychological issues during the period of separation. In learning that their father was imprisoned and not coming back home till the completion of his sentence, Sara notes that it '...just (.) just tore 'em up [the children] which I **knew** it was gonna do and (.) every single one of my kids has suffered...so yeah it hit them hard (.) all of us' ('Down the Line', 2010).

Sara and Mark's story demonstrates that parental separation as a result of imprisonment can be traumatic for children, as evidenced by the psychological and behavioural problems which Charlie and Sophie displayed during their father's absence. Whilst the literature is abundant with studies that document the adverse psychological and behavioural problems of children with a parent in prison (e.g. Arditti, 2012a; Murray and Farrington, 2005, 2008; Baunach, 1985; Geller et al, 2012; Fritsch and Burkhead, 1981), it remains unclear whether these problems can be attributed exclusively to the prison context or separation more generally. The purpose of this research is to investigate the question, 'Does parental imprisonment pose a unique threat to children's wellbeing'? , by comparing the prison and military separation contexts.

This dissertation on the impact of parental separation on children proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 outlines the key findings of existing research on the effects of parental

imprisonment on children. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a summarised account of what is 'known' about the subject area. This provides the reader with the context to the subject area and gives an indication of where this research can be situated within the field of study to aid understanding of the key concepts and debates. The chapter provides an overview of the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on children, the possible explanations for these effects such as stigma and the fact that parental imprisonment is considered as a socially disapproved absence within society.

Chapter 2 addresses the impact of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing, in depth, by examining the trauma it elicits in the lives of affected children. It begins by discussing the nature of parental imprisonment as a socially unacceptable absence within society and discusses the effect of this stigma on children's wellbeing. It also draws upon Boss' theory of ambiguous loss (1999) to describe the uncertainty that arises in the lives of these children post separation and the fact that it is a loss which cannot be mourned or acknowledged in the same way as other forms of loss, which could worsen the trauma which children experience when their parent is imprisoned (Schoenbauer, 1986; Hinshaw, 2005). It considers the adverse behavioural and psychological effects of parental imprisonment on children of imprisoned parents during the period of initial separation and upon their return to the household. The trauma of visitation (Arditti, 2012a; Hairston, 1998) and changing caregiving arrangements (Myers et al, 1999; Wright and Seymour, 2000) is also discussed. Both of these aspects involved in children's experiences of parental imprisonment are traumatic for children and can have adverse effects on their wellbeing.

Chapter 3 explores the impact of parental military deployment on children's wellbeing by examining the factors which may be traumatic for children both during the period of initial separation and return. It begins by outlining the adverse effects of parental military

deployment on children, before offering possible reasons for these effects including, the cyclical nature of the deployment cycle, military family syndrome and the ambiguity surrounding the military personnel's date of deployment and return as well as the fear surrounding the safety of the deployed parent. In addition, the trauma of multiple deployments is discussed. It appears that multiple deployments can increase children's externalising behaviours and levels of aggression (Lester et al, 2010).

Chapter 4 synthesises the previous chapters in an attempt to ascertain whether parental imprisonment poses a unique threat to children's wellbeing. In doing so the chapter outlines and discusses two main points. Firstly, that there are factors which are exclusive to the prison context that adversely affect children's wellbeing. Secondly, the effects children experience are not situation specific but rather a result of separation per se. In addressing the assertion that there are factors which are exclusive to the prison context that adversely affect children's wellbeing, the chapter considers the impact of stigma and visitation on children's wellbeing. However, it also discusses the role of pre-existing disadvantages in shaping children's experiences of parental imprisonment, and that the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on children may be the result of pre-existing factors independent of the separation context, making it difficult to determine the casual connection between parental imprisonment and adverse childhood outcomes.

In addressing the assertion that the effects of parental separation on children are a result of separation more generally and not context specific, the chapter draws upon certain similarities between the prison and military contexts, in terms of the repetition of trauma and ambiguous loss. The chapter concludes by addressing the research question posed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Whilst a definitive conclusion is neigh on impossible to achieve, it attempts to draw out some of the debates and key issues that this dissertation addressed. On

the one hand, parental imprisonment seems to pose a unique threat to children's wellbeing as evidenced by the discussions of stigma and visitation found with Chapters 1 and 2, although casual inference is difficult to determine. On the other hand, it could be argued that parental imprisonment does not pose a unique threat to children's wellbeing. This is due to the fact that there are similarities between the prison and military contexts such as the cycle of imprisonment and deployment and the ambiguous nature of the loss, which elicits similar separation responses in affected children, irrespective of the context.

Chapter 1: Literature review

1.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the key findings of the effects of parental imprisonment on children as documented in the literature. It aims to provide the reader with an overview of the parental imprisonment literature and its effects on children. It will also consider the methodological weaknesses of the subject area. In addition it will provide justification of this research and offer insights into how it might relate to wider criminological knowledge. Specifically, the chapter will outline the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on children, as documented in the literature, before considering the explanations for these effects on children's wellbeing.

1.2 The effects of parental imprisonment on children

Academics have consistently documented that parental imprisonment is associated with a range of adverse outcomes for children. For example, parental imprisonment has been associated with internalising problems such as depression (Kampfner, 1995; Wilbur et al, 2007), withdrawal (Fritsch and Burkhead, 1981; Baunach, 1985), fearfulness (Sack et al, 1976; Boswell and Wedge, 2002) and attachment issues towards the absent parent (Johnston 1995; Poehlmann, 2005; Murray and Murray, 2010); as well as externalising problems such as aggression (Baunach, 1985; Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza, 2001; Sack et al, 1976; Phillips et al, 2002; Gabel, 1992; Lowenstein, 1986), delinquency (Murray and Farrington, 2005; Aaron and Dallaire, 2010; Healy and Bronner, 1926; McCord and McCord, 1963) and criminal behaviour (Huebner and Gustafson, 2007; Murray et al, 2007). Children's educational performance is also thought to be negatively affected by parental imprisonment (Hanlon et al, 2005; Trice and Brewster, 2004).

Parental imprisonment is understood to be detrimental for the wellbeing of children. For example, Murray and colleagues (2005, 2008) utilised longitudinal data from the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (CSDD) and found that children separated because of parental imprisonment were at risk of developing a range of adverse outcomes, particularly delinquent, anti-social behaviour and mental health problems through the life course, even after controlling for other childhood risk factors (2005; pp 1269-1278 and 2008; pp 273-290). Significantly, the study was conducted with four control groups, including boys separated because of parental death or hospitalisation and boys separated due to marital disharmony (Murray and Farrington, 2008, p.273). In this context, parental imprisonment was found to have unique effects on children's wellbeing, distinct from those experienced by boys separated for other reasons (see also: Murray and Farrington, 2005; Geller et al, 2012; Arditti, 2012b; Bocknek et al, 2009; Fritsch and Burkhead, 1981).

1.3 Accounting for the effects of imprisonment on children

There are several reasons proffered in the literature for the unique effects of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing. These include the potential of witnessing arrests and the fact that the separation may be violent and occur without explanation, compounding the trauma that children experience. The associative stigma attached to parental imprisonment is also said to have unique effects on children's wellbeing and distinguishes this form of absence from other separation contexts.

One of the reasons cited in the literature, for the unique effects of parental imprisonment upon children, is the traumatic nature of the separation which can be violent and may occur without warning or explanation (Braman, 2007; Comfort, 2007; Fishman, 1983; Harm and Phillips, 1998; Kampfner, 1995; Nijnatten, 1998). Beckerman asserts that parental separation due to imprisonment is likely to affect children differently to those experiencing other forms

of separation due to the enduring nature of the trauma and the possibility of witnessing arrests (1998, p. 324). Kampfner ascertained that one third of the children in his study exhibited signs of posttraumatic stress disorder including depression, fear, anger and guilt (1995, p. 185). Some scholars have described the trauma experienced by these children as 'enduring', which serves to impede their development (Johnson, 1995; Harm and Phillips 1997; Myers et al, 1999).

Various studies have also emphasised the association between parental imprisonment and stigma which is said to have an adverse impact on children's wellbeing (Dawson et al, 2013; Lowenstein, 1986; Murray 2007; Phillips and Gates, 2011; Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Arditti, 2005; Braman, 2007; Condry, 2011). Unlike other forms of separation such as death of a parent or a parent working away from home for an extended period which might be understood as socially approved forms of absence, parental imprisonment is considered as a socially disapproved absence within society (Moerk, 1973, p.303; Lowenstein, 1986, p.79). In this situation, children may experience 'disenfranchised grief' as prophesied by Doka, which occurs '...when persons experience a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publically mourned, and socially supported' (1989, p. 253). Similarly, parental imprisonment is understood to involve ambiguous loss, as the wider community does not support families and children experiencing this form of separation (Phillips and Gates, 2011, p. 287). This has negative repercussions for the children of prisoners, who are subjected to associative stigma as a result of their parents' imprisonment (Phillips and Gates, 2011, p. 287). For example, Boswell and Wedge ascertained that children were bullied by their peers once they became aware that they had a parent in prison (2002, p. 67).

Discussions of trauma within the parental imprisonment literature are often enhanced by utilising Bowlby's theory of attachment (1973, 1982, 1988), which is frequently used to

improve understanding into the effects of parental imprisonment on the parent-child relationship (e.g. Poehlmann, 2005; Murray and Murray, 2010; Poehlmann et al, 2010; Arditti, 2005; Murray and Farrington, 2008). Bowlby posits that attachment to a parent or caregiver is of critical importance to a child's wellbeing and development, and that the absence of an appropriate attachment figure in the early years is a predictor for adverse outcomes (Murray and Farrington, 2008, p.274). Parental imprisonment disrupts the secure parent-child attachment, desirable for children's wellbeing and often results in insecure attachment towards the imprisoned parent (Murray and Murray, 2010, p.292). For instance, Poehlmann found that 63% of children had insecure attachment towards their imprisoned mother (2005, p. 690).

1.4 The role of pre-existing disadvantage

Contrary to the above, some scholars suggest that separation because of parental imprisonment does not have unique effects on children's wellbeing as prior studies have supposed (e.g. Moerk, 1973; Wakefield 2007; Richards et al, 1994; Murray et al, 2012a; Wildeman and Turney, forthcoming; Johnson and Easterling, 2012; Bocknek et al, 2009). Instead, it is suggested that the adverse outcomes children experience are not caused by parental imprisonment per se, but are the result of a variety of pre-existing disadvantages that are associated with parental imprisonment, such as parental mental health issues, substance abuse problems and poverty, which may increase the risk of developing internalising and externalising issues as those documented above (Dannerbeck, 2005; Johnson and Waldfogel, 2004; Phillips et al, 2006).

As such, it is thought that children experiencing parental imprisonment are likely to be 'at risk' for a range of adverse outcomes prior to the separation, known as the cumulative risk

perspective² (Johnston and Easterling, 2012, p.349). This makes it unclear as to whether parental imprisonment is a risk mechanism, that is, that children's problems are a direct result of the separation caused by parental imprisonment, or whether parental imprisonment is a risk marker, in that the separation does not affect children directly, but instead, serves as a marker for other risk factors which are the root cause of the children's problems (Murray and Farrington, 2005, p. 1270, see also: Kjellstrand and Eddy, 2011; Myers et al, 1999; Aaron and Dallaire, 2010). For example, using data acquired from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study, Wildeman and Turney found that after controlling for the impact of background factors that may influence children's wellbeing, maternal incarceration had no effect (forthcoming, p. 25). Similarly, Gabel (1992) and Hanlon et al (2005) stressed that it was children's dysfunctional home lives that heightened the risk of the development of adverse behaviours, not parental imprisonment per se. Hanlon et al ascertained that children of imprisoned mothers only exhibited a small number of adverse outcomes when familial support was readily given (2005, p. 68).

The literature has also documented that children of imprisoned mothers may have a more heightened risk for adverse outcomes than children of imprisoned fathers (Newell, 2012; Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza, 2001; Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Dallaire, 2007; Poehlmann, 2005, Koban, 1983; Myers et al, 1999). Hence, the gender of the imprisoned parent may be significant in understanding the differing impact of parental imprisonment on children. For example, maternal imprisonment is said to increase the likelihood of school failure and aggressive behaviour among children affected (Fritsch and Burkhead, 1981; Gabel and Shindlecker, 1993). It is believed that maternal imprisonment disrupts child-parent attachment to a greater extent than paternal imprisonment because children are more likely to

² Also known as the selection perspective (Murray et al, 2012b, p. 263; Murray and Farrington, 2008, p.276; Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999, p.128).

be placed in non-familial care following their mother's imprisonment, than if their father was imprisoned (Dallaire, 2007, p.443).

However, whilst the findings documented in the literature are equally significant, the research in this area has been critiqued methodologically on a number of grounds, namely for the lack of comparison groups (Wilbur et al, 2007, p.679; Poehlmann et al, 2010, p.575), small samples (Wildeman, 2010, p.3; Poehlmann et al, 2010, p.575), a shortage of longitudinal studies (Johnson and Easterling, 2012, p.344) and an overreliance on parental reporting on children's behaviours (Wilbur et al, 2007, p.679).

1.5 Research rationale

This research will aim to ascertain whether there are factors exclusive to the prison context that heighten the prevalence of psychological and behavioural problems in children of imprisoned parents as confirmed by Murray and Farrington (2005, 2008), or whether the effects felt by children are the result of separation per se. However, unlike the majority of studies which have compared children of parental imprisonment with children separated by divorce (Moerk, 1973; Richards, 1992) and divorce, death and hospitalisation (Murray and Farrington, 2005, 2008), this study examines a previously unstudied group, children separated because of military deployment. As such, the study fills a void the literature and addresses the lack of comparison groups within the literature as previously stated. It is particularly important to investigate the effect of prison on the parent-child relationship as it offers the potential to understand the effects of parental separation on children and aid practitioners in the development of tailored support programmes for children and their families to cope with separation (Johnson and Easterling, 2012, p. 344). This dissertation will attempt to answer: 'Does parental imprisonment pose a unique threat to children's wellbeing'? This research is particularly timely given that estimates suggest a worrying

number of parents are imprisoned daily, affecting growing numbers of children (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008, p. 1119). As parental imprisonment does not simply affect the imprisoned person but their family and neighbourhood, it could be considered as a global concern (Dawson et al, 2013, p.3; Wakefield and Wildeman, 2011, p. 806).

1.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided an overview of the key concepts and debates that can be found within the parental imprisonment literature. Specifically, it has found that parental imprisonment is associated with a number of adverse psychological and behavioural outcomes for children, and has offered some explanations as to why this might be the case, such as stigma. The following chapter will explore the impact of parental imprisonment on children in greater depth by examining the trauma it elicits in the lives of affected children.

Chapter 2: The impact of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the key findings within the field of parental imprisonment and the effects on children's wellbeing found within literature. This chapter will discuss some of the findings documented in the previous chapter and will argue that parental imprisonment is traumatic for children. In particular, it will focus on children's behavioural and psychological reactions following parental separation as a result of imprisonment. To demonstrate the traumatic nature of parental imprisonment, the chapter will explore the trauma experienced by children during period of initial separation and the additional trauma caused by visitation and changing care-giving arrangements. The impact of stigma on children's wellbeing will also be explored as a potential source of trauma for the child, as will the period of reunification, following the parent's release from prison.

The children of imprisoned parents are often referred to as 'orphans of justice' and 'invisible victims of punishment' by scholars as their plight is seldom recognised by the criminal justice system, despite overwhelming evidence that the impact of imprisonment extends far beyond the individual offender and has a profound effect on their families, especially their children (Johnson, 2008, p. 2). Estimates from the USA suggest that in excess of 1.7 million children have a parent in prison (Glaze and Maruschak, 2008, p.1). UK estimates are also alarmingly large, the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) estimates that approximately 97,000 children have a parent in prison in England and Wales (2014). It is with this in mind that the impact of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing will be the main focus of this chapter.

2.2 The nature of parental imprisonment

Unlike other forms of separation such as military deployment, parental imprisonment is not viewed as a socially acceptable form of absence within society (Moerk, 1973, p. 303; Lowenstein, 1986). This means that family members are forced to cope with the separation alone because unlike other contexts of loss, parental imprisonment does not elicit sympathy and support from members of the community (Schoenbauer, 1986, p. 479). It has been shown that the stigma associated with parental imprisonment adversely affects the experiences of prisoner's families within the community, particularly children (Arditti, 2005, p. 252). For example, Boswell found that the stigma associated with parental imprisonment caused children to be bullied or rejected by their peers at school (2002, p. 19).

According to Braman, the stigma associated with parental imprisonment is 'sticky' in that it attaches itself not only to the individual offender but to their family also (2007, p. 173). It is for this reason that parents may decide to deceive their children about a parent's whereabouts so as to protect them from the stigma associated with parental imprisonment, although this strategy may have negative effects on their wellbeing (Murray et al, 2012a, p. 178; see also: Fishman, 1983; Gabel, 1992; Sack et al, 1976; Schneller, 1978; Rothrauff, 2008, Lee and Whiting, 2007, Bowlby, 1973). According to Boss, deceiving children about their parent's whereabouts can lead to increased stress and dysfunction at both an individual and familial level (1999, p. 8). Similarly, a lack of information may heighten the risk of children developing mental health issues as they may blame themselves for the absence of their parent (Hinshaw, 2005, p. 715). Moreover, it may also cause children to become socially isolated because they are unable to disclose their experiences, contributing to their traumatic experiences (Myers et al, 1999, p.20).

Furthermore, a children's loss following their parent's imprisonment is said to be ambiguous in that it cannot be overtly acknowledged and mourned in the same way as other forms of separation, a situation known as disenfranchised grief (Arditti, 2012a, p. 103). According to Sack et al, children's inability to disclose their experiences of loss '...force[s them] to "go underground"...mak[ing] it that much harder for the child to cope with an already stressful event' (1976, p. 623). This secrecy compounds the trauma already experienced by parental imprisonment and can have a devastating effect on children as previously demonstrated.

2.3 Initial separation

The separation of a parent from a child's life is always considered to be traumatising for children irrespective of the circumstances surrounding their absence (Travis and Waul, 2003, p. 16). There are a number of studies which indicate that children experience behavioural and psychological problems following their parent's imprisonment (Murray and Farrington, 2005; Aaron and Dallaire, 2010; Murray et al, 2012a; Bloom and Steinhart, 1993; Morris, 1965; Lowenstein, 1986; Sack et al, 1976; Baunach, 1985; Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza, 2001; Phillips et al, 2002; Gabel, 1992; Huebner and Gustafson, 2007; Healy and Bronner, 1926; McCord and McCord, 1963; Murray et al, 2007; Geller et al, 2012). In his study of boys with imprisoned parents, Sack ascertained that half of the children exhibited behavioural problems directly after the period of initial separation, such as aggression towards peers and school truancy (1977, p. 163). Likewise, Fritsch and Burkhead found that 67% of the imprisoned parents they sampled stated that their children had developed behavioural problems post separation (1981, p. 85). They concluded that the context of the absence was important in determining the association between the separation and maladaptive child adjustment because children who believed that their parent's absence was socially acceptable did not exhibit problem behaviours (Arditti, 2012a, p. 185). Therefore, there are factors inherent within the prison context, such as stigma, which influence children's reactions to parental separation as

has been discussed (Arditti, 2012a, p. 185). For example, Fritsch and Burkhead ascertained that the behavioural problems children experience following parental separation are not a result of parental absence per se but absence associated with imprisonment (1981, p. 87).

2.4 Prison visitation

It might be expected that the opportunity to visit parents in prison might alleviate children's adjustment problems. However, there is substantial evidence within the parental imprisonment literature that visiting an imprisoned parent can have an adverse effect on children's wellbeing and can be a source of potential trauma for the child, compounding that already experienced during the period of initial separation (Arditti, 2012a; Hairston, 1998; Arditti et al, 2003; Sack et al, 1976; Flynn, 2014; Hairston, 2002). It is suggested that the prison environment is inappropriate for children and potentially harmful for their psychosocial development (de Haan, 2010, p. 272). For example, de Haan notes that the differing visitation settings and the various safety procedures operating within prisons such as 'frisk' searches can be stressful and traumatic for children, most of whom are unable to comprehend and rationalise the environment in which they find themselves (2010, p. 272).

In particular, 'no contact' visits in which visitors and prisoners are separated from each other by a Plexiglas wall and are prohibited from physical contact, have proven to be the most upsetting and traumatising of the differing visitation settings which children experience as they cannot comprehend why they are unable to touch their parent (Arditti et al, 2003, p. 123). This leaves the child to imagine the worst scenario for their parent's lack of physical contact (Arditti et al, 2003, p. 196).

The austere environment of prisons and the behaviour of the prison staff add to the trauma faced by children when visiting their parent in prison, serving as an obstacle that impedes visitation (Arditti, 2003; Flynn, 2014; Morris, 1965; Sturges, 2002; Comfort, 2003). This is

alongside other issues such as the location of the prison in relation to the families' home, available transport and accompaniment (Robertson, 2007, p.23). For example, the prison environment is not considered to be a positive atmosphere to foster the maintenance of family ties, rather it is described as unpleasant, oppressive and intimidating for children (Flynn, 2014, p.4; see also: Healey et al, 2000; King 2002; Hounslow et al, 1982; Tomaino et al, 2005; Stanton, 1980). The negative attitudes of prison staff towards visitors also contributes to the poor visitation environment as documented in various studies. For example, Tomaino et al found that custodial officers were frequently described as 'disrespectful' and 'intimidating' and often upset children during prison visits (2005, p. 27).

Moreover, it remains that visitation can be harmful for children as it may serve as a painful reminder of the trauma experienced in the initial separation period, causing children to 'relive' the traumatic event through re-enacting the separation at the end of the visit (Arditti, 2012a, p. 118). In this way visitation '...could potentially exacerbate loss-related trauma', rather than lessen it (Arditti, 2003a, p. 118). However, whilst children experience many barriers in regard to visitation that serve to hinder their experiences of parent-child contact in prison, such as those documented above, there is the potential that visitation could alleviate children's adjustment problems. Therein lies the paradox of family visitation (Arditti, 2012a, p. 118).

2.5 Changing care-giving arrangements

Imprisonment of a parent can lead to a change in care-giving routines. Alternative care-giving arrangements could be understood as a potential source of trauma for children as they have to re-adjust to family life without the absent parent (Wright and Seymour, 2000, p. 13). The placement of the child following the separation is dependent on the differing familial circumstances and the gender of the imprisoned parent (Travis and Waul, 2003, pgs. 17-18). For example, there is evidence to suggest that children of imprisoned fathers fare better than

children of imprisoned mothers because the separation instigates little change in the child's daily routine as they are likely to remain in the care of their mother who is likely to have been the sole caregiver of the child prior to the separation (Wright and Seymour, 2000, p. 13). As Mumola confirms, 90% of children with imprisoned fathers remained in the care of their mother post separation, whilst 79% of children of imprisoned mothers were placed into the care of other family members and 10% placed in foster care (2000, p. 1).

As such, children of imprisoned mothers face further adversity following the separation because their home environment is likely to be disrupted and they may be placed into a care-giving arrangement that is less than ideal for healthy functioning and development (Ziebert, 2006, p. 5; see also: Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999). For example, Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza assert that the familial environment of the female's family of origin is likely to be harmful for the child as such an environment is often characterised by substance misuse and addiction, exposing children to situations which may adversely affect their wellbeing (2001, p.26). In addition, siblings are often separated in an attempt to reduce the strain on the single care-giver, which serves to compound the already traumatic experience of potentially inadequate care-giving arrangements (Myers et al, 1999, p.16).

Following the imprisoned parent's absence from the household, the remaining family member must struggle to fulfil the roles of the absent parent as well as their own (Wright and Seymour, 2000, p. 13). The resultant strain on the remaining care-giver may mean that their ability to administer care to the children is increasingly difficult and children's wellbeing may suffer as a result (Wright and Seymour, 2000, p. 13; Ziebert, 2006, p.5).

2.6 Reunification

The problems experienced by children during the period of initial separation do not end upon their parent's release from prison (Robertson, 2007, p.40). The period of pre and post release

is viewed as the most traumatic for children and families (Robertson, 2007, p.40). There are several possible explanations as to why this might be the case. For example, during this period, the previously imprisoned parent and their family have to re-adjust to living with each other which can cause tension and have an adverse effect on children's wellbeing (Robertson, 2007, p.40). This tension often arises from the confusion surrounding the adoption of familial roles (Travis et al, 2005, p. 5). The previously imprisoned parent is often keen to resume their role prior to their imprisonment, without consideration of the fact that there may have been significant changes to the roles fulfilled by the differing members of family, who are likely to have gained a sense of self-sufficiency in their absence (Travis et al, 2005, p. 5).

Similarly, the child is likely to be at a different stage of development upon their parent's return from prison than when they left (Adalist-Estrin, 2003, p. 2). Failure of the parent to recognise and appreciate this growth can be upsetting and traumatic for the child (Adalist-Estrin, 2003, p. 2). This scenario may have also been present during a child's visit to their imprisoned parent. For example, Nesmith and Ruhland found that on visits children become frustrated and embarrassed when their parent made references to a television programme that they used to like when they were younger (2008, p. 1124).

The changes that have occurred in children's lives during the period of initial separation may also include changes in the parent-child relationship upon their parent's release from prison (Robertson, 2007, p.40). For example, children may develop attachment to another caregiver who looked after them during their parent's imprisonment, resulting in decreased attachment towards their parent upon release (Travis et al, 2005, p.5). Dannerbeck ascertained that only a quarter of children reported a positive post release relationship with their parent, whilst 60% described their relationship as negative or non-existent (2005, cited in Robertson, 2007, p. 41). Children may also exhibit behavioural and psychological problems following

reunification with the imprisoned parent including trust issues, anxiety and aggression (Robertson, 2007, p. 40). Kingi found that young children exhibited signs of separation anxiety following their mother's release from prison, they were clingy and concerned that their parents would leave them again (2000, p.6).

2.7 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter addressed the impact of parental imprisonment upon children from the period of initial separation through to reunification. It demonstrated that there are number of factors inherent in the prison context which are traumatic for children and adversely affect their wellbeing such as stigma, visitation and changing care-giving arrangements, the combination of which may be the cause of children's psychological and behavioural problems following parental imprisonment. The following chapter will explore the impact of parental military deployment on children's wellbeing.

Chapter 3: The impact of parental military deployment on children's wellbeing

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the impact of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing. It found that parental imprisonment was traumatic for children from the period of initial separation through to reunification, as was visiting and inadequate care-giving arrangements. This chapter will explore the impact of parental military deployment on children's wellbeing. In particular, it will focus on children's behavioural and psychological reactions following parental separation. Children are said to be traumatised by the experience of parental military deployment. In order to demonstrate this, the chapter will explore the impact of trauma on children of military parents during the cycle of deployment, with particular focus on stages 3 and 7; Emotional Disorganisation and Return Adjustment and Renegotiation of the seven stages of deployment. In addition, the trauma of multiple deployments on children's wellbeing will be discussed, as will the contested concept of the military family syndrome.

3.2 The effects of military deployment on children

Parental absence due to military deployment has been associated with a number of adverse outcomes for children including increased behavioural problems such as impulsiveness and irritability (Hillenbrand, 1976), disruptions in peer relationships (Seplin, 1952; Chandra et al 2010) and general conduct problems and 'acting out' behaviours (Baker et al, 1967; Hill, 1949; Barker and Berry, 2009). Studies have also shown that children affected by parental military deployment exhibit psychological problems in the period following the separation such as depression (Jensen et al, 1996), tearfulness and sadness (Rosen et al, 1993), fearfulness, nervousness and shyness (Stolz, 1951), raised heart rates and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (Barnes et al, 2007), a high risk of psychosocial morbidity (Flake et

al, 2009) and have a higher frequency of mental health related hospital admissions than the civilian population (Mansfield et al, 2011; Levai et al, 1995).

3.3 Accounting for the effects of military deployment on children

Studies indicate that the families of military personnel experience their deployment not as a single event but as a cyclical process comprised of many different stages, each eliciting a variety of emotional responses (White et al, 2011, p. 210). To demonstrate the cyclical process of deployment and the trauma of deployment for families, Logan (1987) developed the psychological model of deployment, also known as the emotional cycle of deployment, which was later redefined by Pincus et al (2005, 2007, 2011) (cited in Fletcher, 2013, p.82). Although the model was initially developed to describe the emotional complications of military deployment for military wives, it can be used to apply to children as well (Logan, 1987, p. 1).

The cyclical nature of departure and return which is experienced by military families during the cycle of deployment exacerbates the loss related trauma of military deployment because families are forced to 'relive' the separation which serves as a painful reminder of their past experiences. This trauma is further compounded by the ambiguity surrounding the loss of a parent due to military deployment and could exacerbate existing behavioural and psychological problems in these children. As Mansfield et al note, in the context of military deployment, 'long-term parental absence [is] traumatic for children, often predicting future emotional and behavioral functioning across the ages...' (2011, p.999). According to Boss, a loss is considered as ambiguous if it is indeterminate and involves a significant amount of uncertainty (1999, p. 6).

This is certainly the case in the context of military deployment due to the uncertainty surrounding the military personnel's date of departure and return which is often subject to

change with little warning (Heubner et al, 2007, p. 113). This means that children are hindered in their ability to emotionally prepare for their parent's departure and/or homecoming, which could have adverse effects on their wellbeing (Heubner et al, 2007, p.113). For example, children may display increased anger and sadness as a result of the uncertainty surrounding their parent's deployment, which could lead to behavioural problems (Richardson et al, 2011, p. 48). Richardson et al found that the ambiguous nature of deployment and the extension of deployment length affected children's mood which disrupted peers relationships and classroom activities in school (2011, p. 48). In some cases, changes to deployment dates, causes families to repeat some of the stages of the deployment cycle which occur prior to the parental departure, including Anticipation of Loss and Detachment and Withdrawal. Repetition of the 'goodbye ritual' (Waynick et al, 2005) compounds the trauma of the separation and adds to the emotional ambiguity of the loss, having a deleterious impact on the families of military personnel especially children (cited in Heubner et al, 2007, p. 113).

Fears surrounding the safety of the parent also add to the trauma and emotional ambiguity of the loss children experience after their parent has been deployed to a warzone (Heubner et al, 2007, p. 113). For example, children worry that their deployed parent will die in combat, which is further reinforced by the media (Mansfield et al, 2011, p. 999). As Mansfield et al note, 'children fear a parent's death above any other event and, in military families, view war as a threat to their caretakers' security and stability' (2011, p.999). The fears surrounding the safety of the deployed parent are said to be ambiguous in that whilst children are aware that their parent is in danger, they have no way of knowing the extent of the conflict and their parent's proximity to it (Heubner et al, 2007, p.113). The relatively recent ability to maintain contact with the deployed parent via the internet or on the phone has the ability to lessen the anxiety of military families, in the knowledge that for the duration of the contact they are

safe, however the anxiety soon resumes following the termination of the communication between the deployed personnel and their family (Heubner et al, 2007, p.113). This anxiety has the potential to induce psychological stress, such as depression, in children of deployed parents (Mansfield et al, 2011, p. 999). For example, Jensen et al found that children of deployed parents displayed higher levels of depression than children whose parents were not deployed (1996, p. 436).

3.4 Military family syndrome

One of the possible explanations for the greater occurrence of adverse psychological and behavioural problems in children following their parent's absence due to military deployment is offered by Lagrone in his conceptualisation of the military family syndrome (1978, p.1040). Military family syndrome is a theory which attempts to describe the reasons behind the high frequency of maladaptive behaviours and mental health issues prevalent in military families and their children, for whom the problems associated with military deployment, are particularly pronounced (Tunac De Pedro et al, 2011, p. 570).

The theory is grounded on the belief that the root cause of behavioural and psychological problems in military families is a result of the military personnel's relationship with the bureaucratic military culture which influences their relationship with family members, causing the development of behavioural and psychological problems (Tunac De Pedro et al, 2011, p. 570). Some scholars however (Jensen et al, 1986, 1995, 1991; Kenny, 1967) dispute the assertion that parental military deployment causes greater behavioural and psychological problems in these children than the civilian population, instead arguing that military children experience no greater behavioural and psychological problems than civilian children (Jensen, 1999, pgs. 168, 169, 172). As such, they reject the explanation offered by Lagrone within the military family syndrome theory as to the cause of the problems experienced by military

children (Jensen, 1999, p.155). In fact, in their study of military children and their parents, Jensen et al (1991) found that the prevalence of behavioural and psychological problems in these children were at the same level as national norms (p. 102-107). Nevertheless, there is a wealth of evidence (e.g. Chartrand et al, 2008; Rosen et al, 1993; Hillenbrand, 1976; Hiew, 1992; Mansfield et al, 2011; Yeatman, 1981; Hill 1949; Seplin, 1952; Stolz, 1951; Barnes et al, 2007; Baker et al, 1967; Crumely and Blumenthal, 1973; Jensen et al, 1996; Kelley et al, 2001; Chawla and Wadsworth, 2012) that would contest these scholars' suggestion that military children experience no greater behavioural and psychological problems than civilian children which will be demonstrated in this chapter.

3.5 Initial separation

The period of initial separation from the deployed parent is particularly traumatic for children and has been associated with an array of externalising and internalising problems in affected children, which are said to be a reaction towards their parent's deployment (Chawla and Wadsworth, 2012, p.268). During this period, commonly referred to as the Emotional Disorganisation stage of the deployment cycle by scholars, military families are said to experience intense stress and change as new routines have to be established in the wake of the deployed parent's absence (Logan, 1987, p.2). Children are particularly sensitive to these changes and may develop a number adverse behaviours following their parent's absence, as several studies confirm (Chartrand et al, 2008; Rosen et al, 1993; Hillenbrand, 1976; Hiew, 1992; Yeatman, 1981; Hill 1949; Seplin, 1952; Stolz, 1951; Baker et al, 1967; Crumely and Blumenthal, 1973; Jensen et al, 1996; Barnes et al, 2007; Kelley et al, 2001; Mansfield et al, 2011; Kelley 1994). For example, Baker et al found that following their parents deployment, boys exhibited a number of psychological and behavioural problems, including, disruptions in peer relationships, unhappiness and increased sibling rivalry (1967,

p.1-26). Similarly, Rosen et al (1993) found that during parental deployment between 55% and 64% of girls experienced tearfulness and sadness as did 42% to 49% of boys' (p. 466).

3.6 Multiple deployments

Current deployments are reflective of the changing composition and structure of the military, it is a smaller service than in the past which means that it is likely that military personnel are deployed for a longer duration and experience multiple deployments (Fletcher, 2013, p.79). Hosek et al found that there is a strong likelihood that military personnel will be redeployed within 6 months of returning, which can be extremely traumatic for a child (2006, p. xiii). Whilst some children are able to respond to the trauma with extreme resilience to these adverse circumstances (Hillenbrand 1976; Jensen 1992), the majority of children struggle to cope with the disruption of frequent house and neighbourhood moves which is not surprising given that their coping strategies are less well developed than their adult counterparts (Fossey, 2012, p.10).

Lester et al found that the cumulative length of multiple deployments caused an increase in externalising behaviours and levels of depression in children of deployed parents (2010, p.310-320). This finding is corroborated by Chandra et al (2010, p. 13-22) who found a positive correlation between the length of deployment and amount of child difficulties as did Mansfield et al (2011). Mansfield et al found that children whose parents experienced a lengthier deployment between 2003 and 2006 were worse off than children whose parents were deployed for a shorter duration during the same time period (2011, p.1002). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that children's ability to cope with their parent's deployment wanes over time in the course of multiple deployments (Richardson et al, 2011, p. 53). As Richardson et al note, '...the ability of children to confront the parental separations with the same emotional resolve has been hampered by the extended and multiple deployments'

(2011, p. 54). For this reason, it is suggested that military families may experience ‘...the emotional trauma of deployment on an unprecedented scale...’ (Pincus et al, 2011, cited in Fossey, 2012, p. 15).

3.7 Reunification

The Return Adjustment and Renegotiation stage of the deployment cycle is said to be the most traumatic and stressful of all the stages of deployment. According to Flake et al, 75% of families reported that reunification was the most stressful period of deployment (2009, p.272). It is a time in which the family must adjust to having the family member present in the household following their deployment, which involves the renegotiation of roles and the re-establishment of household routines (Deployment Health and Family Readiness Library, 2006, p.1).

The confusion surrounding the reorganisation of familial roles is a situation Boss termed boundary ambiguity, ‘not knowing who is in or out of your family or relationship’, which can be traumatic for children (2006, p.12). For example, Richardson et al found that children exhibited increased behavioural problems in school and mood changes following their deployed parent’s return (2011, p.56). Whilst the initial separation caused by parental military deployment is traumatic for children, evidence shows that they gradually become accustomed to new household routines which are disrupted when the parent returns which and is likely to cause considerable confusion for children (Mmari et al, 2009, p.464). Moreover, there is a need for the deployed parent and child to become reacquainted following their parent’s return from deployment, although this can produce feelings of estrangement (Andres and Moelker, 2011, p. 423; see also: Mmari et al, 2009, p.465).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the impact of parental military deployment upon children. It demonstrated that parental separation due to military deployment is traumatising for children as a result of the cyclical nature of the deployment cycle, the ambiguous nature of the loss and the trauma caused by multiple deployments. It has been argued that the cycle of deployment compounds the loss related trauma which military families' experience as they have no choice but to repeat the separation and associative activities which cause them trauma, of which children are particularly vulnerable. Similarly, the ambiguity of the loss caused by military deployment such as the uncertainty surrounding the date of deployment and return and the fear of parental death is said to worsen existing behavioural and psychological issues in children developed during the deployment cycle. It has also been demonstrated that multiple deployments can have an adverse effect on children's wellbeing predicting further psychological and behavioural problems. The following chapter will synthesise the findings within this chapter and those in Chapter 2 to determine whether parental imprisonment poses a unique to children's wellbeing.

Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the impact of parental military deployment on children. Through discussions of the deployment cycle, the stress of multiple deployments and the military family syndrome, it concluded that parental military deployment was traumatic for children and could be accountable for the behavioural and psychological problems which many children exhibited during the period of separation. This chapter will assess the findings documented in the previous two chapters in regard to the psychological and behavioural effects of parental separation on children, both with a parent in prison (see Chapter 2) and with a parent in the military (see Chapter 3). The chapter synthesises some of the material discussed in chapters one and two to ascertain whether parental imprisonment poses a unique threat to children's wellbeing, as has been the aim of this dissertation. In order to achieve this, the chapter will discuss two main points. Firstly, that there are factors which are exclusive and unique to the prison context which adversely affect children's wellbeing. Secondly, that the effects which children experience are not situation specific but rather a result of separation per se.

4.2 Prison as a unique context of parental separation

There are several reasons to think that children separated from their parents because of imprisonment, experience a unique set of circumstances that are exclusive to the prison context which could adversely affect their wellbeing, as hypothesised by a number of scholars (Murray and Farrington, 2005, 2008; Geller et al, 2012; Arditti 2012b; Bocknek et al, 2009; Fritsch and Burkhead, 1981). These include stigma³ and difficulties surrounding

³ Stigma is not an isolated aspect in understanding the effects of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing, but rather an overarching concept that impacts the other aspects of children's experiences of parental imprisonment (visitation and care-giving arrangements).

visitation, as discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter will consider each of these aspects in turn, demonstrating their impact on children's wellbeing and validating the assertion that there are factors inherent in the prison context which adversely affects children's wellbeing.

Stigma is one of the chief differences between imprisonment related separations and other forms of separation such as military deployment. One of the main reasons for the association between parental imprisonment and stigma is because parental imprisonment is viewed as a socially unacceptable form of absence within society (Moerk, 1973, p.303) and therefore rarely elicits support from others, as noted in Chapter 2. As such, prisoner families experience ambiguous loss because it cannot be openly acknowledged and mourned in the same manner as those experiencing other forms of parental separation which are socially accepted, such as military deployment, leaving prisoner families to cope alone without societal support (Phillips and Gates, 2011, p.287). At the current time, there is better support available for the families of prisoners as practised by various charitable organisations such as Families Outside, Children of Prisoner's Europe and the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT, 2014).

Despite this, Myers et al suggest that a situation of 'forced silence' remains (1999, p.20) which can be particularly difficult for children who are likely to experience social isolation and peer hostility and rejection as a result of their parent's imprisonment (Nesmith and Ruhland, 2008, p. 1123; see also: Boswell, 2002). This gives credence to the argument that parental imprisonment has an exclusive set of factors which adversely affect children's wellbeing that are distinct from other forms of separation and could be considered as uniquely traumatic for children when compared to military deployment for example.

Visitation could also be understood as a unique factor inherent in the prison context which has the potential to both alleviate problems surrounding children's wellbeing and hinder children's wellbeing (Arditti, 2012a, p.118). As such, visitation could be understood as paradoxical (Arditti, 2012a, p. 118). Nevertheless, studies indicate that children's experiences of visitation are overwhelmingly negative and have the potential to exacerbate the loss related trauma experienced during the period of initial separation (Arditti, 2012a; Hairston, 1998; Arditti, 2003; Sack et al, 1976; Flynn, 2014; Hairston, 2002), as noted in Chapter 1.

In part, this trauma stems from the non-child friendly prison environment involving strict compliance with security practices, all of which may be harmful to children's later psychological development (de Haan, 2010, p.272). Specifically, it was found that children reported 'no contact' visits to be the most traumatic as they were often not provided with an adequate explanation as to why they could not have physical contact with their parent (Arditti, 2003, p.123). Furthermore, as stated in Chapter 1, the nature of visitation causes children to 'relive' the period of initial separation at the end of the visit which can be harmful for their healthy psychosocial functioning (Arditti, 2012a, p. 118).

The nature of parental separation due to imprisonment means that children experience 'enduring' trauma, characterised by a number of repetitive and ongoing stressors which hinder healthy functioning and development (Myers et al, 1999, p. 12). In this way, parental imprisonment could be understood as uniquely traumatic for children than that elicited from other forms of separation because the trauma '...is repeated over the cycle of incarceration and release' (Wildeman, 2010, p. 4). For example, young children may display signs of developmental regression such as bedwetting and soiling as a consequence of the trauma caused by parental imprisonment (Poehlmann, 2005, p. 687). Poehlmann identified that 22% of children in her study experienced developmental regressions as a result of the trauma

caused by parental separation (Poehlmann, 2005, p. 687). Therefore confirming that parental separation as a result of imprisonment has a unique set of factors which adversely affect children's wellbeing and that parental separation could be perceived as uniquely traumatic for children as a result. Conversely, the deployment cycle as discussed in Chapter 3 might challenge this assertion and will be mentioned later in this chapter.

4.3 The role of pre-existing disadvantage

Moreover, whilst there is substantial evidence that parental imprisonment has unique effects on children's wellbeing distinct from the effects experienced by children separated for other reasons, as demonstrated above, scholars warn that causal inference between parental imprisonment and adverse childhood outcomes should be interpreted with caution (Wilbur et al, 2007, p. 679; see also: Rutter, 1979; Sameroff et al, 1987, 1993). This is due to the fact that many prior studies have neglected to examine other factors which may influence children's wellbeing prior to their experience of parental separation as a result of imprisonment (Johnson and Waldfogel, 2004, p. 98). It is argued that the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on children are not a result of the separation per se, but are attributable to an array of pre-existing disadvantages⁴ which preceded their parent's imprisonment which may increase the likelihood of children developing problems (Johnson and Easterling, 2012, p.349).

The cumulative risk perspective⁵ argues that one risk factor on its own is not enough to predict adverse outcomes for children, but rather that the accumulation of multiple risk factors has the potential to predict childhood adversity (Johnson and Waldfogel, 2004, p. 103; see also: Murray et al, 2012b; Murray and Farrington, 2008).

⁴ Pre-existing disadvantages are also referred to as selection factors within the literature. They include poverty, parental mental health issues and problems of substance abuse, single parenthood, low socioeconomic status, care-giving arrangements.

⁵ Also termed the selection perspective within the literature.

From this perspective, parental imprisonment could be understood as one risk factor which influences children's wellbeing that predicts long-term adversity when combined with other adverse life events (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999, p. 127). Thus it is unclear whether the observable changes in children's psychological and behavioural wellbeing post separation are a result of parental imprisonment exclusively or rather a combination of factors of which parental imprisonment is part (Murray and Farrington, 2008, p. 276).

4.4 General parental separation

The above notwithstanding, the effects of parental separation on children may not be attributable to specific contexts, such as the prison context, or pre-existing disadvantages, but rather are the result of separation per se. This argument is based on the premise that the prison and military separation contexts have similarities and both elicit similar responses in affected children.

The parental separation caused by both the prison and the military contexts are similar in that they both involve feelings of ambiguous loss because the loss cannot be acknowledged and mourned in the same way as other forms of separation, albeit for different reasons. As previously mentioned, the prison context is ambiguous in that children are denied access to the normal grieving process and the social support it often accompanies. This is because parental imprisonment is a form of absence which is stigmatised within society and is perceived as an unacceptable reason for absence (Moerk, 1973, p.303). In terms of children's wellbeing, studies have shown that children are likely to be withdrawn as a result of the associative stigma of parental imprisonment (Fritsch and Birkhead, 1981; Baunach, 1985). Bocnek et al reveal that 'because of the nature of the loss itself, it is likely that the impact of parental incarceration produces effects similar to the effects of parental loss by other means' (2009, p.324).

In the military context, the loss is considered as ambiguous because it involves a significant amount of uncertainty regarding the military personnel's date of departure and return which is subject to change at little notice, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Heubner et al, 2007, p.113). This lack of clarification may result in the repetition of some of the stages of the deployment cycle such as Anticipation of Loss and Detachment and Withdrawal which occurred prior to military personnel's departure and contributes to the ambiguity of the loss and increases childhood trauma (Waynick et al, 2005, cited in Heubner et al, 2007, p.113), as discussed in Chapter 3. The ambiguity of the loss these children experience may also be compounded by fears surrounding the safety of the deployed parent (Heubner et al, 2007, p.113), as discussed in Chapter 3. As a result, children may display behavioural problems such as increased aggression, a breakdown of peer relationships, classroom misconduct and mood fluctuations (Richardson et al, 2011, p.48).

Given that both the parental separation contexts involve ambiguity, it casts into doubt the uniqueness of the prison context in regard to children's wellbeing, as previously argued. Whilst the reasons behind the ambiguity differ, the fact still remains that both the losses involve uncertainty irrespective of the differing rationales. Regardless of the context, children affected by parental separation both displayed either externalising problems such as aggression, as exemplified by the military context or internalising problems such as withdrawal as exemplified by the prison context. Therefore confirming that the adverse effects of parental separation on children's wellbeing can be attributed to separation per se and not the context in which it occurs.

The cyclical nature of the military deployment process as discussed in Chapter 3 may be compared to the cycle of imprisonment and release as discussed in Chapter 2, because irrespective of the context both sets of children experience the repetition of trauma which was

first induced at the period of initial separation. For example, the trauma of parental imprisonment for children is ongoing whilst their parent is imprisoned and continues upon their release (Wildeman, 2010, p.4). It is characterised as an emotional cycle that is often experienced more than once (Wildeman, 2010, p.4). Similarly, in the military context, children experience the trauma of the differing stages of deployment such as Emotional Disorganisation and Return Adjustment and Renegotiation which provoke an array of emotional responses (Pincus, 2011, cited in Fossey, p.82). They may also be coerced into repeating some of the stages due to structural constraints which can worsen their emotional response, as noted earlier in the chapter. Due to this similarity, one may consider that the effects of parental separation on children's wellbeing can be attributed to separation per se and not the context in which it occurs.

4.5 Considerations

Both of the arguments presented in this chapter have their merits. However, one may consider the former argument which emphasises the uniqueness of the prison context for children's wellbeing, as the most persuasive because of the potential of harm that it can induce in children's lives. Several studies document that the difficulties surrounding prison visitation and associative stigma can have a deleterious impact on children's mental and physical health, especially when combined (Geller et al, 2012; Arditti 2012b; Bocknek et al, 2009; Murray and Farrington, 2005, 2008). This serves to compound the trauma children have experienced during the period of initial separation.

4.5 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has addressed two arguments. Firstly, that there are factors which are exclusive and unique to the prison context which adversely affect children's wellbeing. Secondly, that the effects which children experience are not situation specific but rather a

result of separation per se. In addressing the uniqueness of the prison context for children's wellbeing, this chapter analysed stigma and visitation as discussed in Chapter 2. It found that both these factors were unique to the prison context and had adverse effects on children's wellbeing. However, the extent to which these effects were a result of the prison context was questioned, as the adverse childhood outcomes could be a reflection of pre-existing disadvantages present in the lives of these children prior to parental separation. Secondly, this chapter argued that the effects which children experience following parental separation were a result of separation per se and not the context of the separation because of certain similarities between the two separation contexts. Specifically, it found that the nature of the parental loss was the similar, despite the differing rationales. It also found that the cyclical nature of the deployment cycle and the cycle of imprisonment and release elicited similar responses in children proving that prison was not unique in regard to children's wellbeing and that the effects were a result of separation generally.

Conclusions: The impact of parental separation on children

This dissertation has been concerned with the impact of parental separation on children. It has sought to examine the effect of differing separation contexts on children's wellbeing, that of prison and of the military, in an attempt to ascertain whether parental imprisonment poses a unique threat to children's wellbeing, or whether the effects are attributable to separation per se irrespective of the specific separation context. This conclusion will summarise the entire dissertation in terms of the key arguments that have been presented and will position these issues within the context of wider criminological debates on the effects of parental separation on children's wellbeing. In addition it will identify the contributions that this dissertation makes towards criminological knowledge more generally and will outline possible directions for future study.

This thesis has 4 core aspects. Firstly, it provides an overview of the current academic work into the impact of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing by identifying the psychological and behavioural effects of parental imprisonment on children and the possible reasons for these effects. Secondly, it explores the traumatic effects of parental imprisonment on children further, through discussion of stigma, prison visitation and changing care-giving arrangements, as well as examining the trauma of the period of initial separation and reunification. Thirdly, it explores the impact of parental military deployment on children's wellbeing by identifying the psychological and behavioural effects of the deployment and offers possible explanations for these effects. In addition, it has sought to examine the traumatic nature of military deployment during the period of initial separation and reunification, as well as the deployment cycle and multiple deployments. Finally, this

dissertation has attempted to ascertain whether parental imprisonment poses a unique threat to children's wellbeing by synthesising the material contained within the previous chapters.

In addressing the primary 2 concerns, this thesis found that parental imprisonment was associated with a number of adverse behavioural and psychological outcomes for children including aggression (Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza, 2001), depression (Kampfner, 1995) and withdrawal (Fritsch and Burkhead, 1981). These effects could be understood as a reaction towards their parent's absence because the problems usually manifested themselves during the initial separation period (Sack, 1997; Murray and Farrington, 2005). There is also evidence to suggest that these effects continue upon their parent's homecoming due to the trauma which is caused by the renegotiation of familial roles (Robertson, 2007). The difficulties of prison visitation (Hairston, 2002; Arditti, 2012a) and changing care-giving arrangements (Wright and Seymour, 2000) were also discussed as a potential source of trauma for the child separated by parental imprisonment.

Prison visitation was considered to have an adverse effect on children's wellbeing due to inappropriateness of the prison environment despite the fact that visitation might alleviate children's adjustment problems (King, 2002; Tomaino et al, 2005). Likewise, it would seem that changing care-giving arrangements as a result of parental imprisonment could be traumatic for children because they have to re-adjust to family life without the absent parent and may be placed into an inadequate care-giving environment (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Ziebert 2006). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the adequacy of alternative care-giving arrangements is gender specific as the children of imprisonment mothers are said to fare worse than children of imprisoned fathers as they are more likely to be placed into a harmful environment (Sharp and Marcus-Mendoza, 2001).

Various explanations for the effects of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing were presented in this dissertation including stigma and the potential trauma of witnessing arrests (Lowenstein, 1986; Fishman, 1983). An alternative explanation was also proffered to account for the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on children known as the cumulative risk perspective (Johnson and Easterling, 2012).

This thesis found that the stigma associated with parental imprisonment could account for the adverse effects on children's wellbeing as it affects the way that they are perceived and treated by others (Arditti 2005; Boswell, 2002). For example, children may lack the social support from peers and the wider community to deal with the loss, leaving them to cope alone, thereby increasing their social isolation (Schoenbauer, 1986; Myers et al, 1999; Sack et al, 1976) which could lead to peer bullying (Phillips and Gates, 2011; Boswell and Wedge; 2002). It is for this reason that many families decide to deceive their children about their parent's whereabouts.

An alternative explanation for the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on children's wellbeing as explored in this thesis is the cumulative risk perspective. This posits that children of imprisoned parents are often 'at risk' of developing a range of adverse outcomes prior to the separation, such as exposure to substance abuse and poverty (Johnson and Waldfogel, 2004; Dannerbeck, 2005). As such, the adverse outcomes which children experience could be attributed to an array of pre-existing disadvantages that are present in the lives of these children prior to their parent's imprisonment, rather than separation per se.

The third concern of this thesis was to explore the impact of parental military deployment on children's wellbeing by identifying the psychological and behavioural effects of military deployment on children, and to offer possible explanations for these effects. This dissertation found that military deployment was associated with a number of adverse outcomes such as

‘acting out’ behaviours (Barker and Berry, 2009; Hill, 1949), irritability and impulsiveness (Hillenbrand, 1976) and depression (Jensen et al, 1996) as was the case for parental imprisonment.

This dissertation has found that there are a number of reasons which could account for the adverse effects that children experience following parental military deployment, including the cyclical nature of the deployment cycle, military family syndrome and ambiguous loss. Several studies indicate that the families of military personnel experience their deployment as a cyclical process, with each stage eliciting a variety of emotional responses in affected children (White et al, 2011). This is understood to worsen the trauma of military deployment for children and their families because it causes them to ‘relive’ the painfulness of the initial separation. The ambiguity surrounding the loss of a parent due to military deployment such as the uncertainty surrounding the safety of the deployed parent and their date of departure and return, may also worsen the effects of military deployment for children, as previous studies have indicated (Heubner et al, 2007; Richardson et al, 2011; Mansfield et al, 2011).

Another argument of this thesis was the cumulative effect of multiple deployments and the harm it may cause for children’s wellbeing, as several studies confirm (Hosek et al, 2006; Lester et al, 2010; Chandra et al, 2010). This dissertation found that the amount of childhood difficulties increased with the length of deployment (Chandra et al, 2010), and increased children’s levels of depression and externalising behaviours (Lester et al, 2010). Furthermore, it found that children’s ability to cope with the separation is hampered by multiple deployments (Richardson et al, 2011).

The final aspect of this thesis was to ascertain whether parental imprisonment poses a unique threat to children’s wellbeing by drawing upon selected material. It was argued that parental imprisonment does pose a unique threat to children’s wellbeing and that it is the most

persuasive of the arguments offered because the prison context involves factors which are absent from other separation contexts, such as stigma and visitation, which have been shown to have negative effects on children's wellbeing (Geller et al, 2012; Bocknek et al, 2009). Consequently, the uniqueness of the prison context in regard to children's wellbeing could be considered as the main contribution of this dissertation towards criminological knowledge. Notwithstanding the above, it has also been argued that there are various similarities between the prison and military contexts, namely the ambiguity and repetitious nature of the loss (Heubner et al, 2007; Wildeman 2010), which suggests that the effects of parental separation on children are the result of separation more generally and not the specific context in which it occurs.

In conclusion, this dissertation has examined the impact of parental separation on children's wellbeing in two contexts, that of prison and the military. The examination of parental military deployment in regard to children's wellbeing was unique to this research as it had not received significant attention within criminological literature prior to this work. Therefore, it is clear that more research needs to be undertaken in this area of study to account for the lack of comparison groups. Future work may consider exploring the impact of other forms of work related absence. More primary research into the effects of parental separation on children's wellbeing would be advantageous, especially studies which focus solely on the views and experiences of children in regard to parental separation, as existing research tends to over rely on parental reporting of children's behaviours and experiences. It may also be interesting to compare the child's and parent's perspectives on the perceived effects of parental separation on their wellbeing. In addition, more longitudinal studies are required so one can assess the impact of parental separation over time.

Separation or the breakup of a family unit under any circumstance has an impact on all members of that family. This dissertation started with a graphic illustration of one such separation, due to imprisonment. This thesis concluded that imprisonment is a unique type of separation due to the wider societal impact on the family in relation to stigma and isolation, especially on any children involved as there are longer lasting and permanent effects that stay with the child throughout their formative years.

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